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THE REAGAN DOCTRINE, MOROCCO, AND THE CONFLICT
IN THE WESTERN SAHARA: AN APPRAISAL OF
UNITED STATES POLICY

by
Derek Harvey

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
Middle East Studies - Political Science

Department of Middle East Studies

The University of Utah

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ABSTRACT

United States policy towards Morocco and the conflict in the Western Sahara reflects the continuing basic geostrategic concerns and the present domestic political conditions in Morocco that have combined to constrain United States policy options. In reviewing the literature pertaining to United States foreign policy and the conflict in the Western Sahara, I discovered four consistent criticisms: (1) Critics charged that the Reagan administration's framing of the conflict in East/West and ideological terms was erroneous and ill-conceived. (2) Traditions of support for self-determination, international law, and human rights were being undermined by the actions of the Reagan administration which stressed geostrategic considerations and ideology. Moreover, given the strategic dimensions and concerns of the United States, (3) the policy was said to be flawed because it failed to fully consider the consequences of aligning the United States with an adventurous Moroccan regime that was unstable. Furthermore, (4) Morocco's inability to achieve a military solution to the conflict could further aggravate its stability. The preceding four points will be analyzed to provide a better understanding of the Moroccan-United States relationship under the Reagan administration.

The purpose, therefore, is to focus on (1) the framing of the Western Saharan conflict and (2) the alleged disparity between tradition and geostrategic concerns; specific attention will be given to the period 1980-1987. An appraisal of United States policy will focus on these points in an attempt to ascertain the success or failure of the Reagan Doctrine. The exploration of issues pertaining to Moroccan stability and Moroccan capability in successfully conducting the war are also examined in order to provide an understanding for the limits United States policy has in influencing an ally. The purpose is not to determine the validity of the positions claimed by the participants in the dispute over the Western Sahara but to provide a general background that facilitates an understanding of the problems confronting United States policy makers.

This study relied primarily on secondary sources but some primary sources were available to provide sufficient accurate information of the United States position. Due to the recent nature of the events and policies discussed in this paper, much is still to be learned as government documents and memoirs become available. Information pertaining to the major participants, government actions, budgets, and policy development is scarce due to the nature of the parties involved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	6
Historical	6
Issues Involved	14
MOROCCO AT WAR	20
The Military Conflict	20
Efforts at Pacification and Integration	41
Conclusion	48
STABILITY AND DOMESTIC LINKAGES	51
Introduction	51
Background	54
The Basic Governmental System	57
Religious Dimension	67
The Economy and Social Considerations	71
The Armed Forces	82
Conclusion	94
UNITED STATES POLICY, 1980-1987	100
United States Policy	100
Strategic and Ideological Interests	110
United States Regional Interests	122
Tradition versus Realpolitik	126
CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF THE CONFLICT	131
Efforts at Conflict Resolution	131
Role of the Superpowers	132
The OAU and UN Efforts	135
Conclusion	141
CONCLUSION	142
Appraisal of Current Policy	142

Final Comments	153
Appendices	
A: DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION OF SADR	159
B: MAP OF WESTERN SAHARA	161
C: THE SAHRAWIS, THE POLISARIO, AND SADR	163
D: UNITED STATES MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO MOROCCO	171
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	175

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Foreign Military Sales Agreements	172
2. Foreign Military Sales Shipments	172
3. Foreign Military Sales Financing Program for FMS and Commercial	172
4. Commercial Exports Licenses Under Arms Export Control Act	173
5. MAP Merger Funds (For FMS) NonRepayable	173
6. Summary of Moroccan Students Trained Under IMED	173
7. Public Law 480 Title 1 Loans and Public Law 480 Title 2 Grants	174

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in the Western Sahara of Northwest Africa has entered its thirteenth year of hostilities; in 1988 the United States is more involved in this conflict than at any other time before. It is a conflict that has at times involved all the nations of the Maghreb - Morocco, Mauritania, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia - and the site of the conflict the Western Sahara. Furthermore, it is a conflict that most Americans are not aware of, but one that reveals the Reagan administration's approach in conducting policy. The purpose of this thesis is to appraise the implementation of the Reagan Doctrine in the Western Sahara conflict and its impact on overall United States interests.

The Kingdom of Morocco is important to the geostrategic interests of the United States.¹ The United States considers Morocco to be a stable and valuable ally with a significant moderating influence in the Arab world. Military ties between the United States and Morocco have been close in recent years. However, the ongoing war in the Western Sahara between Morocco and the Polisario² is of

¹The strategic importance of Morocco is examined on pages 114-122.

²Polisario is an acronym for the Fronte Popular para La Liberacion de Saguia el-Hamra y Rio de Oro. Founded in 1973, Polisario is reported as a modern nationalistic movement with the objective of creating an independent nation-state in the former Spanish Colony known as the

concern to the United States which has an interest in maintaining a strong and stable ally. The United States also has economic, geostrategic, and political interests in the Maghreb, and some of these interests are linked to the continued stability of a friendly government in Morocco.

Naturally then, United States geopolitical interests became tied to a strong and stable Morocco that could possibly help reduce regional tensions. In addition, Morocco is strategically located along the Straits of Gibraltar and the Atlantic approaches to the Mediterranean. Military ties between the United States and Morocco are close; the Department of Defense believes that joint military exercises, base rights agreements, and provisions for the use of airbases and port facilities could further strengthen military ties. Finally, the Department of Defense wants to demonstrate that the United States is a trustworthy ally and a reliable source of supply; a matter of paramount concern after the fall of Shah Mohammed Pahlavi in 1979.³

According to a Reagan administration spokesperson:

...the Administration's foreign policy is predicated on five principles: reviving the domestic economy, strengthening national defense, enhancing relationships with U.S. allies, improving

Spanish Sahara.

³Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle (New York: Farrar-Straus-Giroux, 1985), 250.

relations with the Third World, and dealing with the Soviet Union on 'a realistic basis'.⁴

Moreover, the administration's policy stresses the "globalist" perspective, interventionism, anticommunism, and the proclivity to emphasize the military option in solving foreign policy dilemmas.

When President Reagan took office in 1981 the situation for America's long time friend in North Africa, Morocco, was growing desperate. Morocco had become bogged down in a conflict it was not winning, and more importantly, the conflict was undermining the economic and social stability of the nation. In assessing the problems in Morocco, the Reagan administration decided it was necessary to act decisively in order to support a long time friend.

The American role in the Western Saharan conflict has ramifications beyond this small region of the globe. The debate has been carried to the floor of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, and the Arab League. It is a conflict that sees the United States supporting a regime that is slowly becoming diplomatically isolated. Seventy nations in the world have recognized the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), as the representative for

⁴Charles W. Kegley and Eugene R. Witkopf, "Persistent Premises in Post War American Foreign Policy," (*Orbis*) cited by Gary J. Buckley and Don L. Mansfield, eds., Conflict in American Foreign Policy: The Issues Debated (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1985), 4.

the people of the Western Sahara.⁵ Furthermore, in the eyes of many Third World countries, the Western Saharan conflict is an anticolonial issue with emotional impact.

While publicly declaring neutrality, the Reagan administration (during 1981) tilted American foreign policy to the side of Morocco by providing the necessary military, economic, and diplomatic support which allowed for Morocco to continue its quest for the possession of the former Spanish colony. Feeble attempts by the administration to portray the conflict in East-West terms have distorted what in reality is a regional conflict involving Algeria and Morocco. However, the regional character of the conflict does not eliminate the very real geopolitical concerns of the United States.

In reviewing the literature pertaining to United States foreign policy and the conflict in the Western Sahara, I discovered four consistent criticisms: (1) Critics charged that the Reagan administration's framing of the conflict in East/West and ideological terms was erroneous and ill-conceived. (2) Traditions of support for self-determination, international law, human rights, and morality were being undermined by the actions of the Reagan administration that stressed geostrategic considerations and ideology. Moreover, given the strategic dimensions and concerns of the United States, (3) the policy was said to

⁵See Appendix A for a list of nations that recognize SADR.

be flawed because it failed to fully consider the consequences of aligning the United States with an adventurous Moroccan regime which was unstable. Furthermore, Morocco's inability to achieve a military solution to the conflict could further undermine its stability.

The preceding four points, although complicated and closely intertwined, when closely examined will provide a clearer understanding of the United States-Moroccan relationship from which to appraise the Reagan policy.

First, a brief historical background of the conflict and the major issues involved in the Western Sahara are presented so that a reasonable context to this conflict can be established. Then an examination of the military conflict and an assessment of political stability in Morocco will follow before an examination of United States involvement in six areas: (1) Present United States policy, (2) United States ideological interests, (3) United States strategic interests, (4) United States regional interests, and (5) tradition versus realpolitik. Finally, a current assessment of the conflict and the role of international organizations will precede a critical appraisal of United States policy.

BACKGROUND

It should be said for the sake of clarity, that this is a regional conflict among Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco, and the guerilla movement Polisario; its roots are found in the processes of decolonization. The major divisive issue is the creation of a fourth state in the former Spanish Sahara now known as the Western Sahara.

The Western Sahara is located in the Maghreb of Northwest Africa. It is a vast and desolate stretch of desert that comprises 102,700 square miles (approximately the size of Colorado). Morocco, Mauritania, and Algeria border this coastal area. The nomadic peoples who inhabit this area, the Sahrawis, formerly migrated throughout the Maghreb paying no attention to international borders. Today, the largest concentration of the Sahrawis is located in refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria.

Historical

The Western Sahara was originally seized by Spain from the ruler of the Sharifian Empire⁶ in 1886. The Sharifian Empire was subsequently divided between France and Spain

⁶The Alawite dynasty of Morocco is sharifian in that it traces its descent from the Prophet Mohammed. Until 1956 Morocco was known as the Sharifian Empire. (See Appendix B for map.)

during the turn of the century European race for colonial possessions. France declared a protectorate over Morocco and what is present day Mauritania. Spain took over the Rif region in the north of Morocco, the present enclaves of Melilla, Ifni, Ceuta, the protectorate of Tekna, and what is now called the Western Sahara.

After the Second World War a variety of independence movements were united behind the leadership of Sultan Mohammed Ben Youssef. The objective sought by Sultan Youssef was to ensure the departure of French and Spanish authority from the lands of the former Sharifian Empire. Sultan Youssef was exiled to Madagascar by the French in an attempt to curtail the growth of the independence movement, but a nationalistic uprising obliged the French to change its position and permit the Sultan's return as King Mohammed V and also grant Moroccan independence on March 2 1956.

The new Moroccan government set out to unite the former territories it regarded as Moroccan by virtue of historical claims, common culture, ethnic links, and more importantly Sunni religious loyalty towards the Moroccan crown. The goal of reunifying the old Sharifian Empire inevitably caused political difficulties because the old empire had been divided by colonial powers and now comprised parts of modern Algeria, the Western Sahara, Mauritania, and the Spanish colonial enclaves in northern Morocco. Adding

legitimacy to Moroccan claims and further complicating the situation was the fact that Morocco had always been a viable historical entity with a history predating European colonialism. Conversely, Morocco's neighbors are the artificial products of colonialism. Therefore, Morocco was able to make legitimate historical claims upon the territory of its neighbors⁷ and assert that a denial of these claims amounted to an implicit underwriting of colonialism. Morocco's neighbors argued that colonial boundaries, no matter how illogical, must be respected. This argument remains consistent with the positions of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations who attempt to avoid disruptive changes to former colonial borders that could lead to greater disharmony and anarchy in Africa. Thus, the dispute in the Western Sahara is a case where the opposing sides are figuratively speaking fundamentally different languages and pursuing the issue from very different perspectives and assumptions.

In 1975, the Colonial Administration of Spain was preparing to withdraw from the Western Sahara. Many senior Spanish government officials had decided that independence for the Western Sahara was unavoidable. The Spanish

⁷Morocco's claims are not without merit. France had long regarded the Tindouf region of Algeria to be Moroccan and this area was administered by the French from Agadir. Only in 1952 was administrative authority over the Tindouf region transferred to French Algeria when it became apparent Morocco was nearing independence. Subsequently Moroccan soldiers were removed.

government was facing severe financial difficulties and was reluctant to pay the cost of the Spanish Foreign Legion's operations against the Western Saharan independence forces. Moreover, General Franco, who had previously refused to consider any withdrawal, was in his final decline. The continuing Spanish claims to colonial holdings faced severe diplomatic criticism and suffered in the court of world opinion. Therefore, many obstacles were removed that had previously prevented the Spanish from leaving the Western Sahara along with inducements made by the United States.⁸

Madrid favored a referendum in the Western Sahara that allowed the seminomadic population (estimated at 74,000 in 1974) to choose their own future. The concept of a referendum was consistent with resolutions supported in the United Nations which stressed the rights of the native population to make a choice. However, Western Sahara's neighbors were determined to interdict any such referendum. Morocco and Mauritania expressed claims to the territory based on historical ties, and they claimed that the land had been stolen by colonial powers. Algeria could not make such claims for itself, but it was against any settlement that would enhance Morocco's regional position in northwest Africa. Another consideration was that Algeria's president, Houari Boumedienne, was a committed Marxist and a diehard

⁸Stephen Zunes, "The United States and Morocco," Arab Studies Quarterly, 9(Fall, 1987): 427.

opponent of "reactionary regimes" such as that of Morocco's King Hassan II.

During this period of diplomatic maneuvering Morocco had greater leverage against Spain because of the ongoing dispute involving Spanish possessions in northern Morocco at Ceuta and Melilla. Conversely, Algeria had some leverage due to a trade relationship with Spain that focused on gas and oil during the oil shortage prone era of the 1970s. In addition, the United States under the direction of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger pressured Spain to acquiesce to Moroccan demands.

Economic factors have motivated the parties involved in this conflict as well as historical and ideological claims. The Western Saharan deserts allegedly cover a vast wealth of natural resources. The Spanish colonial authority, for example, had developed a huge phosphate extraction facility at Bou Craa. The Western Sahara was thought to possibly contain reserves of oil, and some experts believed that it contained the world's largest deposits of uranium.⁹ Such resources were a powerful attraction for the poverty-stricken state of Mauritania which depended on the meager earnings of its iron ore mines at Zouerate for 75 percent of its foreign exchange.

⁹"Phosphate is key to Dispute over Sahara," Washington Post, 9 November 1975, 11, A.

Morocco was attracted by the phosphate facilities at Bou Craa. Morocco was already mining phosphates at 20 million tons per annum, and it was the world's leading exporter accounting for 34 percent of all phosphates exported. Moroccan strengths in this particular economic sector had enabled King Hassan to quadruple the world phosphate price over a short period of time during the 1970s. Control over the phosphate resources in the Western Sahara would have further enhanced Morocco's control of the world market.¹⁰ In addition, Morocco was attracted by the abundantly rich fishing areas off the coast of the Western Sahara.

Algeria made no territorial claims, but it has been suggested that Algeria did hope to gain access to the Atlantic ports for exporting iron ore from its mines in southwest Algeria. In theory, access to the Atlantic would boost economic development in this area of Algeria.

In the early 1970s King Hassan survived two military coups and was in a precarious political situation. The crisis in the Western Sahara provided the king with an opportunity to raise the banner of nationalism and to unify the people under his leadership in a "national crusade."

In November of 1975, King Hassan of Morocco led the famous Green March (with over 350,000 Moroccans) into the

¹⁰Ibid., and John K. Cooley, "Morocco's Soft Spot," Christian Science Monitor, 23 December 1977, 2 and 10.

Western Sahara and laid claim to the land. In doing this he directly challenged the processes already established for the transition of power. Subsequently, Spain acquiesced to the demands of Morocco during negotiations, which resulted in the Madrid Accords,¹¹ withdrew from the Western Sahara, and handed over joint administration to Morocco and Mauritania. Moroccan armed forces entered the northern Western Sahara where they encountered stiff resistance from guerrilla forces that had been fighting for independence from Spain. Meanwhile, Mauritania occupied the southern third of the Western Sahara.

While the regional diplomatic machinery was working, the Saharan people had organized themselves into several resistance organizations under the sponsorship of the different interested states in the region: (1) the Liberation and Unity Front (FLU) was sponsored by Morocco, (2) the Sahrawi National Union Party (PUNS) accepted the support of Spain; although, two of its leaders later aligned with Morocco in 1975, (3) the Taureg Mouvement Révolutionnaire des Hommes Bleus (Morehob) was initially supported by Algeria but turned to Morocco in 1975, and (4)

¹¹The Madrid Accords were agreements among Spain, Mauritania and Morocco providing for Spanish withdrawal and joint Moroccan/Mauritanian administration of the Spanish Sahara.

the Front for the Liberation of the Seguiet el-Hamra and the Rio de Oro (POLISARIO).¹²

The claimed national aspirations of the Sahrawis, represented in part by the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and the Polisario, are today recognized by seventy nations. However, the SADR and the Polisario are not the only representatives of the Sahrawis people. There continue to be rival organizations in the Western Sahara that also claim to be the true representatives of the Sahrawis.¹³ The Polisario viewed the joint action by Morocco and Mauritania as an annexation that halted the process of decolonization that had been underway for nearly a decade.

The Polisario, who had been fighting the Spanish, turned their attention to the Mauritians and the Moroccans. The Polisario had no desire to exchange Spanish rule for Moroccan. Algeria provided assistance to the Polisario that brought back to life the dormant regional conflict between Morocco and Algeria. The Polisario proved themselves to be the best organized resistance of the Saharan groups, and they quickly became the leading entity in resisting Moroccan and Mauritanian annexation. Refugees,

¹²For more information on the Polisario and the Sahrawis see Appendix C.

¹³The question of who actually represents the Sahrawi continues to be debated by the parties involved. Moreover, any resolution to the conflict rests on determining who is a Sahrawi, who is eligible to vote in any future referendum, and under what auspices any referendum would be run.

encouraged by the Polisario sought safe haven in Southwest Algeria as the war progressed. During the initial stages of the conflict Moroccan and Algerian forces reported a number of clashes which increased regional tension.

The conflict that ensued saw the Polisario concentrate their force against Mauritania the weaker of the two occupying nations. The Mauritians were eventually forced to negotiate an agreement with the SADR and withdraw from the Western Sahara in 1978. Morocco responded by annexing the southern third of the Western Sahara that was the Mauritanian zone. Subsequently, war weary Mauritania diplomatically recognized the SADR and formed an alliance with Algeria due to continuing apprehensions about Moroccan intentions and irredentist claims along with the possibility of securing financial assistance from Algeria.

Algeria, Mauritania, and Libya have at times offered support for the cause of independence for the former Spanish colony. This support for the Polisario, against the interests of Morocco, has inflamed already tense regional rivalries. Intransigence by all parties has prohibited the conclusion of a negotiated settlement.

Issues Involved

The conflict in the Western Sahara between Morocco and the Polisario places the United States in the unenviable position of negotiating among competing and possibly conflicting foreign policy objectives, interests, and

values. Issues involved in this conflict that severely complicate any attempt to resolve it are: (1) decolonization, (2) conflicting nationalisms, (3) self-determination, (4) questions concerning international law, (5) the role of international and regional organizations (some of which have their own agenda), and (6) the principle of nonrecognition of changes of borders affected by force.

The problems associated with the process of decolonization have been aggravated since the end of the Second World War. Colonized peoples naturally wished to free themselves from the oppressive yoke of foreign domination; yet, this process failed to adequately consider the desire of the native peoples to be unified rather than separated by artificially drawn borders. In addition, this led to the question - should any subnational or national group be allowed to unilaterally declare itself independent? Questions of state viability, unified territory, and other basic criteria of state definition sometimes were not adequately addressed. The League of Nations, after World War I, and the United Nations after World War II have expressed concern for the integrity and stability of new political units over the claims of self-determination.¹⁴

¹⁴Aureliu Cristescu, The Right to Self-Determination. Historical and Current Development on the Basis of United Nations Instruments (New York: United Nations, 1981):810

The United Nations developed an interest in the case of the Western Sahara in the early 1960s.

The definitive anti-colonial breakthrough in the United Nations came with General Assembly Resolution 1514 of 14 December, 1960 - entitled 'Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples'. The United Nations is here given a central role in supporting independence for colonies and trust areas. The declaration confirms that 'all peoples have a right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.' And the declaration further denounces 'any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of a country' as incompatible with the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter. This becomes the major channel for the U.N. Doctrine of self-determination: decolonialization, but territorial integrity for new as well as old states?¹⁵

Morocco's neighbors - Algeria, Mauritania along with the Polisario - have argued that Spanish colonization negated Moroccan claims to the Western Sahara even if historical ties are substantiated. Furthermore, the Polisario along with Algeria has been willing to:

...accept the bonds of common fate created by colonialism, unified by a collective struggle for independence, strengthened also by a nation-building effort in pursuit of a territorial homeland.¹⁶

cited by Oyvind Osterud, "Varieties of Self-Determination: The Case of the Western Sahara," The Maghreb Review 10(1985): 21.

¹⁵Ibid., 21.

¹⁶Ibid., 23.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has stressed the preeminence of colonial border integrity by including it in its founding charter of 1963. The issue of the Western Sahara has been extremely divisive to the OAU and has led to Morocco's withdrawal from the organization concomitantly with the seating of the SADR in 1984. The many OAU attempts to resolve the conflict have met with failure.

The Arab League has considered this issue to be primarily an African one. However, the Saudi government has been very active in recent months in trying to pressure Algeria and Morocco into reaching a compromise. In May 1987 King Fahd of Saudi Arabia organized a meeting between King Hassan II and Algerian Prime Minister Chadli; they met in Algeria with what appears to have been inconsequential results. Yet, the meeting was the first between Algeria and Morocco since February 1983.¹⁷

The International Court of Justice determined that there had been vague historical ties, but Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara was unproven. It

¹⁷Le Monde, 5/6 May 1987 cited in SPSC Letter, Vol. VII., No.4, February/May 1987,3. Also, statement by the Ambassador of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, Mohammed Kamal, on December 1, 1987 who said that the Arab League and especially Saudi Arabia are pressuring Algeria to cease support for the Polisario. Moreover, the Ambassador said, "it is senseless for Algeria to promote independence for 50,000 nomads" and "besides, Algeria must understand their support is disruptive to Arab unity, and could cause problems for other Arab states."

declared the Western Sahara to have been terra nullius; (that is) it belonged to no one at the time of the colonialization by Spain. The Court could only go as far as to recognize past informal allegiances that the Court determined could not justify Moroccan claims to sovereignty.

Polisario and Morocco both support the referendum concept in order to allow the people of the Western Sahara to freely determine their national destiny. In November and December of 1987 a delegation from the United Nations was in the Western Sahara on a technical fact finding mission (a preliminary step in the referendum process). However, there are substantial obstacles to a referendum, which will be discussed later; let it suffice that King Hassan has publicly stated that he also favors a referendum.

This is a contentious and volatile issue for the many parties involved. Moroccans, Algerians, Mauritians, France, Libya, the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, the United States, and many more are in one form or another caught in the diplomatic, economic, and political quagmire. Each of these parties have their own point of view and they each assume their own "accurate" statistics to support their point of view. In fact, these viewpoints are often supported by divergent statistics at the most basic level of analysis. For example, how many Sahrawis were there in the Western Sahara in 1976? Were

there 74,000 as the Spanish say or 750,000 as the Polisario claim, or was it closer to 50,000 as Morocco claimed? How many are there today? Where do they live? How are they living and under what conditions? Who is capable of speaking authoritatively for these people? How many did leave the Western Sahara in 1976? How many live in the refugee camps in Southwest Algeria? There are many different responses to each of these questions and one is not sure where the truth lies.

This short summary of the historical background and major issues makes it clear that the Western Sahara is in a complicated political situation where neither the principle of self-determination or territorial integrity yields a clear cut choice in resolving the rivalries emanating from decolonization. All parties seek refuge in the name of nationalism; behind these claims there are many other interests at work frustrating attempts at finding a solution.

