

Forum: Advisory Panel on the Question of Northern Africa

Issue: Addressing the territorial and political dispute over Western Sahara between Morocco and the Polisario Front

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Introduction

Even though the mass media are remaining negligent of the past territorial disputes in the Western Sahara, we can see this topic as a possible ignition of the popular Islamic movements in the Arabian Peninsula and the Northern African regions. As a respected scholar, we can mention Noam Chomsky's contemplation on the matter, with his statements on the Western Sahara region's responsibility on the Arab Spring (*The Arab Spring: "Power Does Not Say 'Thank You for Dismantling Us!'" | Noam Chomsky Interviewed by Michael Bröning, n.d.*) becoming a starting ground for the Arab Spring. Territorial and Political disputes between a government and a native ethnicity are a common topic in the construction of new states.

To be more prepared for the issue, it would be crucial to understand the region and its historical development while considering the ethnic alteration. Understanding the issue in this state is important to developing solutions that will affect the region in the most efficient form. The struggle between these two nations has been a leading issue in the Western Sahara, becoming more dangerous for the related parties. Colonial powers have shaped the geography into a place of political conflict, a vulnerable position over time. Spain became the colonizing power (Pazzanita, 1994) over the region, which politically affected the area as a managing power. The withdrawal of Spain has been an immediate change in the region. This caused uncertainty. The Madrid Accords have been signed (Sampedro Vizcaya, 2019), leading to this withdrawal. Starting the conflict between these two parties, Morocco and Polisario Front became left without any decision on division.



Uncertainty can be acknowledged as a key term in the situation that elevated the conflict. Armed and political clashes took over the region as these two parties left due to their own mutual relationship.

Advisory panel, therefore, would be an informative force on the region's future implementations, even though the region already has a ceasefire. It is consequently suggested to show solutions contributing to both parties' national sovereignty. As a chair, I usually do not speak my own voice in study guides, but as my last conference, I suggest that the house show its best interest in the issue that will be important in solving this issue as a whole. Enduring this type of committee will include hardships in debate, but a success as these debates are on point and time-efficient.

Definition of Key Terms

Western Sahara:

Western Sahara is a disputed region that encloses the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and the Kingdom of Morocco ("Western Sahara," 2025) in the Northern African geography.





Map of Western Sahara Showing the territorial divide of Morocco and the Polisario Front (Wikimedia Commons)

Spanning around an area of 272.000 square kilometers, the region is rich in natural resources. Also, the region is known for its fisheries and phosphate mining activities. The region has been a subject of conflict with clashes with the Moroccan Government and the Sahrawi People.

Green March:

Green March is a mass demonstration ("Green March," 2025) that happened in November 1975. It has been coordinated by the Moroccan Government to protest the Spanish semi-autonomous region in the Western Sahara region as a colonizer. This mass demonstration has been seen as an unlawful action as the International Court of Justice made the Advisory opinion on the region's situation. As this mass demonstration gained control over the region, it led to the Western Sahara Conflict as the Sahrawi people refused Moroccan control over their settlements.



Polisario Front

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra is a nationalist liberation movement ("Polisario Front," 2025) in means of armed resistance and self-government. This movement has been shaped from the Sahwari people's ethnic liberation acts and protests. The organization was constituted in 1973; however, it became active in 1975 after the occurrence of the Green March, as the Sahwari people's territory changed to the Moroccan regime. Movement afterwards claimed the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), becoming united on 27 February 1976 ("Polisario Front," 2025). The United Nations considers the movement as a representative force of the Sahrawi people in the Western Sahara.

Ceasefire

Ceasefire is an act of stopping the armed conflict between two or more parties (*Ceasefire*, 2025) in order to allow the ground for diplomatic peace discussions to be held, which may not always be the case. Many cases, such as the discussed topic of this agenda item, arise from the tension in the aftermath of these ceasefires.

Autonomy Plan

Autonomy is defined as the right to govern without any external pressure (*Autonomy*, 2025), and an autonomy plan is a proposal for a region or a state to govern itself with its independent decisions. Many autonomy plans showcase the future action plans for a new state (Gattuso, 2020), which help the new state to be able to start its functions.

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

The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is a United Nations mission created for the reintegration of the states in the Western Sahara. It was created in 1991 with the United States Security Council Resolution 690 (*Background*, 2016) in order to dedicate a United Nations task force to organize the Sahrawi people to grant independence and freedom from the external pressure from the Kingdom of Morocco.



