MARSHA R. ROBINSON

MATRIARCHY, PATRIARCHY, AND IMPERIAL SECURITY IN AFRICA

Explaining Riots in Europe and Violence in Africa

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Matriarchy, Patriarchy and Imperial Security in Africa

To my parents who gave me the world before they left it

To my children for whom I write a tomorrow

L'État affamé
était
envieux
de ceux
qui vivaient.

The starving State
envies
those
who live.

Introduction
Primordial Questions and the Internet

Will your family eat today and sleep peacefully tonight?

Imperial security. What is it? I have looked at this thing called imperial security from as many different angles, different geographies, different social classes, and different cultures as I could. I turned it over through such a variety of sources that I fear my curiosity to know this thing called imperial security will be called undisciplined and unfocused. On the contrary, I have been extremely focused on knowing this thing called imperial security to a Foucauldian and Socratic depth, wading through complexities until I arrived at the essence of the thing. At the end of my journey, I found this simple Primordial Question.

Will your family eat today and sleep peacefully tonight?

There is nothing simple in the answer to the Primordial Question, nothing simple at all. This is the question that drove humans to cooperate and build prehistoric empires. This is the question that drives personal, corporate, national and imperial security. This is the question that shapes American, European, African, and Asian definitions of imperial security in the twenty-first century. This is the question that propels the United States to serve as the bodyguard of the world even to the point that this role threatens to bankrupt the United States back into colonial status. This question has been asked daily since earliest times by those who have a family of one, one hundred, one nation, one empire, or one human family.

Security is the power to answer "yes" to the Primordial Question. Today, we ask if everyone has the right to the affirmative answer. It is

the question asked by anarchists and mobs of students and workers inside the European Union since the 2008 financial crisis. Students protesting tuition fee increases attacked the car ferrying Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, on December 9, 2010. It is the question asked by the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States in 2011. It is the question asked in Afghanistan and Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo where some men, powerless to answer "yes," attack women. Everyone has some power to make that right answer happen. Each person may not have enough power or as much power as a competitor.

Right is the power to answer "yes." On every frontier between neighbors and empires, especially those frontiers where military activity happens, every person involved is right. They are all conservatives. Each conserves the right to feed their family and to let their family sleep through the night in peace. Every soldier fights to make this right happen for their family, however they define family.

At the most basic level, this is the question that shapes the definition of imperial security. What is wrong with our current answers to this question is our darned stubborn insistence on nineteenth century economic thinking. This kind of thought has rationalized as right the concentration of 80 percent of the world's wealth to twenty nations of the nearly 200 nations in the world (the G20 at www.g20.org). Such concentration suffocates wealth creation in the rest of the world, diminishing potential profits for even those in the G20 who are facing increasing hostility within their own national borders over this economic crisis. This concentration of wealth limits more than 175 nations' ability to create enough wealth in their own countries to allow their families to eat today and sleep peacefully tonight. Individuals in the hungry nations are a cellular telephone and a satellite image away from images of this wealth concentration.

Moroccan sociologist Dr. Fatema Mernissi has been warning the West that the Internet and satellite television are changing power and market relations in the Islamic world for more than a decade. Her warning proves true. The Internet means that clandestine mercenary operations that once worked in the 1960s and 1970s are less covert. It means that monopolies on commodity distribution networks have competition. Speaking on National Public Radio in 2002 about the Middle East Crisis, Mernissi alerted those in Washington and other listeners that technology was restoring political power to ordinary people and to subordinated classes of people. Satellite television is changing the sense of powerless-

ness. This democratization of information can undermine and dilute the power of Big-Man politicians who once secured commodity distribution networks for years through terrorist attacks on their own citizens because, once upon a time, it would have taken months and years for the world to find out about these crimes. Mernissi continued,

> People are just tired of violence and extremism because in Morocco or most of North Africa we are living from tourism. The people on the street, they know that their life is with global communication and good contacts and understanding with foreigners. The Arab citizen is seeing for the first time that the national state is no longer functioning.[1]

This is a situation so unstable that no army of any size will be able to hold the frontier between those who sleep with full bellies and those with empty ones. This 80/20 ratio threatens the security of the United States and American military leaders are addressing this in a new kind of structure, the U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM).