MOROCCO AT WAR

The Military Conflict

One criticism of the Reagan policy as it applies to this conflict is the assertion that Morocco cannot win a military victory and therefore any encouragement from the United States only increases the likelihood that Morocco will continue to be immersed in an unwinnable situation. However, the nature of this conflict is such that it does not require a clear cut military victory. What is required is the effective neutralization of the Polisario and the creation of an environment in the Sahara that is free of conflict and conducive to development and pacification. It is necessary to examine the military situation because it will provide answers for a viable way in which Morocco will be able to fully integrate the Western Sahara into greater Morocco.

The first priority in any insurgency war is to impose military control while keeping in sight the political objectives. An insurgency war which exhibits the tendency to forget its political, social, and economic objectives while searching for a military conquest of an elusive enemy can expect failure.

This section will show that the Moroccan counter-insurgency strategy has focused on: (1) military control,

(2) balanced development, (3) neutralization of the Polisario, and (4) mobilization of the population both physically and psychologically. The Moroccan administration in the Western Sahara has sought to control the population, improve administration, maximize intelligence, insure unity of effort, and minimize violence within the overall objective of integrating the Western Sahara into Moroccan economic, political, and social life.

It should also be noted that the Moroccan Armed Forces (FAR) are no strangers to a conflict of this nature. The war in the Western Sahara is similar to the attempts that brought government control and authority to the bled el-siba in the years immediately following independence. In this case, however, the major complicating factor is the continued outside support for insurgent forces combined with Algeria granting sanctuary. The Moroccan strategy may yet bring the issue of sanctuary to a head in the near future.

Escalation of the Conflict and Crisis

In 1976 Morocco marched into the former Spanish Colony now named the Western Sahara. Moroccan Armed Forces were immediately engaged by the military arm of a self-proclaimed national liberation movement called Polisario. At the onset of hostilities the Polisario numbered nearly 3,000 soldiers, and they were provided with substantial

support from Algeria and Libya. Algeria provided arms, fuel, water, and most importantly a territorial sanctuary.

During the first four years of the conflict, 1976-1980, Morocco occupied the key positions in the Western Sahara - towns, oases, industrial and population centers. However, Moroccans found themselves fighting a defensive campaign concentrated on these key areas. Occasionally the Moroccans would venture out to patrol or engage in offensive search and destroy missions; these activities seldom met with success.

The Polisario, primarily operating from a sanctuary in the Tindouf region of southwestern Algeria, conducted unimpeded harassing hit-and-run attacks on economic, transportation, and military targets. The Polisario were also able to conduct operations from smaller camps in the Western Sahara, northern Mauritania, and even parts of southern Morocco. Polisario would typically use hit-and-run tactics that incorporated lightning strikes by highly mobile forces, typically a couple dozen all-terrain vehicles with machineguns, recoilless rifles, rocket launchers, and anti-aircraft guns.

By 1980 the Polisario were considered to have effectively denied control to the Moroccans of nearly five-sixths of the Western Sahara. In fact, the Polisario were even striking targets up to two hundred kilometers inside southern Morocco. The small force of guerrillas had grown

to nearly 20,000 soldiers according to disputed claims of the Polisario. The Polisario were receiving increasing amounts of Eastern Bloc sophisticated armaments through Libya and Algeria. Morale was high due to many military victories and successes in the diplomatic arena.¹⁸ The relative freedom of action enjoyed by the guerilla units bode well for potential future success on the battlefield.

In 1982 some believed that the tide of events were irrevocably in the Polisario's favor:

The Polisario Front, as everybody knows, continues to march forward from victory to victory towards the ultimate objective of gaining full independence for Western Sahara. Its complete victory against Morocco is very clearly in sight to everybody except those who enjoy making castles in the air.¹⁹

From the Moroccan point of view, the situation had become critical. The Moroccan Armed Forces were in the process of nearly tripling in size (55,000 to 171,000) with the accompanying problems of absorbing large amounts of new equipment, changing organizational structures, and strains on the command and control capabilities. Fragmented command and control procedures were particularly damaging to the Moroccan military because command centers could not directly communicate with each other to coordinate

¹⁸Tony Hodges, Western Sahara: The Roots of a Desert War (Westport, Connecticut: Laurence Hill and Co., 1983), 339.

¹⁹Suresh Chandra Saxena, Self-Determination in Western Sahara: Last Chance for Morocco (New Delhi: Vidya Publishers, 1982), 51.

strategy. For example, the air force could not effectively support the army due to prohibitions initiated by King Hassan which dated from the early 1970s. The Moroccans, ever on the defensive during this period, were suffering approximately one hundred to one hundred and fifty dead soldiers each month (1,500 a year).

The tens of thousands of soldiers in the Western Sahara serving on garrison duty were plagued by boredom, low pay, poor food, and lacked other support facilities. Continued uncertainty and boredom while waiting to be attacked wreaked havoc on the morale of the Moroccan soldier.²⁰

Attempts to take the initiative led to few large scale offensive operations conducted by Morocco - some involving more than 18,000 soldiers - met with little success. The towns of Mahbes, Tifariti, and Amagala were overrun by the Polisario in 1980. Continuous pressure by the Polisario forced the Moroccans to abandon the towns of Hausa and Jariria later in the year.

By 1981, Morocco had 50,000 soldiers precariously confined to enclaves that were essentially besieged. In October 1981 the Polisario overran the garrison at Guelta Zemmour and occupied it for four days creating a devastating loss for Morocco. In the battle for this

²⁰Based partly on several conversations with Major Mohammed Kandouci during the summer of 1981 on conditions in the Western Sahara.

garrison Morocco lost five aircraft (two Mirage jets, one AC-130 Hercules, one F5 fighter and one Puma helicopter), forty-eight landrovers, forty lorries, seven water carriers, twelve 160mm cannons, two 185mm cannons, six batteries of 23mm, and 2,600 Moroccan dead as well as two hundred Moroccans taken prisoner by Polisario.²¹

The Polisario were effective in combatting Moroccan forces until 1982. More than half of the FAR - 85,000- were tied down defending barely one-tenth of the Western Sahara in a situation which saw the military forces outnumbering the civilian population. Essentially, Morocco's forces were confined to two major centers - Boujador and Dahkla - and a small area in the northwest where the bulk of the economic resources were located. This area, called the "useful triangle," was cordoned off by a ten-foot-high, four hundred mile long sand wall equipped with high technology sensors and radar in the first of six walls.

The deteriorating military situation was apparent to the Moroccan public, the military, and outside observers of the conflict. Some experts were predicting the imminent fall of King Hassan's government. Despite the huge investments in modernization, training, and the increasing size of the military, it did not seem that the defeatist atmosphere could be easily reversed. It was against this backdrop that Morocco decided to strike out boldly with a

²¹Saxena, Self-Determination in Western Sahara, 43.

radical concept to contain and eventually eliminate the military threat of the Polisario. This concept was embodied in the "wall," which had as its base the French experience in Algeria.

The French have 250 military advisors in Morocco, and they are influential in developing Moroccan strategies in the Western Sahara. The French concept of Guerre Révolutionnaire et Pacification stresses the necessity of government maintaining a careful watch over its people (particularly in remote areas), adopting policies of education and reform, and implementing military action to prevent or contain subversive activities. The heart of the program lies in the conviction that all actions must center on cutting insurgents off from their sources of support among the people and beyond the borders of the state. Along this line one may consider a thought of Mao Tse-Tung:

Because guerilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation.²²

Therefore, the most crucial task for an insurgent movement is not the defeat of the government army but the development of support from, and control over, the civilian population.

²²Mao Tse-Tung in Mao Tse-Tung on Guerilla Warfare, quoted in John Steward Ambler, "France in IndoChina and Algeria," Comparative Defense Policy, Frank Horlem III (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1974), 44.

According to the theories of Guerre Révolutionnaire, to deny the insurgents' success - as in the case of the Western Sahara - requires extensive resettlement, the building of elaborate barriers along international frontiers, and the implementation of government measures in the area of intelligence and internal security; these criteria had to be executed in an absolute manner no matter how repressive.²³ Yet, the French also envisioned a comprehensive military, social, and political strategy geared toward protecting the infrastructure and providing benefits to the population in order to eventually win their "hearts and minds."

The first priority in this strategy is to impose military control. During the Algerian campaign the French built the "Morice Line" the full length of the frontier between Algeria and Tunisia and between Algeria and Morocco. The Morice Line incorporated minefields, electric fencing, and constant patrols in order to split the rebel movement and separate it from outside support. The interior was a checkerboard of small garrisons used to oversee the massive population. Algeria had a large population and large metropolitan areas in which insurgent forces could blend and seek support. Although this policy did not work in the case of Algeria, it is working in the Western Sahara

²³John Pimlott, "The French Army: From Indochina to Chad, 1946-1984," 46-75. No other information available.

because of very different social, geographical technological and demographic factors; besides an improved understanding about the nature of insurgency warfare.

Moroccan Control and Dominance

What is "the wall"? The wall is a sand and stone structure nine to twelve feet high which stretches for 1,550 miles across the Saharan desert from the Algerian and Mauritanian borders to the Atlantic Ocean; it is equipped with radar and other advanced sensor devices. The wall has foxholes along the top of the berm, barbed wire and minefields to its front, and command posts/bunker complexes interspersed every 1.8 to 2.9 miles depending on the terrain.

The latest in ground radar and other advanced technology is incorporated into the defensive system which has the ability to detect movement up to thirty miles away. This ability to detect movement at great distances provides early warning and detection to the forces that are manning the wall. The Moroccans utilize superior mobility and quick responsiveness to concentrate military power when an enemy force is detected. If there is an attempt to breach the wall, this superiority allows for the consolidation of dispersed forces to meet and repel the enemy. The modern weaponry of the army and air force complement each other by providing a devastating and rapid response. The terrain along the wall provides little concealment or protection to

one caught in the open. Additionally, the Moroccans are often provided with the advantage of surprise since they receive early warning; moreover, the guerrillas are not sure where the Moroccans are.

Usually the problem in an insurgent war is how to keep an area clear of insurgents and deny them freedom of movement. With what apparently became a slow-squeeze strategy the Moroccans progressively moved the wall forward in stages. The wall, which originally was a protective barrier for the vital northern sixth of the Western Sahara, has been moved closer and closer to the frontier since 1982. With each leap forward the wall effectively denies access and freedom of movement that the Polisario have grown accustomed to. The wall has become an obstacle to vehicular and dismounted movement. To penetrate the wall military power must be concentrated raising the probability of a decisive engagement. The Polisario can not afford to become decisively engaged, if they do, the tide of battle will quickly favor the Moroccans' superior military power. Moreover, this incremental strategy allows Morocco to gain and secure more and more territory as recommended by counterinsurgency theorists. The previous strategy based solely on seek and destroy missions was disruptive to the pacification effort.

Since then the walls have been progressively expanded and modernized and now cordon off most of the Western

Sahara. The first wall stretching 600 kilometers was built between August 1980 and May 1981 and protected the "useful triangle." The second wall stretched 300 kilometers and was built between 19 December 1983 and 20 February 1984. The third wall is also three hundred kilometers and was built between 19 April 1984 and 10 May 1984. The fourth wall is two hundred kilometers long and connects the second and third walls. The fifth wall parallels the Mauritania border near Guelta Zemour and connects with the sixth wall near Aghounit. The sixth wall, 550 kilometers, stretches from Oum Dreiga to the Atlantic. It brings the FAR to within one mile of the vital railway carrying iron ore from the mines at Zerouate to Mauritania's commercial capitol, and it has increased tensions in the region.²⁴

Due to the success of the wall strategy, the Moroccans have reduced the commitment of manpower to the Western Sahara. The amount of terrain controlled by the government is nearly nine-tenths of the Sahara quite a reversal from 1980 when control was limited to one-sixth of the Sahara. Nearly 55,000 soldiers are on garrison duty along the 1,550 mile wall. This compares favorably to over 100,000 soldiers deployed in the Western Sahara in 1980. Moreover, it is estimated by authorities that the war now costs less than one-third of the \$1 million a day it was costing before the

²⁴See Appendix B for a map depicting the walls.

wall strategy was implemented.²⁵ Hence, the Polisario lost their freedom of action, were being decisively engaged, and most importantly needed development of the region could proceed because it was now secure.

Mahmoud Abdel Fettah, SADR Ambassador to Algeria, has said, "It [the wall] is not the Great Wall of China and we can still get through it."²⁶ In fact, a negative aspect of the wall strategy is having units stationed all along its length in what is in essence a continuous and draining state of alert. Polisario commander Muhammed Lel Oual says:

We bomb, they reinforce in expectation of a wall invasion, nothing happens, they disperse, we bomb again, they regroup, still nothing - they become demoralized and then we attack. We have the initiative. We are not obliged to participate in any attack if we don't want to.²⁷

The current tactic of the Polisario is to shun the hit-and-run approach and attack the wall with artillery and minor incursions through all hours of the night in different places with the hope of wearing down the Moroccan army. Occasionally the Polisario attempt to breach the wall.

A major attack on 25 February 1987 was the first major conflict in nearly three years since the advent of the wall

²⁵Jonathan Randal, "Morocco Seeks More U.S. Help," Washington Post, 12 January 1987, A18.

²⁶Jonathan Randal, "Polisario Raid Shows Fragility of Morocco's Hold on Territory," Washington Post, 27 February 1987, A34.

²⁷Western Sahara Newsletter, July 87, 11.

strategy. The Polisario were successful in occupying a section of the wall for nearly five hours. According to reports, the Polisario attacked with one hundred armored vehicles and land rovers from the direction of Mauritania; this battle saw Morocco lose thirty-seven dead soldiers and eighty-seven prisoners taken.²⁸

The Polisario continue to report a large number of operations. In February 1987 a communique reported 595 military operations against Moroccan forces, which allegedly included attacks at El-Mesmar, Graret Lahid, Garet El-Kercha, Rous Dirct, Dhoubeb, and Kekiaiba Nesla. To add credibility to these reports the Polisario often include the names of captured prisoners and dead Moroccan soldiers.²⁹ However, the number of attacks cited by Polisario are generally accepted as being vast exaggerations.

Yet, the "wall strategy" is not meant to be impenetrable, and it is not a passive defensive system. It does act to canalize and separate the insurgency forces while providing a buffer zone for security. Morocco has not only learned from the French but also from the Israeli experience in the Sinai desert which employed the strategy of the Bar-Lev line. Five Israeli general officers toured

²⁸"Le Polisario a voulu demythifier Le 'Mur' Marocain," Le Monde 2 March 1987, 4.

²⁹SPSC Letter, Vol. VII., No.4, February-May, 1987.

the Western Sahara with the Crown Prince in the fall of 1986 to assess the military needs of Morocco and ways to improve the wall.³⁰

In a 1985 article, National Review said that the Moroccan forces:

...keep the guerrillas at bay from behind the wall, over which officers, in a manner reminiscent of Foreign Legion movies, scan the desert horizons ceaselessly through binoculars for signs of the elusive enemy.³¹

Others have proclaimed the wall a success, and say it is revolutionizing antiguerrilla tactics.

One official called the war the most conspicuous success of the use of high technology against a guerilla army equipped with sophisticated Soviet weapons.³²

With such high praise, one is led to ask two questions: (1) Since the incorporation of the wall into Moroccan strategy what are the results? (2) If the wall has been successful, have there been other factors that might explain or possibly contribute to the Moroccan success?

One of the first things that comes to mind when looking at this conflict is its harsh desolate terrain that offers the military strategist a different set of problems when trying to devise a plan to control and eventually

³⁰Ibid.

³¹"Abroad: Rabat," National Review, 9 August 1985, 40.

³² Judith Miller, "Morocco Tries to Foil Rebels with 1,550-Mile Wall of Sand," New York Times, 11 August 1985, A30.

destroy an insurgent force. This rugged, dry, and sparsely vegetated region (which is roughly the size of Colorado) is comprised of an environment where man is dependent upon vehicular transport. The topography inhibits the ability to conceal forces. In addition, the harsh climate forces man to remain in specific areas near water and other sources of supplies; it is nearly impossible to live off the land.

The harsh geographical environment creates obstacles as well as opportunities. For instance, guerilla forces must use vehicles to cross vast distances in order to support the hit-and-run tactics common to most guerilla wars in their early stages. This dependence on vehicles requires large quantities of fuel, oil, water, and a maintenance support structure.

Moreover, the harsh climate does not support a large population. In 1976 the population was estimated at 76,000 divided mostly among three nomadic tribal peoples. These tribes have their own historical rivalries and traditions of the nomadic lifestyle. This cultural background has enabled the guerrillas, who come from these tribes, to be especially well-suited for a desert conflict due in part to their cultural predisposition for courage, their knowledge of the desert, and their adaptability. Nevertheless, this sparse population, for the most part, fled the area in 1976 at the urging of the Polisario leadership and in reaction to Moroccan forces. It may be argued that this is quite

similar to the circumstance of the Palestinians in the 1940s when the Arabs were encouraged to depart the Israeli occupied areas.

While Morocco has greatly increased the territory under its control since 1983, it is far from total victory as long as the Polisario continue to receive Algerian sanctuary and international support. Moroccan forces are dispersed along the 1,500 mile wall with the Polisario attacking when they so choose. Conversely, Morocco has little opportunity for offensive action without violating the sovereign borders of Algeria or Mauritania. Yet, Polisario troop strength is diminishing although attacks continue. Reports vary on the number of attacks from less than ten per month by Morocco to over 350 per month claimed by the Polisario. The potential for this war to continue indefinitely without a clear-cut military victory for either side is highly probable.

Yet, the wall has denied key areas to the Polisario; moving the wall closer and closer to the frontiers of the Western Sahara is bringing the conflict nearer to the Polisario sanctuaries in Algeria and Mauritania. Thus, Morocco has been able to dictate the location of the conflict and put some distance between the contested areas and the more economically important areas of the Western Sahara.

Most importantly, Morocco is able to claim that the resistance movement is a product of Algerian adventurism and not an indigenous movement supported by the local population. The "expanding wall" could eventually lead to the threatened implementation of "hot pursuit" actions across the Algerian or Mauritanian borders. According to a former British Minister, Julian Amery:

Experience has shown that a guerilla movement can generally be beaten only if the base from which it operates is destabilized.³³

It is important to point out that the Polisario are in every sense an Algerian creation because without Algerian support the Polisario would probably have ceased to exist some time ago as a credible force. Soviet vintage arms are supplied almost entirely by Algeria and there are reports that Algerian officers are involved.³⁴ According to Richard Nixon:

Revolutions can begin without outside support. But they cannot survive and prevail without weapons, logistical expertise, food, medical supplies, communications equipment, and training. These things must be provided from outside the country.³⁵

Despite the success of the wall strategy the war does continue due mainly to Algerian support. The Polisario claim to have killed over 5,000 and injured 10,000 Moroccan

³³Quoted by Richard Nixon in Real Peace (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1984), 85.

³⁴James E. Dougherty, "The Polisario Insurgency: War and Minuet in North West Africa," Conflict 2(1980):100.

³⁵Nixon, Real Peace, 76.

soldiers since 1982. Morocco disagrees by saying that casualties are only in the single digits each month. However, the number of attacks have dropped dramatically since the wall was completed and moved closer to the borders. The Polisario seem limited to complaining about the use of American "cluster bombs" and generating other charges against the Moroccans in an attempt to gather worldwide support for political recognition of the liberation movement rather than announcing new military successes. This is in contrast to the daily reports of hit-and-run attacks of earlier times. Despite verified reductions in military activities, the Polisario still claim to have conducted over 4,000 operations since 1982. The preponderance of these are scattered small scale attacks against the wall, which reach up to 450 per month by documented Polisario claims.

What other factors could have caused a change in fortune for the Moroccans in this conflict? Improvements in command and control, adjustments to the rapid military expansion of the 1970s, gained leadership experience, more and better equipment, improved training techniques, and enhanced professionalism have all contributed. How have these factors affected the outcome of hostilities and would there have been success regardless?

It may be argued that improvements in any or all of these areas could significantly affect the military

capability of the Moroccan Armed Forces; but more importantly, could any or all of these factors with some in combination be so important as to negate the impact of the wall?

The massive infusion of military hardware and assistance from France, Saudi Arabia, and the United States provided Morocco the means to do things it could not do before. Due in part to military cooperation agreements with the United States, Morocco acquired sophisticated technology which made its aircraft less vulnerable to Polisario missile attacks; and radar and other surveillance equipment for the wall was also obtained. Massive infusions of assistance for logistical development were crucial in the period 1981 - 1983. The wall, which depends so heavily on the advanced technology, could not have been effective without this aid. For example, the improved close air support, which is needed to support the wall, was greatly enhanced with the purchase of twenty F5-E Fighter-bombers.

Another assessment adds:

In any event, Moroccan performance improved in the spring of 1980 more because of improved operational procedures than because of new equipment, and a new strategy was developed for consolidating positions in what was called the "useful" triangle of the Sahara.³⁶

Progress was already well on its way in many areas before the wall was constructed. The limitations of the

³⁶Judith Miller, "Morocco Tries to Foil Rebels With 1,550 Mile Wall of Sand," New York Times, 11 August 1985, 2.

highly centralized structure of the Moroccan military were readily apparent during the early stages of the war. A response that King Hassan dictated because of two unsuccessful coup attempts and a general distrust of the military. The realization that military action against a lightly armed, highly mobile enemy could not be effectively directed from Rabat led to internal command structure changes/liberalization and modification to the close control. Ultimately more authority was delegated to local military commanders which improved the responsiveness to aggressive actions by the Polisario. By 1984 the Moroccan Army's organization, fighting capabilities, and logistical support had greatly improved due in no small part to the assistance provided by the United States.³⁷

Yet, it still seems as though the wall is the glue that holds the Moroccan strategy together. It is the wall which prohibits the Polisario from freely crossing the vast wastelands to attack where they choose. The Polisario's ability to project its forces has been curtailed; they had previously been able to project their military units up to 1,000 miles from base camps. The wall diminishes freedom of action to project power. When the Polisario did move against the wall it became heavily engaged and suffered unacceptable losses. In 1980 there were a reported 12,000

³⁷ Godfrey Morrison, "The Kings Gambit," Africa Report (November/December, 1984):15.

active Polisario in the Western Sahara, 6,000 in 1982, and by 1985 a further erosion to 2,000. What fighting that did exist was conducted closer and closer to the border and outside the wall.

Moroccans were securing their border over a period of five years as the wall inched closer to the Algerian and Mauritanian border. Without an indigenous base, in a harsh and desolate climate, and with a dependence on outside support the Polisario has been driven out of the very areas it needs to be an effective insurgent military force. The Polisario can continue to harass from the sanctuaries in Algeria and Mauritania, but at what cost, for how long, and at what level of effectiveness?

In summary, the wall strategy is a creative application of the old and the new. It combines advanced technology with the ancient Chinese idea of a defensive wall in order to effectively enhance the strategy of Guerre Révolutionnaire. This strategy is successful for a number of reasons, and they are primarily the unique geography, the climate, and the population (considerations already mentioned). However, this strategy also required that other significant problems confronting the Moroccan Armed Forces be successfully addressed. The early problems of organization, leadership, supply, air transport, support, command and control all needed to be improved both in quality and in quantity. If these areas have not been

completely corrected, they have improved sufficiently so as not to be a major impediment to the successful implementation of the wall strategy. Crucial to these changes made by the Moroccan military was and still is the assistance provided by the United States.

