

Forum:	Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)
Issue:	The question of the Western Sahara
Student Officer:	Antigoni Dilana
Position:	Co-chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

Welcome to the 14th Platon School Model United Nations conference! My name is Antigoni Dilana, and I am a student in the 11th grade at Doukas School. It is an honor to be serving as one of your Chairs in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4) for this conference.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate all of you for taking the initiative and getting involved in the complex world of MUN. From my experience I'm pretty certain that MUN conferences have a lot to offer, from skills and knowledge to even long-lasting friendships. During my MUN years I have realised that successful committees are those where delegates are well-informed, respectful, and collaborative. It is with this in mind that I have crafted this study guide to help you get a better understanding of the Western Sahara conflict and navigate through the complexities of the issue.

Undoubtedly, the question of the Western Sahara is a multifaceted issue and as your chair I have to say that this study guide doesn't provide all the information you need to be fully prepared for the conference - just an introduction to the topic. I encourage you to use it as a foundation for your research as it is thorough, from diverse and accurate sources. The study guide, in any case, is here to help you get a better understanding of the issue and build the base for your research, so relying solely on it is not recommended.

I look forward to witnessing a fruitful and productive debate. Remember, the skills you develop and acquire here will serve you well beyond this conference and the academic environment.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out and contact me at a.dilana@edu.doukas.gr. It would be my pleasure to help you!

Best regards,

Antigoni Dilana

INTRODUCTION

Western Sahara, often referred to as “Africa’s last colony” is a disputed area on the western coast of Africa.¹ Western Sahara’s creation can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries during the period of European colonialism in Africa. For many years that place was a terra nullius i.e., land belonging to no one.²

Since its independence in 1956, Morocco has been claiming that the Western Sahara is an integral part of its kingdom. However, the Polisario Front, a rebel national liberation movement, refused to accept this and sought to establish Western Sahara as an independent state, known as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Similarly to the Morroccans, in 1957, Mauritania also made claims to the territory but withdrew them in 1991 unlike the Morroccans whose persistence continues to this day.

In 1975, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that there was no evidence of sovereignty ties between Western Sahara and Morocco or Mauritania. Despite this, Morocco controls 80% of the area, including the whole coastline and the natural resources.³ It has established a government presence, while the Polisario Front only controls the remaining 20% of the region. This division creates a complex situation: Morocco’s control over the resource-rich area has led to disputes over their exploitation. Meanwhile the Polisario Front, which advocates for the independence of the Western Sahara, continues to seek international recognition and assistance. The issue is further complicated by the involvement of other powers, namely: the United States of America (USA) and its strong alliance with Morocco and the Polisario Front’s support from Algeria which caused many disagreements over autonomy versus independence, leading to multiple failed negotiations.

Currently, the United Nations (UN) works to maintain a peacekeeping mission in the region known as United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), whose task is to monitor a ceasefire that has been agreed upon since 1991. It is also obligated to hold a referendum which has not been held yet.

In recent years, there have been renewed diplomatic efforts to end the political instability of the region, including proposals for autonomy or independence. However these solutions have failed to provide a lasting way to tackle the issue due to the nations’ refusal to cooperate and compromise.

¹ Democracy Now! “Four Days in Occupied Western Sahara-a Rare Look inside Africa’s Last Colony.” *Democracy Now!*, 11 Sept. 2018, www.democracynow.org/2018/8/31/four_days_in_occupied_western_sahara.

² *Case Comment: Advisory Opinion on the Western Sahara*, brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1447&context=bjil.

³ “Who Should Control Western Sahara?” *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2024/07/31/who-should-control-western-sahara.

The Western Sahara conflict is a critical issue for the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4) as it is tasked with ensuring that the right to self-determination is upheld in the region. Despite its mandate, the Western Sahara issue has been overshadowed on the global stage which is why the conference's theme 'State Apathy' is particularly relevant to the situation where the inaction of the international community has allowed the conflict to flourish and still exist for decades.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Terra nullius

"The term terra nullius means 'nobody's land' or 'land belonging to nobody.' In legal jargon, terra nullius means 'land over which no previous sovereignty has been exercised.'" Under this, if a land was deemed *terra nullius*, then, countries could lay claim to and occupy the territory. It provided a justification for countries to colonize. This concept has been linked to the Western Sahara issue because Morocco initially argued that the region was unclaimed or without sovereignty before its annexation.

Self-Determination

"Self-determination is the right of a country to be independent, instead of being controlled by a foreign country, and to choose its own form of government" which is a central issue in Western Sahara, where the Sahrawi people seek the opportunity to decide between independence and integration with Morocco.⁴ It is the cornerstone of democracy as it empowers people to determine their own political status.

Decolonization

"Decolonization is a process by which colonies become independent of their colonizing country."⁵ It is strictly linked to the fundamental right to self-determination, the root of decolonization. This connection exists because self-determination gives the right to the colonised to reclaim their land, it enables the process of decolonization itself. It is a critical aspect to the issue as the territory of Western Sahara seeks to assert its right to self-determination after being under colonial rule by Spain.

Colonialism

"Colonialism is the act of power and domination of one nation, by acquiring or maintaining full or partial political control over another sovereign nation."⁶ Colonialism has been historically associated with European powers leading to world dominance. In respect to the Western Sahara, Colonialism is deeply linked due to

⁴Self-Determination Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/self-determination.

⁵ "Decolonization." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 7 June 2024, www.britannica.com/topic/decolonization.

⁶"Colonialism." Legal Information Institute, www.law.cornell.edu/wex/colonialism.

Spain’s colonial rule over the territory that has created a longstanding struggle for self-determination.

The Polisario Front

The “Polisario Front is a Politico-Military organization aiming to end Moroccan control of the former Spanish territory of Western Sahara, and win independence for that region.”⁷ The organization is composed of inhabitants of the Western Sahara region, the Sahrawis.

Referendum

A “referendum is a vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion about or decide an important political or social question.”⁸ In the Western Sahara case, despite the numerous attempts to hold a referendum, it still hasn’t taken place due to disagreements between the two parties regarding the voter’s eligibility.

Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)

The SADR is a “self-declared state claiming authority over the disputed territory of Western Sahara, which is presently occupied by Morocco.”⁹ The independence of the SADR has been recognized at various points by some 80 countries, although several of them withdrew or suspended their recognition and is now recognised by 46 countries. The conflict remains unresolved with constant tensions between the two parties.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Background

European Colonization

During the 19th century in Europe, the need for raw materials was greater than ever, with the population increasing rapidly in less than a century. Consequently, European powers developed a heightened interest in the natural resources and land of African countries. In 1885, the Berlin Conference convened, during which it was decided that any power that occupied a territory could claim it.¹⁰ Spain and France emerged as dominant powers, occupying the regions now known as Western Sahara and Morocco respectively. Initially, the occupation did not lead to conflict, however, the

⁷ “Polisario Front.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/Polisario-Front.

⁸ Referendum | English Meaning - Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/referendum.

⁹ “Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/place/Sahrawi-Arab-Democratic-Republic.

¹⁰ “Berlin West Africa Conference.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 25 Nov. 2024, www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-West-Africa-Conference.

situation evolved after World War II. Independence movements occurred across Africa and in 1956 Morocco gained its independence. Subsequently, the southern colonies became one, forming the Spanish Sahara, formerly referred to as the Western Sahara.

