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**A COMPARISON BETWEEN IDEALISTIC AND
REALISTIC APPROACHES TO PEACEKEEPING
OPERATIONS: MINURSO AS A CASE STUDY**

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Master's Thesis

Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Turan ÇAĞLAR

Istanbul 2024

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I hereby declare that all information/data presented in this graduation project has been obtained in full accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare all unoriginal materials and conclusions have been cited in the text and all references mentioned in the Reference List have been cited in the text, and vice versa as required by the abovementioned rules and conduct.

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DEDICATION

First and above all, I would like to thank Allah for being with me throughout this journey, for his presence and guidance that he provided me throughout my whole life, and for always keeping me strong in the face of hardships.

This thesis is dedicated to my loving family for their continued support and encouragement. To my dearest Mom (Nadia CHAFAI) and Dad (Abdellatif JNAH), to my siblings (Hamza JNAH, Aya JNAH), thank you for believing in me and for your never-ending sacrifices. Your faith in my abilities has always motivated me to excel.

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ABSTRACT

A COMPARISON BETWEEN IDEALISTIC AND REALISTIC APPROACHES TO PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: MINURSO AS A CASE STUDY

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How to secure peace and protect security is one of the essential questions that each theory of International Relations (IR) tends to have an answer to. Idealism and realism as one of two fundamental pillars of the IR world have an ongoing debate on how international organizations and the international system presented by the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations will contribute to achieving the ultimate answer to this question. This thesis examines each theory's approach to the subject of international security and peace. On one hand, the idealists are characterized by their optimistic view and faith in international cooperation and their belief that peace can be achieved if all of the states are gathered under the international organizations' umbrella. On the other hand, the realists believe that war is a must and sees no benefits in international cooperation while the system is anarchic. The UN after its establishment in 1945, founded Peacekeeping operations as a means to maintain peace and security in times of crisis, one of these long-lasting operations is the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). This research will point out Which theoretical framework is best suited to resolve ongoing global conflicts? How can the success of a peacekeeping operation be measured, and can its effectiveness be improved by studying the perspectives of idealists and realists? Why did the MINURSO not succeed in organizing the Sahara referendum, and what can be done to improve its effectiveness? Document analysis is being used to answer these questions.

Keywords: Peacekeeping, Realism, Idealism, Western Sahara, MINURSO.



ÖZET

İDEALİST VE REALİST YAKLAŞIMLAR ARASINDA BARIŞI KORUMA OPERASYONLARININ KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI: MINURSO ÖRNEĞİ

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Barışı sağlamak ve güvenliği korumak, Uluslararası İlişkiler (UI) teorilerinin cevaplamaya çalıştığı temel sorulardan biridir. İdealizm ve realizm, UI dünyasının iki temel direği olarak, Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) barışı koruma operasyonları tarafından sunulan uluslararası örgütlerin ve uluslararası sistemin bu soruya nihai cevabı nasıl sağlayacağı konusunda süregelen bir tartışmaya sahiptir. Bu tez, her bir teorinin uluslararası güvenlik ve barış konusuna yaklaşımını incelemektedir. Bir yandan, idealistler, uluslararası işbirliğine ve barışın tüm devletlerin uluslararası örgütler altında toplanmasıyla sağlanabileceğine olan inançları ile karakterize edilirler. Diğer yandan, realistler, savaşın kaçınılmaz olduğunu ve sistem anarşik olduğu sürece uluslararası işbirliğinde hiçbir fayda görmediklerini düşünürler. 1945 yılında kuruluşundan sonra BM, kriz zamanlarında barışı ve güvenliği sağlamak amacıyla Barışı Koruma operasyonlarını devreye sokmuştur. Bu uzun süreli operasyonlardan biri, Batı Sahra'daki Referandum için Birleşmiş Milletler Misyonu (MINURSO) operasyonudur. Bu araştırma, devam eden küresel çatışmaları çözmek için hangi teorik çerçevenin en uygun olduğunu, bir barışı koruma operasyonunun başarısının nasıl ölçülebileceğini ve idealistlerin ve realistlerin bakış açıları incelenerek etkinliğinin nasıl artırılabilirliğini ortaya koyacaktır. MINURSO neden Sahra referandumunu düzenlemekte başarılı olamamıştır ve etkinliğini artırmak için neler yapılabilir sorularını yanıtlamak için doküman analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Barışı Koruma, Realizm, İdealizm, Batı Sahra, MINURSO.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAR	:	Central African Republic
CRS	:	Congressional Research Service
DRC	:	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ICJ	:	International Court of Justice
IR	:	International Relations
MINURSO	:	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUGUA	:	United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala
OALS	:	Advanced Organization for the Liberation of the Sahara
ONUC	:	United Nations Operation in the Congo
ONUSAL	:	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
UN	:	United Nations
UNAMIC	:	United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia
UNAMIR	:	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMOT	:	United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan
UNMISS	:	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNPROFOR	:	United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	:	United Nations Security Council
UNTSO	:	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
U.S.	:	United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will cover the study's background, main objective, research questions hypothesis, methodology, literature review, and overall thesis structure.