The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-first Century is Thomas P. M. Barnett's effort "to brief [military leaders] on the view from 30,000 feet."[2] It is a military application of Fatema Mernissi's observations. His map uses the digital divide, access to the Internet and the World Wide Web, to distinguish the Core of digitally integrated economies from those that fall into the Gap (formerly known as Less Developed Countries). Barnett's genius is his use of Core/Gap as a replacement for Cold War polarized thinking.

Barnett asks us to begin our work on globalization, stability and security by using an imagined photo of a Hobbesian life for many in our one human family as seen from 30,000 feet. "Life in the Gap is poor . . . nasty . . . short . . . brutal . . . solitary."[3] For too high a percentage of our global neighbors, the answer to the Primordial Question is "no" even though the Internet shows them that there is a surplus of food on the planet. I think I am supposed to see this Gap as space in less developed nations. The problem is that I know this Gap exists in the most developed Core nations where poverty is an urban and rural reality, where prison populations are increasing, and where Social Security and other social welfare benefits are losing funding.

Civil disturbances and civil war threaten within developed nations where ordinary people refuse to be excluded from the benefits of living in Barnett's Core nations, benefits that are just beyond reach and that are increasingly more distant as fiscal austerity measures are imposed even in Great Britain. Barnett's technology Gap does indeed exist but it defies

the traditional boundaries on maps. A new map of the world is needed.

Barnett gives us an accurate snapshot of what he sees through a conceptual periscope of an imagined naval jet fighter at 30,000 feet above the earth. He sees that Americans "are an insanely optimistic people" who have "always shaped the future" and who have an "unparalleled capacity to wage war."[4] Barnett's periscopic *view* at 30,000 feet has a very limited field of vision because it was forged during the Cold War. He cannot *hear* what this sounds like to some in the Gap who read his works. There are people in the Gap who read books written by American authors via the Internet and satellite communications even in the middle of Hobbesian areas where too often the answer to the daily Primordial Question is "no." What they hear sounds like this: If you want to do business with the United States, you had better prepare to be afraid. Then those readers can get on the Internet and read China's Africa Policy in which "China believes . . . mankind is to live in harmony."[5] Hmm. African Gap nations can choose American Fear or Chinese Harmony. Which one offers "a future worth creating?"[6]

The United States is undergoing a generational shift in foreign policy. There is a generation that was so impressed with seeing the planet from space that it seems to have reduced billions of individuals to pixils on a digital image. Those individuals are speaking and they have expectations of the United States to behave like the elder sibling of post-colonial nations rather than behave like an insensitive colonizer. Take the USS *Cole* bombing on October 12, 2000. Exactly one week earlier, on October 5, 2000, future Vice President Dick Cheney told the world that the United States "military is in trouble." Cheney announced,

> if you look at the data that's available, 40% of our Army helicopters are not combat ready. The combat readiness level in the Air Force dropped from 85% to 65%. . . . We don't give them the spare parts they need. . . . We have not been investing in the future of the U.S. military.[7]

In plain words, Dick Cheney dropped the pants of our military in front of the world. Did he think that he was having a private conversation with a limited number of American voters? He was quickly corrected by his international audience. Two "suicide bombers in a small rubber dinghy laden with explosives rammed a highly sophisticated U.S. Navy destroyer," leaving "a gaping hole along the waterline of the USS *Cole* as she was pulling in to refuel at the Yemeni port of Aden."[8] People in the Gap are listening to us and they may be hearing more than we think we are saying. For example, there was a time when the media and American

government spokespersons used sound-bites containing a language of rape (embed, penetrate) to describe our planned action to help the good citizens of the Motherland of Afghanistan. Needless to say, our words offended patriotic sensibilities in Afghanistan and were likely counter-productive to our peace mission. The return communication was lethal.