The Spanish Sahara

The UN and the African Union called upon Spain to end colonization. Several resolutions (for example UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 or UN General Assembly Resolution 2072) passed aimed at decolonizing the area including the initial attempt to organize a referendum on self-determination.¹¹¹² However, they failed, as they lacked enforcement mechanisms to compel compliance. During this period, Spain engaged in the exploitation of the land, specifically large phosphate deposits. These were extracted through open-pit mining and were used by Spain for the production of fertilizers, helping with plant growth. As Spain continued to resist decolonization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro-shortened to Polisario Front- was established in 1973. The Polisario Front initiated an armed conflict against Spain. In 1974, another referendum which was intended to allow the people of the Spanish Sahara to vote on their political status was announced; however, it ultimately did not occur due to Spanish hesitation and pressure from both Morocco and Mauritania.

Morocco's claims

During the reign of King Hassan II, Morocco asserted a historical connection to Western Sahara advocating for its corporation into Moroccan territory. In pursuit of this objective, Hassan made an alliance with Mauritania, which held similar claims. Both nations subsequently turned to the ICJ. The ICJ recognised the said historical links but concluded that these did not establish a link to territorial sovereignty. The Kingdom of Morocco rejected the ICJ's advisory opinion and made the Spanish Sahara a national cause. Following this, King Hassan ordered Moroccans to cross the borders 'peacefully', leading to the settlement of 350,000 Moroccans in Western Sahara. This event is now referred to as the "Green March."¹³ Under this suffocating pressure, Spain retreated and with the Madrid Accords (1975), split the Sahara in two, between Morocco and Mauritania. The Polisario Front, whose voice has not been heard, expressed its disliking by launching attacks against Moroccan and

¹¹ UN, documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/152/88/pdf/nr015288.pdf.

¹² "Question of Ifni and Spanish Sahara." *United Nations*, digitallibrary.un.org/record/203565.

¹³ "Green March." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/Green-March.

Mauritanian forces entering the territory after an agreement they weren't invited to.

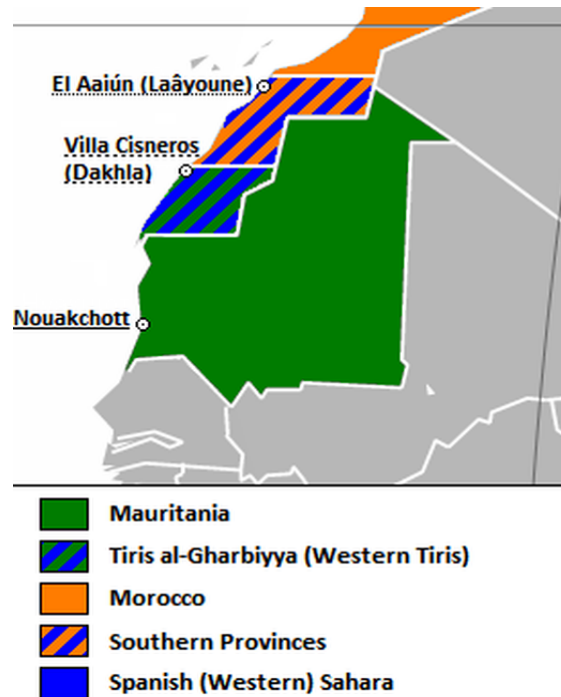


Figure 1: Map of land occupation of the Spanish Sahara.¹⁴

Western Sahara

A significant portion of the population is considered displaced seeking refuge in Tindouf, Algeria. On February 26, 1976, Spain officially completed its withdrawal from what is now referred to as the Western Sahara. Following this withdrawal, the Polisario Front declared the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).¹⁵ This declaration is a crucial point for delegates to consider, as it reflects the aspirations of the Sahrawi people for self-determination. The Polisario Front subsequently organized a military campaign against Mauritania and Morocco, despite being outnumbered. The movement's headquarters remain in Algeria, with both Algeria and Libya supplying them with weapons and fuel, illustrating the international dimensions of the conflict.

Political developments (1978-1982)

In 1978, Mauritania faced a coup d'état in Nouakchott. The new government aligned itself with the SADR and signed a peace agreement with the Polisario Front, resulting in the abandonment of Mauritania's claims over the Western Sahara. This development highlights the shifting alliances and the complexities

¹⁴ "Tiris Al-Gharbiyya." Wikidata, www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q4458092.

¹⁵ "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/place/Sahrawi-Arab-Democratic-Republic.

of regional politics. Following this shift, Morocco took Mauritania's former land and began to build six walls to block the Polisario Front from achieving their goals. This militarization of the conflict is evidenced by the construction of the 'sand walls' and is significant for understanding Morocco's strategic interests- to secure economically vital areas and to secure control.

In 1982, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) officially recognised the SADR and even accepted it as a new member state prompting Morocco to withdraw from the organization and leaving it diplomatically "cornered". The OAU recognition is a pivotal event, highlighting the acceptance of the Sahrawis among African regions. Despite this diplomatic setback for Morocco the construction of the sixth 'sand wall' has enabled it to control approximately 80% of the area, while the Polisario Front retains control of the remaining 20%. This territorial division is crucial as it enhances the challenges for the displaced Sahrawi population. Many Sahrawis are confined to refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria where they face harsh living conditions. The construction of the 'sand walls' has enhanced this division, cutting off Sahrawis from their traditional lands and restricting their freedom of movement.

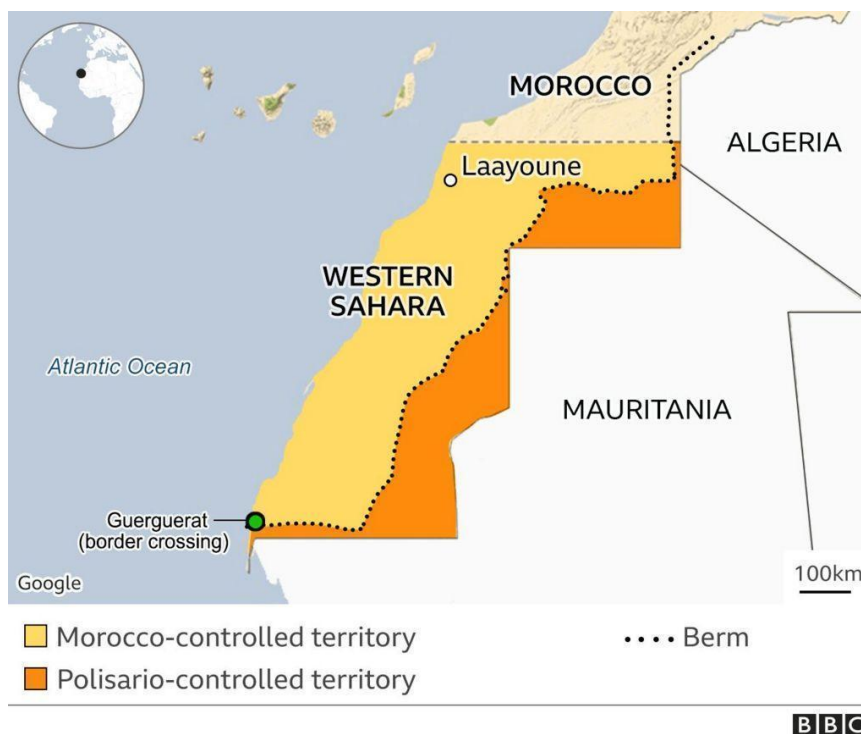


Figure 2: Map of the land occupation of Western Sahara¹⁶

¹⁶"(34), nuura.