Most observers believe that the Moroccans can indefinitely sit behind the wall for the duration of the war. The frontiers have been secured thereby separating the Polisario from the Western Sahara for all practical purposes. It seems that the Polisario are walled out of the Western Sahara, and they may now be in a situation somewhat similar to the Palestinians. Israel was able to control her border and isolate the guerilla forces of the PLO; Moroccans are now doing the same to the Polisario. Without a doubt this strategy has been a military success and a dramatic reversal for the Moroccans who were in dire straits during the late 1970s.

It is appropriate to take a look at the opportunities the military sphere has created with its successes.

Efforts at Pacification and Integration

Moroccans view the Western Sahara as a part of their state. Morocco has had administrative control of the Sahara since 1975 but only since the early 1980s has there been sufficient control over the region to allow integration to proceed. For Morocco the most important objective is the

real and irreversible integration of the Western Sahara into Greater Morocco.

Similar to the Israeli attempts at "changing the facts" on the West Bank, Morocco has sought the creation of demographic, economic, and infrastructural "facts" that will bind the people of the Sahara to the concept of rational integration. In addition to luring the Sahrawi who remained in the Western Sahara with a "carrot," Morocco also sought to fill the region with a steady influx of Moroccan settlers. The institutionalization of state authority is preceding apace along with the cooptation of local elites and extensions of political rights and citizenship.

Morocco has devoted a large part of its wealth to supporting the annexation effort. The plan for the Western Sahara, as designed by the Ministry of Saharan Development, envisioned a large transfusion of Moroccans into the area, massive infrastructure development, industrial and residential subsidies with the goal of offering a higher level of living to residents of the Western Sahara.

Morocco has sustained a program of large investments with the hope of translating the new "facts" into social, economic, and psychological realities. Recently there have been indications that the cause for a separate Saharan identity has expired and that Morocco is now firmly entrenched in the Sahara. Any movement towards

accommodation with the Polisario would most likely be met by resistance from the population of the Western Sahara as well as the polity of Morocco. In fact, there is no debate about the shape of the state of Morocco both in Morocco and the Western Sahara. Undoubtedly the political weight applied to the "facts" may have created factors that are now irreversible.

With a multifaceted counterinsurgency strategy Morocco sought to integrate the Western Sahara economically, socially, and politically. By using unifying devices such as religion, a central and responsive bureaucracy, the sharing of material benefits, and instituting a federal system; separatist forces have been countered effectively. Morocco has given the Sahrawis that remain in the Western Sahara a stake in the system.

This newly founded security and stability, since the construction of the walls, permits an atmosphere where there may be a balanced development plan, settlements, economic opportunity and investments which all allow for Morocco to fully integrate the Western Sahara. The ability to effectively concentrate all activities on the important processes of consolidating economic, social, and political reigns of power in the Western Sahara is essential when integrating the Western Sahara into all facets of Moroccan life.

Development is possible because the basic military objectives - the providing of security to the population and the neutralization of the military arm of the Polisario - have been achieved. Since 1983, Morocco has been able to take advantage of the potential in the region. The wall has greatly enhanced security, and the Polisario are limited to harassing attacks of the wall along with the few scattered outposts outside the perimeters of the wall.

The Moroccan government has devoted nearly seven percent of its GNP to programs in the Western Sahara, and it has already invested over \$1 billion in development on the Western Sahara. Consequently, programs to raise the level of living to that of the rest of Morocco have been successful. Massive construction of a new infrastructure includes covered football stadiums, the second largest airport in Morocco, mosques, high schools, hospitals, and a \$42 million deep water port. Michael Griffen asserts, "Morocco is winning the battle of the building sites and that may turn out to be more significant in the long run."³⁵

The positions of governor, minister, and deputy in the three provinces of the Western Sahara are limited to Sahrawi. Local officials are also Sahrawi, and they coordinate the programs that provide free education, free

³⁵Michael Griffen, "Sahrawi Development Winning Through," Middle East 151 (May 1987): 20.

medical care, rent free accommodations, and new housing. Moreover, the large subsidy program for commodities such as flour, sugar, and fuel are added incentives in winning the war of the "hearts and minds." During 1986 there were 6,000 properties sold and over 7,000 building permits granted; moreover, salaries for people settling the Sahara are tax exempt for ten years. In this environment many Sahrawi entrepreneurs have emerged in the fields of construction, food, and services.³⁹

There are over 14,000 students in secondary school as compared to only eight hundred in 1976. The town of El Laayoun grew from 25,000 in 1975, to 38,000 in 1981, and increased to over 100,000 by 1987. Moreover, reports from journalists who have not been favorably disposed to Morocco's efforts indicate that there is little opposition; in fact, the Sahrawi "...seem to actually want Moroccan integration."⁴⁰ Even the New York Times has reported on its editorial page that there is "...undeniable popular support in the Western Sahara for Morocco" and that Morocco is more firmly in control.⁴¹

Residents who have remained in the Western Sahara are refused permission to continue a nomadic lifestyle, and

³⁹Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰John Gretton, "Morocco and Western Sahara," Middle East Review (Essex, United Kingdom: Middle East Review Company, 1981), 240.

⁴¹New York Times, 4 March 1985.

they must also remain in designated areas. These limitations have been imposed for security reasons but there are also economic justifications. Townspeople and merchants that have remained appear more than willing to try and improve their lot under the Moroccan banner.

The Country Report on Human Rights prepared by the Department of State says "On balance, there was progress in human rights in Morocco." However, there continues to be concern about human rights and the internal security measures utilized by Morocco. In Moroccan controlled Western Sahara the Sahrawis have been incorporated into the political system of Morocco with deputies in the Moroccan parliament. In addition, elections in the Western Sahara have had a participation rate above 76 percent with native Western Saharans being elected to the parliament and local village leadership remaining in the hands of Saharans.⁴²

The movement of the nomadic population to refugee camps and the questionable commitment to the Polisario by the population that remains complicates an already difficult situation for the Polisario. Unlike most guerilla movements in recent history, the Polisario do not have a large population in which guerrilla elements can blend and

⁴²U.S. Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights - 1983, (Report submitted to the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and subsequent amendments, 1983) Washington, GPO.

hide and from which they can draw support. Moreover, the Sahrawi youth of the Western Sahara are also included in the military draft, but they are not allowed to serve in the Western Sahara.

Immigration into the area is encouraged. Large numbers of Moroccans have moved to the area drawn by the economic opportunity. For example, seven hundred families settled in El Laayoun in July 1987. The Western Sahara receives a disproportionate share of state funds for social services and infrastructure development. In this area, according to some reports, there is a boom town atmosphere, subsidies by the government, and a general belief that the government is acting with sensitivity and compassion in regard to the native Sahrawis.⁴³ The Polisario claim that this is a "West Bank" strategy and they may be right, but they are also powerless to stop this progression.⁴⁴

The net result is that Morocco has invested more in the Western Sahara than it has withdrawn. The result appears to be a settled and relatively content community. The goal of linking the Sahara irreversibly to Morocco in economic terms seems also to be working.

According to Strategic Survey:

Commerce thrives and the people are generally prosperous. Life behind the wall has greatly

⁴³Griffen, "Sahrawi development winning through," 21.

⁴⁴SPSC Letter, Vol. VIII., No.2, November 1987.

improved with Moroccan control - most would no doubt favor integration with Morocco.⁴⁵

The Sahrawi have benefited from their incorporation into the political and economic structure of Morocco even if it was initially against their will. The continued threat posed by the Polisario may have contributed to the generous pacification program created by Morocco. For the Sahrawi of the Western Sahara, as opposed to those in Algeria, the gains and profitability of remaining integrated with Morocco are apparent. Any change in the structure of the system could undermine or jeopardize their enhanced position if the Polisario were ever to regain control over the Western Sahara.

Consent is probably the strongest weapon against the appeals of an insurgency force. Morocco is firmly developing that consent, and it is also developing a new generation of Sahrawi leaders who look towards Rabat. The Polisario's appeal in this environment is muted when there are no real grievances to exploit.

Conclusion

In this section we have seen how Morocco has been able to effectively impose its will on the Western Sahara through a multifaceted policy of pacification, integration, and military security. Morocco has denied the Polisario

⁴⁵Strategic Survey, 83-84 (Institute for Strategic Studies, London), 108.

access to the region, occupied and established supportive contact with the population, destroyed elements of Polisario support internally, set up a new system of participatory government, gained support through investments and education, and it has also made attempts to win over the population by providing security and demonstrating the positive aspects of integration.

The political weight of the "facts" created in the Western Sahara are sufficient to prevent the Moroccan regime from considering a withdrawal. However, international circumstances along with Algerian support continue to hinder Morocco's position. For the vast majority of the Moroccan population, emotional and cognitive beliefs tie Morocco to the Western Sahara and vice versa. For many it is difficult to imagine Morocco without the Western Sahara and any attempt to dismember this "psychological reality" would be political suicide. Any attempt to bring peace to the Western Sahara will have to confront this new reality.

Although critics of the Reagan policy are correct in asserting that the war cannot be won militarily Morocco has been effective in its application of Guerre Révolutionnaire. However, there continues to be a threat of escalation due to the sanctuary and support provided by Algeria to the Polisario. In all probability the war cannot be technically won until Algerian support ceases. Yet, the

cost of the war has been great, creating concern about the stability of the Moroccan government and its ability to absorb the high cost of the war and the pacification effort. The following section will examine the implications of the war on Morocco's domestic politics and the question of stability.

STABILITY AND DOMESTIC LINKAGES

Critics of the Reagan policy allude to the fact that the government of King Hassan is (1) unstable and illegitimate⁴⁶ and (2) that the war in the Western Sahara is unwinnable further undermining the stability of the regime. Hence, if these two criticisms are correct then the Reagan policy has been counterproductive. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to assess the question of stability and to see how domestic political conditions in Morocco effect decisions on the Saharan conflict.

Introduction

The political stability of the Moroccan monarchy, which was so critically assessed in the late 1970s, appears to have survived a turbulent period of socioeconomic crisis and a deteriorating military situation in the Western Sahara. The regime of King Hassan II is more secure today than at any previous period of his reign. However, as the war in the Western Sahara enters its thirteenth year with its own complications, difficulties typical of many Third

⁴⁶There is no question about the legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy when considered by traditional political science definitions. It is the lawfully recognized government of Morocco. However, critics such as the publishers of the Western Saharan Newsletter question the legitimacy on moral grounds. Therefore, the question of legitimacy will not be addressed further.

World countries continue to pressure the monarchy. For the short term, the King appears to be in control. For the long term, his ability to negotiate the obstacles of economic development, modernization, democratization, social justice and the war in the Western Sahara while channeling and containing the forces of change will be the essential keys in determining Morocco's future stability.

Limits and Scope

This stability assessment of the Moroccan monarchy is limited to a brief description of the background of Moroccan political, military, economic, and social conditions in the years leading up to the first Reagan administration and into the present with a prognosis for future potentialities.

The purpose, therefore, is to focus on the stability of the monarchy in light of the Polisario's clearly espoused goal -- to undermine the monarchy by making the war drain the economic and social resources of the nation. In other words, their goal follows the classic guerrilla strategy of achieving victory by destroying the capacity to wage war and subverting the national will to continue; a strategy that requires no battlefield victories.

The problem of stability for King Hassan II is closely associated with the Saharan conflict which has dragged on for thirteen years. The increasing economic and social burdens of the war aggravate an already tenuous situation

in Morocco by diverting needed resources to the conflict. The cost of this conflict is estimated between \$1.5 million and \$2 million per day but may be considerably less by some accounts. The daily cost of the war is high when the gross domestic product of Morocco was only \$15.1 billion in 1986. Continuous appeals by the Moroccan government for personal sacrifice and national unity may be wearing thin after thirteen years of fighting, which has eroded the average Moroccan's level of living.

The stability of Moroccan political life when gauged by Western standards is difficult to comprehend. Careful analysis of the Moroccan political situation must be done by assessing the situation from a Moroccan viewpoint and if possible, eliminate an ethnocentric bias Western observers may bring to such an attempt. Morocco is an easy target for idealistic criticisms because its governmental system is dominated by a monarchy which encompasses many imperfections in Western eyes, but one must remember that the national, historical, cultural, and religious background of Morocco is unique.

King Hassan II is not just a king but also the respected religious leader of Morocco and as such, a national symbol of unity. The king represents nearly four hundred years of continuous Alawite monarchical rule in Morocco; yet, this tradition is lost on many casual observers of the political scene.

The political stability of the Moroccan monarchy, which was critically assessed in the late 1970s, appears to have survived - for the moment - the turbulent economic and social crisis, and the desperate circumstances of the military situation in the Western Sahara. It can be argued that the regime of King Hassan II is more secure today than at any other time. However, difficulties abound especially for the long term. The economic and social time bomb continues to tick in Morocco as in so many other Third World countries; exerting pressure that may yet topple the monarchy if the King is unable to effectively channel and contain the modernization and democratization processes.

Background

At the onset of the Reagan administration, one of the primary concerns in the White House was the question of support for a long and trusted ally, the King of Morocco, who appeared to be on the brink of disaster. Recent world events brought into question the capability of the United States to support its friends. The disasters in Iran with the fall of the Shah, the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt, and the fall of Anastozia Samoza in Nicaragua were just a few examples reflecting poor analysis of the political situations, threats, and appropriate American responses. In fact, in 1979 the Central Intelligence Agency expected the King of Morocco to last no more than a year on the throne, although the Department of State was more

optimistic.⁴⁷ Experts speculated that the political fallout from an unwinnable war would be the most likely catalyst for a direct challenge to King Hassan.⁴⁸

At the time of these dire predictions, the war in the Western Sahara was not going well for Morocco. The Polisario controlled nearly 90 percent of the Western Sahara, had clearly demonstrated a superiority in the field and controlled parts of southern Morocco as well. The Moroccan Army was overextended, frustrated, and war weary; Mauritania had negotiated a separate peace with the Polisario and there was increasing diplomatic pressure for a settlement. Moreover, the economy of Morocco was unable to take advantage or derive any economic benefit from the large phosphate deposits and fisheries off the coast due to successful attacks by the Polisario.

King Hassan, who had staked everything on the recovery and development of the Western Sahara, was being criticized by the military for his restraint and by the opposition political parties. These criticisms reflected the increasing frustration with the course of the war and its toll on Morocco's economy. At this time, a retreat from the Sahara after so many years of sacrifice for a cause having the status of a "national crusade" would have shattered the

⁴⁷"Western Sahara: The Heat is On," The Middle East 62 (December 1979): 43.

⁴⁸Ibid., 41.

King's prestige and credibility. Moreover, the return of a defeated and frustrated army from the Sahara in such ignoble circumstances would almost surely have invited a coup attempt. Therefore, it was crucial that the King remain firmly committed to remaining in the Western Sahara despite the economic and social consequences -- but how?

For the prospects of the Polisario in the early 1980s, the worsening socioeconomic situation in Morocco combined with Polisario military successes in the Western Sahara boded well for its long-term goal of wearing down the Moroccans. The war in the Sahara impacts nearly every Moroccan household either by "war levies" or by having a family member in the armed forces. Today, the war continues to be a significant drain on the economic and human resources which could further undermine the monarchy.

However, in assessing the stability of the monarchy and the impact of the Saharan conflict, one must remember that there is a real acceptance of the monarchy in and of itself as an institution. Its place is at the top of Moroccan politics even when there is widespread and outspoken disagreement. According to Moroccan Supreme Court Justice Ahmed Majid Benjelloun:

The Moroccan constitutions have not been the result of caprice or horsetrading. They flow from our great ancestral traditions and the great principles of our religion and are the fruit of the generous creative genius of His Majesty Hassan II. They are

also a symbiosis of our unconditional and indefectible attachment to the monarchy.⁴⁹

The Basic Governmental System

The government of Morocco is based on a constitutional monarchy with a king (as chief of state), a prime minister, and a unicameral legislature elected for six years. The prime minister is appointed by the king as are the members of the supreme court, and the governors of forty-two provinces and seven prefectures (Rabat and Casablanca comprise the seven prefectures). The Western Sahara is incorporated into the kingdom and is divided into four provinces. The legislature is unicameral with 306 seats. Two-thirds of the legislature is elected by popular vote and one-third by the vote of community councils, business organizations, farm groups and labor.

In the 1984 elections nearly 68 percent of the 7,414,846 eligible voters went to the polls to vote for delegates to the parliament. The Center/Right coalition supporting the monarchy earned 124 of the 199 directly elected seats in this election. The municipal/local elections that preceded this election saw 57,120 candidates representing thirteen political parties nominated for 15,480 seats in 857 communities. The municipal elections

⁴⁹John Dingle, "Morocco After the Elections," Middle East International, 17 February 1986, 11.

had an impressive 72 percent of the eligible electorate participate.⁵⁰

Observers of the political scene in Morocco indicate that the elections are indeed rigged or controlled, but that the elections do reflect the complex Moroccan political equation. In fact, under this system the "left" can be muzzled in a clearly controlled political process while allowing some degree of participation and ability to influence events.⁵¹

The political culture of Morocco is characterized by tension and status quo oriented politics with some movement towards reform and democratization. The country has the trappings of modern world politics - political parties, labor unions, interest groups, and a limited degree of free press and assembly. The style of politics is based on a shared cultural tradition with a high degree of social homogeneity and a small elite that dominates the political decision making process. There is "an abhorrence of bold initiatives" and a continuously existing factional stalemate. The vitality and strength of the monarchy is founded upon the fractions of the political elite.⁵²

⁵⁰George Joffe, "Morocco: In the Masters Image," Middle East International, 28 September 1984, 10.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²John Waterbury, Commander of the Faithful (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 10.

The truth is that Morocco's political process has little to do with democracy in the normal Western sense. It is really an exercise in consensus through royal mediation. It is a process of bringing all disparate varieties of opinion into a common cause - provided that certain basic assumptions are accepted. And what are the assumptions? That the royal palace stands outside the political process while dominating it, and that the war in the Western Sahara is not a subject open to discussion and that the fundamental trends of Moroccan foreign policy cannot be questioned.⁵³

In essence, the King directs a sophisticated manipulation of the political process and so follows the tradition of Moroccan political life. In fact, the King fosters the development and creation of political factions loyal to the monarchy and attempts to co-opt others. In the intermittent struggles, the King has proved extremely adept at skillfully playing groups against each other.

Political Parties

Numerous political parties participate in the political process but two royally supported parties occupy 145 of the 306 seats in the legislature. The first, the Constitutional Union Party (UC), founded in 1983, is the largest with eighty-three seats in the legislature and five cabinet posts. It is led by former Prime Minister Marti Bouabid. This party represents the government's viewpoint and strongly supports the monarchy. The National Rally of Independents (RNI), founded in 1977 by Ahmed Osman, holds

⁵³Joffe, "In the Master's Image," 10.

sixty-two seats as of the partial elections in April 1986.⁵⁴

There are four significant opposition parties, of which the Istiqlal Party (PI), founded in 1944, is the most widely known. The Istiqlal holds forty-two seats and is seen as nationalistic and a "left-of-center" party. The Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), founded in 1974, claims to be modeled after the social democratic parties of Europe. It has thirty-seven seats and is strong in urban areas and universities.

The Popular Movement (PM) is a party with a narrow base in that it represents the interests of the Berber population. It has generally voted with the government and has been active in government. However, in 1985 the Popular Movement left the government and is now in opposition. Some other parties of lesser importance are the National Democratic Party (PND) founded in 1981 with twenty-four members with a rural base and loyal tendencies toward the government. The Party of Progress and Socialism (the communist party) is tolerated by the government and has two seats. Finally, there is the Organization for Democratic and Popular Action (OADP) with one deputy.

Although there are opposition political parties, the system has imposed strict limits on their ability to influence and participate in the political process. For

⁵⁴Joffe, "Masters Image," 10,11.

example, personal criticism of King Hassan is not tolerated, the press is closely monitored, and there are imaginary lines of tolerance that can not be crossed without penalty. Although this is just a cursory review of the major political parties, the basic structure, and interaction in the system -- the application of the political process is more complicated.

All the political parties support the King's claim that the Western Sahara is indubitably Moroccan, a support which is part of the tacit agreement between them and the Royal Palace over their participation in the political process. However, democracy in Morocco rests on other common assumptions as well. No legally recognized political party would attack the fundamental institutions of the Moroccan state - the monarchy and Islam. Nor does any party oppose the official freedom of the press and expression, introduced in 1977 as part of the general agreement over the re-introduction of democracy, by permitting injudicious comment on those matters over which the government is known to be sensitive.⁵⁵

The few overtures that King Hassan has made to resolve the conflict in the Western Sahara (e.g., to the Organization of African Unity's summit in 1981), have resulted in criticism of the King. The barrage of criticism of the moderate initiatives exercised by the King underscores his dilemma in searching for a solution to the conflict in the Western Sahara that will not undercut his position in the eyes of the Moroccan people. The King's position was not strong enough in 1981 to withstand the

⁵⁵George Joffe, "Morocco: An Experiment in Democracy," Middle East International, 25 April 1980, 7.

socialist opposition's criticism, alleging that he was mishandling the crisis and giving away too much.⁵⁶

The USFP even went so far as to demand that a militia be established and put under the control of Morocco's National Security Council, which represents all major political parties. Additionally, most political parties led by the Istiqlal Party, urged the commencement of cross-border attacks into Algeria. Even PPS (the communist party) echoed these aggressive calls for action against the Algerians.⁵⁷ The criticism in the period 1979 through 1981 for failing to properly prosecute the war effort with "sufficient drive and energy" was narrowing the King's options, and at the same time was an indication of the unity of spirit and commitment of the Moroccan people to carry on the war effort.

The political parties vie with each other in their declarations of total commitment to retaining all of the Western Sahara, whatever the price in men or money.⁵⁸

The USFP, the Union National des Etudiants Marocain (UNEM), and the Confederation du Travail, a group of national labor unions, became so emboldened during the 1979-1981 period that they openly participated in the riots

⁵⁶John Damis, "Western Sahara: A Critical Period," Middle East International, 26 February 1982, 7.

⁵⁷"Morocco Settles 'No Man's Land'," Middle East 56 (June 1979): 36.

⁵⁸Anthony Hyman, "Morocco: The Military Gamble," Middle East International, 7 October 1979, 10.

and public disturbances that followed the second wave of price increases instituted in January 1981 in response to conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This period was particularly bloody and disruptive in that it included strikes in all sectors of the economy causing comparisons of the domestic turmoil with the former problems in Iran. Shortly thereafter, the King cracked down on the USFP and the CDT, leaders were jailed, offices were closed, and newspapers were banned. In cracking down on the opposition parties and elements of society involved in the disturbances, the King used the banner of the war in the Western Sahara to rally the nation. The nation did respond to this call for "unity" indicating a degree of war weariness and economic frustration, but not yet a rejection of the war effort.

The political parties have not demonstrated the will, organization, or leadership to overthrow the King; neither have the small factions of Islamic fundamentalists and students. The Royal Armed Forces of Morocco (FAR) continues to be the only real threat to the monarchy. The FAR has displayed its political ambitions at least two times through attempted coups. For the armed forces, it appears the worst has passed as a threat to the monarchy, although there continues to be discontent with the restraint exercised by the King regarding the reluctance to strike at the Polisario sanctuaries in Algeria.

Under these circumstances, can the monarchy be an agent for modernization and of controlled economic and social change, (as in Jordan), supported by a loyal army that is selected, well-armed, organized, and trained - - or will the model of Iran apply?

The Makhzen⁵⁹

In examining the political life in Morocco it is striking to notice that the same class of political elite has had an uninterrupted succession of control over the politics of Morocco despite two or three coup attempts, the doubling of the population, and the problems of satisfying the needs and wants of the increasing population. There continues to be an alliance between the royal family and the rural notables which constitutes the bedrock of stability in Moroccan political life. These two blocs have managed to channel and contain the pressures being exerted by the increasing demands of the middle class and in fact have allowed the political elite to continue to control present day Moroccan politics. This system has been essentially stable for many years. This is due in part to the sophisticated balancing act of the King who has been sharply attuned to the political currents and who has used

⁵⁹Makhzen is a term that means the sultan's government and the area that the government effectively controls. The Makhzen is the area where the king's control is recognized.

co-optation and prison/punishment to control, entice, and threaten political elements.