Matriarchy, Patriarchy and Imperial Security in Africa is an effort to hear communications and messages from people in the G176 group of Rest-of-the-World nations who seek positive answers to the Primordial Question. It is an effort to listen differently. Listen to this version as an example. On October 12, 2000, exactly one week after Dick Cheney dropped the pants of the U.S. military, a ship that takes the pronoun "she" was rammed with a giant "rubber" . . . raft. This is a message from Yemen, home of ancient matriarchal cultures that produced people like Queen Makeda of Sheba and the Prophet Mohammed's first wife Khadijah who was the CEO of her own international shipping company with regional offices in Arabia and the Levant. Yemen has a matriarchal history. Some Yemenis were tired of patriarchal U.S.' boasts of embedding and penetrating matriarchal nations. Two ordinary Yemenis were man enough to rape a U.S. warship. Did we hear the message?

In the next seven chapters, you will take a journey through European, African, West Asian, and American history. There is more going on in the frontier than capitalism and crusades. There is a clash between patriarchal and matriarchal empires. It is not just about Salafists and Taliban and women's schools and women's driving privileges. It is as much about the 1200 year battle to conquer and pacify indigenous matriarchal states in *Western Europe* as it is about the 2200 year battle to conquer matriarchal empires in Africa. When we add a gender lens, we can see that there were times when the Holy Roman Empire behaved like the Salafists and the Taliban.

When I talk about gender, I am talking about the way that men and women relate to one another. I am not talking about biology and I am talking about something beyond sexuality. I am talking about a masculine mystique and a corruption of men's relationships to the women in their families and communities, be these women mothers, sisters, daughters, wives or neighbors. In the journey to the Primordial Question, I found an imperial process that depends upon reversing the evolution of human society, a process that devolves civilized peoples to animals. This masculine malaise involves dehumanizing men, dangling fatherhood in front of them like a carrot to a donkey, and then corrupting fatherhood to make incest and pedophilia part of patriarchal imperial booty. Notice

how sex tourism increased in a post-colonial twentieth century? Chapter Two explores this through writings of some nineteenth and early twentieth century European intellectuals. I also found that this is not a universal imperial process. There are options, profitable ones at that, to patriarchal imperialism.

Part of what Europe exported in pursuit of its own economic security is a corruption of fatherhood and dehumanization of men. We can hear it in the explosion of the USS *Cole*. Barnett describes Americans as insanely optimistic. Well, when the insanely optimistic Americans, with our rose-colored lenses manufactured in London or Berlin or Paris or Lisbon or Madrid or Rome or Amsterdam, arrive at some location in the world we sometimes only see European imperial history since 1885. We are too often blinded by these lenses to 2000 years of European history, a history that includes imperial contests between African matriarchal states who colonized parts of ancient, classical, and medieval Europe, and the Holy Roman Empire patricians, descended from Roman Senators, who fought matriarchies in Africa and who squashed European matriarchies. We do not see the West Asian empires who fought both of them over proto-globalizations past and globalizations present. We are just the insanely optimistic people from the American frontier looking at the world with eyes dilated by short views of history as we search for ways to prevent a third European patrician implosion on the order of WWI and WWII by bringing security and stability to the nations of the world.

What Does Security Mean to Whom?

Our histories determine our definitions of security. In no way can I claim ownership of the idea of changing the definition of security.[9] Our stories explain what we did to pursue our particular forms of security. In the West, our fairy tales form templates that help us accept our "good strategic concepts" of imperial security.[10]

After 9/11, some Europeans thought President George W. Bush was a cowboy-diplomat. So I chose a cowboy folklore hero, Pecos Bill, to explain America's definition of security. Lt. Alvin Sydenham introduced Pecos Bill as a minor character in a fictional story about life on the American frontier and that story was published in a military journal in 1893. Because we are talking about war and imperial frontiers, I find the use of a mythical, charismatic cowboy from a military journal story an

appropriate device for explaining the evolution of the United States' definition of security.