[https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/976/Cpsprodpb/A3D8/Production/128844914_whatsappimage2023-0.](https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/976/Cpsprodpb/A3D8/Production/128844914_whatsappimage2023-0) Hive, [hive.blog/someeofficial/@nuura/https-ichef-bbci-co-uk-news-976-cpsprodpb-a3d8-production-128844914-whatsappimage2023-0-701257.](https://hive.blog/someeofficial/@nuura/https-ichef-bbci-co-uk-news-976-cpsprodpb-a3d8-production-128844914-whatsappimage2023-0-701257)

Conflict resolution efforts

United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

After 16 years of war, a ceasefire was signed in 1991 and a peacekeeping mission called United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)¹⁷, monitored by the UN, was sent to organize yet another referendum on the future of the region. The most noteworthy aspect of the plan is its ‘winner-takes-all’ approach. Participants in the referendum will be offered two options: independence or autonomy, with both parties having to abide by the results. Both the Polisario Front and the Moroccans have, thus, taken enormous risks in accepting the referendum. However, as can be foreseen the plan was blocked and was never held. But in 1997, a diplomatic victory was finally achieved. The Houston Accords, a set of agreements aimed at facilitating negotiations, took place and were considered a significant step in resolving the dispute.

After a terrorist attempt in Marrakech, Morocco accused Algeria of being responsible and demanded a visa for all Algerians wishing to visit the country, while Algeria cut off the borders completely, leading to both countries’ diplomatic relations being scarred.

Despite the referendum not being held and MINURSO not fulfilling its role it has made significant strides in other areas. The mission successfully oversaw the 1991 ceasefire which brought an end to 16 years of armed conflict. Furthermore, the mission’s presence allowed for ongoing diplomatic efforts such as the abovementioned Houston Accords. Although the referendum was never held, MINURSO’s role in maintaining peace is a notable achievement.

Autonomy Plan

Morocco proposed what is considered the only realistic way to tackle the issue: the Autonomy Plan¹⁸. The plan aimed to grant the Sahrawi people local governance while the region remained under Moroccan sovereignty. While some negotiations failed, leading to a status quo, Morocco used this period to strengthen its position gaining diplomatic support for its Autonomy Plan. This stability came to an end when, in 2020, Moroccan forces crossed the southern wall and ended the 1991 ceasefire by removing Polisario’s supporters who were blocking the El Guerguerat crossing- a crucial link between Morocco and the rest of the Africa and a strategic point of tension for both Moroccan and Sahrawi populations.

¹⁷ “Minurso.” *MINURSO*, minurso.unmissions.org/.

¹⁸ Atalayar. “Key Points of Morocco’s Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara.” *Atalayar*, 23 June 2023, www.atalayar.com/en/articulo/politics/key-points-of-moroccos-autonomy-plan-for-western-sahara/20230622132224187082.html.

The turning point came with the USA’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty, after Morocco adopted a more assertive stance. A striking example of this shift occurred when the leader of the Polisario front, Brahim Ghali was admitted to Spain for hospitalization. In response Morocco allowed over 8.000 migrants pass into Spain, signalling a more aggressive diplomatic posture.¹⁹

The autonomy plan, while successful in securing international support, faced some challenges. The United Nations expressed its skepticism due to concerns whether the plan actually addresses the aspirations of the Sahrawis. However, Morocco’s military actions in 2020 complicated the region’s stability. This increased the risk of undermining the legitimacy of the autonomy plan. While the proposal is viewed as a realistic solution, its implementation efforts have revealed both its potential for diplomatic success and its vulnerabilities at maintaining peace due to the refusal of the Polisario Front and Algeria to engage with the proposal.

The effects of conflict in the Western Sahara

Right now, over 100.000 Sahrawi people are living in Algeria as refugees²⁰. The Tindouf refugee camps have existed for decades and are among the most protracted refugee situations in the world, with generations of Sahrawis being born and raised there. Multiple violations of human rights are occurring with both sides being at fault. The Polisario Front mistreats Moroccan prisoners and refugees in Tindouf, while Morocco imposes its law without any possession of legal authority. Morocco has been accused of arbitrary detentions against Sahrawis advocating for self-determination. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights has voiced concerns over these actions.

The interest in natural resources by the international community couldn't be more evident with fishery agreements between Morocco and the European Union (EU) regarding the Western Sahara coastline taking place. In more depth, the Saharawi Natural Resource Watch (SNRW) was established. It is composed of a group of Sahrawi refugees living in the camps in Algeria who are against the exploitation of Western Sahara’s natural resources. The SNRW has published a report on the issue named “Los tentáculos de la ocupación” (‘The Tentacles of the Occupation’) which stresses how illegal this trade is.

¹⁹ O’Rourke, Bridget Ryder, et al. “How (and Why) 8,000 Migrants Breached the Spanish-Moroccan Border - and What It Says about Europe’s Migration Crisis.” *America Magazine*, 9 June 2021, www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2021/06/09/spain-morocco-north-africa-ceuta-migrant-crisis-240821.

²⁰ Nations, United. “Far from the Headlines: After 50 Years Refugees from Western-Sahara Are Still in Camps.” *United Nations Western Europe*, 11 Mar. 2024, [unric.org/en/far-from-the-headlines-after-50-years-refugees-from-western-sahara-are-still-in-camps/](https://www.unric.org/en/far-from-the-headlines-after-50-years-refugees-from-western-sahara-are-still-in-camps/).

The report also discussed how these agreements have been utilized to excuse the Moroccan occupation and enhance the transfer of the Moroccans to fishing settlements which is believed to be contributing to the exploitation of natural resources, without providing benefits to the Sahrawi people. This situation led to a vicious, never-ending cycle of war, violation of international law and human rights abuses.

A more overshadowed impact of the Western Sahara issue is its role in shaping organized crime and human trafficking networks connected to the Sahel region. The conflict has created a governance vacuum or a state absence in parts of Western Sahara, particularly in areas controlled by the Polisario Front which are areas beyond the reach of stable authority. This 'vacuum' has facilitated the rise of networks that use the region as a transit corridor for trafficking drugs, arms and people between West Africa, North Africa and Europe. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that various groups have capitalized on the availability of illicit firearms to fuel conflicts in the region. The conflict, thus, takes a different shape and form contributing to a broader cycle of insecurity. This demonstrates how a local political and territorial dispute can affect the international community.

Challenges in resolving the issue

The Western Sahara conflict remains one of the most complex territorial disputes in modern history due to its deep political divisions between the parties. One of the central challenges to tackling the issue is the incompatible positions of the Polisario Front and Morocco. Morocco asserts its sovereignty over the region while the Polisario Front demands full independence. This fundamental disagreement over the status of the territory has made finding a mutually acceptable solution a challenge.

Apart from that, the humanitarian situations and the refugee crises created by the conflict serve as a challenge as well. The refugee situation has created a generation of young Sahrawis who have never known a life outside the camps. This crisis not only affects those directly linked to it but hinders the negotiation process as well, as the refugees demand for their return to their homeland.

Finally, a key challenge is the lack of international consensus. While both the United Nations and international law support the principle of self-determination, they have failed to enforce resolutions that mandate a referendum for the people of Western Sahara. The lack of enforcement mechanisms has allowed Morocco to continue its de facto control over the region without facing any significant consequences. Without a strong enforcement mechanism, international law has been largely symbolic rather than effective.