Natural Resources

Seeming like a fundamental term, the agenda needs clarification for the resources in a region. Natural Resources are defined as the resources drawn from nature ("Natural Resource," 2025). Western Sahara's natural resources include phosphate resources, rich fishing banks, and the potential use of sunlight to generate renewable energy (*Western Sahara Resource Watch | The Resource Curse*, n.d.), as the region is situated in the south of Morocco.

Background Information

Understanding the area and its historical evolution while taking the ethnic modification into account would be essential to being better prepared for the problem. It is crucial to comprehend the problem in its current condition in order to create solutions that will have the greatest possible impact on the area. One of the main problems in the Western Sahara has been the conflict between these two countries, which is getting riskier for those involved. Over time, colonial powers have molded the terrain into a site of political strife and a precarious position. As the conquering authority over the territory, Spain had a political impact on the area as a governing power (Pazzanita, 1994). The region changed immediately once Spain withdrew. This created a sense of uncertainty. This withdrawal is the result of the signing of the Madrid Accords (Sampedro Vizcaya, 2019). Morocco and the Polisario Front were left without a resolution regarding their partition at the beginning of the dispute between these two groups.

It is possible to recognize uncertainty as a crucial phrase in the circumstance that intensified the dispute. As these two parties departed based on their personal relationship, armed conflicts and political disputes dominated the area.

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Pre-Colonial Period

Western Sahara has been the home for the settlers of the Sahrawi people in the Pre-Colonial Period (*Sovereignty on Borrowed Territory: Sahrawi Identity in Algeria on JSTOR*, n.d.). Sahrawi people demonstrated their nomadic living styles and practiced their cultural traditions that connected their community. Social structures in the Sahrawi people's practices depended on solidarity between peers. Their geographical position has been very strategic throughout their trade history. The region, which covers an area of about 272.000 square kilometers, is abundant in natural resources. The area is also well-known for its phosphate mining and fishing. The region has been a subject of conflict with clashes between the Moroccan Government and the Sahrawi People. Trade within the African Region affected the Sahrawi tribes by meeting with other cultures and getting outside resources. Therefore, as the trades developed, Sahrawi people interacted with various cultures (*Redefining-the-Sahrawi-Political-Identity.Pdf*, n.d.) and ethnicities, including Berbers, Arabs, and other small African Tribes.

The Green March

Through the interactions of the Sahrawi people, their tribes, and their ethnic population arose. In the Colonial Period, the Sahrawi people were a subject of Spanish influence. However, the effects of the Colonial Period were not highly restrictive ("Green March," 2025) for the Sahrawi people, allowing them to be able to proceed to their religious and social practices. As the colonial powers started to stop their acts all around the world,

The Green March has played a leading role in the Sahrawi people's plans for their self-determination. The Green March was a large-scale protest that took place in November 1975 ("Green March," 2025). As a colonizer, the Moroccan government



has organized the protests against the Spanish semi-autonomous entity in the Western Sahara. Since the International Court of Justice issued its advisory judgment on the circumstances in the region, this large-scale protest has been viewed as illegal. The Western Sahara Conflict resulted from the Sahrawi people's refusal to allow Moroccans to rule over their settlements as a result of widespread protest.

Whilst this mass demonstration faced different reactions from different countries. Considering Morocco's historical right to govern the Spanish Territory, it has been partly supported, legitimizing the action of the Kingdom of Morocco. On the other hand, the demonstration has been condemned as it was an illegal act of the masses.

As those reactions arose, the Madrid Accords were agreed upon by the mutual discussion of Spain and the Kingdom of Morocco. Although the self-determination right was given to the Sahrawi people, future clashes between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic are possible. Also, this resulted in the appearance of the Polisario Front and its acts for full independence in the region without any external pressure from the Moroccan regime.

Ceasefire Period

According to Ceasefire, a ceasefire is an action used to halt an armed conflict between two or more parties so that diplomatic peace talks may take place, albeit this isn't always the case. The tension that follows these ceasefires gives birth to several cases, including the one that is the subject of this agenda item. Understanding the situation has been in a halt from the ceasefire signed in 1991.

After the Madrid Accords, we witnessed the rise of the Polisario Front in adopting the representativeness of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as the ambivalence of the Kingdom of Morocco has been prevalent after the Green March. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra is a nationalist organization that uses self-government and military resistance to achieve its goals ("Polisario Front," 2025). The ethnic liberation actions and demonstrations of the Sahwari people



have influenced this movement. The group was established in 1973, but it didn't start operating until 1975, following the Green March, when the Sahwari people's land was taken over by the Moroccan government. The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) was later claimed by the movement, and on February 27, 1976, it was unified ("Polisario Front," 2025). The movement is regarded by the UN as a representative force of the Western Saharan Sahrawi people.