Political life in Morocco is typically devoid of ideological content (left versus right).⁶⁰ The concern of the political elite focuses on local power, economic influence, and prestige. This, in part, explains the fluidity of the coalitions, alliances, and participation in government by opposition parties.⁶¹ Additionally, the elite tend to have much in common. They possess the same education level, social origins, class backgrounds, and have economic interests in maintaining the status quo. King Hassan is effective in reminding the elite of how well off they are, of his ability to sanction them, and of his power to distribute the spoils of government to this "client group."⁶²

We are all members of a big family; perhaps there are two hundred of us. Some call themselves progressives, Unpistes, others Istiqlalis, others monarchists. But we all know one another, and one shouldn't take our public name-calling very seriously. Today, we need support from the U.S. so the monarchists are in power. But if our relations with France sour more, and the U.S. does not aid us, all we have to do is bring in a UNFP or UMT government and start knocking on the door of Russia or China.⁶³

⁶⁰However, religion is important in Morocco's politics and this is discussed on page 66.

⁶¹Waterbury, Commander of the Faithful, 117.

⁶²Ibid., 123.

⁶³Ibid.

The principle code of conduct for the maintenance of monarchical control in the makhzen includes: (1) preventing one group from becoming too strong and "breathing life" into the weaker groups, (2) not allowing any segment to depart from the political arena, (3) assuring that the followers of the monarchy are well-treated and that they have access to the monarch, and (4) not allowing the King to become too closely associated with any one group or issue.⁶⁴ The Western Saharan issue violates the "associational rule"; and some believed the poor prospects for the conflict's favorable resolution in 1981 constrained King Hassan's options due to his direct responsibility and identity with the campaign.

In the social context, "Moroccan society appears to be ever on the verge of an explosion that never occurs."⁶⁵ The increasing social and economic pressure for reform could degenerate into violence and threaten to rupture the alliances of "makhzen politics." The changes that have occurred in Moroccan politics have, to a great extent, been the result of the initiatives of King Hassan. However, criticisms abound that the "more things change, the more they stay the same."

⁶⁴Ibid., 147.

⁶⁵Waterbury, Commander of the Faithful, 62.

The Religious Dimension

Whoever overthrows the present regime will inevitably have to justify the elimination of the monarchy in terms of a return to a more righteous and egalitarian Islam similar to that depicted by people like Abd al-Slamyasin and Shaykh al-Zimzimi.⁶⁶

One of the more difficult areas to assess when analyzing Moroccan politics is the strength of the fundamentalist elements. Fundamentalist forces have been the source of problems in many Middle Eastern states. The examples of the Shah of Iran and the assassination of Anwar Sadat quickly come to mind in regard to Middle East fundamentalism. In Morocco, there are militant Islamic preachers and an active minority element of university students who are sympathetic to the idea of creating an Islamic state. However:

Most Moroccans do not seem to even know there is an Islamic movement in their country. As an organized political force, Morocco's highly fragmented militant Islamic movement is impotent at the present time.⁶⁷

There are several advantages for King Hassan II in seeking to contain any rise of Islamic extremism. The close identification of the monarchy with Islam is a major obstacle to any opposing element wishing to overthrow the king and his baraka or "blessedness." The strength of belief in the monarchy and its religious character is

⁶⁶Henry J. Munson, Jr., "Militancy in Morocco," Middle East Journal 40 (Spring 1986): 284.

⁶⁷Ibid.

deeply rooted in the peasant class, the urban poor, people in rural areas, and in the armed forces (which draw most of their recruits from these groups). The position of the spiritual leader or if you will, "the Commander of the Faithful" is widely recognized as is the claim of direct descent from the prophet Mohammed. The credibility of King Hassan is less well-established among the urban elites and the newly emerging educated middle class.

It should be stressed that the fundamentalist movements have encountered difficulty in mobilizing the masses in Moslem countries, with the exception of Iran. This difficulty can be traced to an underlying conflict between the idealized Islam of the militants and the more modern interpretations held by the majority of Moroccans. The Sunni heritage and the strong Western influence in the country moderate tendencies that could lead to extremism which is more often associated with Shiism.

Yet, the monarchy takes the threat seriously and has been harsh in sentencing fundamentalists accused of plotting to overthrow the monarchy. In July 1984, forty fundamentalists were brought to trial and sixteen received the death sentence.⁶⁸

Islamic groups took advantage of the food riots and the public disturbances of the early 1980s to focus

⁶⁸Godfrey Morrison, "The King's Gambit," Africa Report 29 (November/December 1984): 16.

attention on the alleged charges of immorality and corruption exercised by King Hassan. They stressed the social chasm between the rich and the poor, the decadence of values and moral standards of modern Morocco, and claimed Hassan II to be a lackey of the United States and its imperialist interests. Shaykh al-Zimzimi went so far as to call Hassan II the "Commander of the Traitors."⁶⁹

In 1981, Moroccan observers began to notice the presence of taped cassettes of the sermons of various radical fundamentalists such as Shaykh al-Zimzimi, Shaykh Kisk of Egypt, and even the Ayatollah Khomeini. This led King Hassan to warn the clergy "... not to transform the mosques into rostrums. . ." for political agitation. That same year, Shaykh al-Zimzimi was jailed and he has reportedly been restrained in his political activities since his release. Moreover, in January 1982, street disorders erupted due to the mysterious disappearance of a popular fundamentalist who was a political agitator against the monarchy and disseminated fundamentalist cassette tapes.

There does not appear to be a manifestation of public support for the militant course outside of a small minority at the universities and a few active clergy. Yet, the King maintains an effective control over the clergy by co-opting, cajoling, rewarding, and threatening. The movement

⁶⁹Munson, "Militancy in Morocco," 282.

has yet to attract the support of the urban poor; however, potential exists for growing support of the fundamentalist cause from this class if socioeconomic conditions worsen.

The monarchy has been clear to differentiate between reformist and revolutionary goals enunciated by religious elements. The monarchy will tolerate a debate of a reformist nature but not one which crosses the "imaginary line" into forbidden territory.⁷⁰

There is ample fertile ground for the nurturing of opposition groups due to the many problems facing the regime. Today, 5 percent of the population are students, partially represented by 984,707 secondary students and 82,177 postsecondary students according to a 1982 census. Evidently, the support for the Islamic movement is strongest among the young, but support for the "left" really dominates this segment of the population. There have been clashes between the few fundamentalist groups and the more popular "leftist student groups." According to a confidential survey of students at Mohammed V University only 3 percent of the student body supported the ideas encompassed by the fundamentalist movement.⁷¹ There were fifteen identified fundamentalist groups at the

⁷⁰Ibid., 282.

⁷¹Ibid., 271.

university.⁷² More importantly, only 15 percent of the student body could accept the militant definitions of Islam. The vast majority of the student body supports an integration of Western culture and values within the framework of today's Islamic Morocco which bodes well for the King's attempts at modernization and ties to the West.

The Economy and Social Considerations

A primary concern of the United States is that the protracted war may severely impact on the social and economic stability of Morocco. This could, theoretically, translate into political instability threatening the continuation of the reign of King Hassan. Arms expenditures and the maintenance of large garrisons in the Sahara have restricted the King's ability to react to social and economic problems, which could lead to uncontained political or social explosions.

Morocco is the only North African country that is a net importer of oil. With no important oil fields of its own, Morocco depends on phosphates, tourism, and agriculture exports as well as remittances from Moroccans working abroad for its foreign exchange. The lack of oil is a significant economic problem for Morocco and has contributed to its present debt woes.

⁷²Richard Parker, North African Regional Tensions and Regional Concerns (Washington, D.C.: Praeger Special Studies, 1984), 95 and 96.

Morocco has seen other setbacks in recent years: the declining price for phosphates and the growing protectionism in the European Common Market, which is the major market for Moroccan textiles, leather, and food exports. Moroccan aid from Gulf States went through a period of decline due to the fall in oil prices from above \$1 billion in 1982 to \$300 million in 1983.

Yet, Morocco's economic problems are induced by both external and internal factors. Morocco has joined the long list of countries that have had to reschedule their international debt. Foreign debt rose from \$1.6 billion in 1976 to \$9.3 billion in 1982 and is over \$12 billion today. Sharp fluctuations in world prices and the severe world recession combined to increase the country's trade deficit, resulting in increased taxation and cuts in subsidies. The weight of the foreign debt and its impact on export receipts, and the increasing budget burdens were combining to cripple the Moroccan economy.

The 1985 Moroccan budget was \$3.7 billion, according to government reports, with 19.5 percent of this being spent on defense. In reality, Morocco is spending nearly 40 percent of its GDP on defense-related items, i.e., new equipment, logistical support, and personnel.

The underlying weaknesses of the Moroccan economy have clearly been aggravated by the war in the Western Sahara.⁷³

⁷³Hyman, "Morocco: The Military Gamble," 10.

In addition to the massive expenditures related to the military campaigns in the Western Sahara, there are large development and pacification programs including subsidies, bonuses, and cuts in taxes for Moroccans who move to the Western Sahara. The Kingdom's plan d'urgence intends to transform the desert Sahara into a viable and contributing part of Greater Morocco. This includes massive expenditures on roads, airports, and other public facilities in developing the infrastructure. In 1976, the population of the Western Sahara was near 74,000, but today there are nearly 225,000 Moroccans living in the Western Sahara with 100,000 Moroccans living in the city of El Laayoun and 25,000 in Dakla. War taxation siphons off three days of a workers' monthly pay and 2 percent of business turnover, striking at the individual and also at the government's ability to finance development projects and needed reforms in order to restructure the economy.⁷⁴

Moreover, anticipated gains from the control of the rich phosphate resources and the abundant fishing areas of the Western Sahara coast were not quickly realized due to the effectiveness of the Polisario. The campaign by the Polisario in singling out economic targets and denying a safe and secure environment conducive to development severely impeded Moroccan efforts until 1983.

⁷⁴John Mercer, The Sahrawis of the Western Sahara (London: Minority Rights Group, 1983), 15.

The government expenditures for the FAR and the Interior Forces (The Forces Auxiliaires, the Société Nationale, and the Gendarmerie Royale) have seen dramatic increases. Moreover, the size of the armed forces reflect this increase as it grew from 56,000 in 1974 to nearly 200,000 in 1985.

The normal measure of the burden of defense is to take military expenditures as a share of the gross national product. For many countries this is an adequate measure: there is no better figure for purposes of international comparison. However, the determination of the burden is more complicated in the case of Morocco, which receives immense amounts in foreign loans and grants, many of which are discounted. For example, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states are reported as heavy contributors to the war effort with the Saudis' commitment allegedly reaching nearly a billion dollars a year. Moreover, many of the government accounts of Morocco are well-hidden or disguised. Additionally, there are problems of computing the lost opportunity costs (e.g., conscription). In Morocco's case conscription may be a net benefit considering the large population and the accompanying social problems (e.g., chronic unemployment and underemployment).

Further aggravating the economic situation, the king in 1981 announced a \$1 billion armaments program for the FAR. It appears that the IMF and the World Bank are

resigned to allowing Moroccan defense expenditures to remain unchecked by austerity measures. In the spring of 1982, Morocco was in arrears with payments to the French, resulting in a cessation of deliveries and a renegotiation of the schedule of payments on the \$328 million debt. By June 1983, Morocco was in arrears again to the French and owed the United States \$200 million for weapons orders it was unable to pay.

Unfortunately for King Hassan II, the worst drought in thirty-five years struck Morocco from 1979 to 1982. The drought disrupted rural life and destroyed 50 percent of the grain crops and one-third of the livestock. The subsequent need for increased food imports aggravated the burden of large budget deficits and left the government unable to meet investment targets. The drought caused Morocco to import 75 percent of its needed corn, barley, and wheat.⁷⁵

The drought arrived at a difficult congruence of events for Morocco: phosphate prices were depressed, the cost of the war was rising, and there were mounting trade and budget deficits. Morocco was compelled by the IMF to remove subsidies on staple commodities that triggered the food riots in June 1981 in Casablanca and spread to other

⁷⁵John Damis, "Western Sahara: A Critical Period," Middle East International, 26 February 1982, 7.

regions.⁷⁶ The drought increased the social strains by forcing peasants to sell their land accelerating the demographic revolution.⁷⁷

Again in January 1984, Morocco was rocked by civil disturbances related to government austerity measures. This time there were pitched battles in the streets of dozens of cities. These disturbances were led by students, fundamentalists, and leftists. The crowds also included fishermen, sailors, port workers, and peasants. These crowds stormed armories, local installations of the Auxiliaries Forces, police stations, and military barracks. It seemed that the King's position "above politics" had been lost as opposition groups attacked King Hassan directly. In the disturbances of 1981, King Hassan remained above the fray. However, a notable change was seen in 1984 when posters of the King throughout the country were being torn down, mutilated, burned, and marked with graffiti critical of the monarchy.

The violent outbursts led King Hassan to call on the military to quell the violence, which lasted for several days. In the town of Tetouan, for example, fierce fighting

⁷⁶Examples of the impact of cuts in subsidies: tea increased 70 percent, sugar by 65 percent gasoline by 50 percent, and flour by 30 percent. Moreover, pay was not keeping pace with double digit inflation.

⁷⁷In 1956, 14 percent of the population was urban based as compared with 44 percent in 1981. Casablanca had increased to 3.2 million nearly tripling its size with one-third of that being urban poor.

occurred leaving 150 dead and 9,000 jailed in a makeshift prison established at an airport.⁷⁸

The IMF plan, which sparked the riots, was not a politically sound action though it was deemed economically required by the IMF. The problems that erupted in Morocco have been seen before in response to similar measures taken by Morocco in 1965, in the Sudan in 1979, and in Egypt in 1977. Other implications of the IMF plan led to: (1) cutting back on civil service jobs, (2) freezing of industrial projects, (3) large personal tax increases, (4) imposition of a solidarity tax for the war in the Western Sahara equaling one months salary each year, and (5) cuts in subsidies on basic foodstuffs. Additionally, restrictions on imports were enacted, leading to slackened economic activity.

Survivalist regime tactics require the government to respond to short-term needs of the urban areas in an attempt to prevent massive social unrest. This hinders the necessary investment and reform in the rural sector, especially concerning agricultural policies. However, it is vital to the long-term security of the Moroccan regime to curb the flight from the rural countryside to the overcrowded urban areas.

⁷⁸Jean Paul, "States of Emergency: The Riots in Tunisia and Morocco," Middle East Research and Information Project Reports 14 (October 1984): 6.

For the short-term the King must be concerned with his political flanks which limit and constrain his options. The move away from socialist spending practices has created tension with opposition parties of the "left" and has further narrowed the Kings options:

Practical economic proposals flounder on the rock of political realities. The King must first take into account the urban bourgeoisie whose control of the inner circle of national political life and access to high government position is readily apparent to the observer. Although not at the center of power, the rural landlords exercise considerable power and influence at the regional and local level. Hassan II, like his father, Mohammed V, has courted the rural elite if only to provide a counterweight to the strongly urban Istiqlal Party and the others who constitute the urban elite.⁷⁹

The rural sector is plagued by problems common to many Third World countries - absentee landlords, land tenure problems, poor infrastructure, and lack of mechanization.⁸⁰ However, reform and mechanization could lead to displacement of the tenant farmers further aggravating rural flight while increasing efficiency and production.

King Hassan has become convinced of the need to restructure the economy and has begun to take concrete measures towards reform in response to initiatives of the United States and encouragement by the World Bank

⁷⁹John G. Merriam, "Morocco's Commitment to Agrarian Reform and Rural Development: An Examination," The Maghreb Review 8 (1983): 82.

⁸⁰Morocco has 20,000 tractors and needs 90,000. The use of wooden plows and other primitive tools is common. Also, 75 percent of the farms are under five hectares.

authorities. In the meantime, the gap continues to grow between food demand and the ability of Morocco to supply it due mainly to production inefficiencies in the agricultural sector, and more recently aggravated by the drought. The increasing population grows at a rate of 3.2 percent a year with a forecast for a doubling of the population in twenty-two years. In 1981, 45.6 percent of the population was under fifteen years of age out of a population of 20.1 million. Unemployment levels have reached 25 percent and another 25 percent are underemployed. There is a crucial need to create jobs through expansion of the economy.

Morocco is in a transition of structural adjustment for its economy but resources are needed to finance the adjustment. Economists agree that the high debt service will make it difficult to make new investments for growth or even to import sufficient quantities of spare parts, fuel, and war materials necessary for the conduct of the war or the maintenance of current export levels. The recent adjustments in debt schedules should help ease the problem, but short-term prospects are poor.

King Hassan, in recognition of the need to restructure the economy, began an economic liberalization program after 1984 that included: (1) financial reforms to encourage investment, (2) the liberalization of exchange controls, (3) privatization of state-controlled industries, (4) the removal of the state monopoly of agricultural exports, and

(5) the privatization of vast holdings of state controlled land. Moreover, the government has sought to reduce rural and urban poverty, to raise basic skill levels and to eliminate structural impediments to development in agriculture and industry.⁸¹

In response to requests for assistance in financing needed structural changes, many international, regional, and national institutions have sought to assist Morocco's quest for aid. The World Bank has loaned \$400 million for agriculture reform, land consolidation, and water projects. The United States Government through the AID Program, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Saudi Fund, and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development contributed to projects targeted at economic development.

The massive amount of foreign aid is helped by the fall of the dollar, lower oil prices, and the end of the drought, which have combined to ease the economic strain. The resulting improved agricultural harvests and increased domestic economic vitality were positive developments for the king's position. Growth continues to be sluggish, but indicators are good. For example, in 1986, there were no cereal imports, tourism increased 47 percent to 1.5 million visitors, and fruit exports increased 28 percent.

⁸¹David Bradshaw, "Morocco," Middle East Review (1987): 135.

The severe political and social strains imposed by the combination of low commodity prices, high debt payments, lingering effects of the drought, the war, and trade deficits appear to point to a dimmer long-term future. However, the World Bank report has indicated a "guarded optimism" about the long term prospects for Morocco if the World Bank's measures are strictly followed. The 1981 GNP had a negative 1.3 percent growth rate and by 1982 had turned around to a 6.8 percent growth rate.

A reason why Morocco can continue the war despite the economic hardship (other than outside aid) is that there is also a large underground economy said to be between 30 and 40 percent of GNP which is not included in the governmental statistics. Moreover, Moroccans "have a great sense of social solidarity."⁷⁷ Yet, there are eight million Moroccans living in poverty, nearly one-third of the population, and the number continues to grow.

There are numerous political debates as to how to proceed regarding the economic crisis and as to what the people desire most from their government. It seems safe to speculate that Moroccans probably want what other people want: to hold on to what they have worked for, to have a chance to better themselves, and to have a say in who governs them. The classic clash of emerging expectations

⁷⁷. Surinder K. Datta, "Western Sahara: Suffering a Stalemate," African Quarterly 13 (no date): 72.

with the bitter realities of life is pressuring the government, as in other developing countries. Therefore, it can be surmised that there should be an economic incentive for peace in the Western Sahara, yet the government is constrained and committed to the present policy for political reasons. Also, long-term potential gains from the Western Sahara may yet make it a profitable annexation.

The Armed Forces

With the arrival of independence in 1956, King Mohammed V and Crown Prince Hassan set out to develop a military force that would serve the same goal its pre-Protectorate predecessor had served, that of service to the dynasty, maintaining the territorial integrity of the Kingdom, the subjugation of dissident tribes, and the maintenance of internal order.

The Moroccan style of government has been described as the "neo-classical Islamic political type." In this model, the survival of the king is dependent on the continued support and effective use of the military to impose the king's will.⁷⁸ Royal authority derives from: (1) the king's position as supreme military commander, (2) the inculcation of professional values through military instruction and education, (3) the effective development and use of counterespionage and intelligence services, (4) the close

⁷⁸J. C. Hurewitz, Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension (Washington, D.C.: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1969), 339.

personal control of the police, militia, and other internal security forces, and (5) the control over promotion, assignments and selection of personnel.⁷⁹

Morocco's armed forces have been a behind-the-scenes political force that has been used to intimidate political opposition and to crack down during periods of social strife. King Hassan has effectively used the armed forces to control the Moroccan elite and to maintain his position as the dominate political entity. He is able to achieve an equilibrium in which a loyal civilian wing administers the commercial and technical affairs of the country and a military wing keeps law and order and is always present to remind civilians of the folly of recalcitrance vis-a-vis the regime.⁸⁰ This system of balance of power has existed in the domestic arena with the exception of two coup attempts that temporarily disrupted the equilibrium.

To some, recent history raises concerns that the military leadership may attempt to take power. In the Arab world there have been over thirty coups or attempted coups in the last thirty years. The attempted coups of 1971 and 1972 against King Hassan II add to this concern. Questions remain as to whether reforms initiated by the monarchy will be effective, what impact the Berber element will continue

⁷⁹Ibid., 345.

⁸⁰John Waterbury, "The Coup Manque," Arabs and Berbers, ed. E. Gellner and C. Micaud (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1972), 399.

to have on the FAR, and what the impact of the ongoing demographic change of the FAR represents. Will the shifting ethnic balance change the traditional support for the monarchy? Most importantly, has the war in the Western Sahara changed the traditional purpose of the FAR, and if so what has been the war's impact on the FAR?

In view of the turbulent history of the FAR and its crucial role in the political stability of Morocco, it is useful to examine in more detail the history of the FAR and the background leading to the failed coups. From this, a better understanding of the FAR and its role may be ascertained.

On July 10, 1971 there was a coup attempt led by a group of senior officers. Prior to the coup attempt there had been a deterioration of the political climate. In the summer of 1970, King Hassan promulgated a new constitution which provided the monarchy with unlimited powers. The Istiqlal and its more radical offshoot, the National Union of Popular Forces had boycotted the following elections for an unicameral parliament. The result was a parliament consisting of handpicked members selected by the ministry of the interior. The political opposition was in an uproar. At the same time political turbulence (evidenced by surfacing corruption and scandals of several government ministries) resulted in a series of resignations in the

wake of these scandals, other ministers were dismissed by the King.

A suitable illustration is the case in which the King assigned General Medbuh to investigate the causes surrounding a Pan Am contract to build a hotel in Casablanca. Pan Am had showed no interest in contracting for the work. General Medbuh sought out the reasons why during a visit to the United States. What he found was a copy of a letter signed by Omar Ben Messaoud, an important Moroccan entrepreneur and speculator and at one time a member of the Royal Cabinet. The letter stipulated that if Pan Am wished to build on a particular plot of land in Casablanca, over a million dollars would have to be disbursed among the foreign bank accounts of several ministers as well as the King. General Medbuh presented the evidence to King Hassan, who was allegedly upset and claimed he had known nothing about it. The arrest and interrogation of Ben Messaoud revealed similar affairs, some dating back years and involving some of the King's closest advisers.⁸¹

This incident illustrates the disintegration of the political equilibrium that King Hassan had carefully nurtured over the previous decade. Political parties shunned any association with the monarch, the elite in the King's entourage were going beyond the limits of the

⁸¹Ibid., 401.

patronage system, and General Medbuh's reaction demonstrated that the "old guard" in the military leadership was increasingly intolerant of the political and economic situation. King Hassan failed to act decisively in the Ben Messaoud case that created further criticism. Ben Messaoud had been released from jail and retired to enjoy the wealth he had accumulated. General Medbuh was extremely unhappy with the King's leniency and so decided to pressure the King with the Army.⁹² General Medbuh later became the leader of the 1971 coup attempt at the Skhirat Palace.