Current Status

Ever since the ceasefire in 1991, the parties haven't been on the same page. For nearly 30 years, for one reason or another, both sides have rejected the plan of a referendum, which eventually led to the suspension of the negotiations. Finding a solution to the issue is a difficult case. Both sides are crystal clear: autonomy or nothing, independence or nothing. To avoid those absolute positions where the options seem limited, international mediation could be considered. However, overcoming the deeply entrenched positions of both parties remains a significant challenge.

The 100,000 exiled people in Algeria are in desperate need of a realistic approach. The Polisario Front has been fighting for nearly 50 years and refuses to surrender while the Moroccans' failure to recognise the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people shows their persistence.

To this day, the region remains unevenly divided. Diplomatic efforts monitored by the UN have taken place but progress has been limited due to the persistent disagreement between Morocco and the Polisario Front on sovereignty. The question in the Western Sahara has been proven over the years to be a problem extending well beyond the decolonization process. The continued stalemate has been really draining for both Sahrawi and Moroccan people. The Western Sahara dispute, often overshadowed by the media and on the global stage, continues to be an accurate illustration of the intricate issue of the fundamental right to self-determination in the 21st century.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Morocco

Right after gaining independence, Morocco pursued the vision of the “Greater Morocco” including the Western Sahara region within its borders.²¹ It is said that the Kingdom of Morocco is potentially more interested in the natural resources of the area, for instance the phosphates, rather than the land or its historical link to Morocco. The continuous persistent efforts of Morocco to make the Western Sahara an integral part of its country while controlling the coastline full of natural resources suggest that this may be true.

Morocco has been exporting phosphates from Western Sahara and has entered multiple agreements with the EU, such as the Fisheries Partnership Agreements (2005). These agreements allow the countries of the EU to be able to fish near these

²¹ Fillali, Wissal Mabrouk. “Morocco’s New Geopolitical Journey: The Path towards Becoming the New Regional Power?” *Hermes Kalamos*, 1 May 2023, www.hermes-kalamos.eu/moroccos-new-geopolitical-journey-the-path-towards-becoming-the-new-regional-power/.

waters full of fisheries which are of great economic value, while Morocco gains diplomatic power from that. This complicates the conflict by including Western Sahara's economic resources into Morocco's national economy.

France

France in the past was a great colonial power, with its sovereignty being imposed on Morocco during the colonial times. It publicly remains neutral in the matter. However, support for the Moroccans can be realised through the fact that Morocco is a past colony of theirs and full of natural resources that France is interested in. It can also become evident by their trade relations. France is also one of the largest-if not the largest- of Morocco's trading partners. With a total trade of 5.3 billion euros and a 20% share in the market, about 600 French enterprises employing 70,000 staff and almost 40,000 French residents, it is Morocco's main business partner.²²

While it has shown its support for Morocco, France has voiced some concerns over the potential violation of human rights in Western Sahara. In either case, France's stance reflects its history and diplomatic relations at the same time.

Mauritania

Mauritania has also claimed numerous times the Western Sahara land and was, in fact, an owner of some of it at some point. That changed when in 1979, Mauritania signed a peace agreement with the Polisario Front, withdrawing its claims. Currently Mauritania remains neutral in the matter recognising as valid neither parties' stance.

Mauritania has emphasized the immense need of negotiations in order to tackle the issue peacefully under the supervision of the United Nations. It becomes clear that Mauritania has become tired of the constant, longstanding dispute over the area. While maintaining its diplomatic relations with Morocco Mauritania has not shut down the Polisario Front. The want of Mauritania to avoid conflict is reflected through its non-involvement policy throughout the years.

Algeria

Algeria has historically supported the Polisario Front in its quest for independence and has hosted Sahrawi refugees in camps near the Algerian border. The country has been a key player in the Western Sahara conflict, providing political and diplomatic support to the Sahrawi movement.

²² Research Paper - No. 30 - November 2006 on JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10358.

More specifically, Algeria has supported the nationalist movement with secure military bases around the Algerian desert town of Tindouf. It has also provided shelter for more than 150,000 displaced people.²³

Algeria's decision in May 1988 to restore diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Morocco essentially indicates that the country is not keen on continuing the conflict. Although Algeria still remains firmly in favour of the nationalist movement, it is possible that it has become tired of this long-lasting dispute, hoping that their mediation efforts can result in some kind of compromise between the two parties.

Spain

Spain has played a significant role in the conflict. Its official stance remains neutral, however, through several fishing agreements with Morocco such as the 2001 Fisheries Agreement Between the European Union and Morocco²⁴, it becomes clear that Spain is also interested in the region's fishery. Due to its colonial past and historical link, it continues to maintain friendly relations with the Moroccans because Spain is aware that the area is full of phosphates and fishery. To this day, Spain plays a crucial role in reaching a consensus and is a key factor to the question of Western Sahara.

United States of America (USA)

The USA has played a role in the Western Sahara conflict by being one of the biggest Moroccan supporters. It is of paramount importance to mention that the United States urged Spain to sign the Madrid Accords, dividing the territory to the Mauritians and Moroccans. They feared that if Moroccan demands were not fulfilled, King Hassan II, a strong American ally, would be overthrown.

Additional US assistance has included the 50\$ million refurbishing of Morocco's Sidi Slimane airfield as well as a broad range of military equipment including F-5 Cobra helicopters while also providing training to Moroccan military troops. Total the US has surpassed \$1 billion over the past 10 years.

Apart from that, President Trump, on December 10th, 2020, in the final weeks of his presidency, proceeded with the establishment of relations between the USA and Morocco while recognizing Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara and there has been no reversal of the recognition.

Polisario Front

The nationalist organisation is undoubtedly a key stakeholder in the issue of Western Sahara. Its struggle throughout the years can be characterized by armed conflict,

²³ Thelwell, Kim. "Sahrawi Refugees Living in Algeria: The Forgotten Crisis." *The Borgen Project*, Kim Thelwell <https://Borgenproject.Org/Wp-Content/Uploads/Logo.Jpg>, 26 Apr. 2021. borgenproject.org/sahrawi-refugees-living-in-algeria/.

²⁴ "Lex - 32001R2561 - En." *EUR*, OPOCE, eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX%3A32001R2561%3AEN%3AHTML.

resistance and some diplomatic efforts. Its primary goal is to end Moroccan control over the region. The Polisario Front has established an exile-based government in Tindouf, Algeria, proclaiming the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). SADR was at some recognised by 80 countries, but some of them withdrew. Currently, 46 countries recognise SADR, some of them being:

Algeria (6 Mar 1976), Angola (11 Mar 1976), Belize (18 Nov 1986), Bolivia (14 Dec 1982), Botswana (14 May 1980), Cambodia (10 Apr 1979), Chad (4 Jul 1980 - 9 May 1997, from 17 Jul 2007), Colombia (27 Feb 1985 - 20 Dec 2000, from 10 Aug 2022), Costa Rica (30 Oct 1980), Cuba (20 Jan 1980).