1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), through Resolution 50 (1948), has called for the cessation of hostilities in Palestine and also further provided for the supervision of the ceasefire by the UN Mediator and his military observers. The team of its observers finally developed into the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in 1949, to supervise the Israel-Arab Armistice Agreements. This was the lead peacekeeping operation that started a long series of missions that lasted more than 74 years until now with a total of 72 missions sent by the UN to conflict zones, 12 of which continue today (UN News, 2023).

Since 1949 the whole world has relied on peacekeeping operations as a new solution to maintain and secure peace in the international system, but many doubts were raised since some of these missions did not succeed in achieving their goals despite the long-term deployment. For instance in Cambodia (UNAMIC), El Salvador (ONUSAL), Guatemala (MINUGUA), and Tajikistan (UNMOT), UN operations effectively completed their mandates and none of these countries have returned to conflict, however in the former Yugoslav republics of Bosnia and Croatia (UNPROFOR) was one of the biggest failures in UN history, as the former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan wrote on the 10th anniversary of the massacre that this mass murder will “haunt our history forever” and that back then the UN had “made serious errors of judgment, rooted in a philosophy of impartiality” (United Nations, 2005).

One of the most difficult tasks for current UN operations is achieving the correct balance between protection and escalation and resolving the conflict. In this aspect, the UN is regarded as more careful in terms of not worsening a conflict while attempting to safeguard huge numbers of communities living within that conflict, all while trying to end the said conflict. However, the challenge of maintaining this balance for the UN is growing more

difficult more and more, since UN forces are now involved in more complicated situations and are responsible for intervening and defending more than in the past.

1.2 MAIN OBJECTIVE AND IMPORTANCE

This research has an essential objective which is to critically analyze the efficiency of UN peacekeeping from the view of two fundamental IR theories, which are idealism and realism. This study seeks to explain how these theoretical frameworks impact the operations and perceived successes of peacekeeping missions by looking at the optimistic view of idealism-which claims that global peace can be achieved through the collective actions of states under international organizations and that all states will benefit equally. Additionally, the counter-realist approach believes that international cooperation will be difficult to realize due to the anarchy nature of the international system and inevitably of conflict (Di Salvatore & Ruggeri, 2017). This research on the one hand contrasts these approaches; on the other hand, it aims to decisively determine which theoretical framework is more appropriate by which UN peacekeeping operations could predict and achieve international peace and security.

Furthermore, this research will be specifically focused on MINURSO to illustrate the implications and what is at stake when executing peacekeeping missions. The research aspires to discover the reasons for the successful and failed attempts at MINURSO and the factors that prevented it from realizing its first and most important mission in organizing the Sahara referendum. This case study serves as a basis to explore broader questions about the measurement of success in peacekeeping operations more broadly, and to demonstrate some ways in which incorporating idealist and realist approaches might improve such work. Using document analysis, this thesis will explore how the core principles of IR could potentially be utilized to make the UN peacekeeping effort more efficacious and thereby help in offering a potential resolution for the global conflicts that are still currently ongoing.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THESIS ARGUMENT

This research aims as mentioned earlier to critically analyze the efficiency of UN peacekeeping by comparing the idealist and realist approaches in IR. It examines how idealism, which advocates for global peace through international cooperation, contrasts with

realism's skepticism due to the anarchic international system and inevitable conflict. Focusing on MINURSO, the study seeks to identify factors affecting its success and failures.