The majority of the FAR generals participated in the coup. This majority had a common background: they were Berbers, trained at the Azrou College and commissioned in the French Army but had joined the king after independence in 1956. John Waterbury, a noted student of Morocco offers five possible reasons for the coup:

(1) Most of the officers were known for their honesty relative to the rest of the elite. (2) There is some evidence that certain officers felt as if they had been bought over the years, that they had become mercenaries of the regime, placated for their inglorious role by royal patronage. (3) Along with their reputation for honesty, some of the participants were said to be disturbed from a religious and moral viewpoint by the decadence of the regime and its poor public image. (4) From the perspective of career advancement, some of the officers were upset by the constant shifts in position to which they were being subjected and the clear lack of confidence that such transfers implied. (5) Lurking behind all explanations of the coup was the notion of preemptiveness. These were not Leftists, nor young officers, nor did any

⁹²Ibid.

of them have any known links with civilian politicians and parties. It is quite probable that they had no political program whatsoever other than a brutal military housecleaning. It may be that they observed the economic stagnation in the country, the growing spoils system, the disintegration of the civilian elite, took note of the widely-reported discontent, militancy, and politicalization in the junior ranks of the army, and decided to act before younger and more radical men seized power, eliminating the King and his senior officers.⁸³

Underlying all of these reasons, it can be seen that the personal qualities of these officers reflected the professional attitudes they had developed while serving with the French forces. Their Berber background added to the alienation that they felt from the intrigues of the royal patronage system, and the Arab urban middle class whom were viewed as responsible for the disintegration of the Moroccan government.

The following year General Oufkir, the second most powerful man in the country, led a coup with the Air Force. Oufkir was exposed as the mastermind of the 1972 coup as well as a participant in the Skhirat attempt the preceding year. In the 1972 attempt, jet fighters attacked the king's personal jet upon his return from Europe. The attempt failed but damaged the King's prestige and his confidence. The result was a wave of reforms. King Hassan assumed direct control of the FAR and served as his own minister of defense and chief of staff. King Hassan centralized the

⁸³Ibid., 404.

command structure to insure that most decisions came under his scrutiny. Additionally, the King reorganized the military cabinet. Most of the remaining officers from the "old guard" with French or Spanish experience were purged from the military. King Hassan virtually disarmed the FAR by ordering all ammunition to be maintained in locked depots scattered throughout the country under the control of the civilian provincial governors and guarded by the Auxiliary Forces that are subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. The military zone system was abolished because three of the five generals who took part in the 1971 coup were governors of military zones.⁸⁴

This degree of highly centralized control lasted until the middle of 1979. The inability of local commanders to display initiative due to the requirements for permission from Rabat hampered the FAR's ability to conduct operations against the Polisario in the Western Sahara. This led to the realization that changes were needed. For example, liaison between service branches is essential in the conduct of a counterinsurgency war because swift responses are needed in a fluid environment. This led to more autonomy and delegation of responsibilities which created a

⁸⁴Harold D. Nelson, ed., Morocco: A Country Study (Washington, D.C: American University, 1978), 288.

more flexible command structure. Two maneuver divisions were established as part of the new structure.⁸⁵

The new operational force in the Sahara was given to one of King Hassan's closest military advisors - General Dlimi. Following the purges of the 1970s, General Dlimi emerged as an Arab officer whose loyalty to the King was beyond doubt. Prior to assuming this command, General Dlimi had been the Commander of the Royal Military Household and Director of the DGED intelligence service. At the height of the Saharan conflict, Dlimi was referred to as the second most powerful man in Morocco and held all three posts simultaneously. His death in 1983 under suspicious circumstances bears the mark of a political assassination. Unconfirmed reports point to the fact that a group of free officers led by General Dlimi were planning a coup attempt due to dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war in the Sahara. According to unofficial reports the coup was scheduled to take place on 23 July 1983, shortly before a major reorganization of the FAR. These same reports revealed that the CIA discovered the plot and informed Hassan II in time to stop Dlimi. Shortly after Dlimi's death the army was purged of twenty-five officers loyal to Dlimi.⁸⁶ These officers were found in the Royal Guard, the

⁸⁵Mark Heller, The Middle East Review Balance (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1984), 116.

⁸⁶Ibid., 183.

Gendarmerie and the regular military services. However, it should be noted that these reports were speculative. Interestingly, Dlimi had been a long time associate of General Oufkir dating to duty in the French Forces and service in the Ministry of the Interior. Additionally, both Oufkir and Dlimi were implicated in the 1960s kidnapping and murder of Fen Barka, the leader of the UNFP.

Little is known about the coup attempt that never came to pass. There is no indication of the political direction of the leadership, and although it was alleged to be a coup in the making it may have been an excuse to eliminate opposition that had serious reservations concerning the conduct of the war in the Sahara. Yet again, the leader of the coup was a man closely associated with the "old guard." With the death of General Dlimi the senior leadership of the FAR was left in the hands of a new generation of Moroccan officers, those who had been selected and recruited since independence. This new group is not predominantly drawn from the Berber population as in the past. The education required for admission at the Royal Military Academy of Meknes tends to attract officers from the educated urban Arab elite.

Several assumptions may be drawn from an examination of the Moroccan military tradition. First, given the many ethnic and social axes of Morocco's political culture, the FAR leadership has no basis for popular support.

Senior military figures are also said to fear that, even if they take power, they would be incapable of holding the country together without a symbolic figure such as King Hassan.⁸⁷

The central focus of Moroccan society on the allegiance of various societal groups to the monarchy demonstrates a nation which is thoroughly conditioned by its historical experience and has no precedent for the preeminence of military personalities. Traditionally the military has been a pillar of support for the monarchy. Today, as in the past, the stability of the monarch depends primarily on the loyalty and allegiance of the traditional Moroccan tribes or in modern times, and possibly of greater importance, established political parties.

Secondly, after the attempted coups of the 1970s and the doubts about the loyalty of the FAR, King Hassan sought to increase the participation of the political parties in the government. The cycle of political repression that had been part of the 1960s gave way to a more cooperative and conciliatory attitude toward political opposition. Pro-royalists and opposition parties have shared in the political process and in the formation of various cabinets. This has broadened and increased popular political awareness and institutionalized the role of parties. As a result of these actions the FAR finds itself effectively cut-off from any potential power-base because it does not

⁸⁷Susan Morgan, "Morocco: Austerity and Sacrifice," Middle East International, 4 July 1980, 12.

represent the aggregate demands of any ethnic or political group.

Thirdly, the reforms enacted by the King following the attempted coups generally have been effective. Units remain far from the centers of power, and a large contingent of the FAR is stationed in the Western Sahara. Young officers are carefully monitored for their political beliefs and are forced to resign if not totally supportive of the monarchy. The officer corps of today has been carefully nurtured by Hassan II since independence through the patronage system. Unlike the "old guard" these officers due to vastly different experiences and training are not prone to take exception to the inherent inequities and corruption of the system.

In light of this, and several failed coup attempts, the monarchy stresses professionalism of the armed forces, as can be seen by the increased emphasis on military education and a promotion/compensation system based on merit. The introduction of new concepts of military organization, tactics, and an acceptance of military subservience to the civilian government authorities may aid in tightening the monarchy's control over the armed forces. The exposure to Western political ideas could be a double edged sword in that the respect for the monarchial system could decline.

It is unlikely that there will be a coup attempt in the near future due to the changes in command structure, organization, deployment, operational procedures, and the changing demographic nature of the armed forces. An opportunity could present itself owing to weaknesses in the political opposition which could only be filled by the military due to its more advanced state of education, organization and technology. The military could justify their intervention by citing nationalistic reasons (e.g., a foreign threat or a sell out in the Western Sahara); the need for national unity along regional, ethnic, or tribal lines; or a need for order, discipline and organization resulting from a deteriorating socioeconomic position combined with political arena paralysis. Finally, the threat of a successful fundamentalist movement could be cause for the military to act unilaterally.

The formerly Berber dominated armed forces controlled by King Hassan are the forces that provide the King the tight security and intelligence needed for the continuation and strength of the monarchy but also, paradoxically, its greatest threat. The armed forces are the best-placed institutional group to take advantage of any crisis that may threaten the monarchy. However, at this time:

The war has effectively removed the threat of another attempted takeover by the military - the most obvious alternative to the King. With one-half of the army deployed in the Western Sahara, it is difficult to see who could mount such a coup attempt. Soldiers on active duty in the desert are

well cared for and receive twice their normal pay.⁵⁵

Possible conditions that could lead to a coup would include economic and political disintegration leading to increased rural and urban unrest. In this case, instead of a coup overthrowing the monarchy, the FAR would step in with greater authority to restore order in the context of maintaining a royal coalition. Other possibilities could be the assassination of King Hassan II by someone not affiliated with the FAR (possibly fundamentalists); which would require the FAR to restore order and administer the government. There is the possibility of an increased role for the FAR, but not a predominant one. Therefore, in answering a question posed at the beginning of this section, it appears that the FAR will continue to remain loyal to the monarchy for the foreseeable future due to improving economic conditions, current political stability, and a favorable position in the conflict in the Western Sahara.

Conclusion

The Polisario are correct in their assessment that the social, economic, and political tensions inside Morocco are where the war for the Western Sahara will be won or lost. The present military situation is stable in Morocco's favor

⁵⁵Michael Dobbs, "Morocco's War," The Washington Post, 17 March 1985, 30(A).

with the effectiveness of the Polisario military being limited to conducting only harassing attacks of "the wall." The present socioeconomic and political climate is not sufficiently severe to force the King's hand in the Western Sahara without severely damaging his prestige and status as national leader. The Saharan campaign still has the power to galvanize the Moroccan people and any hint of withdrawal would lead to a loss of public support and the passing of the leadership of nationalist cause to the opposition political parties. Any hint of a compromise could lead to military intervention in the political process. Therefore, King Hassan's policy of placating domestic and military interests while conducting the war is a sound policy which has maintained the monarchy as the preeminent power in Moroccan political life.

King Hassan continues to be engaged in maintaining his position in the forefront of Moroccan politics without withholding from his people the political participation they must have in keeping with Moroccan political culture. The King seems to be advancing the democratic process, ever slowly, while maintaining centrality of control over the system.

Yet, there are threats to this process and to the stability of the monarchy. In the short-term the military and/or Islamic fundamentalists could threaten the regime. In the long-term, the emerging middle class demanding

greater political participation, more economic rewards and an improved standard of living during a period of sluggish economic growth and worsening social conditions could force change.

King Hassan has many strengths, many already reported: the continuity of the monarchy and public acceptance of it, political tradition, religious leadership and who he is:

Hassan's strength is his awareness of the dangers facing him. After years on the throne he has accumulated enormous experience in the governing, and even his opposition concedes that despite a reputation for high living and autocratic whims, he has proved himself one of the wisest rulers in the Arab world.....The King is much more intelligent than most Third World leaders and he has his own sources of reliable information. The regime cracks down hard against the smallest sign of disorder, but is also trying ways to let people express themselves⁵⁹

King Hassan II is probably less threatened than one would imagine. The increased democracy, programs targeted at compensating the rural and urban poor, reforms and liberalization of the economy, the use of military force to maintain order, the use of his religious position, and the public support for the war are all factors that support the prospect for continuity of the monarchy.

The evaluation of the forces of destabilization, the impact of the Western Saharan War on this process, and the prognosis for the continued stability of the Moroccan regime are subject to many unknown factors of human

⁵⁹Michael Dobbs, "Morocco's War," Washington Post, 17 March 1985, 25A.

behavior and chance. In other cases involving speculations and assurances of stability "experts" have proven to be disastrously wrong (e.g., the alleged stability of the Shah of Iran).

The United States is undoubtedly pleased with the recent initiatives of the Moroccan government directed at increasingly liberalizing the economy. Morocco is responding to pressure from the IMF and the Reagan administration to decrease the role of the state in economic planning. Moreover, Morocco's free-enterprise economics and economic reform embodies privatization, a public sector overhaul, and the creation of a business environment conducive to growth and development. These developments reflect a substantial change in Moroccan economic policy.⁹⁰ In addition, the economic programs in Morocco, in the view of the Reagan administration, are the initial steps necessary to prepare the foundation for greater political liberalism.

Furthermore, the politics of liberalization in the economic sphere is expected to have an effect in the political sphere. Remy Leveau foresees increasing political liberalization with the emergence of a middle class, a technocratic class, and the further development of political parties. The return to constitutional government

⁹⁰"Morocco's Economic Sea-Change," Middle East Economic Digest, 9 April 1988, 6-9.

in September 1984 marked an important point in this process. The Moroccan government continues to pressure opponents but the political system is more participatory in 1988 than in the late 1970s.⁹¹

The tendency to judge a political situation in Morocco by Western criteria must be avoided. There is a longstanding tradition of disdain for monarchies in American attitudes which could effect an assessment of the King's strength. Ethnocentrism and national hubris characterize some attitudes towards the regime in Morocco, and the many predictions of the imminent collapse of the Moroccan monarchy may reflect a desire to see the end of the Moroccan monarchy.

However, from all possible empirical factors, attitudinal and intuitive, the assessment is that the King's position is as strong as ever. Yet, the long-term pressures and conditions generating demands for change, constitutionalism, democracy, and socioeconomic reform may produce sufficient pressure to bring change; but within a controlled context of King Hassan's choosing.

King Hassan has ruled for twenty-seven years. He has to this point succeeded in channeling the social and political evolution. To the degree that there is a

⁹¹For more information on the liberalization process see Albin Michel ed., Edification D'un Etat Moderne: Le Maroc de Hassan II or Remy Leveau, Le Fellah Marocain: Défenseur du Trone.

possibility for change, the most likely evolution could be along the lines of a constitutional monarchy similar to Spain's with King Carlos.⁹²

It is clear that the United States faced a unique situation in the case of Morocco and the conflict in the Western Sahara. Moroccan domestic politics and the question of stability has been examined in the context of the Saharan conflict. Next the Reagan administration's policy will be analyzed to see how policy was conceived, developed, and implemented in regard to the long-standing Moroccan-United States. relationship and the conflict in the Western Sahara.

⁹²Remy Leveau, Le Fellaah Marocain: Défense Du Throne (Paris: Presses de la Foundation National des Sciences Politique, 1985), 275-278.

UNITED STATES POLICY, 1980-1987

The Reagan administration continues a policy of economic and military support for Morocco that began in the last year of the Carter Presidency. Current United States budget problems that impact on foreign aid programs and security assistance programs now restrict the Reagan administration's attempts at providing aid to a friendly government.

Moreover, there continues to be concern in Congress about the appropriateness of assisting Moroccan historical territorial claims to the Western Sahara. To America, this means that the traditions of supporting self-determination, decolonialization and human rights may come into conflict with a foreign policy premised on ideology, geostrategic concerns, and the murky issues of this conflict. This in itself is a very explosive and divisive issue for policy makers in the United States. For example, consider the consequences of forcing the issue of self-determination in Morocco and the Western Sahara on the Palestinian issue, the Kurds, the Armenians, the Tamils, and the Basques.

United States Policy

On July 29 1987 the Reagan administration notified Congress that it was selling Morocco one hundred M48-A5

tanks at a cost of \$68 million which will be used in the Western Sahara. This announcement once again brought a focus to the continuing conflict in the Western Sahara. It also brought the conflict into the limelight and caused many members of Congress to raise questions about the United States role, and it created an uproar among liberal activist groups who have followed the developments.⁹³

United States policy toward the conflict in the Western Sahara, on the surface, appears to be one of declared neutrality; yet, in reality United States policy is very supportive of Morocco. Although the United States makes public pronouncements that declare a desire to see a mediated end to the conflict and free elections on one hand, on the other, the United States under the Reagan administration has jeopardized this public stance of neutrality by providing substantial amounts of economic and military assistance which permits King Hassan to forcibly maintain control over the Western Sahara. Moreover, the Reagan administration has supported the Moroccan position diplomatically. For example, in November and December 1982 the United States voted against a United Nations ceasefire resolution. Also the United States has said the International Court of Justice Opinion decision regarding Moroccan claims to sovereignty over the Western Sahara is

⁹³Saharan People's Support Committee Letter, 17 August 1987.

not compulsory and further alleges that Morocco has equally justified claims to self-determination.⁹⁴

Official stated United States policy continues to favor a peaceful negotiated solution to the war and supports United Nations and Organization of African Unity's efforts in finding a political solution based on free and internationally supervised elections. The stated principles of the United States policy are:

1. The United States has a desire to see the parties involved in the dispute negotiate an acceptable solution.⁹⁵
2. The United States acknowledges Morocco's administrative control but not its sovereignty of the Western Sahara.⁹⁶
3. The United States supports the principle of self-determination, but questions the applicability of the principle in regard to the situation in the Western Sahara.⁹⁷
4. The United States desires to see stability in the Maghreb with a continuation of a balance of power between Morocco and Algeria.⁹⁸
5. Finally, the United States is resigned to the fact that the war is not winnable by either side. That a negotiated solution with some kind of referendum is the key to ending the war and bringing peace and stability to the region.⁹⁹

⁹⁴SPSC, February 1983

⁹⁵ John Damis, Conflict in Northwest Africa: The Western Sahara Dispute (Stanford: Hoover Press, Hoover International Studies, 1983), 120.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 121-122.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ John Damis, "United States Relations with North Africa," Current History, 84 (May 1985): 195.

⁹⁹Damis, Conflict in Northwest Africa, 122.

The stated policies and objectives are in some ways different from the reality of the policy. Early in the Reagan administration it was clear that the United States was going to support Morocco. This fact is made abundantly clear in administration testimony before Congress:

America's allies and close associates should expect understanding and reliable support. It would not be in the spirit of this administration's policy of support for America's traditional and historic friends - to meet reasonable and legitimate needs - if aid were to be withheld or made conditional other than under extraordinary circumstances.¹⁰⁰

In particular the administration believes "...very strongly that traditional old friends such as Morocco deserve special support and attention."¹⁰¹

The Reagan administration's program proceeded to build on the military assistance initiated under the Carter administration. President Carter had withdrawn support for pending arms requests from Morocco in 1978. In part this was due to a lack of progress in resolving the Western Saharan conflict, concerns about human rights

¹⁰⁰ Statement of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern And South Asian Affairs Morris Draper, in U.S. Congress, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on International and Scientific Affairs and on Africa, Arms Sales in North Africa and the Conflict in the Western Sahara: An assessment of U.S. Policy. Hearings, 25 March 1981. Washington D.C., 14.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

violations¹⁰², and the legitimate aspirations of self-determination for the Sahrawis.

State Department spokesman David T. Schneider testified in March 1983:

U.S. Government policy on the Western Sahara conflict has been consistent. We support fully and encourage all parties to support the Organization of African Unity's ceasefire/referendum formula for a negotiated settlement.¹⁰³

Schneider's testimony glossed over the fact that U.S. policy had changed, at least in the practical application of regulations concerning arms supplies to Morocco, of increasing financial assistance for military grants and loans to that nation, and in the accepted use of United States supplied arms. Moreover, just three months before Schneider's statement the United States had vetoed United Nation resolutions pertaining to a ceasefire.

The Carter administration reversed itself in 1979 after the fall of the Shah of Iran. In October of 1979 a \$235 million arms package was submitted which included six OV-10 Bronco armed reconnaissance planes, twenty F5E-fighter bombers, and twenty-four Hughes MD helicopters—all of which were to be delivered in 1981 and 1982. The reasoning enunciated by President Carter's National

¹⁰²The disappearance of political opponents, extended periods in prison without trial, and torture are examples of human rights concerns.

¹⁰³"Hearings on U.S. Policy in the Western Sahara," March 15, 1983.

Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was: (1) A need to insure allies that the United States is a stable and reliable source of supply. (2) Morocco was suffering a threat to its internal security. (3) Morocco was a trusted and long-term ally; therefore it deserved United States support. (4) Saudi Arabia had pushed for and offered to partially finance the sales.¹⁰⁴

Security assistance guidelines stress that assistance is to be authorized solely for internal security and legitimate self-defense, must be consistent with United States policy interests, and the President must determine that United States security interests will be enhanced. Moreover, there are three principle reasons for security assistance: (1) to enhance the ability of friendly nations to defend themselves against external aggression or internal subversion, (2) to enhance bilateral security relationships in order to deter aggression, and (3) to express tangible support for a regime. Security assistance is theoretically political and military in nature. In recent years the principal concern has been to use security assistance to deal with Soviet proxies and to advance purely political goals of the United States.¹⁰⁵ However, it should be noted that security assistance, even when

¹⁰⁴ Damis, Conflict in Northwest Africa, 122.

¹⁰⁵Richard F. Grimmelt, "An Overview of U.S. Military Assistance Programs," Report No. 85-91F, 23 April 1985, Congressional Research Service, U.S. Government.

massive, cannot guarantee the outcome the United States seeks (e.g., billions to the Shah).

United States military sales to Morocco exceeded \$1.9 billion in the period from 1974 to 1987. Military aid alone in 1983, was \$103 million; military aid has been around \$50 million each year since. In 1986 Moroccan military assistance suffered a 26 percent cut during the budget battles of Congress, but it was still above the assistance levels given prior to the Reagan administration. In the past two years assistance has consisted primarily of logistical and maintenance support.¹⁰⁶ It should also be noted that the majority of military sales have been for the Moroccan military's modernization program and not specifically for use in the Western Sahara.

For 1984 comparative purposes, the high point of United States assistance, Morocco received nearly \$150 million in military assistance, \$244 million in agricultural export credits, \$150 million to finance improvements for the Voice of America facilities in Tangier, and \$40 million to upgrade two airfields (which may be used by the Rapid Deployment Force). This package totals \$600 million in non-military aid.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, the administration received

¹⁰⁶ Scott Malcomsen, "The U.S. and Morocco: The High Cost of Helping Hassan," Nation (22 December 1984): 674.

¹⁰⁷ John Damis, "United States Relations with North Africa," Current History, 84(May 1985): 194.

full funding for its economic and military requests in FY1985.¹⁰⁸

Economic assistance has been provided to Morocco in various forms. In 1985 aid consisted of \$27.5 million in developmental assistance, \$7 million in economic support, a loan of \$45 million under Public Law 480 Title 1 (loans), and \$8.8 million under Public Law 480 Title 2 (grants). In fact, under Title 1 Morocco received \$223.3 million between 1980 and 1986 while Title 2 provided \$78.8 million in grants.

With budget constraints the Reagan administration faced difficulty securing from Congress approval for foreign aid and security assistance slated for Morocco as well as others. Apparently Morocco was not pleased by the results along with the refusal to sell \$500 million in aircraft. To compensate the administration rescheduled loans which saved \$4 million dollars for Morocco. Additionally, the Defense Department contracted a multimillion dollar long-term purchase of Moroccan farm products and textiles to support forces in Europe. Moreover, the administration went in and received a supplemental authorization of \$34 million.¹⁰⁹

Essentially, the Reagan administration removed the "linkage" of progress in negotiations from arms sales and

¹⁰⁸See Appendix D for information on United States assistance.

¹⁰⁹Randall, "Morocco Seeks US Help," Washington Post, 12 January 1987, 18(A).

other assistance. Under the Reagan administration requests for assistance were tripled; counterinsurgency training for Moroccan soldiers was initiated, cluster bombs, Cobra helicopters and other weapons systems effective in counterinsurgency warfare were sold. Finally, airborne radar and United States technological assistance was provided to assist in locating Polisario bases in the Western Sahara.¹¹⁰

Of course, military assistance is subject to the limitations of the 1960 Security Assistance Agreement and the Arms Export Control Act both of which require that these weapons be used for only internal security and the legitimate defense needs of Morocco. In reality these prohibitions have been ignored. Incursions into Moroccan territory by the Polisario in 1981 provided the Moroccans with the opportunity to claim the useful need of these weapons for self-defense. Congressional allegations of violations of these imposed restrictions are answered by the administration in saying that these, "...uses do not constitute substantial violations."¹¹¹ Robert Flaten, Director North Africa, Department of State said:

In view of the fact that Morocco is recognized by the UN as the administrative authority of the

¹¹⁰ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on International and Scientific Affairs and on Africa, Review of U.S. Policy Toward the Conflict in the Western Sahara, Hearings, 15 March 1983.