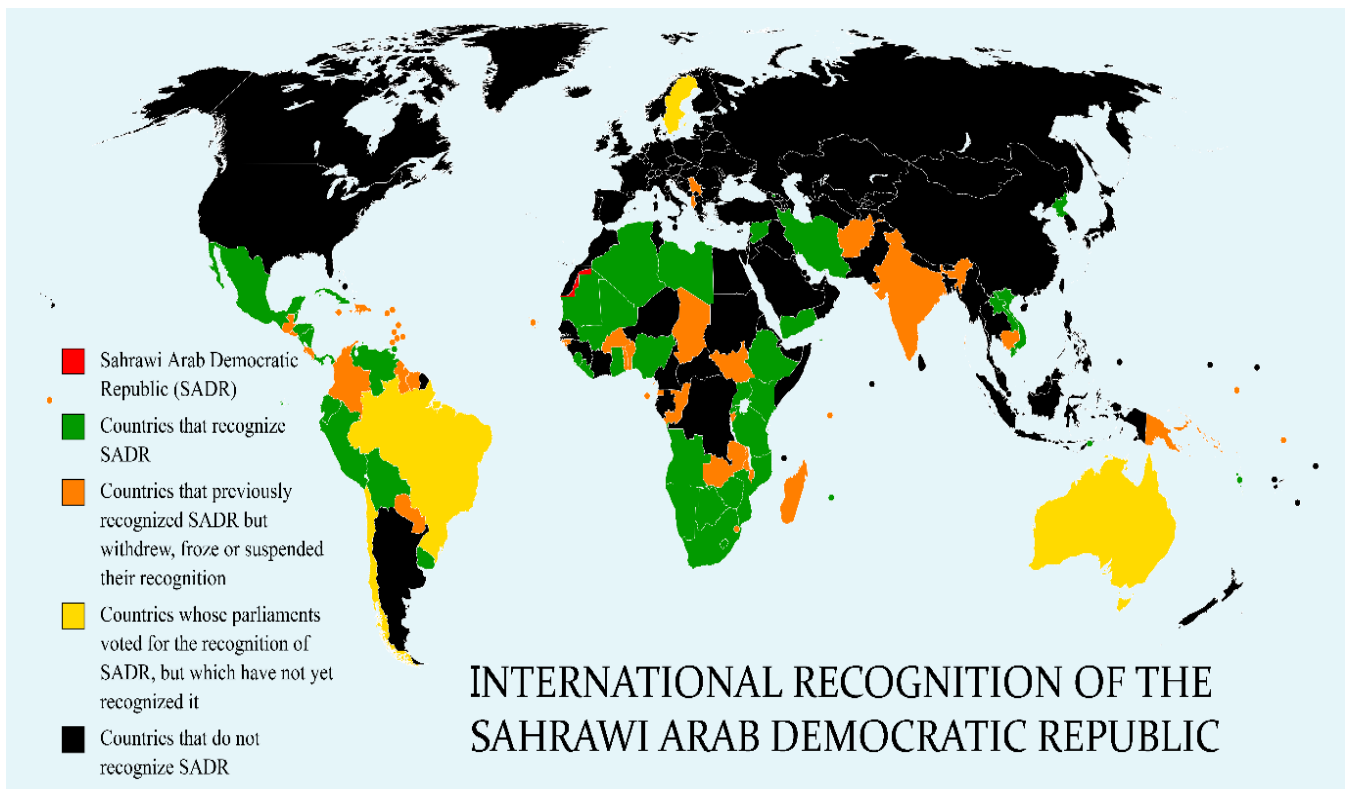


Figure 3: Map of the recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.²⁵

The SADR has also organised some refugee camps in Tindouf and provides people there with education, healthcare, and other services to the Sahrawis. However, the Human Rights Watch has reported concerning conditions of the refugee camps. An example is the isolation of the population and the lack of regular, on-the-ground human rights monitoring.²⁶ Generally, the Polisario Front expresses in all ways its

²⁵ Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:International_recognition_of_the_Sahrawi_Arab_Democratic_Republic_%28SADR_or_Western_Sahara%29.png.

²⁶ Goldstein, Eric. "Human Rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf Refugee Camps." Human Rights Watch, 28 Mar. 2023, www.hrw.org/report/2008/12/19/human-rights-western-sahara-and-tindouf-refugee-camps.

commitment in achieving the recognition of the right to self-determination to the Sahrawi people.

United Nations Missions for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)

Since its creation, in 1991 MINURSO's primary goal has been to monitor the ceasefire agreement. It has personnel stationed across the region to ensure that neither Morocco nor Polisario Front engage in hostilities.

The mission's mandate also includes the organization of a referendum that would allow Sahrawi people to vote on their future. However, due to disagreements such as the voter's eligibility the referendum has been many times blocked and postponed leaving MINURSO with mainly a peacekeeping role. Specifically, MINURSO has maintained a presence along the 2.700-kilometer-long 'sand wall' and has been monitoring the stability of this buffer zone.

The Security Council renews the mandate of MINURSO when necessary. In total, it has been updated 51 times and yet hasn't succeeded. The said updates emphasized the need for a political process and negotiations under the UN auspices. While they also often included calls for renewed negotiations. The updates had limited success as the interests of various nations have complicated the resolution process making it difficult to reach a consensus. Also, the absence of a humanitarian component within MINURSO has resulted in inadequate attention to human rights violations.

European Union (EU)

The EU has been involved in the Western Sahara conflict due to its political and economic interests. Those include the phosphates extractions and renewable energy projects, for instance, the Desertec project, which aims to harness solar energy from the Sahara region. In 2006, the EU-Morocco Fisheries Agreement was signed which allows European vessels to fish in Moroccan Waters and even in the Western Sahara coastline.

It is crucial to mention that no Member State has recognised the occupation of Morocco, yet, there have been major agreements that indicate Morocco as not an extinct country from the Western Sahara. However, European countries recognise Morocco's borders as far as the Western Sahara area begins.

In 2016 and 2018, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that Western Sahara is a distinct territory from Morocco and that the aforementioned agreements couldn't include the area without the consent of the Sahrawi people. Nevertheless, the EU-Morocco agreements continue to take place.

Both have tried to gain the consent of the Sahrawi but that has not been done. In summary, the agreements have not been discontinued and remain a subject for international debate and political negotiations.