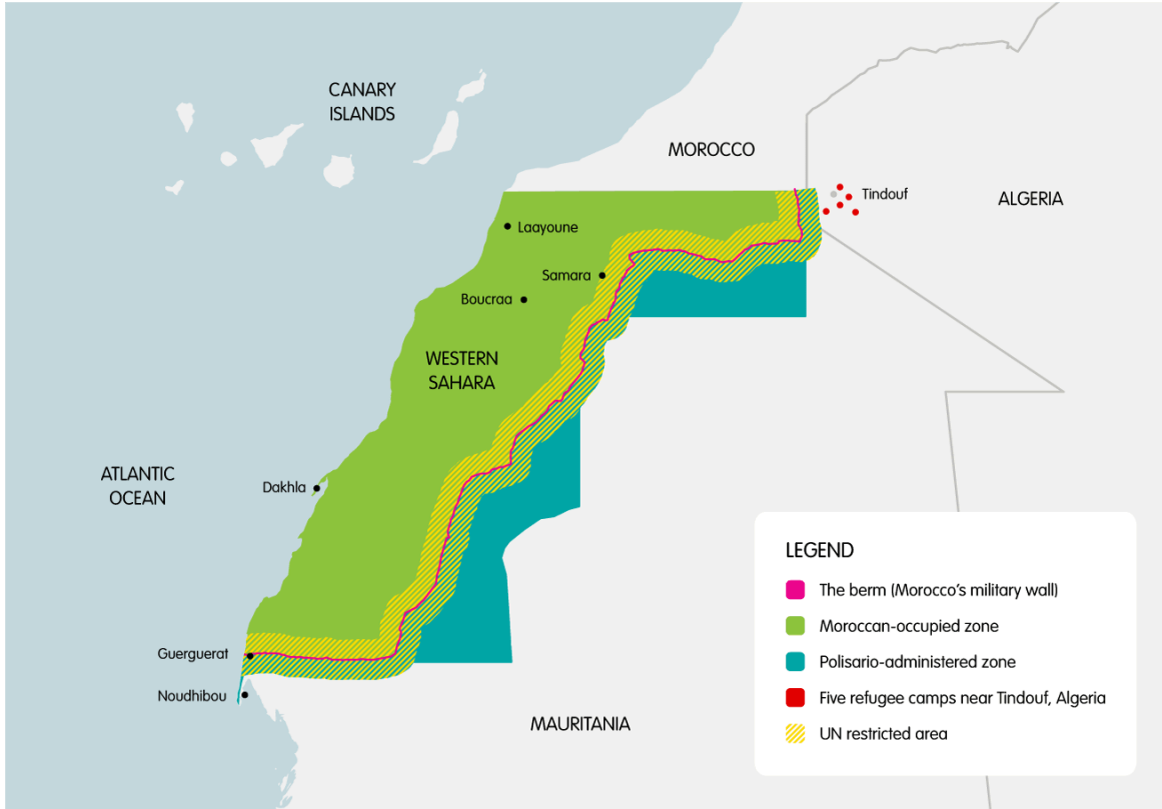
As armed conflicts arose between these two states, militarization became dominant in the Western Sahara. Becoming divided, the Kingdom of Morocco started controlling the total seventh percent (*The Arab Spring: "Power Does Not Say 'Thank You for Dismantling Us!'" | Noam Chomsky Interviewed by Michael Bröning, n.d.*) of the Western Sahara region. The Kingdom of Morocco fortified their defences building the sand berm used for the defence and the division of the territories.

Aftermath of the Ceasefire

As the ceasefire ended, the territory of these two states were in favour of the Kingdom of Morocco. Around eighty percent of the territories stood on the Moroccan side. Polisario Front became the governing body of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic controlling the remaining twenty percent.

MINURSO became the monitoring body to control the equal division and indepenence of these nations. For the purpose of reintegrating the nations in the Western Sahara, the UN established the Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). In 1991, the United States Security Council established it with Resolution 690 (Background, 2016), designating a United Nations task force to organize the Sahrawi people in order to provide them independence and freedom from the Kingdom of Morocco's external pressure. Consequently, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara was able to deeply monitor the unequal acts of the Kingdom of Morocco, which affected the independence and self-determination of the Polisario Front and the Sahrawi people.





Map of Western Sahara Showing the current territorial divisions(Wikimedia Commons)

Through time, it has been reported that the Kingdom of Morocco has been developing their infrastructure and defensive fortification and the Polisario Front remained their existence.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Many different organizations and countries were prominent in the decision making processes' of the autonomy plans and future plannings in the territorial, political and economical processes in the divided regions.