¹¹¹ Damis, Conflict in Northwest Africa, 122.

Western Sahara, we have not challenged the use of American supplied equipment.¹¹²

What is interesting about this statement is that the United Nations has never recognized Moroccan administrative control.

More troubling to some has been the persistent reports of United States advisors being seen in the Western Sahara near the combat zones where Congress has specifically forbidden the presence of United States servicemen. However, these accounts may in fact be reporting the siting of United States contract civilian personnel who are wearing military style dress and are present in the Western Sahara. There is no prohibition concerning civilian personnel.

These alleged violations of congressional restrictions and the liberal interpretation of rules by the administration may be further indications of an alleged general lack of respect for strict compliance with the letter as well as the spirit of the law.

All of the above leads to the question - is the United States neutral, or is it pursuing a policy to allow Morocco to win the war and secure its historical claims to the Western Sahara at the expense of the claimed national aspirations of the Sahrawis people? If this is the case, what are the possible interests that have motivated the

¹¹²Tony Hodges, "Interview with Flaten," Africa Report (July/August 1982):19.

Reagan administration to disregard concerns for upholding international law, international regimes, and self-determination?

Strategic and Ideological Interests

Ideological

The United States has been more than willing to view the conflict in East-West terms under the Reagan administration. In fact, the response reflects the fear of losing another ally to Soviet supported proxies. However, in the case of the Western Saharan conflict, Morocco's expansionist policy led to the military and economic disasters and subsequent social chaos that threatened to topple the Moroccan government in 1980 to 1983. United States concern focused on the internal turmoil and the threat to the Moroccan government. In addition, United States officials were concerned about regional instabilities if Morocco should fall, the creation of a mini-state, and the emergence of Algeria as the dominant regional power.

Administration officials were wary of the socialist nature of the Algerian government, and its close ties to the Soviet Bloc. Additionally, the Polisario which could not survive without the assistance of Algeria, utilized Soviet Bloc equipment, Marxist-Leninist terminology and rhetoric. Former United States Ambassador to Morocco, Joseph Verner Reed Jr., came to this conclusion:

It is obvious that the next pressure point for the Soviets is going to be the Kingdom of Morocco, situated strategically as it is on the Straits of Gibraltar.¹¹³

Former CIA Director William Casey visited Morocco early in 1981 and upon his return to Washington took King Hassan's request to the White House. Casey apparently told President Reagan, "We want to back him." Soon thereafter a series of high level visits began which included Ambassador Vernon Walters, Caspar Weinberger, Admiral Robert Inman, LTG James Williams the Director of DIA, Alexander Haig, and numerous other general officers and officials.¹¹⁴

Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig further illustrates the perception of the conflict in East-West terms:

I decided that the issue of Morocco's defense against a Marxist insurgency and Soviet intimidation was so important in itself, and as a means of alerting Moscow and the world at large to the presence of American will, that some other means of acknowledging our genuine gratitude to Algeria would have to be found.¹¹⁵

Haig continued that it would be necessary to prove again that a relationship with the United States pays dividends and not just risks:

¹¹³ "A Friend in Need" Atlantic, (December, 1982): 25.

¹¹⁴ Bob Woodward, Veil, 170 and New York Times, 1 February 1982.

¹¹⁵ Alexander M. Haig Jr., Caveat: Realism, Reagan and Foreign Policy (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984), 98.

Rhetoric would not lead them to this conclusion. Only a credible show of will and strength could do so. Even with American military in a temporary state of post-Vietnam dysfunction, the U.S. and its friends had enough assets to be able to deal with the Soviets and their proxies with confidence.¹¹⁶

The administration's foreign policy under the direction of Alexander Haig considered the Soviet Union to be the source of conflict in the world, and he had suspicions of a Soviet propensity that takes advantage of turmoil and unrest in order to make a situation worse. The Western Saharan Conflict became viewed by some in the administration as another "proxy war" by the Soviets against Western allies. The theory being:

Revolutions can begin without outside support. But they cannot survive and prevail without weapons, logistical expertise, food, medical supplies, communications equipment, and training. These things must be provided from outside the country....But eventually all roads and supply lines lead back to Moscow.¹¹⁷

The Soviets are skilled at exploiting grievances in order to bring about Marxist-Leninist governments. The response, according to this scenario, should be political and military support to those governments that are threatened by Soviet proxy forces. This is not to be viewed as a good or a bad choice, but simply as an imperfect and expedient choice in a hostile world.

¹¹⁶Haig, Caveat, 96.

¹¹⁷Richard M. Nixon, Real Peace (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1984), 76.

In the book Game Plan, Brzezinski is convinced that the Polisario is linked to the USSR through arms supply, East Bloc training, and sanctuary. He states that the conflict is part of a "...long term diversionary strategy, not geared to immediate gains but rather designed to promote erosion on the flanks, while Soviet military-political pressure is applied on the central front."¹¹⁶

In trying to focus the conflict in East-West terms the Reagan administration took a step back from the official pronouncements of neutrality. Essentially this characterization of the conflict as an East-West struggle endorses the territorial ambitions of Morocco while undercutting the position of Polisario. It was as if the Reagan policy discounted the legitimate interests of a people involved in a transition from colonial rule; moreover, the policy denied the very real social and political forces involved in the Western Sahara conflict.

The administration claims that the Polisario are not the "indigenous movement" of the Sahrawi people, but rather a movement composed mostly of Algerian, Libyan, and "non-African" mercenaries under the sponsorship of socialist Algeria. The Pentagon and Department of State point to the presence of Soviet equipment (SAM-6 anti-aircraft missiles, T-54 and T-55 tanks) and occasional sightings of Soviet-Bloc personnel in the Sahrawis refugee camps as justification

¹¹⁶Brzezinski, Game Plan, 140

for these allegations.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, visits by Raoul Castro, the Defense Minister of Cuba and brother of Fidel, in the late 1970s to Polisario refugee camps was cited as further evidence of the monolithic threat of communism facing Morocco.

It would be a misperception of the Western Saharan conflict to see it simply as an extension of the East-West conflict.¹²⁰ The presence of Soviet Bloc military equipment is not unusual when Algeria's military equipment is 90 percent Soviet. King Hassan has sometimes insinuated that Morocco was in fact fighting Soviet surrogates in an attempt to rally Western support. Alexander Haig, Reagan's former Secretary of State, and other administration officials have attempted to portray the Polisario as Marxist-Leninist under the tutelage of the Soviets. However, the Polisario are not a Marxist-Leninist movement and they are not on the "...cutting edge of Soviet expansion in the Maghreb."¹²¹ The Polisario have been influenced by their major benefactor, Algeria, which has its own brand of Islamic-Socialism and positive neutralism. Yet, there has been some radical support originating in

¹¹⁹ Damis, Conflict in Northwest Africa, 122.

¹²⁰ John Damis, "The Western Sahara Conflict: Myths and Realities," The Middle East Journal, 37 (Spring 1983): 170.

¹²¹ Stephen J. Solarz, "Arms for Morocco," Foreign Affairs 58 (Winter 1979/1980): 287.

Libya and Iran which has created an atmosphere of concern in Washington and also in Algeria.¹²²

The Soviet Union has not recognized the SADR, and does not have any official contacts with the Polisario. This is unusual in light of traditional Soviet support for national liberation movements. The Department of Defense has identified numerous organizations that receive training from the Soviets but the omission of Soviet support for the Polisario is conspicuous:

Thousands of Palestinians, other Arab recruits, and selected non-Arabs and members of the South West African Peoples' Organization (SWAPO) and the African National Congress (ANC) have received training in insurgency and terrorist techniques at facilities in the Soviet Union.¹²³

If the Soviets are behind this insurgency why doesn't the United States establish some concrete linkage in training? It seems this linkage could be established if the Soviets were in fact supporting the Polisario.

The Soviets do have a strong presence in Algeria with over 1,300 Soviet-Bloc advisors.¹²⁴ Additionally, in the

¹²²Algeria is concerned with maintaining control over the Polisario. Iranian emissaries have been prevented from visiting the refugee camps in order to maintain Algerian control. Algeria does not wish to see the conflict escalate or see the Polisario resort to terrorism. Moreover, Algerian leadership is concerned with radical tendencies that could infiltrate the Algerian polity.

¹²³ U.S. Department of Defense, Soviet Military Power 1986, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., March 1986.

¹²⁴ U.S. Department of State, Atlas of the United States Foreign Relations, December 1985.

1970s there were reports of East German and Cuban advisors in the Polisario refugee camps; however, these have not been confirmed. One would suspect that if a connection could be established the administration would publicize the information.

Of notable interest is the fact that even while the United States continues to characterize the conflict as an East-West confrontation, Morocco is pursuing her own national interests by negotiating with the Soviet Union for the joint construction of a major hydroelectric project near Kenitra, trade in phosphates, a joint program of development of the rich fishing areas off the Moroccan coast, and a cultural exchange program. In fact the economic ties between Morocco and the USSR are close and represented \$9 billion worth of trade agreements in 1978. The Soviet Ambassador to Morocco has courted Moroccan friendship by suggesting that the question of Spanish colonialism of Moroccan territory [i.e., the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla] needs to be resolved.¹²⁵ Despite these close economic ties, the political and diplomatic relationship with the Soviets is not close. It indicates, however, that King Hassan conducts Moroccan foreign policy stressing Moroccan national interests.

¹²⁵ "USSR Envoy Addresses Press on Regional Issues," Foreign Broadcast Information Service, MEA-86 Vol 5 - No. 066, 7 April 1986.

Worth noting is that the United States is the primary trading partner of Algeria whereas the Soviet Union far surpasses the United States in trade with Morocco. Conversely, Algeria is a military client state of the Soviet Union, and Morocco is dependent on the United States and France for the bulk of her military support. Moreover, "Hassan has also promoted Eastern bloc ties, so both sides now use Soviet as well as Western arms."¹²⁶ This is indeed a paradox and does not support the ideological position of the United States.

Strategic Interests

United States military planners have long acknowledged that Morocco is located in a key geostrategic position along the Straits of Gibraltar and the Atlantic approaches to the Mediterranean. It has been a basic goal of the United States to deny the Soviets access to this area. At the same time the United States is exploring methods that would utilize these key areas for offensive and defensive warfighting actions.¹²⁷ Robert Pelletreau, former Deputy Secretary of Defense, in testimony before Congress said, "...if we are in active battle, I believe we would

¹²⁶Jon Marks, "Africa's Forgotten War," Africa Report (Sept/Oct 1987):1.

¹²⁷ Claudia Wright, "Journey to Marrakesh: U.S.-Moroccan Security Relations," International Security, 7(Spring 1983): 163.

have access to every single facility that we have negotiated."¹²⁸

Additionally, close military ties have evolved over the years and have been further stressed under the Reagan administration with the signing of the United States-Moroccan Pact of May 27, 1982. For example, joint military exercises, base rights agreements, and provisions for the use of airbases and port facilities for CENTCOM (Rapid Deployment Force) add to the military and strategic significance of United States-Moroccan cooperation. The Kenitra naval base and air station, for example, could be used for force projection purposes, as well as to provide umbrella coverage for naval forces in antisubmarine warfare. The United States Navy currently depends on trans-Atlantic telecommunications facilities located in Morocco for its Sixth Fleet, and its submarine fleet in the Mediterranean and the eastern Atlantic. The National Security Agency has a listening post at Sidi Yahia.¹²⁹

The Department of Defense has been increasingly interested in Morocco because of difficulties encountered by United States negotiators in trying to come to terms with other allies in the Mediterranean region. For example, base rights in Spain will not be renewed for a squadron of F-16s. Other facilities, most notably in Greece and the

¹²⁸Claudia Wright, "Letters," Foreign Affairs, 207.

¹²⁹Ibid., 208.

Azores, may be terminated. The lack of funds for supporting base rights agreements is aggravated by current budget shortages and there does not appear to be a solution to this problem in the near future.

King Hassan has offered bases to the United States in compensation for any facilities that may be lost in negotiations with Portugal over the Lajes base in the Azores. Morocco is an excellent location; to date the administration has been sensitive to the potential Moroccan domestic political fallout that could result from a more visible United States military presence.

A large U.S. military presence would be far more plausible here than in most Middle Eastern countries, since Morocco's geography, history and culture have created a climate unlikely to breed a xenophobic reaction as occurred in Iran.¹³⁰

Air Force Secretary Paul Thayer has anticipated the positioning of United States forces in airbases in Morocco which have been upgraded at a cost to the United States of \$58 million. These facilities are seen as a possible deployment site for a squadron of F-16s which may be forced to vacate facilities in Spain and as a forward deployment location for cruise carrying B-52s.¹³¹

Moreover, the regime of King Hassan has supported the United States in the United Nations, in pursuit of the

¹³⁰Zune, "The United States and Morocco," 435.

¹³¹Wright, 209.

Middle East peace process,¹³² in training guerrillas for Jonas Savimbi and UNITA, and finally has been outspoken in criticizing Soviet actions (e.g., the invasion of Afghanistan). Another example of Morocco's cooperative nature came about in the 1970s when King Hassan dispatched 1,500 of Morocco's best soldiers to assist President Mobut Sese Seko, President of Zaire in resisting the Angola based invasion of the Shaba Province. Willingness to support U.S. and French actions aimed at maintaining stability in the region has earned Morocco the friendship of both countries.

Morocco had been used as a conduit for arming and training UNITA, the South African backed rebel movement in Angola, in order to circumvent the Clark Amendment which prohibited direct United States support. This amendment has since been repealed. Additionally, UNITA guerrillas have admitted receiving training at a joint United States-Moroccan training center in Morocco. Jonas Savimbi has used Morocco as a base for diplomatic efforts.¹³³ Morocco is also the base for one of the Libyan exile groups supported by the United States. Moroccan troops have played a role in Chad in 1982.

¹³²For example, King Hassan is credited with arranging secret meetings between Israel and Egypt which led to Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977. Additionally, Hassan has been at the forefront of efforts to have Egypt reinstated in the Arab League since Egypt's expulsion after the Camp David Accords.

¹³³Zune, "The United States and Morocco," 434.

The United States continues to hold on to emergency transit, staging and refueling rights at four former United States air bases.¹³⁴ The United States operates two telecommunication centers that are managed as civilian facilities as links for the United States Navy. Thor Kuniholm of the Moroccan desk at the United States State Department said:

One thing we're getting there is naval ships' visits there, and the Navy is very interested in that. That's a high priority for the Navy, because it is becoming increasingly difficult to find ports in the Middle East where American Navy ships are welcome.¹³⁵

Growth in this region would be consistent with the Reagan Doctrine's desire to extend United States naval presence below the southern limit of NATO. This would supplement new NATO facilities at Portugal's Madeira Islands, French bases in Senegal and Gabon and British facilities on Ascension Island.

Though Morocco appears to be more of a backup to U.S. global strategy than a crucial cornerstone, it fits in well with the Reagan Administration's concept of a "strategic consensus" of the United States and its allies against Soviet influence and left-wing insurgency, serving as a surrogate regional power. From Morocco's point of view, it now has a superpower umbrella for its territorial ambitions.¹³⁶

¹³⁴Claudia Wright, In These Times 28 July 1982.

¹³⁵Philadelphia Inquirer, 18 January 1982, in Zune, "The United States and Morocco," 435.

¹³⁶Ibid., 436.

David Lamb, author of The Arabs, explains United States sympathy for Morocco and King Hassan by noting, "Hassan is one of the few Third World leaders I can think of who gave, rather than sold, his country's friendship to the United States and the West."¹³⁷

United States Regional Interests

The conflict in the Western Sahara is essentially regional in nature fueled by rivalries that go back centuries. Since the government in Morocco is a conservative monarchy and the government of Algeria is a one party socialist state that has freed itself from the bonds of foreign hegemony, the differences in perception and goals of these two rivals causes mutual hostility and intense rivalry.

Morocco insists that the Western Saharan war is really a power conflict between itself and Algeria, not the Polisario. This partially explains Saudi Arabia's willingness to support another conservative monarchy financially, in the Arab League, and in the United Nations.

United States regional interests are interwoven in the strategic and economic interests of the region. If the war were to escalate, these interests could be dramatically affected. In such a conflict the United States, in supporting Morocco, would be supporting an economically and

¹³⁷David Lamb, The Arabs (New York: Random House, 1987), 295.

militarily weaker nation. Moreover, United States diplomatic interests, and perhaps others, would be affected because Morocco has few supporters and Algeria is recognized as a nonaligned leader among the developing countries. Any open conflict between these two regional powers could have severe ramifications.

In order to prevent the friction between these two rivals from erupting into overt hostilities, the United States has sought to maintain a relative balance of military power in the region. The United States and France have been Morocco's prime arms suppliers. In the 1970s, Morocco began a modernization program to enhance the deterrent capability of its armed forces. This has been an expensive venture which has diverted valuable resources from domestic needs. However, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia have contributed financially to this modernization program. It appears that Spain too has advanced credits totaling \$1 billion to Morocco for purchases of military hardware.¹³⁸

In attempting to establish closer ties with Algeria, the United States has tried to keep Algeria informed of United States actions in Morocco in order to alleviate any fear or apprehension. Additionally, the United States is

¹³⁸Reports in the Moroccan press indicate that Spain has established a line of credit for the Moroccan government for the purpose of supplying Spanish military equipment.

interested in improving relations with Algeria in an attempt to prevent further Soviet penetration. The perceived dissatisfaction of Algeria with the Soviet Union over Afghanistan, issues of Moslem unity, and the lack of economic progress has opened the door for the United States to pursue a more regionally oriented policy.

The United States has made overtures at increasing economic ties with Algeria, and is even considering selling sophisticated weaponry to Algeria (F-16s) in an effort to improve bilateral relations. Examples of improving relations are: United States vessels have begun calling at Algerian naval ports, Algeria has purchased seventeen C-130 Hercules at a cost of \$300 million, and in 1981-1983 Algeria purchased 4,000 heavy duty trucks from the American Motor Corporation. Moreover, Algeria has expressed an interest in more military sales, participating in foreign military sales, and financing programs. The United States has no formal military ties with Algeria, but has begun a military training program on a limited scale.¹³⁹

The significant amount of economic activity between Algeria and the United States dwarfs the trade relationship the United States has with Morocco. The United States replaced France as Algeria's number one trading partner in 1977. In 1980 trade reached \$6.6 billion; in 1983 Algeria

¹³⁹ Security assistance briefing at Fort Bragg, N.C. on 23 November 1986 presented by a briefing team from the Department of State.

exported 56 percent of its crude oil and 28 percent of its liquified gas to the United States. The United States has \$3 billion in private and public sector loans outstanding to Algeria, and it has several long range economic projects which could total \$27 billion for American companies. Morocco's principal product - phosphates - has no market in the United States.¹⁴⁰

Besides the economic relationship, Algeria has been helpful to the United States in recent years in other matters. The assistance given during the Iranian hostage crisis of the Carter administration is a case in point. As a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, Algeria is in an influential position that cannot be discounted.

Other nations in the area are not as involved in the conflict but deserve mention. Mauritania, originally a partner in the annexation of the Western Sahara, and Tunisia have formed a pact with Algeria. Libya, not really part of the Maghreb region, has played a role in financing the Polisario and in providing needed political and diplomatic support. This activity by Libya was undercut with the "Treaty of Union" between Morocco and Libya which astonished the Reagan administration. This pact further substantiates the point that King Hassan directs an independent foreign policy. However, this was a treaty of

¹⁴⁰ Robert A. Manning and Jennifer Nayan, "Maghreb Policy in Disarray," Africa Report (Nov.-Dec. 1984):79.

expediency between Libya and Morocco when both became concerned by recent security arrangements between Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania. This "Treaty of Union" has since been unilaterally abrogated by Morocco.

Finally, the United States really has no desire to see another mini-state created that would have a tiny population, few resources, and would probably be under the effective domination of Algeria. The creation of a mini-state under Algerian dominance could undermine the stability of the region and undercut the security of Morocco.

Tradition versus Realpolitik

The Reagan administration ushered in a rejuvenated period of ideological bipolar foreign policy disguised as "realpolitik." The principles of containment, globalism, and anticommunism with the added dimensions of ardent interventionism emphasizing the use of military power became the preeminent philosophy of the Reagan Doctrine. The Reagan policy was at the same time determined to support United States allies, improve relations with the Third World, and improve the military position of the United States.¹⁴¹

This policy is evidenced by the administration's approach to the problems of the Western Saharan conflict.

¹⁴¹Kegley, "Persistent Premises in Postwar American Foreign Policy," 4.

Traditional American concerns of human-rights, support for decolonialization, and self-determination are subordinate to the application of a policy of "realpolitik" focusing on the East-West contest. The support of the Kingdom of Morocco is seen as a litmus test of United States resolve. Furthermore, the interests of the United States are defined in the geostrategic terms of the administration. Morocco's position as a long and trusted friend which is strategically important is sufficient enough to warrant the military aid and economic assistance given.

The administration has at times resorted to legalisms in order to justify its policies and support of Morocco. Denying the legitimacy of the Sahrawi peoples national consciousness is just one example. Another, is the allegation that the Polisario are in fact made up of mercenaries, Libyans, Mauritians, and scattered economic refugees in conjunction with the assumption that they are merely puppets of the Algerians.¹⁴² Justification for more military assistance was based on attacks by the Polisario into the sovereign nation-state of Morocco. Of course, the Reagan administration had an obligation to assist Morocco in defending its territorial integrity.

¹⁴²There may be truth to these charges. Drought conditions in the Maghreb and the perceived benefits in moving to a well-subsidized refugee camp were attractive to peoples of the region.

A dilemma faces any administration that tries to come to grips with the rights of self-determination in this modern world. There are many groups that claim this right, and the Palestinians, the Kurds, and the Armenians are just a few. The traditional United States support for such groups conflicts with real world judgments concerning the balance of forces, regional stabilities, loyalties, and precedents. If the United States recognizes Sahrawis claims, what about other groups that espouse a claim to self-determination?

Morocco's northern neighbor, Spain, maintains control of two colonial enclaves in North Africa. If a vote was taken to determine the wishes of the people living in these Spanish colonial territories the result very well could be incorporation with Morocco!

Spokesman for the liberal tradition, Congressman Stephen J. Solarz, has been an articulate and effective opponent of administration policies. In fact, he has led what one might call the "conscience" of the House of Representatives. Solarz said in 1979 that:

Arms increases would be a fundamental contradiction of the principles on which our country was founded, as well as our commitment to human rights, if we were to assist in the suppression of a genuinely indigenous and internationally recognized effort to achieve self-determination, particularly in the absence of any compelling strategic considerations of this country.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Stephen J. Solarz, "Arms for Morocco", Foreign Affairs, 58 (Winter 79/80): 26.

Solarz adds that United States support to Morocco amounts to a reward for aggression; it is damaging important relationships with the Third World. This brings up an interesting question of the selective application of standards. For example, the United States has rewarded Israeli intransigence and aggressive behavior with extremely limited criticism. Moreover, the conflicting nationalisms epitomized in the Western Sahara appear to be in the process of being settled by force. Should the United States recognize borders that are imposed by military action? If not, then the unity of Italy and Germany in the nineteenth century could even be brought into question. The point is that force has often been the determining factor in resolving conflicts of this nature.