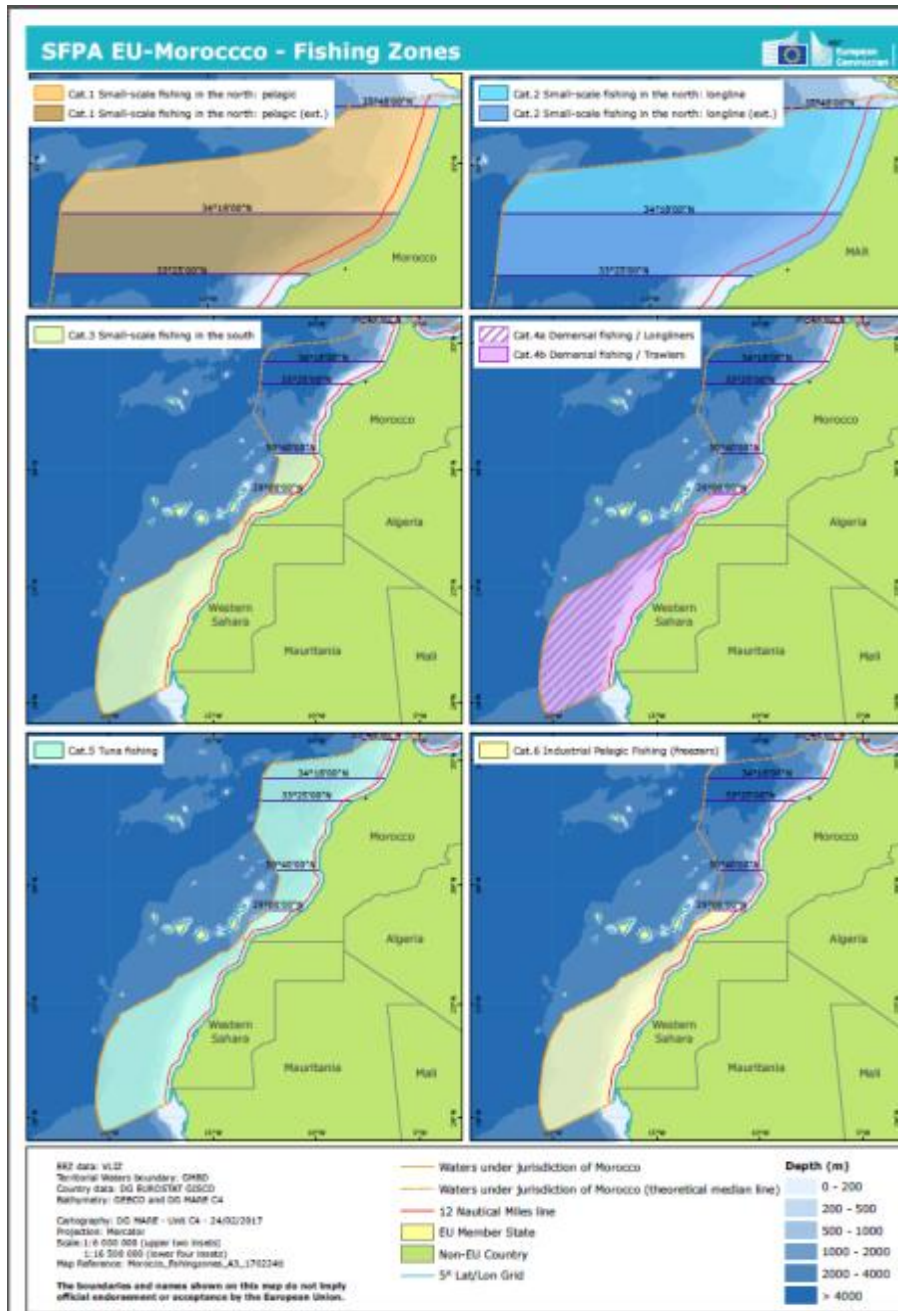


Figure 4: European Commission’s six charts showing the extent of the fishing zones, used in the Opinion of the Advocate General Wathelet, delivered on 10 January 2018.²⁷

²⁷ “CJEU: EU-Morocco Fisheries Agreement Not Applicable to Western Sahara Adjacent Waters.” De Maribus, demaribus.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/download.png?w=454&h=647.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

10-20 May 1973	The Polisario Front is formed and launches attacks against Spanish colonizers.
16 October 1975	The ICJ issues an opinion on the matter stating that there are no territorial ties between Western Sahara and Morocco or Mauritania.
6 November 1975	“Green March” happens, with around 350,000 Moroccans crossing the borders and settling down on Western Sahara. ²⁸
27 February 1976	Morocco annexes the area since Mauritania withdraws their claims. The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which fights in favour of the right to self-determination, is established. Fighting breaks out and populations are going to Tindouf.
22 February 1982	The SADR becomes part of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).
12 November 1984	The Kingdom of Morocco withdraws from the OAU as a response to the inclusion of SADR in the organization.
30 August 1988	The parties agree upon the ‘settlement proposals’ by the UN which essentially call for a referendum with a ‘winner-take-all’ format; independence or autonomy.
29 April 1991	With UN Resolution 690 the MINURSO is established. ²⁹
16 September 1997	Houston Accords take place, one of the very first talks between the two parties in what has been termed a huge diplomatic victory.
20 June 2001	The Baker Plan I occurs.
23 May 2003	The Baker Plan II occurs.
18 August 2005	The Polisario releases 404 Moroccan prisoners.
11 April 2007	Morocco submits its autonomy plan and presents it as a compromise solution.
14 December 2007	The Polisario states that if current negotiations fail, the Moroccan government will assume full consequences including possibly for resumption of hostilities. ³⁰

²⁸ Jihane Rahhou - Morocco World News. “Green March: A Day Forever Engraved in Moroccans’ Collective Memory.” <https://www.Moroccoworldnews.Com/>, www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/11/352237/green-march-a-day-forever-engraved-in-moroccans-collective-memory.

²⁹ Securitycouncilreport, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES690.pdf.

³⁰ Chronology-Western Sahara, a 50-Year-Old Dispute | Reuters, www.reuters.com/article/us-sahara-polisario-timeline-idUSL2163728820071221/.

12 January 2008	Human Rights Watch states that Morocco's authorities continue to harass human rights defenders and Sahrawi activists in the Western Sahara.
December 19, 2008	Human Rights Watch criticized the Polisario Front for violation of human rights in the refugee camps in Tindouf.
20-22 June 2011	The parties meet for the seventh round of talks, lasting 2 days.
13 November 2020	Moroccan forces violate the ceasefire and enter the buffer zone to remove Polisario protesters from blocking the Guerguerat crossing.
10 December 2020	Donald Trump recognises Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara.
8 March 2021	The AU adopts a communiqué expressing its concerns over tensions in Western Sahara.
21 April 2022	Members of the Council discuss the current situation in the Western Sahara.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Baker Plans (2001 and 2003)

The Baker plans refer to proposals developed by James Baker, who served as the USA's Secretary of State and the United Nations Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara from 1997 to 2004. In 2001, Baker proposed a period of several years of autonomy in Western Sahara under provisional Moroccan sovereignty, possibly followed by a referendum. This referendum would present options for the independence of Western Sahara, integration with Morocco or continued autonomy. The plan also included provisions of local governance by the Sahrawi, while Morocco would retain control over defence. These proposals contradicted the UN Settlement plan approved in 1991, which required a clear choice between independence and integration, thereby sidelining the explicit solution. In May 2003, both parties' responses to the Baker Plan were negative; however, Morocco later accepted it. As this plan was not implemented, Baker introduced another version known as Baker II, which advocated for a self-ruled Western Sahara for 5 years with a referendum on independence pending to follow.

The Polisario Front partially accepted the plan as a basis to begin peaceful negotiations, while Morocco rejected it and said that they would no longer agree on any referendum having the option of independence. While both Baker Plans assisted

in sidelining the 1991 Settlement, they appear to be obsolete as they haven't been discussed in nearly 20 years without a replacement plan existing as well.

The Baker Plans represent significant attempts to address the Western Sahara issue. The contradiction with the 1991 UN Settlement plan created confusion and resistance. Morocco, which has always rejected full independence, saw the Baker Plans as a possible compromise. This proposal, however, was not aligned with the 1991 plan because it didn't offer the Sahrawi a right to choose independence. On the other hand, the Polisario Front felt that the Baker's proposals undermined their right to self-determination as they were a more autonomy-based solution. Consequently, the Baker plans did not lead to a durable solution, emphasizing the need for renewed attempts to tackle the issue. A better approach could have involved a more inclusive and transparent process of determining voter eligibility.

Autonomy proposal (2007)

In response to Security Council demands on a definitive political solution, Morocco in 2007 presented the Autonomy Proposal. Under this proposal the Sahara region would have its own government, parliament, trials and laws with a possibility of a referendum. However, a key point of contention is that the Western Sahara will retain the Moroccan flag and currency while the diplomatic relations and defence will be under control of the Moroccans as well. In essence the region would still be under Moroccan sovereignty.