1.3.1 Main Research Question

How do idealist and realist approaches in IR influence the effectiveness and outcomes of UN peacekeeping operations, specifically in the context of the MINURSO?

1.3.2 Research Sub-Question

- a. How do the realist and the idealist approach to peacekeeping define the role and effectiveness of UN operations in maintaining international security?
- b. What are the common factors that assess the success or failure of major UN peacekeeping missions?
- c. Why did MINURSO fail in its first mandate to organize a referendum for self-determination in Western Sahara?
- d. How does the Moroccan plan for autonomy serve as a replacement for the referendum, and what are its implications for the conflict?
- e. From a realist and an idealist perspective, what factors contributed to the challenges and limitations of MINURSO, and how does it explain its failure and its success?

1.3.3 Thesis Argument

Realism offers the most practical solution to the Western Sahara conflict by supporting Morocco's stronger position to ensure regional stability and prevent prolonged uncertainty. It provides, within its Moroccan Autonomy Plan, a feasible governance framework that can quickly and firmly be put into effect. This pragmatic approach addresses immediate security concerns and acknowledges the limitations of international interventions and the complexities of contested referendums. As such, UN peacekeeping missions should integrate more realist solutions to efficiently resolve complex conflicts by striving for stability and practical governance rather than idealistic long-term processes that usually face significant delays and obstacles

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of this research focused mainly on the realist and idealist approaches to peacekeeping operations and conflict resolution. This focus is contextualized by the historical deployment of over seventy United Nations peacekeeping operations in the seven decades since the first mission during the Arab-Israeli war, with fourteen of these missions still active today. It is these current missions, particularly the "big five" in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Darfur, and South Sudan, which have shown just how complex peacekeeping has become and changes daily. The enduring conflicts in these regions highlight the limitations of peacekeeping, with increased armed groups in the DRC despite two decades of peacekeeping efforts and South Sudan's fragile peace process post-civil war. The spread of violence in Mali and the continued instability in CAR further underscore these challenges, while the winding down of the Darfur mission leaves millions displaced with an incomplete peace process (Day, 2019). While some argue that peacekeeping is in crisis, there are increasing demands for the calibration of expectations and focusing on more realistic missions that lead to the realization that peacekeeping, despite its limitations, does make a difference in reducing conflict and shielding civilians (Fortna, 2008). This literature strongly suggests the need for realism and pragmatism in peacekeeping while balancing the ambitious mandates with the realities on the ground.

While the majority of people who believe in the idealist view on peacekeeping were delighted with its recent achievement, many others see them as small victories that are not worth the praise. The realist believers see that the UN peacekeeping operations were given a much more optimistic view since we cannot expect, and it is even impossible to solve issues like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) or the Darfur Crisis with a win-win approach (Day, 2019).

The historical context of idealism in the 1940s and its fall into the epoch of the Cold War significantly impacted the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping initiatives. The intense propaganda battles between the states during the Cold War led to the ineffectiveness of many UN peacekeeping efforts (Smith, 2010). There has to be a careful balancing approach in

future peacekeeping efforts so that overreaching of UN mandates, any kind of solutions being imposed, and straining of limited resources will not occur. What is important is making sober assessments of past successes and failures and creatively extending traditional peacekeeping practices. The authors stress the need for ongoing dialogue and exchange of views on potential improvements, reflecting a collective view that calls for a balance between the future roles, opportunities, and challenges under UN peacekeeping, while also emphasizing the need for a balanced and realistic approach to future peacekeeping initiatives (Campbell & Weiss, 1990, pp. 22-26).