Solarz is correct in his assessment of the potential damage to United States relations with the Third World. This emphasis on "realpolitik" is cause for concern and dismay in the Third World where the bulk of the Polisario's diplomatic support lies. Seventy countries have recognized the legitimacy of the claims to nationhood of the Sahrawi people as of January 1988.¹⁴⁴ Of these, it is interesting to note, only two Eastern Bloc countries have recognized the SADR - Yugoslavia and Albania - independent communist states outside the "monolithic block of communism"! From

¹⁴⁴It is interesting to note that the majority of these countries are minor states or mini-states with little international power or influence.

the West not one nation has recognized the SADR, although some have had informal contacts.¹⁴⁵ What pressure the United States has exerted on allies to maintain this status of nonrecognition by the West is open to conjecture.

¹⁴⁵Additionally, SADR has representatives at the European Parliament.

CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF THE CONFLICT

Efforts at Conflict Resolution

The failure of the parties involved to "internationalize" the conflict, and therefore polarize it has kept it essentially localized and limited. Yet, there is still the fear of escalation which could lead to direct a direct conflict between Morocco and Algeria and/or Mauritania.

Pressure has been exerted at different times during the conflict in order to move the peace process forward. A review of the literature indicates numerous prognoses of impending breakthroughs. The flurry of diplomatic activity at different junctures since 1975 has yet to produce any tangible results despite intermittent high hopes. The lack of progress, the role of the superpowers in conflict resolution, and the role of regional/international organizations demands more study. However, the purpose of this section is to provide further background on the role of the Soviet Union, the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, and parties directly involved in the conflict in order to ascertain the short-term prospects for peace.

Role of the Superpowers

Neither superpower has an interest in the escalation of this conflict. In fact, the conflict has been muted rather than polarized due to the complex relationships which tie the superpowers to the antagonists. Morocco is perceived as an ally of the United States; yet, it has greater economic ties with the Soviet Union. Conversely, Algeria is perceived as being in the Soviet sphere but has greater economic ties with the United States.

Although there is antagonism between Morocco and Algeria resulting from this conflict and their continuing struggle to be the leading regional power to date, neither Morocco nor Algeria has seen it as advantageous to widen the conflict. Both sides are tempted by brinkmanship, but both appear to recognize the consequences of falling over the edge. Moreover, Algeria has restrained the Polisario and there has not been an eruption of terrorism from the Polisario. For both superpowers local ambitions are troublesome to their regional interests.

Soviet Union

The Soviets clearly do not see the conflict in the Western Sahara as a priority that requires initiatives from the Soviet Union because the Soviets have been able to maintain excellent relations with the states of the region by emphasizing bilateral relations.

In general, Soviet objectives in the Maghreb are first and foremost to be present and have influence in the region; to develop strong relations with the states and political parties to counterbalance U.S. influence; to exploit U.S. failures to its own advantage; to prevent intra-regional conflicts; and, most importantly, to consolidate its image as the friend of the Arabs and to reinforce the perception of the United States as the enemy of the people in the region.¹⁴⁶

For the Soviet Union, the problem of the conflict in the Western Sahara stands on two issues: (1) how to pressure the Polisario to end its military operations without antagonizing Libya, Algeria, and Mauritania, and (2) how to maintain the long-standing relationship with Morocco without undermining the Soviet position as a supporter of Third World liberation movements. Moreover, the conflict in the Western Sahara has the potential to affect Soviet relations with the states of the Maghreb, the members of the OAU, and the future ability of the Soviets to acquire support facilities for its navy. The resulting policy of the Soviet Union reflects an emphasis on bilateralism with strong anti-American overtones.

Considering the interests of the Soviet Union, it seems that a policy of care and restraint has been followed. The Soviets have supported the initiatives of the UN/OAU. However, the Soviet Union has not proposed any serious initiatives to resolve the conflict or has it taken an active role. There have been calls for a cease-fire and

¹⁴⁶Yahia Zoubir, "Soviet Policy in the Maghreb," Arab Studies Quarterly, 9(Fall 1987):401.

warnings given to Morocco and the Polisario so that caution is exercised, a search for common ground is undertaken, and an interest in preventing the conflict from expanding is explored. The Soviet Union did propose an international peace conference in October 1982 which was eventually supported by Algeria but by no other party. In addition, the Soviet Union has cautiously though publicly asserted that the Sahrawi do have a right to self-determination.¹⁴⁷ The Soviet Union has publicly articulated criticism of United States actions in the region, but it has not really become involved.

Pravda published an article titled "On Mutual Ground: USSR-Morocco, Horizons of Cooperation" which described various aspects of Soviet-Moroccan relations to include the fact that the USSR is the number one supplier of oil to Morocco and is willing to barter. This is seen as an indicator of the Soviets intention to strengthen bilateral relations with Morocco.¹⁴⁸

Morocco is the largest trading partner of the Soviet Union in Africa.¹⁴⁹ Relations between Morocco and the USSR remain primarily economic and cultural with the Soviets having a significant interest in access to Moroccan phosphates.

¹⁴⁷Zoubir, "Soviet Policy in the Maghreb," 405.

¹⁴⁸"Soviet Peace Plans for the Middle East," 108.

¹⁴⁹Middle East Economic Digest, 17 March 1978, 32.

Zoubir suggests that the Soviet Union is utilizing its trading relationship in order to further expand its presence in the region. Yet, the Soviets are allegedly sensitive to the problems of the region. The Soviets have reiterated their support for the positions of the OAU and the United Nations regarding the Western Sahara, and they have revised their fishing agreement with Morocco because it implied recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara.¹⁵⁰ The Soviet Union has been concerned with the enlarging relationship between the United States and Morocco; therefore, a primary objective of the Soviets has become the maintenance of a position of influence in the region to deny Morocco to the West.

The OAU and UN Efforts

The United Nations and the Organization of African Unity have struggled with the issue of the Western Sahara since the early 1960s. The inability to resolve this conflict is typical of the lack of success such organizations have experienced when trying to resolve international crisis. In addition, the disunity in the OAU makes the prospects for a successful role problematical. However, the purpose here is not to recount the failed efforts of the past but to focus on recent initiatives and the prospects for a breakthrough.

¹⁵⁰Zoubir, "Soviet Policy in the Maghreb," 410.

OAU Resolution AHG/104 and UN General Assembly Resolutions 40/50 establish the ways and means to reach a just and definite solution to the conflict according to these two bodies. Moreover, the United Nations continues to affirm, as recently as October 13 1986, that the conflict in the Western Sahara is a question of decolonialization and self-determination. The intent of the UN/OAU initiative is to conduct a credible referendum through which the people of the Western Sahara can freely exercise their right to self-determination without military or administrative constraint.¹⁵¹

Following the technical mission to the Western Sahara, the UN Secretary General and the President of the OAU will formulate proposals to be presented to the Polisario and Morocco as a basis for two-party negotiations. In March 1988 a report from a UN Technical Mission investigating the problems of a referendum was expected; subsequently, a meeting of Algerian and Moroccan representatives chaired by Secretary General Perez de Cuellar is hoped for.¹⁵²

An ominous note for Morocco and a possible roadblock to future progress was a statement by Kenneth Kaunda, OAU President:

We in Zambia....condemn colonialism in all its forms. We cannot conceive that one African country

¹⁵¹SPSC Letter, Vol. VII., No.3, November 1987.

¹⁵²SPSC Letter, Vol. VIII., NO. 3, January 1988.

colonizes another African country. The Sahrawi people must obtain their independence.¹⁵³

What does this indicate about the impartiality that Morocco expects from any OAU/UN sponsored referendum? The perspective and role of the OAU president is a vital factor in bringing the parties together to negotiate. Any indication of bias that breeds distrust hinders the prospects for negotiation. Yet, there are other obstacles to negotiations besides the perceived bias of Kaunda.

All the parties have agreed at one time or another that the best solution is a referendum but that has been the extent of the progress. Any potential agreement still rests on the issues of (1) who should be allowed to vote in any referendum, and (2) the structural/administrative procedures to be followed in the event of a referendum.

The technical questions concerning this referendum are complicated and controversial. Should there be a withdrawal of Moroccan forces and administration before any referendum? Should the returning refugees from Tindouf be allowed to vote, and are they really Sahrawi? Should there be an international peace force assigned to the Western Sahara? Other problems continue to be the refusal of Morocco to enter into direct talks with the Polisario, and Algeria's refusal to represent the Polisario. (Direct talks

¹⁵³Ibid.

imply recognition and Morocco does not recognize the Polisario.)

Both Morocco and Algeria face pressures to bring an end to this fratricidal conflict. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia brought Chadli and King Hassan together for talks in May 1987. The meeting was the first between Algeria and Morocco since a February 26 1983 meeting. Dialogue had been nearly nonexistent for four years.¹⁵⁴ Of significance in this meeting was the removal of Algerian demands for direct talks between Morocco and Polisario and the willingness of Algeria to consider something other than independence for the Western Sahara. Le Monde reporter Jean De La Gueriveire suggests that Algeria is driven by a desire to end the conflict and move on to an era of Maghrebian unity. Moreover, Algerian support for the Polisario has grown troublesome due to the fact it is beset with its own economic problems.¹⁵⁵

George Joffe echoes this view by saying:

The military and financial support it has given Polisario over the years has cost the country dear - and even more so now, at a time when the economy is under great strain. Moreover, the Algerians are likely to have concluded by now, along with everyone else, that despite Polisario's recent

¹⁵⁴Fredrick Fritscher, "La Rencontre Chadli - Hassan II Ne Parait Pas Avoir Eu Les Resultats Escomptes Par le Roi Fahd," Le Monde 6 May 1987, 7.

¹⁵⁵Jean De La Gueriviere, "Rabat Estime Que L'Algerie A Admis Son Implication Direct Dans Le Conflit Saharien," Le Monde, 7 May 1987, 5.

initiative on the battlefield, the military balance is decisively in Morocco's favor.¹⁵⁶

Simon Ingram also reports that, "Algeria is keener now than ever to end the fighting." He suggests that this may be due to the fading control Algeria has over the Polisario.¹⁵⁷

Despite some rapprochement between Morocco and Algeria the Polisario continue to call for nothing less than full sovereignty and territorial integrity. Suggestions for a federal solution, limited autonomy, or partition are all unilaterally rejected by the Polisario. Moreover, the Polisario steadfastly demands that the Western Sahara be turned over to an international organization and Morocco completely withdraw before any referendum takes effect.¹⁵⁸

Mohammed Abdul Aziz, President of SADR and Secretary of the Polisario, is satisfied with the diplomatic pressure exerted on Morocco and the continual harassing military attacks conducted by the Polisario. He emphasizes that UN Resolution 40/50 stressing a referendum under international supervision is the correct path to follow in ending hostilities.¹⁵⁹ He added that the cause of the Polisario is

¹⁵⁶George Joffe, "Morocco and Spain: Crisis in the Presidios," Middle East International, 20 February 1987, 10.

¹⁵⁷Simon Ingram, "Polisario: Through the Wall," Middle East International 3 April 1987, 12.

¹⁵⁸SPSC Letter, Vol. VII., No.1 July 1987.

¹⁵⁹"Western Sahara Ministry Statement Denounces Moroccan Strategy," Foreign Broadcast Information Service, MEA-86-091 Vol. 5. N.091, 23 July 1986.

supported by the OAU and the UN; moreover, the Polisario are receiving more diplomatic recognition with every passing month.

Morocco has agreed in principle to the UN and OAU efforts of a ceasefire and international supervision over a referendum. Yet, here again the refusal to enter into direct talks, technical problems relating to the conduct of a referendum, and a refusal to vacate the Western Sahara are obstacles to a negotiated solution. In addition, Morocco would need to placate domestic and military opinion in order to have a negotiated settlement. Although the war is costly, the war remains popular and unites the political parties. Any attempt to resolve the conflict that jeopardizes Moroccan control would be disastrous, therefore, leading to the conclusion that Morocco has nothing to gain from a referendum that does not satisfy its interests. It would be foolish for King Hassan to agree to any scheme that threatens the Moroccan position. Henry Kissinger has noted that:

No power will submit to a settlement however well balanced and however 'secure' which seems totally to deny its vision of itself.¹⁶⁰

Kissinger goes on to say that a state will never cease in pressing what it regards as its "just claims". In the case of the Western Sahara both of these factors are applicable

¹⁶⁰Henry Kissinger, A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822 (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1957), 146

and make it doubly hard to come to a peaceful resolution. It remains true that matters of national security, self-definition, and the existence of the state are too vital to be left to arbitration or impartial judges.

Conclusion

The inability to internationalize the conflict along with the unique role that the superpowers play with the parties involved has so far kept the conflict limited. However, the war has dragged on for over a decade and prospects for a peaceful settlement are dim.

Morocco's position in the Western Sahara is continuously improving as the "facts" change. To date, Morocco has withstood the social, economic and political tensions created by the war and the military situation has now stabilized in Morocco's favor. There is no reason for Morocco to withdraw from the Western Sahara and many reasons to remain (the most important being regime survival). For Morocco, the optimum arrangement would be to hold a referendum in a few years with OAU/UN assistance and hope that by then a clear majority of the people would vote for integration.

CONCLUSION

Appraisal of Current Policy

When the Reagan administration came to office, the general assessment concerning Morocco was one of despair and hopelessness. The military and economic situation of Morocco which comprised a conflict, severe losses on the battlefield, and a grave economic crisis set the stage for a bleak outlook. Conversely, the diplomatic situation looked good for the SADR due to the fact that Morocco was becoming diplomatically isolated, and the Polisario had taken the initiative and advantage in the military aspects of the conflict.

Since 1980, the military situation has stabilized with Morocco exercising effective and unimpeded control over the bulk of the Western Sahara. Economic development is progressing now that law and order have been reestablished.

This dramatic turn around can be attributed, in part, to the massive increases in military assistance from the United States. In addition, military sales from France and financial resources provided by Saudi Arabia have contributed to the stability of Morocco and the rapid strengthening of military forces.

The modern application of a new, but old, war fighting strategy aided by the incorporation of modern technology

has impacted dramatically on the course and conduct of the war.

The program to support the regime of Hassan has been successful in solidifying our friendship with the present king and in ameliorating the costs and impact of the conflict. Even though this policy has been implemented in conformity with grand strategic interests and within the confines of the Reagan administration's perceived global role, there have been costs economically, diplomatically, and ideologically.

The present United States policy conforms with traditional (post World War II) United States responses to threats to friendly governments which the United States believes to be strategically important. The reliance on the military response - stressing military assistance - may not always be in the long-term economic, regional, and ideological interests of the United States. However, no one can argue the strategic importance of Morocco's location. The present policy of military sales, assistance, economic aid, and the failure to diplomatically pressure Morocco into seeking a negotiated solution is in fact a de facto acquiescence to Morocco's goal of territorial expansion.

In the long-term, the policy of the Reagan administration may run into difficulty. Congressional opposition to foreign aid in general and objections to military assistance in specific creates short-term and

long-term problems for the administration's attempts at providing economic and military aid. Congress cut the administration's requests for foreign assistance by \$1.5 billion for FY1986. However, current American aid to Morocco is running at close to \$400 million a year when all programs are factored into the equation.¹⁶¹

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a major financial supporter of Morocco, has had to cut back on foreign aid as its financial position has weakened. These two factors, coupled with the fall in the price of oil, undercut a base of support which has provided Morocco with the financial resources to absorb the cost of the war.¹⁶² It is possible that the Polisario could yet gain a victory through a war of attrition.

The ideological positions and credibility of the United States are undermined when it "cries wolf" about the Soviet threat appearing in every conflict. This further undermines the position of the administration when it seeks funds from Congress and support in the court of world opinion. In addition, the tendency to "cry wolf" has cost the United States valuable political capital in the forums of the Third World such as the Organization of African

¹⁶¹ John M. Goshko, "White House Blinked on Foreign Aid," Washington Post, 17 October 1986, 21, A.

¹⁶² Estimates vary as to the cost of the war from \$1 to \$4 million per day. This does not include any positive economic gains associated with controlling the Western Sahara.

Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement.¹⁶³ Of course other issues are of more importance to the OAU as in the case of South Africa and American support for Jonas Savimbi in Angola. The United States does support a referendum in the Western Sahara; however, increased military aid during the Reagan administration and vetoes of UN General Assembly resolutions, like Resolution 34/37, demonstrates to the world a lack of United States support for regional initiatives that are supported by the majority in the United Nations.

A major criticism of American policy, according to Stephen Zunes, lies in its consequences for international order:

Traditionally, nation states - particularly great powers such as the United States - have upheld international law not for fear of sanctions as much as for the perception that maintaining international order prevents global instability which could threaten that nation's vital interests worldwide. With some notable exceptions, primarily within their tightly controlled spheres of influence, the United States and other major powers have been willing to sacrifice short-term policy interests rather than risk losing the long-term advantages of maintaining international stability...¹⁶⁴

Thomas Frank of the New York University Law School adds:

¹⁶³ U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Report of Staff Study Mission To Morocco, Algeria, The Western Sahara, 1982, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Stephen Zunes, "The United States and Morocco," 427.

... this is the first instance - with the possible exception of West Irian, where there was at least an attempt to make a show of consultation - in which a former colony has been dismantled by another former colony before being allowed to become independent, thereby being denied its right to self-determination; and as such, it constitutes a particularly destabilizing precedent for Africa and indeed the whole world.¹⁶⁵

Critics fear that by supporting Morocco the United States undermines the OAU and its by-laws which could lead to other unilateral actions by dissatisfied states seeking to change colonial borders.

Another concern is that it has the potential to sour United States relations with African and Third World states. Votes in the United Nations reflect substantial support for Sahrawis self-determination. A UN vote calling for Moroccan compliance with conditions established by the UN was ninety-six in favor and seven opposed with thirty-nine abstentions. United States relations with African states are already strained, and the situation in the Western Sahara further weakens the diplomatic position of the United States.

Are American interests best served by an ability to cope with regional problems stressing accomodation or by stressing East-West ideological concerns? The Reagan answer stressed containment, military security, and support of

¹⁶⁵Thomas Frank, Hearings before the Subcommittees on International Organizations and on Africa of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 13 October 1979, quoted by Zunes, "The United States and Morocco," 427.

allies rather than actively pursuing negotiations. The Reagan administration sought to restore cooperation among allies and to defeat insurgent wars of liberation allegedly fostered by the Soviet Union. The conflict in the Western Sahara became a testing ground for the Reagan Doctrine. However:

... such conflicts potentially hurt American economic interests, embroil regional friends, risk direct American-Soviet confrontation. It also deepens suspicions of many in the Third World that the US is intolerant of Third World nationalism and political experimentation. This could cause Third World leaders to look towards Moscow for support thereby creating the very results it seeks to prevent.¹⁶⁶

Publicly the United States supports the principles of self-determination - within the frontiers inherited from colonial periods - for fear of encouraging aggression in other parts of the globe. In the case of the Western Sahara there is the potential for further damage in relations with the Third World if the United States openly supports Morocco's annexation. Algeria has made it clear that the only obstacle to improved United States-Algerian relations is the Western Saharan conflict.¹⁶⁷ However, it is unlikely that bilateral relations would be allowed to suffer unless there were vital interests at stake. Algeria is the only nation with a vital interest in the conflict which is tied

¹⁶⁶Richard E. Feinberg, "American Power and Third World Economies," Lieber ed., Eagle Resurgent, 158.

¹⁶⁷Zune, "The United States and Morocco," 428.

to both prestige and the regional balance of power. The United States has sidestepped this issue by simply contributing to the support of the Moroccan military and their economic requirements and by not diplomatically recognizing Morocco's claims. Moreover, the possibility of another Moroccan-Algerian border war exists. Yet, the United States still hopes that Algeria will abandon the Polisario. This could encourage other states to act, or even Morocco to consider other irredentist claims, and could undermine the Algerian leadership position in the Nonaligned Movement.

The present military situation is stable in the Western Sahara; the King enjoys wide public support for his policy. Yet, the economic costs of maintaining the war effort continually drain an already troubled economy. It is not easy to assess the affect of the depressed economy on the populace when there is widespread support for Morocco's policy in the Western Sahara. The Moroccan military and the middle class appear to support the war effort. It is not likely that there will be any threat to the monarchy from these two bastions of power as long as the war proceeds favorably and the economic strains do not grow too great.

Experts have "...pointed to the vulnerability of the narrowly based traditional Moroccan elite in face of the

rising demands of a mushrooming urban population."¹⁶⁸ Morocco is undergoing a tremendous internal stress as it grapples with the problems of development and population growth. The war effort only aggravates these problems, and it may provide a fissure wide enough in the future to topple the Hassan Regime. This is the hope of the Polisario: to outlast the Hassan Regime by continuing a costly war with Algerian support and by exerting diplomatic pressure to isolate Morocco.

It is clear that decisions are not made in a vacuum. They are subject to structural conditions - global, regional, and domestic - which determine the decision making environment. In the case of Morocco there is a remarkable homogeneity of opinion regarding the Sahara. The "public mood" seems to define the boundaries outside which King Hassan dare not tread without risking legitimacy. The present position reflects Morocco's "self-definition," and its concept of vital national interests which lead to the supposition that it would be foolish for the United States to pressure Morocco unduly on this matter.

The United States policy, as constituted, is heavily dependent on the presence of King Hassan as the dominant political leader of Morocco. Could the United States lose long-term political advantages and influence at the cost of

¹⁶⁸ U.S House. Report of Staff Study to Morocco :23. Previously cited.

the short-term support for the policies of Morocco? Claudia Wright suggests:

Over the last three decades, the fundamental U.S. objective, in U.S.-Moroccan security relations has not changed: the preservation of King Hassan's throne as an ally to the West. The risk for the U.S. in giving unqualified support to the king's personal security and political survival is the Reagan administration has reduced U.S. influence over the course King Hassan is pursuing in the Saharan war.¹⁶⁹

Could the identification of King Hassan with the United States ignite latent hostilities towards the United States and revive Islamic fundamentalism with antimonarchical tones? Will increasing the presence of United States personnel cause the government problems? It could be easy to misconstrue the war as one supported by the United States with the King of Morocco being a United States lackey that does not represent the best interests of the Moroccan people and their Islamic values. It was thought impossible that the Shah of Iran would topple so easily. Could present United States policies be so blind as not to see the potential long-term damage to American interests in becoming so closely associated with the Moroccan war effort in the Western Sahara that in effect the United States will help to topple Hassan II through his own policies? These are all questions that do not have final answers at this

¹⁶⁹Claudia Wright, "Journey to Marrakesh: U.S.-Moroccan Security Relations," International Security 7 (Spring, 1985):178.

time but need to be continually revisited in assessing the United States role.

However, this study concludes that United States policy has been balanced, objective, and sensitive to the dynamics of Moroccan politics. It is the very nature of the Moroccan polity, the near unanimous support for the annexation of the Western Sahara, and the central role of King Hassan that limited the options available to the Reagan administration. In fact, three successive United States administrations have supported Morocco directly or indirectly in the Western Sahara.

King Hassan has survived a period of socioeconomic crisis and a deteriorating military situation in the Western Sahara due in part to the timely assistance provided by the United States. Moreover, King Hassan is as secure in 1988 as at any time during his reign. It should also be noted that King Hassan is an exceptional leader with vastly different capabilities than the late Shah of Iran. In addition, the Moroccan governments recent initiatives to liberalize the economy along with the return to constitutional government indicate that King Hassan is firmly in control and secure enough to risk economic and political reform. The major elements of society (e.g., political parties, the religious sector, the military, and rural notables) agree that the monarchy is the center of Moroccan politics and will continue to be.