Morocco views this as a realistic compromise to end the conflict while the Polisario Front which is strictly in favour of the full independence of the region rejects once again a plan as it does violate the Sahrawi's people right to self-determination.

In June 2007, the parties met to discuss the disputed area and the proposal. Despite this being the first face-to-face meeting, no substantial progress made.

The Moroccan autonomy proposal, while framed as a realistic compromise, falls short in addressing the core issue of the complex Western Sahara conflict, the right of the Sahrawi to self-determination. As a result, the plan has not bridged the gap between the parties and the issue remains unresolved.

Ceasefire and MINURSO (1991)

The Ceasefire or the Settlement plan proposed in 1991 aimed at a referendum on self-determination and eventually led to a ceasefire and the creation of MINURSO, a peace force to oversee and monitor the ceasefire and the referendum. The plan was comprehensive in nature with the involvement of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) who was responsible for implementing a programme to bring citizens who lived outside of the territory back to their homeland in order to vote on the referendum. MINURSO continued to serve its mandate by overseeing the ceasefire and initially the plan appeared to be effective.

However, Morocco in 2020 arbitrarily deployed armed security personnel without informing the UN peacekeeping forces, thus, violating the long-term ceasefire. In response, the Polisario Front deployed 32-armed military personnel. These violations continue as evidenced by multiple ground and air patrols conducted between August 16th and 25th. Morocco defended its actions by claiming that during that period of time it “was conducting what it maintained to be clearance of damaged vehicles in order to reduce the capacity of smugglers to operate, along with road laying activities”³¹ in the southern part of Western Sahara.

The 1991 settlement plan initially held promise, as it combined ceasefire measures and a referendum. However the breakdown in the ceasefire with Morocco’s unauthorized military activities has severely undermined its effectiveness.

Madrid Accords (1975)

Signed on November 14, 1975, Madrid Accords represent a series of agreements aimed at decolonizing the former “Spanish Sahara”. These accords effectively divided Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania with Spain ceasing its colonial control over the region. Morocco was allocated 2/3 of the territory while the remaining third was designated for Mauritania, who eventually gave up their land.³²

This decision was influenced by military pressure from the Polisario Front representing the Sahrawi people as well as a shift in the alliances, with Mauritania becoming an official ally to Algeria, the Polisario’s Front principal supporter, and headquarters place. It is important to note that the Polisario Front and many other countries do not recognise the Madrid accords as they do not constitute an official decolonization process, organized and monitored by the United Nations.

The Madrid accords by blatantly disregarding the aspirations of the Sahrawi people, have sparked decades of conflict. Nonetheless, they serve as a significant first step to decolonize the region and, in that context, acknowledge the voice of the Sahrawis.

United Nations Resolution 690 (1991) and 1495 (2003)

Both resolutions served as significant steps towards a peaceful solution. However, more specifically, resolution 690 adopted on April 29, 1991 was a major milestone as it established the MINURSO. It prioritized a ceasefire and successfully set the groundwork for a referendum to determine the future status of Western Sahara. It is important to mention that this document sought to implement the 1991 settlement plan, the basis and the root of the resolution of the issue of Western Sahara.

³¹ Lederer, Edith M. “Un Document Says Morocco Violated Western Sahara Cease-Fire.” AP News, 30 Nov. 2023, apnews.com/general-news-e8085398ed0644848a41e4fb8bbe6691.

³² “Madrid Accords.” *Wikiwand*, 14 Nov. 1975, www.wikiwand.com/en/Madrid_Accords.

Resolution 1495 adopted on July 31, 2003 was a significant development in the Western Sahara conflict as well. Contrary to the previous one, this resolution built upon the Baker Plan II and it aimed to break the deadlock caused by Morocco's rejection of the original referendum plan. Also, resolution 1495 extended the mandate of MINURSO until October 31, 2003. The document, marked the peak of international support of the Baker Plan II.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The fair allocation of the natural resources in the Western Sahara

It's important to solve the natural resources issue first, before any other issue is discussed. Agreeing on how the natural resources will be exploited can definitely be a confidence-building measure between Morocco and the Polisario Front. It is a fact that the said resources attract many countries and by addressing the issue it is made sure that natural resources are exploited internally and not by external factors.

To ensure that natural resources in Western Sahara are fairly allocated a transparent system should be established. This could involve the creation of an oversight committee monitored by an independent third party comprising representatives from all parties involved including Morocco and Sahrawis. The body would be responsible for assessing resource extraction, ensuring that a significant portion is allocated to humanitarian efforts and preventing misallocation.

Countries involved in the negotiations should decide whether to exploit the natural resources before or after the political situation is settled. This should be decided with transparency and objectivity while the rights of the Sahrawi people are respected.

Focusing on natural resources can, thus, serve as a starting point for mutual trust. Also, given that many are interested in the natural resources rather than the land itself, by settling this issue, the landscape becomes a lot clearer and we are one step closer to finding a long-lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara.

The establishment of a development fund for Western Sahara

Establishing a mechanism inspired by the development fund for Iraq (DFI) could assist in facilitating the allocation. This mechanism would ensure that the exploitation of natural resources in the area is done in a transparent way, while the Sahrawi people are the ones gaining the benefits of the procedure. For the DFI, the Central Bank of Iraq managed and monitored the Fund, and it was independently audited by accountants approved by the International Advisory and Monitoring Board. Crucially, the revenue generated was to be used exclusively for the benefit of the Iraqi people. No similar mechanism exists for the resources of Western Sahara, despite requests from the Sahrawi side.

With some modifications this mechanism can be fully compatible with the situation in Western Sahara and serve as an effective measure. Some modifications could include the establishment of a governance structure for the Fund composed of Sahrawi representatives, and a monitoring body to oversee how the funds are used and make sure they are being beneficial only to the Sahrawi.

By implementing these modifications, we can ensure that the right of the Sahrawi to access their natural resources and benefit from them is not violated.

Free Association

Free Association in the issue of Western Sahara may be a complex term. In simple words, free association is a potential political ‘arrangement’ in which Western Sahara becomes a self-governing territory but in free association with Morocco. This basically indicates that Western Sahara will have control over governance, education, and economy while still maintaining a formal relationship with the Kingdom of Morocco. This option is often characterized as a middle ground between absolute integration and independence. It provides the Sahrawis with the right to self-determination while also addressing Morocco’s numerous concerns over the land’s history and security.

For this to be achieved, a political framework is needed, usually through an agreement approved by both parties and possibly confirmed through a referendum by the Sahrawi people. Free association could serve as the starting point for greater protection of the Sahrawi’s rights.

While this solution may seem close to Morocco’s autonomy proposal, it is not the same. Free association and the Autonomy Plan (2007) may look similar but are completely distinct. A key difference is the degree of Autonomy. In the Autonomy Plan, it is proposed that the Sahrawi can have their own parliament and government but remain under Moroccan sovereignty. The region would also use the Moroccan flag and currency. Contrary to that, in free association the Sahrawi people will have a higher degree of self-governance like an independent country’s one except for some agreed upon areas that are debatable, like foreign policy. This gives Western Sahara international recognition.

Recognition and legal frameworks are another difference as well. The idea Morocco proposed has not been accepted nor recognised by the international community or the Sahrawi themselves.