Western Europe's definition of security is far more emotional and primal. The 1200 year battle to subdue and pacify matriarchies in Europe was gruesome and formed the stuff of nightmares. The story that describes this is actually Red Riding Hood, a story that is common to western and eastern European nations. Why is this story so common? What lessons does it teach to children? Where, by the way, were her grandfathers, father and brothers? While Pecos Bill did indeed carry me to that American frontier, searching for a European definition of security by using the Red Riding Hood story as inquisitive device took me to a surprising and dark place in European memory, a place that becomes more apparent with every trip that I make to the Continent. Security negotiations with the E.U. are incomplete without including this emotional definition of European security.

African security is a tall order for it needs to be general enough to cover fifty-four nations, only one of which is part of the G20 that controls 80 percent of the world's wealth. For this definition, I follow clues found in Cheikh Anta Diop's *Cultural Unity of Black Africa* (1959). In that book, Diop argues that matriarchy was the indigenous social system across most of the continent. African matriarchy, according to Diop, is a system in which men and women share political power. Neither gender dominates.

This is not what I read in my early days of graduate school. I read anthropologists like Gwendolyn Mikell who noticed that "gender hierarchy and female subordination, evident in traditional African culture, became more pronounced during the phases of Islamic expansion and European conquest, as well as afterward." There is still that Western presumption that female subordination is universal and eternal.[11] Mikell's sentence made me think. I thought about a huge gap or blind spot in my studies of Africa to that point: the Sahara desert. It is neither the Arab north coast nor the Bantu sub-Sahara. The Nile Valley is abridged to the Middle East in an artificial zone called MENA (Middle East North Africa). The Sahara was orphaned and seemed to be a forbidden part of the continent. Why was I supposed to ignore 30 percent of the continent? So, like the explorers Heinrich Barth or Mungo Park, I pushed into historiography about the Sahara and found a body of scholarship, about an entirely different world-trade zone, especially nineteenth century works.[12] That blind spot hides a history of several matriarchal empires that once ruled parts of Europe and Asia by using a particular definition of imperial se-

curity. In fact, one can even say that without one of these empires, Charlemagne of the Holy Roman Empire would only have been Tall Charles, Mayor of the Merovingian Palace.

For the definition of African security, I borrow the myth of Tiski al-Ardja, the legendary mother of all Berbers who occupy much of the Saharan world-trade system, and I present several Berber women who had the political clout to impact African empires that conquered land in Europe. This system is older than Islam by millennia. Men and women in this Saharan proto-globalization zone shaped Islam to protect this African matriarchal system. Patriarchal Muslims from West Asia conducted a 1200 year crusade to subdue these matriarchies. And, as in the Roman senators' system, they also offered pedophilia as an imperial booty. Africa has a decidedly different definition of security here and, surprisingly, it more closely matches the United States' definition.

I conclude the following.

1. The United States is not the bodyguard of Western imperialism. I believe that the United States is the elder sibling of nations that have freed themselves from a dying imperial system created by the Senatorial families of imperial Rome.
2. We have to understand the frustrations shown in riots and mass demonstrations in the European Union over welfare state benefits and the appeal of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab as contradicting but symbiotic expressions of the same societal disease—corruption of fatherhood in service to zero-sum game imperial thinking in Europe.
3. We have to see gender issues in non-patriarchal ways as something far grander and more politically significant than locating wells in rural villages for women's convenience. It is no accident that Uganda and Rwanda are stable as of this writing.
4. We must understand that when we say "security" to people in other nations, we are not necessarily talking about the same thing. This is a source of friction and an impediment to successful diplomacy.
5. Everyone's family has a right to eat today and sleep peacefully tonight. That cannot happen without a strong military to guard their rights.

The United States is most secure when it shoulders its responsibilities as elder sibling of the formerly colonized nations.