In other literature that discusses the idealist approach to peacekeeping where it emphasizes the belief that security can be achieved through international organizations, such as the UN. Idealists argue that states are now engaged in restoring a pace for morality in foreign policy, pursuing collective, cooperative interests that all states have in common, such as peace, justice, and a better way of life (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40). These idealists favor international organizations to secure peace, disarmament, arbitration, and enforcement, ideals incorporated in the Charter of the UN signed in June of 1945. Idealists also support democracy within states, the development of international law, and the pursuit of collective security by international institutions. They see the march of democracy and economic interdependence as key to promoting international cooperation and security. In general, the idealist approach to peacekeeping emphasizes a much more positive picture of the post-Cold War world, one in which nation-states cooperate and fulfill moral objectives to improve people and states (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40).

Furthermore, the optimistic versus pessimistic debate on the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping has sparked great interest because it mirrors the broader debate between the fundamental approaches in IR: Idealism and Realism. A theoretical analysis of this subject means different interpretations of the success or failure of UN peacekeeping. These interpretations often stem from differing focuses on world politics and the distinct lenses provided by IR theories. Idealism and Realism each have a different lens for their explanation of historical events and diverse assumptions on causes of action and results in the international arena. The diverse answers and perspectives highlight the complexity of

understanding global conflicts and the efficacy of peacekeeping operations, emphasizing that multiple narratives and explanations coexist in the social sciences (Smith, 2010).

1.5 METHODOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES

Qualitative research methods play a crucial role in the field of social sciences by revealing the intricacies of human behavior, social interactions, and institutional processes. Document analysis is particularly notable among these methods due to its capacity to offer comprehensive insights into historical and contemporary phenomena within the field of IR and peacekeeping studies (Bowen, 2009, pp. 27-40). This approach entails a methodical analysis of written materials that encompass information pertaining to the phenomena under investigation. Document analysis is an essential tool for scholars who aim to comprehend and interpret crucial areas such as global interactions and peacekeeping operations, which are frequently guided by written communications, agreements, and reports (Bhandari, 2020).

The document analysis method used in the social sciences generally and applied in the specific area of IR and peacekeeping studies particularly, involves a set of structured steps. Most of these steps are necessary and must be carried out to ensure the analysis is accurate and trustworthy. The specific documents for this case study include UNSC resolutions, reports from the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Western Sahara, internal mission reports from MINURSO, and these documents should also be complemented with the record of communication among the involved parties, mainly from the Kingdom of Morocco, Polisario Front, and the UN. Together, they create a complete record of the operational mandates, diplomatic correspondences, and obstacles that have emerged within the history of the mission (Tight, 2019). In addition, one needs to look at the circumstances in which these papers were prepared, the issue of their authenticity, and of course their import on peace-keeping performance and diplomatic engagement as well. For instance, UNSC resolutions provide the international point of view updates, while UN Secretary-General reports provide the reality on the ground and updates on operations. Moreover, the documents are categorized by theme: "diplomatic negotiations," "ceasefire monitoring," and "referendum planning." These are important themes as the mission and peacekeeping itself are multi-dimensional issues that are being assessed in an unsettling political climate. In

addition, the synthesis of the data from those documents illustrates, how the theory of IR helps to understand the purposes and working of a peacekeeping mission. This also underlines the difficulties of enacting UN resolutions and organizing a vote in a land with difficult political and identity complications, hence the failure to achieve the primary mandate of the mission. Similarly, through this synthesis, it will be possible to provide clear definitions for the potential patterns that emerged during the analysis, like the consequence of the success of peacekeeping missions and the international diplomacy management of conflict situations.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While document analysis is both deep and informative, it poses some challenges. First, the availability of documents is often limited because of issues of confidentiality, especially in the case of confidential diplomatic communications or internal reports of international bodies. Secondly, the interpretations of the documents by the researchers themselves are subjective and may lead to biases in the analysis.

However, document analysis is considered a powerful tool within social science research, especially in the field of IR and peacekeeping studies. One can have a fine understanding of the complex dynamics of global interactions and the complicated mandates of peacekeeping missions. Through systematic analysis of relevant documents, researchers can make significant additions to the discourse on global peace and security.