Defining the criteria of the voters of the referendum

It is important that who is able to vote on a possible referendum is decided prior to an effort to hold one. The attempts to organize a referendum were blocked due to the disagreement on the voter’s eligibility, so addressing this aspect, reaching common ground through diplomatic talks and defining the common criteria can help in eventually holding the referendum.

Morocco has set two primary criteria for who is able to vote if a referendum is held. The first one being any person living in the now Western Sahara and the second criterion being any Sahrawi person. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, many Sahrawi moved across the region so this results in many Sahrawi's living in Morocco who aren't from the Western Sahara and are potentially biased. Secondly, Western Sahara has a population of almost 600,000³³ which means that if the Moroccans who settled in the Western Sahara during the 'Green March' are all still there, at least 58,33% of the population isn't Sahrawi.

While, on the other hand, the Polisario Front wants only the people registered in the 1974 Spanish census and their descendants to have the right to vote when a referendum is held.

The evident rift in those criteria is obviously an obstacle in the procedure of holding a referendum. Not only that, but setting common criteria can foster legitimacy, avoid post-referendum disagreements, inclusivity and prevent voter manipulation. For common ground to be reached, a negotiation framework could be established and a committee on identifying eligible voters could potentially be created.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Western Sahara Chronology of Events." Security Council Report, www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/western-sahara.php.

"Morocco Autonomy Plan (Letters/2007/206)." AUSACO, ausaco.org/documents/192.

Mutambo, Aggrey. "Au Sides with Western Sahara on Autonomy despite US Decision." The East African, 12 Dec. 2020, www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/au-sides-with-western-sahara-on-autonomy-despite-us-decision-3226802.

"Background." MINURSO, 19 Dec. 2017, minurso.unmissions.org/background.

Special, Henry Giniger. "Morocco and Mauritania in Sahara Pact with Spain." The New York Times, 15 Nov. 1975, www.nytimes.com/1975/11/15/archives/morocco-and-mauritania-in-sahara-pact-with-spain-madrid-agrees-to.html.

Laadam, Jamal Ait, et al. "Western Sahara Legal Case the International Law Narrative of Unresolved Conflict." SCIRP, Scientific Research Publishing, 12 Oct. 2023, www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=130068.

³³ Western Sahara Population 2024 (Live), worldpopulationreview.com/countries/western-sahara.

Natural Resources | English Meaning - Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/natural-resources.

Self-Determination Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/self-determination.

“Decolonization.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 7 June 2024, www.britannica.com/topic/decolonization.

“Colonialism.” Legal Information Institute, www.law.cornell.edu/wex/colonialism.

“Polisario Front.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/Polisario-Front.

Referendum | English Meaning - Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/referendum.

“Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/place/Sahrawi-Arab-Democratic-Republic.

Research Paper - No. 30 - November 2006 on JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10358.

Securitycouncilreport, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20SRES690.pdf.

Chronology-Western Sahara, a 50-Year-Old Dispute | Reuters, www.reuters.com/article/us-sahara-polisario-timeline-idUSL2163728820071221/.

Lederer, Edith M. “Un Document Says Morocco Violated Western Sahara Cease-Fire.” AP News, 30 Nov. 2023, apnews.com/general-news-e8085398ed0644848a41e4fb8bbe6691.

“Joint Statement: Human Rights Violations in Moroccan-Occupied Western Sahara Must End.” Right Livelihood, rightlivelihood.org/news/joint-statement-human-rights-violations-in-moroccan-occupied-western-sahara-must-end/.

Human Rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf ..., citizenshiprightsafrika.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/HRW-WSahara-Dec08.pdf.

Diplomatic Relation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic ..., www.worldstatesmen.org/SADR_relations.doc.

Goldstein, Eric. “Human Rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf Refugee Camps.” Human Rights Watch, 28 Mar. 2023, www.hrw.org/report/2008/12/19/human-rights-western-sahara-and-tindouf-refugee-camps.

Natural Resources in Western Sahara : A Fishy Battle at the Doors of Europe | Cairn.Info, www.cairn.info/revue-l-ouest-saharien-2019-1-page-135.htm.

Resolution 1483, unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1483.

“Activities of Foreign Economic and Other Interests Which Are Impeding the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in Namibia and in All Other Territories under Colonial Domination and Efforts to Eliminate Colonialism, Apartheid and Racial Discrimination in Southern Africa :” *United Nations*, digitallibrary.un.org/record/110874?ln=en&v=pdf.

Thelwell, Kim. “Sahrawi Refugees Living in Algeria: The Forgotten Crisis.” *The Borgen Project*, Kim Thelwell <https://Borgenproject.Org/Wp-Content/Uploads/Logo.Jpg>, 26 Apr. 2021, borgenproject.org/sahrawi-refugees-living-in-algeria/.

Fillali, Wissal Mabrouk. “Morocco’s New Geopolitical Journey: The Path towards Becoming the New Regional Power?” *Hermes Kalamos*, 1 May 2023, www.hermes-kalamos.eu/moroccos-new-geopolitical-journey-the-path-towards-becoming-the-new-regional-power/.

Nations, United. “Far from the Headlines: After 50 Years Refugees from Western-Sahara Are Still in Camps.” *United Nations Western Europe*, 11 Mar. 2024, unric.org/en/far-from-the-headlines-after-50-years-refugees-from-western-sahara-are-still-in-camps/.

“Who Should Control Western Sahara?” *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2024/07/31/who-should-control-western-sahara.

Democracy Now! “Four Days in Occupied Western Sahara-a Rare Look inside Africa’s Last Colony.” *Democracy Now!*, 11 Sept. 2018, www.democracynow.org/2018/8/31/four_days_in_occupied_western_sahara.

“Madrid Accords.” *Wikiwand*, 14 Nov. 1975, www.wikiwand.com/en/Madrid_Accords.

UN, documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/153/15/pdf/nr015315.pdf.

Western Sahara Population 2024 (Live), worldpopulationreview.com/countries/western-sahara.

Case Comment: Advisory Opinion on the Western Sahara, brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1447&context=bjil.

09, Bridget Ryder June, et al. "How (and Why) 8,000 Migrants Breached the Spanish-Moroccan Border - and What It Says about Europe's Migration Crisis." *America Magazine*, 9 June 2021, www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2021/06/09/spain-morocco-north-africa-ceuta-migrant-crisis-240821.

"Question of Ifni and Spanish Sahara." *United Nations*, digitallibrary.un.org/record/203565.

"Minurso." *MINURSO*, minurso.unmissions.org/.

Atalayar. "Key Points of Morocco's Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara." *Atalayar*, 23 June 2023, www.atalayar.com/en/articulo/politics/key-points-of-morocco-autonomy-plan-for-western-sahara/20230622132224187082.html.

MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

"Tiris Al-Gharbiyya." Wikidata, www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q4458092.

"Western Sahara | the Story of a Stolen Country." YouTube, 8 May 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7xRduwFNPg.

Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:International_recognition_of_the_Sahrawi_Arab_Democratic_Republic_%28SADR_or_Western_Sahara%29.png.

(34), nuura. "https://lchef.bbci.co.uk/news/976/Cpsprodpb/A3D8/Production/128844914_whatsappimage2023-0." Hive, hive.blog/someeofficial/@nuura/https-icheck-bbci-co-uk-news-976-cpsprodpb-a3d8-production-128844914-whatsappimage2023-0-701257.

"CJEU: EU-Morocco Fisheries Agreement Not Applicable to Western Sahara Adjacent Waters." De Maribus, demaribus.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/download.png?w=454&h=647.