King Hassan is probably less threatened than one would imagine. The increased democracy, programs targeted at compensating the rural and urban poor, reforms and liberalization of the economy, the use of military force to maintain order, the use of his religious position, and the public support for the war are all factors which support the prospect for continuity of the monarchy. Yet, there will continue to be long-term pressures and conditions generating demands for change, greater democracy, and socioeconomic reforms which will continually challenge the monarchy.

We have witnessed King Hassan change direction quickly when opportunities presented themselves such as a treaty with Libya and improving economic and cultural ties with the Soviet Union. We cannot look into the future and predict the outcome of this war nor the status of future United States-Moroccan relations. However, one thing is sure, King Hassan will follow his own guidance; "Before being a friend of the U.S., I am first of all King of Morocco."

One can only hope that the Reagan administration has judged the situation in Morocco correctly, and that the realpolitik concerns that have driven United States policy are valid because the future stability of Morocco is important to United States interests.

Final Comments

The policies of the Reagan administration, and to a lesser extent the Carter administration, supported the Moroccan annexation of the Western Sahara through both military and diplomatic means. In fact, three successive American administrations have found it advantageous to support Morocco's position. United States support reflects the special relationship between the two countries; the United States receives support for its strategic consensus, gains an ally in the Arab world, has a surrogate for actions in Africa, and acquires military support. Morocco in return receives military, economic, and diplomatic support from the United States. Moreover, the dynamics of the relationship reflect the domestic political realities in Morocco that inhibit any United States inclination to pressure the Moroccan government to make concessions that would be contrary to Moroccan nationalism and self-definition. To a degree reverse leverage may in fact play a role in this relationship.

The impact of these events: fall of the Shah, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the crisis surrounding the hostage taking in Teheran all contributed to the perception that the United States was weak and ineffective during 1980. Before Reagan's team assumed positions of authority on January 20 1981, Alexander Haig - the incoming Secretary of State - pressured the Carter administration to

release military assistance to Morocco.¹⁷⁰ This was an attempt to reestablish American credibility and trustworthiness. Reagan was committed to promoting policies which stressed America's strength, and its willingness to assume an active role in the world scene - - namely a role befitting a superpower.

In the opinion of some in the Reagan administration, the "postwar world" was to continue with no fundamental changes especially for America's role. The Reagan administration emphasized the opportunities and denied the limits that had previously been the basis for former United States administrations policies. The call for economic and military restoration, a "rejuvenation" if you will, was done in response to the perceived notion that American leadership was in decline.

The Reagan Doctrine denied the "theory of hegemonic decline" by enacting policies which stressed containment, globalism, and ideological foundations geared to the East-West conflict. The administration sought to explain that:

...what it saw as a catastrophic erosion of American military and economic strength rested on the premise that the causes of erosion were rooted in the policies of previous administrations, not in long-term cycles of hegemonic decline. Insufficient military spending and mistaken economic ideology

¹⁷⁰Haig, Caveat, 97.

were the primary causes of the recession of American power.¹⁷¹

The Reagan Doctrine explicitly perceived a world caught in a titanic struggle against Soviet expansionism; furthermore, it identified the conflict with the Soviet Union as: democracy versus totalitarianism, capitalism versus communism, freedom versus repression. This viewpoint supported military power and gave a high priority to national security goals. Some called this "conservative internationalism" with an emphasis on conservatism.¹⁷²

The policies of containment and globalism premised on ideological considerations caused regional conflicts to be subordinated rather than fully examined; the overriding concern was always the East-West conflict. Regional problems, such as the Western Sahara, were categorically analyzed as problems that arose from competition with the Soviet Union; to a lesser degree these regional problems were viewed as emanating from indigenous sources. The result was a Reagan policy that turned away from Carter policies, which stressed human rights, regional dimensions, regional concerns, and an acceptance of a changing and diminishing role for the United States. Moreover, Reagan's

¹⁷¹Kenneth A. Oye, "Constrained Confidence and the Evolution of Reagan Foreign Policy," in Eagle Resurgent? The Reagan Era in American Foreign Policy, eds. K. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1987), 5.

¹⁷²William Schneider, "'Rambo' and Reality: Having It Both Ways," in Eagle Resurgent?, 71.

globalist policies underestimated the importance of intra-regional conflicts which directly caused an incorrect assessment of American interests and contributed all the more to an imbalance between "global images and regional realities".¹⁷³ In effect, the realities of the Western Saharan conflict became confused when the analytical process of assessing this conflict was undertaken using Reagan policy premises. In addition, Morocco may be seen as a typical example of an entire United States policy process that embraced anticommunist authoritarian governments and the status quo in an effort to build an international structure to support containment.

However, the heavy costs associated with a role of active leadership, containment, and globalism led to problems for the Reagan Doctrine. Although there was a desire to support foreign aid and an increased military posture, the changing domestic economic realities, recognition of the diffusion of power, and changing international realities forced the administration to accept cuts in foreign aid and other financial commitments. Yet, in the beginning of the Reagan administration military aid and other forms of bilateral aid were provided to trustworthy and friendly governments in order to assist them in resisting insurgency movements and repulsing Soviet

¹⁷³Kenneth A. Oye, "Constrained Confidence and the Evolution of Reagan Foreign Policy," in Eagle Resurgent?, 25.

"proxies." In the case of the Western Sahara, the Polisario were said to be supported by the Soviet Union in conjunction with Libya, Algeria, and Iran.¹⁷⁴

The Reagan Doctrine expressed a desire to support friendly governments, to support allies in strategic locations, and to counter Soviet penetration; all of these factors are evident in Reagan's policy toward Morocco. Yet, other factors played a prominent role for American policy: the need for military bases to support force projection, to maintain NATO's southern flank, and to counter adventurism by radical states (Libya and Iran).¹⁷⁵ Consequently, security assistance was a primary feature of the Reagan Doctrine.

Even though we have seen that American foreign policy has been driven, during the Reagan presidency, by ideological and strategic interests, in my judgement the policy was the correct one; yet, a policy that seems to have been chosen for incorrect reasons if public pronouncements are to be believed.

Yes, the Western Sahara is a regional conflict which exhibits many complex issues, and some of those issues may never be satisfactorily resolved. The fact remains, once

¹⁷⁴Brzezinski, Game Plan: How to Conduct the U.S.-Soviet Contest, 140.

¹⁷⁵Donald Rothchild and John Ravenhill, "Subordinating African Issues to Global Logic," Lieber ed., Eagle Resurgent, 393.

King Hassan led the Green March into the Western Sahara and supported the annexation, support of the war effort became a litmus test in Moroccan politics. The United States had to be sensitive to the perceived vital interests of the Moroccans. For Morocco, the conflict is based on national self-definition and principle; it is not something open to compromise.

For the United States the policy of declared neutrality and limited support for Morocco supports self-determination but a self-determination that has allowed an ally and a friend to pursue its own national interests. The United States has used its influence to decrease tensions in the region and to keep more peaceful options open; yet, the United States has also stood steadfastly behind a friend in need. In the short-term, levels of support to Morocco have contributed to regional balance, demonstrated United States reliability, strengthened mutual ties, and increased defense capabilities in order to project power and deter aggression. The role that the United States has played in the conflict really has not been dysfunctional to broader interests. In fact, policy during the Reagan administration towards Morocco and the conflict in the Western Sahara reflects continuing basic geostrategic concerns and domestic political conditions in Morocco which have constrained the options available to the United States.

APPENDIX A

DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION OF SADR

Diplomatic recognition of SADR by country and date (day, month, and year).

Africa

1. Madagascar	28.2.76
2. Burundi	1.3.76
3. Algeria	6.3.76
4. Benin	11.3.76
5. Angola	11.3.76
6. Mozambique	13.3.76
7. Guinea-Bissau	15.3.76
8. Togo	17.3.76
9. Rwanda	1.4.76
10. Seychelles	5.10.77
11. Congo	3.6.78
12. Sao Tome and Principe	22.6.78
13. Tanzania	24.2.79
14. Ethiopia	24.2.79
15. Cape Verde	4.7.79
16. Ghana	24.8.79
17. Uganda	6.9.79
18. Zambia	12.10.79
19. Lesotho	9.10.79
20. Sierra Leone	28.3.80
21. Libya	15.4.80
22. Swaziland	28.4.80
23. Zimbabwe	3.7.80
24. Chad	4.7.80
25. Mali	4.7.80
26. Botswana	14.5.80
27. Mauritius	16.7.80
28. Mauritania	27.2.84
29. Upper Volta	4.3.84
30. Nigeria	12.11.84
31. Liberia	3.8.85

Asia

32. North Korea	16.3.76
33. South Yemen	2.2.78
34. Vietnam	2.3.79
35. Kampuchea	10.4.79
36. Laos	9.5.79
37. Afghanistan	23.5.79
38. Iran	27.2.80
39. Syria	15.4.80
40. India	1.10.85

Latin American and Carribean

41. Panama	23.6.78
42. Grenada	20.8.79
43. Guyana	1.9.79
44. Dominique	1.9.79
45. Saint Lucia	1.9.79
46. Jamaica	4.9.79
47. Nicaragua	6.9.79
48. Mexico	8.9.79
49. Cuba	21.1.80
50. Costa Rica	30.10.80
51. Venezuela	3.3.82
52. Surinam	21.8.82
53. Bolivia	14.12.82
54. Ecuador	14.11.83
55. Peru	8.9.82
56. Columbia	27.2.85
57. Guatemala	10.4.86
58. Dominica	24.6.86
59. Trinidad	1.11.86
60. Belize	18.11.86
61. Antigua and Barbuda	no date
62. Saint Kitts and Nevis	no date

Europe

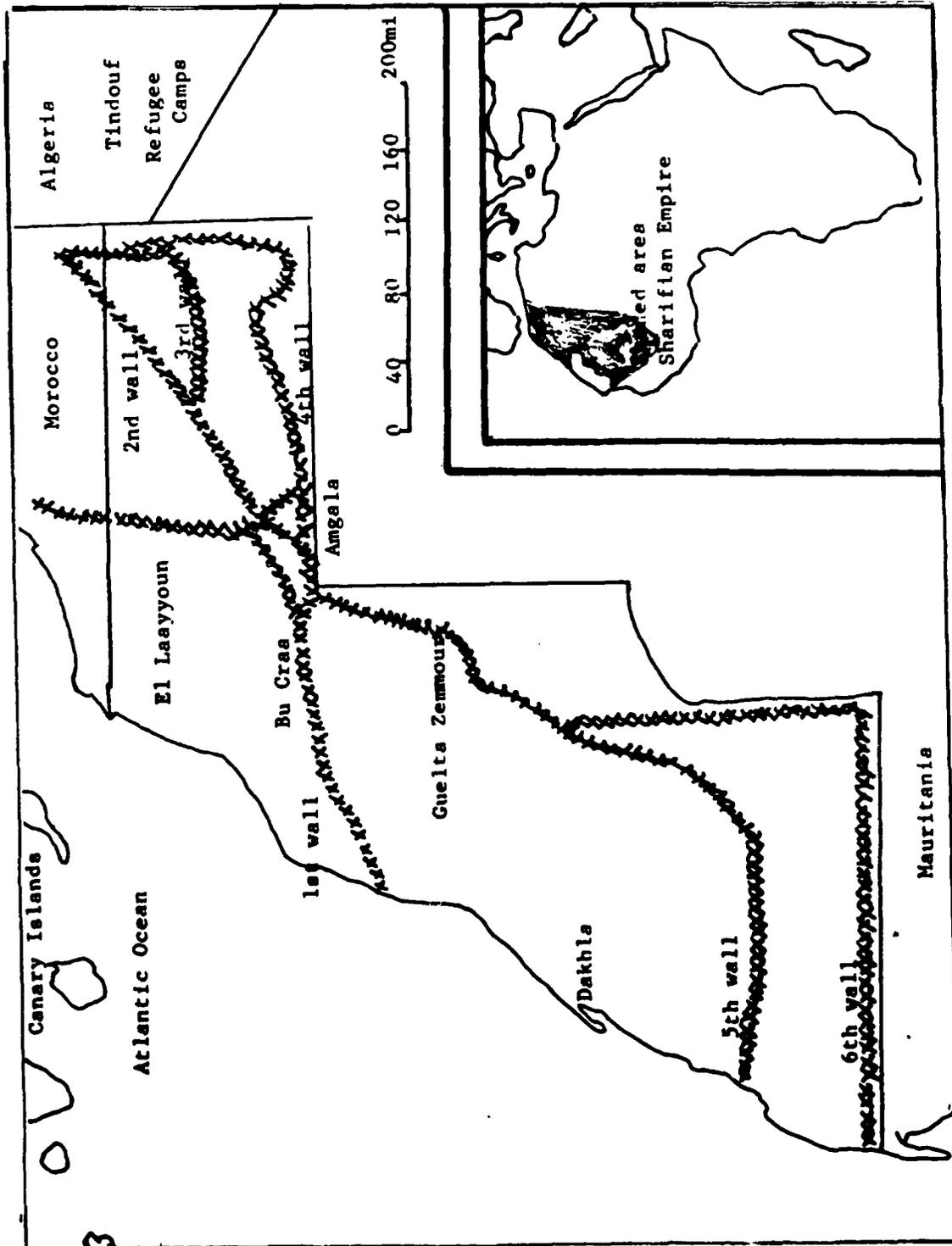
63. Albania	13.11.87
64. Yugoslavia	no date

Oceania

65. Vanuatu	27.11.80
66. Papua-New Guinea	12.8.81
67. Solomon Is.	12.8.81
68. Kiribati	12.8.81
69. Nauru	12.8.81
70. Tuvalu	12.8.81

APPENDIX B

MAP OF WESTERN SAHARA



APPENDIX C

THE SAHRAWI, THE POLISARIO, AND SADR

This appendix is designed to introduce the reader to the Sahrawi, the Polisario, and SADR. The focus is not on the historical period prior to 1976 but rather the period following the outbreak of hostilities. Furthermore, I believe that to accurately assess the conflict, a comprehensive understanding of who the Sahrawis are, where they live, how they are supported, how they are financed, their living conditions, their leadership, ideology, culture, religion, etc. is essential to a better understanding of the dynamics operable in this conflict. In short, the factors that have an impact on a national identity or "national consciousness" must be accurately assessed within a framework that allows for a comprehensive understanding.

The Sahrawi

Essentially a tribal people, the Sahrawis are divided, poor, and backward by Western standards. Languages spoken are Arabic and Berber. Islam is the dominant religion with Sunniism being the dominant sect. There appears to be some influence of Sufism.

In 1970, Spain estimated the population at 74,000 by virtue of a census. The Sahrawis have significant numbers living in several countries within the region. Mauritania claims 10 to 15,000, while Niger, Algeria, and Mali have native Sahrawi populations. The majority of the population, according to the Polisario, fled their homeland

(Western Sahara) after the Moroccan occupation of 1976. Morocco claims that there are approximately 50,000 Sahrawis still living in the Western Sahara and 50,000 in Morocco proper.¹ The Minority Rights Group of London indicate a total of 100,000 in the Western Sahara alone. There are many conflicting figures pertaining to the demographics of the Sahrawis. Some figures receive very little credibility; for example, the Polisario claim 750,000 as the population base for the Sahrawis. Indications are that some of the refugees in the Polisario counting are not Sahrawis, but, in fact, economic refugees seeking respite from recent drought conditions in the Maghreb.

Sahrawis as Refugees

In 1976, Algeria's representative to the United Nations claimed there were 50,000 Sahrawi refugees residing in Algeria for whom increased humanitarian assistance was required. Despite the immediate efforts undertaken by the United Nations, the League of Red Cross Societies, and the Algerian Red Crescent still more assistance was needed. Levels of assistance continued to increase for the next six years until the demand stabilized. On the contrary, Moroccan and Mauritanian representatives stated that there were only 5,000 Sahrawis refugees, and that these people were being held against their will by Algeria; therefore,

¹Tony Hodges, "The Origins of Saharawi Nationalism," Third World Quarterly, 5 (January 1983)1, 44.

they did not meet the definition of refugees.² In any event, the United Nations appropriated \$70,000 to assist Algeria with the refugee problem in 1976.

By the end of 1977 twenty refugee camps were established near the Algerian city of Tindouf under the auspices of "Special Programmes" of the UN at a cost of \$1.185 million. It was recognized that due to the arid conditions and poor agricultural prospects the money would be needed for care and maintenance, e.g., foodstuffs, tents, clothing, medicines, and domestic utensils. Water cisterns and vehicles were purchased because of the limited supplies of water in the region which necessitated transporting water to the camps.³

Humanitarian assistance coordinated by the United Nations reached \$1.625 million in 1981. Projects included expanding the educational programs, building hospitals and infant care facilities, and the continued promotion of self help projects.

In 1983, \$3.15 million was appropriated for multi-purpose assistance directed at encouraging local settlement and self-help activities. Items now included furniture, canteens, dormitories, baby clothing, blankets, and medical

²United Nations General Assembly, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Twenty-Seventh Session. A/AC.96/534, 20 October 1976, 21.

³Ibid.

equipment for medical centers. In addition, eight large water transport trucks were purchased.⁴

Algeria provides a substantial amount of assistance by meeting most external and all internal transportation costs. Algeria also provides assistance and monetary support to begin poultry farming in the region, textiles to begin a weaving industry, and other tools and raw materials to promote handicrafts. However, it should be noted that by 1984 assistance support levels had reached \$3.5 million.⁵ This level of assistance continued throughout 1985, 1986, and was the proposed amount for 1987.

Education in the refugee camps has been directed at improving the literacy rate of the population (for example, the opportunity to have an education from the primary level to the university level was reached by 1981 through UN sponsored educational programs), but it has also focused on building a sense of national consciousness. Political indoctrination, social awareness, Islamic-socialism, and military techniques are also a part of the education curricula. Reports indicate that this political emphasis is successful, and it is also creating a radicalized youth with a deep sense of commitment to the Sahrawi cause.

⁴Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1983-1984 and proposed voluntary funds programmes and budget for 1985. A/AC.96/639. 2-3.

⁵Ibid., 46-47.

Refugee Update

Algeria now estimates that there are 165,000 Sahrawi refugees (105,000 adults and 60,000 children) living in twenty-two camps near Tindouf. Each camp allegedly houses 7,500 persons. Morocco has stressed a need for a census to validate these figures which Algeria has resisted to this point.

An allegation which has received substantial support states that the camps have quickly become an attractive alternative to life in the drought plagued region of the Maghreb. Therefore, it is believed that a significant number of these refugees are not political refugees from the Western Sahara but economic refugees from the entire region seeking greater opportunity. Consequently, Morocco has asked for an international commission to investigate the true origins of the people in the Algerian refugee camps.

The Polisario

Polisario is an acronym for the Fronte Popular para La Liberacion de Saguia el-Hamra y Rio de Oro. Founded in 1973, Polisario is reported as a modern nationalistic movement with the objective of creating an independent nation-state in the former Spanish Colony known as the Spanish Sahara. It claims to represent the interests of the people known as Sahrawis.

A small population base affects the military and political strategies of the Polisario. First, the

Polisario are unable to absorb large combat losses. Second, questions concerning population distribution and raw numbers impact on diplomatic and political negotiations. Therefore, recognizing the futility of succeeding militarily the Polisario concentrate in the diplomatic arena with the dual goals of pressuring and isolating Morocco.

Reports by some observers indicate that the Polisario is succeeding in forging a sense of national consciousness among the various tribes of the Sahrawis.⁶ Polisario's council has outlawed caste distinctions, stressed unity and their common historical experiences. In addition, the hardships of life in the camps and the continuing war effort are the alleged catalysts for strengthening the bonds of these differing tribes.

SADR

The Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) was proclaimed February 26 1982. The SADR, with its major supporter Algeria, has actively pursued regional and international diplomatic initiatives in the United Nations, The Arab League, and the Organization of African Unity. These efforts have been remarkably successful, and they have resulted in seventy nations recognizing SADR. In 1982 SADR entered the OAU, causing Morocco to withdraw from the

⁶Tony Hodges, "The Origins of Saharawi Nationalism," 29.

organization. SADR has offices in Paris, has met with representatives of the United States Government, and even has a support group in the European Parliament. However, the bulk of its diplomatic support comes from Third World countries. The Soviet Bloc and the Soviet Union have maintained a discreet distance from both the military and the political problems in the Western Sahara.

SADR has a complete shadow government with all the appropriate ministries one would expect from a fully functioning government. In fact, the administration of the large refugee camps, the diplomatic postings and negotiations, and the coordination of the war effort have been excellent for the development of the Saharwis' administrative and governing skills. The Sahrawis Arab Democratic Republic is a parliamentary system of government. Each of the twenty-two refugee camps are divided into sectors which elect representatives to the national council. In addition, each of the camps are grouped into one of three regional associations identified with the three major cities in the Western Sahara - El Laayoun, Dakhla, and Smara.⁷

For those interested in more information there are a number of books on the subject listed in the bibliography.

⁷Ibid.

APPENDIX D

UNITED STATES MILITARY AND ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE TO MOROCCO

TABLE 1
FOREIGN MILITARY SALES AGREEMENTS

Fiscal Year	\$ in Mil.	"	Fiscal Year	\$ in Mil.
1976	96	"	1982	13
1977	28	"	1983	68
1978	7	"	1984	34
1979	3	"	1985	65
1980	266	"	1986	35
1981	29	"	1987	34

TABLE 2
FOREIGN MILITARY SALES SHIPMENTS

Fiscal Year	\$ in Mil.	"	Fiscal Year	\$ in Mil.
1976	16	"	1982	56
1977	34	"	1983	54
1978	86	"	1984	69
1979	134	"	1985	54
1980	51	"	1986	37
1981	125	"	1987	43

TABLE 3
FOREIGN MILITARY SALES FINANCING PROGRAM
FOR FMS AND COMMERCIAL

Year	Direct	Guaranty	"	Year	Direct	Guaranty
1976	30	30	"	1982	30	30
1977	30	30	"	1983	75	75
1978	43	43	"	1984	39	39
1979	45	54	"	1985	8	8
1980	25	25	"	1986	9	9
1981	33	33	"	1987	12	12

TABLE 4

COMMERCIAL EXPORTS LICENSES UNDER
ARMS EXPORT CONTROL ACT

Fiscal Year	\$ in Mil.	"	Fiscal Year	\$ in Mil.
1976	4	"	1982	5
1977	22	"	1983	14
1987	12	"	1984	10
1979	9	"	1985	2
1980	17	"	1986	5
1981	3	"	1987	10

TABLE 5

MAP MERGER FUNDS (FOR FMS) NONREPAYABLE

Fiscal Year	\$ in Mil.	"	Fiscal Year	\$ in Mil.
1983	25	"	1986	34
1984	30	"	1987	32
1985	40	"	1988	?

TABLE 6

SUMMARY OF MOROCCAN STUDENTS TRAINED
UNDER IMED

Fiscal Year	# Students	"	Fiscal Year	# Students
1976	132	"	1982	112
1977	85	"	1983	136
1978	199	"	1984	142
1979	109	"	1985	96
1980	129	"	1986	63
1981	150	"	1987	87

TABLE 7

PUBLIC LAW 480-TITLE 1 LOANS
 PUBLIC LAW 480-TITLE 2 GRANTS

Year	Loan	Grant	"	Year	Loan	Grant
1980	5.8	9.9	"	1984	45.0	14.9
1981	25.0	16.0	"	1985	45.0	8.8
1982	35.0	13.5	"	1986	40.0	4.9
1983	27.5	4.9	"	1987		

Source for Tables 1-7: United States of America, Congressional Presentation for Security Assistance Programs, FY 1987 and FY 1988, Department of Defense, Security Assistance Agency, Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Construction Sales, and Military Assistance Facts, as of September 30, 1985, Saharan Campaign Newsletter, and Congressional Quarterly.

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