1.7 ORDER OF THE STUDY

This study will therefore compare both the approaches of idealism and realism concerning the peacekeeping missions while taking the MINURSO as a case study, the thesis questions are addressed through the chapters as follows:

Chapter one (Introduction) will discuss the Background Information, Main Objective and Importance of the Study, Research Questions and Thesis Argument, Literature Review, Methodology and Techniques, Limitations of the Study, and Order of Study. the second Chapter (Theoretical Framework) will address the Realist and Idealist Approaches to

Peacekeeping while emphasizing on Their Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications for International Security and Peacekeeping Operations.

Chapter three (Historical Context of Peacekeeping Operations) will detail the evolution of peacekeeping, through its history and how it evolved to what is it currently. this chapter will also analyze significant peacekeeping missions while outlining primary operations and their impacts. Chapter four (Case Study: MINURSO) is an essential part of the research, which gives background information on the conflict in Western Sahara, the history of its occupation, the birth of the Polisario Front, the status quo, the creation of MINURSO, and how it failed to organize a self-determination referendum within its first mandate. it will also discuss the new Moroccan proposal for autonomy as a replacement for the referendum.

Therefore, Chapter Six (Analysis and Discussion) will compare realist and idealist approaches to the MINURSO. This chapter will further synthesize the findings and analyze how these theoretical frameworks have impacted the mission's objectives and operations. The last chapter is the (Conclusion), which will summarize the findings, discuss the contribution of the findings to the field, provide policy recommendations, and draw areas for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will delve into the theoretical framework of peacekeeping operations including both realist and idealist approaches, giving two views about international organizations, conflict resolution, and international cooperation. To begin with, according to realism, which focuses on the sovereignty of states, power politics, and anarchical nature, peacekeeping should be about ensuring stability and power balance, which leads to supporting stronger states to maintain order (Mearsheimer, 2001). Idealism, in contrast, believes in international cooperation and the promotion of human rights and it emphasizes that peacekeeping should aim for comprehensive conflict resolution and the establishment of a lasting peace based on international organizations, such as the UN and its peacekeeping operations (Bull, 2002).

Moreover, in IR, the difference that tackling a subject from its approaches might be very significant for how practical an understanding of global dynamics is. Approaches in IR such as constructivism, realism, or idealism, involve methods and modalities taking specific ways of looking at international phenomena with pragmatism proposed by mechanisms and processes rather than by abstract theory. Therefore, this pragmatic orientation makes it easier for researchers and policymakers to narrow their points of view toward specific issues and challenges. For instance, the realist approach prioritizes the analysis of power dynamics and state interests, offering concrete strategies for understanding and managing conflicts and alliances (Mearsheimer, 2001). By focusing on the approaches, this thesis focuses on the particularities of peacekeeping operations which will enhance the relevance and applicability of the findings. This flexibility thus comes as opposed to the rigidity that is usually associated with theoretical research, which puts constraints on the scope of analysis and lead to overgeneralizations (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Strategic usages of IR approaches will, therefore, foster a more adaptive and context-sensitive exploration into international issues, aligning scholarly inquiry more closely with the complexities of real-world international relations.

Furthermore, this chapter will show that both approaches give insights into how conflict should be resolved. Realists would consider practical approaches entailing zero-sum solutions, it does not encourage long-term solutions that will affect the balance of power.

While idealists call for addressing the root causes of conflicts, calling for democracy, and human rights as bases on which lasting peace can be rooted (Krasner, 1983). This duality of approaches reflects the complexities involved in international peacekeeping which will be discussed throughout this chapter in detail.

2.1 REALIST APPROACH TO PEACEKEEPING

Following the failure of the League of Nations and other attempts to soothe the practice of international politics after the end of World War 2 (WW2), a new set of self-identified realist scholars came to prominence in the emerging subject of international relations. They believed that the international system is a self-help system that will remain like that without any change and that the international arena is a brutal arena where states look for opportunities to take advantage of each other (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 29-32). Therefore, they emphasize the role of military power and see that alliances between different states are a double-edged sword as they might likely provoke or prevent war and conflicts.