Polisario Front

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Kingdom of Morocco

Kingdom of Morocco is a country in the North Africa, which spans to the Western Sahara [\[Updating\]](#). Population of the Kingdom of Morocco is around 37 million. Kingdom of Morocco is one of the two most dominant actors on the agenda which are the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front.

Kingdom of Morocco has been responsible for their acts against the Spanish Colonism. In the 1975 they initiated the mass demonstration the Green March. The Sahrawi people's contacts led to the formation of their tribes and ethnic population. The Sahrawi people were influenced by Spain during the Colonial Era. However, the Sahrawi people were allowed to continue with their social and religious customs since the consequences of the Colonial Period were not very limiting ("Green March," 2025). As the colonial powers began to halt their activities globally,

The Sahrawi people's ambitions for self-determination have been heavily influenced by the Green March. In November 1975, a massive demonstration known as the Green March was held ("Green March," 2025). The protests against the Spanish semi-autonomous state in the Western Sahara have been orchestrated by the Moroccan government, which is a colonizer. This massive demonstration has been seen as unlawful ever since the International Court of Justice released its advisory ruling about the situation in the area. After much outcry, the Sahrawi people refused to let Moroccans govern their settlements, which led to the Western Sahara Conflict.

Algeria



Algeria has been a major supporter of the Sahrawi people; therefore, the Polisario Front. Algeria is a country in North Africa with a population of 44 million. Algeria holds a position that supports the United Nations' interest in creating an equal ground for the independence of the Sahrawi people.

Overall, Algeria holds the view of decolonization and self-determination (*ALGERIA, THE MAGHREB UNION, AND THE WESTERN SAHARA STALEMATE* on JSTOR, n.d.) that favours the Polisario Front. Holding these views, Algeria opposes the resolutions or opinions that do not allow an independent Western Sahara.

Spain

Being the former colony of the Western Sahara, Spain holds a broad and unclear position. The Sahrawi people's contacts led to the formation of their tribes and ethnic population. The Sahrawi people were influenced by Spain during the Colonial Era. However, the Sahrawi people were allowed to continue with their social and religious customs since the consequences of the Colonial Period were not very limiting ("Green March," 2025).

Over time, colonial powers have molded the terrain into a site of political strife and a precarious position. As the conquering authority over the territory, Spain had a political impact on the area as a governing power (Pazzanita, 1994). The region changed immediately once Spain withdrew. This created a sense of uncertainty. This withdrawal is the result of the signing of the Madrid Accords (Sampedro Vizcaya, 2019). Morocco and the Polisario Front were left without a resolution regarding their partition at the beginning of the dispute between these two groups.

Overall, Spain has a distant position on the issue; however, it should be considered that Spain was prominent in the past agreements and colonial activities.



Timeline of Events

1884	Colonization of Western Sahara by Spain
1960	Western Sahara is listed as a non-self-governing territory of the United Nations
May 10, 1973	Polisario Front Founded
November 6, 1975	Green March
November 14, 1975	Signing of the Madrid Accords
February 27, 1976	Establishment of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) by the Polisario Front
September 6, 1991	Ceasefire between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front is declared

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 690

United Nations' Security Council Resolution 690 poses the concerning situation in the Western Sahara. This resolution has been written under the agenda of "The Situation Concerning Western Sahara.

- Madrid Accords

These accords can be read to understand the relationship of Spain with its colony in the Western Sahara.

- Annual UN Reports on Western Sahara

These reports may be used to understand the economic and sociological status of the Western Sahara.



Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The United Nations and relevant countries have been effective in creating solutions in this area with different actions. The colonial power of Spain has made a decision to create an equal division between the Kingdom of Morocco's territory and the Sahrawi people's settlements.

As another attempt, Morocco has tried to establish its sided view to solve the issue. To solve the issue, Green March took place. The Green March was a large-scale protest that took place in November 1975 ("Green March," 2025). As a colonizer, the Moroccan government has organized the protest against the Spanish semi-autonomous entity in the Western Sahara. Since the International Court of Justice issued its advisory judgment on the circumstances in the region, this large-scale protest has been viewed as illegal. The Western Sahara Conflict resulted from the Sahrawi people's refusal to allow Moroccans to rule over their settlements as a result of this widespread protest.

Other related attempts were done prominently by the United Nations.

Possible Solutions

Understanding the topic in a broad perspective would be important in this agenda's debates and clauses. Also, usage of the effective bodies of the United Nations and other states would make the issue more in-depth in terms of feasibility. Initiation of ministries can also be taken into consideration to create solutions.

Overall, solutions may opt to initiate existing organization's changes of operation.

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