Theoretical Approaches Used in this Book

Matriarchy, Patriarchy and Imperial Security in Africa attempts to explain national security from the perspective of ordinary people who face negative answers to the Primordial Question in the G20 and in the G176 and it does so by illuminating a different battlefield with insights from a long history of the clash of cultures that each have their corresponding definitions of imperial security. This battlefield is the frontier between matriarchal and patriarchal societies in Western Europe and Africa.

I apply gender history and world-systems theory to a topic usually addressed by military and political scientists. *Matriarchy, Patriarchy and Imperial Security in Africa* unites Africa and indigenous Europe in a single *Kulturkreis*, a term used by linguist Joseph Greenberg.[13] This book starts from the grassroots level and works up to the clash of civilizations made popular by Samuel Huntington and Edward Saïd. My perspective humanizes these clashes of culture by addressing angst in patrician and ordinary social classes and by verbalizing a masculine mystique that motivates ordinary people to join terrorist organizations.[14] Long cycles of history and macro-scaled waves of events are common approaches to comprehending the past in order to understand the present.

There are other scholars who are more eloquent in their expression of this type of historical writing. J.G.A. Pocock carries his reader in a dance around Edward Gibbon, author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776). In doing so, Pocock introduces us to Gibbon as a person and as a scholar who made choices in organizing his epic work. When Pocock finishes with Gibbon, we see a writer who was a member of an English society wrapped in insecure awe of its own success in creating a global empire.[15] The kind of history that Gibbon's generation began to write resulted in a congealed collection of disconnected events from around the world. Aziz al-Azmeh calls this process "organismic romanticism" and it comes to us from "medieval natural philosophical and medical notions." It affects the portrayal of "historical subjects conceived in terms of living organisms, and thus is history narrated as the romance of this Western, Islamic, or otherwise denominated subject."[16]

In a 3000 year view, a center of the world is the Saharan world trade zone and this region has to be added as a peer to the conventional Oriental-Occidental binary. This triangulation, more geographically focused and more temporally expansive than that used in Valeria Bello and Bela-

chew Gebrewold's *A Global Security Triangle* (2010), allows one to view Western Europe as a colonized territory of a Roman economic empire that never died. Rome 2.0, as I call it, merely reorganized as a patrician, patriarchal empire that gathered resources from its eighth century European frontier with the assistance of legions of eunuchs (Catholic priests) instead of Roman legionnaires. Rome 2.0's patricians expanded their proprietary gathering grounds to the American frontier of the eighteenth century and most of the African frontier in the last two centuries. A parallel reorganization occurred in West Asia. Curiously, within this triangulation of imperial clashes, the United States becomes the elder sibling of the family of post-colonial frontier nations and its defensive definition of security aligns with the African definition of security.

I observe a fairly consistent historical cycle at frontiers between patriarchal and matriarchal societies in Western Europe and Africa. There, patriarchal Roman and West Asian imperialists were defeated by African matriarchal societies over the last two millennia. The patriarchal imperialists did not succeed until they convinced enough men within the matriarchal societies in Africa and Western Europe to betray the rights of women. Such betrayal became a form of currency used to purchase the benefits of *patria potestas* or male dominance over females. These patriarchal empires imposed a set of laws that corrupts definitions of fatherhood until men suffer from a societal malaise that I call *patria impotestas*. Such economically castrated men respond with acts of terrorism and, ironically, war crimes against women.

I conclude that counter-terrorism efforts will not stabilize frontier nations in Africa or anywhere until issues that frustrate men's ability to provide the means of living for their families are addressed. Misogynist acts of warfare and terrorist attacks on infrastructure are expressions of a demand for an African matriarchal definition of security. Until that demand is satisfied, neither the American nor the European definition of security will be met.

Research and Preparation

This book is the result of research begun in 1998 on American merchants' encounters with Barbary nations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the research concluded with study of the mission of the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM). I research in French

and I have translated some documents from Arabic, especially *nawazil* (divorce cases). When I studied Arabic, supported by a multi-year Foreign Language and Areas Studies Fellowship at the Ohio State University, I pursued grammar rather than colloquial vocabulary. This method helped me to understand and explain the construction of words and metaphors from root ideas. The discipline that I acquired from that approach to Arabic opened me to incorporate Joseph Greenberg's linguistic anthropology. I have also studied and applied critical theory and critical discourse without using the jargon. Combined, this discursive study reveals the embedded emotions in competing cultural definitions of the word "security."

My undergraduate study in International Economics was conducted at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. I am hard-wired to see commerce as the driver of international political activity, whether I am reading nineteenth century American Navy ships' logs at the Washington Navy Yard Ships History archives, eighteenth century Gibraltar Garrison records in London archives or nineteenth century St. Louis, Senegal, Chamber of Commerce proceedings in the archives in Dakar. I have also read about Islamic women's rights in archives in Morocco, Senegal and Nigeria. I juxtapose these to records about American and British women's rights that I studied at the Beinecke at Yale, the Connecticut Historical Society and the Connecticut State Archives.

My approach to British imperial history was shaped by documents that I read at the Bodleian and the Rhodes-Mandela House at Oxford University, at the British Public Records Office, at Senate House at the University of London's Rare Books Room, at the British Museum and at the Irish National Archives. The documents about French military expeditions were located at the National Archives of Senegal in Dakar. I have also been teaching courses on African history, African American history, American history, World history and Western Civilization for more than a decade. This keeps my mind actively engaged with the history of three continents. My view is refined by my visits to the regions of the world that I discuss in the book, including Oman, France and Spain. World history narratives on a longue durée scale take many years to develop.

Presentation of my findings has taken some years to develop, too. In the English archives I found early modern documents in which the English felt equal or inferior to some African and Islamic polities. This was very disturbing for me because it challenged the hegemonic ideas that are foundational to my generation's education. The same held in the Barbary War documents and in the Senegalese archival documents. Another dis-

turbing issue has been the visceral reaction that some European historians have to the idea that there are indigenous matriarchal cultures in Western Europe that share similarities with some African cultures and that these European cultures have been colonized much longer than many African cultures have been colonized.

This book gives voice to the suffering of ordinary men, European, African and West Asian, who live on the imperial frontiers. I have presented some of these chapters at conferences to get feedback from my peers and it has been very difficult to watch the facial reactions of some of my colleagues from Africa and around the world. Their faces quiver and some men were moved to the brink of tears. For such men, my research findings are painful to hear as they remember abuse and war crimes they may have witnessed or that their female relatives and friends have suffered. Rather than focus on feminism, I have found that many African and non-African men, scholars or not, on the continent or in diaspora, have been very receptive to my empathetic description of a masculine mystique in the form of *patria impotestas* (men who are impotent with respect to the power to provide for the living of their female family members and their households in general).

Others in my conference audiences become angry about learning for the first time that African matriarchies from that forbidden zone of the Sahara once ruled parts of Europe and that Islamic wars have often been about imperial contests between matriarchal African Muslim states and patriarchal West Asian Muslim states. These have not been wars about religion. My research findings are painful reminders that some African men and women—and non-Africans, too—are still unaware of the profound depth of our intellectual conditioning by waves of patriarchal colonial hegemonies that makes us believe that women have universally and eternally been second class citizens.

The Primordial Question is not derived from written books. I read it in the eyes of maimed soldiers at an American Veterans Administration Hospital. I read it in the eyes of bewildered Somali mothers and fathers who arrived by the thousands to resettle in my hometown of Columbus, Ohio in the late 1990s. I read it in the eyes of school children who hawked chewing gum and water to motorists on the busy streets of Mexico City and Abuja, Nigeria. I read it in the eyes of young college students in Oman, Morocco, and Senegal. I read it in the eyes of displaced Liberians. I read it in the eyes of scholars from Africa who are dedicated to the African Renaissance from the ashes of post-colonial and Cold War conflicts. And I read it in the eyes of taxi drivers and shop keepers and