Therefore, in order to grasp a real understanding of the realist approach toward peacekeeping, we need to first understand its approach to international organizations, mainly the UN. According to realists, institutions hold little influence on the behavior of states, including international organizations such as the UN, and hence hold little promise for promoting stability in world politics. They view the international system as anarchic, with states competing for security, markets, and influence which makes peacekeeping have such a small effect that can mainly be useful in implementing ceasefires in wars involving minor powers and has no role to play in disputes between great powers or solve real conflicts (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40).

Additionally, realism, being one of the fundamental theories in IR, perceives humans as a rational but egoistic being whose ultimate goal is to ensure the securing and maximization of their self-interest, thus paving the way for uninterrupted rivalry for power and survival. According to the realist approach, which is influenced by thinkers like Kautilya, Machiavelli, Thucydides, Hobbes, and Rousseau, it emphasized that the pursuit of power is the natural human behavior that influences state behavior as well (Suthar et al., 2016). The realists believe that since the states are at the center of international politics, they also operate in an

anarchic environment and must increase power to ensure survival in case of crisis. In this case, they continue to be relevant even with new actors coming in different forms, such as international organizations. These do not have any authority over matters to do with the state's domestic or international affairs. The realist view maintains that states have to help themselves while forming alliances for purposes of power balancing and security in case of conflict (Suthar et al., 2016).

Moreover, from the realist view, the effectiveness of international institutions can be highly questionable. John Mearsheimer, one of the leading realist scholars, in his essay "The False Promise of International Institutions" argued that international institutions impact the behavior of states very minimally, especially regarding security matters. According to him, institutions cannot get states to stop from behaving as short-term power maximizers, something that rarely significantly influences the interests or interactions of states in anarchy. This approach challenges the notion that international institutions can lower the number, frequency, danger, or intensity of violent conflicts between states or non-violent conflicts that may turn into wars. Mearsheimer's argument focuses on security relations, particularly the concept of stability, which he defines as the absence of wars and major crises. He asks if international institutions might have a significant role concerning relationships related to security and if they might achieve peace. He claims that true peace, defined as a situation of tranquillity or mutual concord, is not going to break out in the world soon. This approach challenges the idea that international institutions can fundamentally transform the character of international relations. Besides, Mearsheimer argues about the origins, motivations, or goals of international institutions but not their effects. He wonders why rational, self-interested states would do and pay for international institutions when they have no impact. This would challenge the fact that international organizations could change state behavior with desirable results (Donnelly, 2004).

In addition, realists argue that states are the leading players in world politics, which leads to the emergence of great powers in shaping world order due to their vast power and immense potential to establish global events and conflicts. Realists claim that power calculations dominate state behavior, with states ceaselessly competing for power in a zero-sum game in which one state's gain is other states' loss. This contest frequently requires war, legitimized

in an instrument of statecraft, as stated by Carl von Clausewitz's words that war is a continuation of politics by other means (Mearsheimer, 2001). The pragmatism in the realist approach was put in relief by E.H. Carr's saying that wisdom consists in accepting and adapting oneself to the inevitable force of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies (Mearsheimer, 2001). Along with this the pessimistic origin of realism that influences its analysis of international relations and emphasis on the anarchic structure of the international system and the natural drive for power that shapes state behavior in a way that provides valuable insight into the nature of complexities and challenges in attaining and sustaining international peace and security.

Realism is sceptical of claims regarding the causality of international institutions and insists that global governance is highly dependent on the dynamics associated with power politics. Historically, power politics has sometimes resulted in temporary military alliances to maintain a balance of power when necessary. A good example is the United States (U.S.), which has continued practicing the assertion to stay hegemonic by being at the center of global power. For this aim, the U.S. has been known to create temporary alliances that help lock in the balance of power to its advantage. Almost all relations among the existing international organizations can be traced back to some form of U.S. hegemony immediately after WW2. After the war, the U.S. emerged as one of the most potent nations globally, with a significant reliance on formal institutions and international law, which became defining features of its hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001).

In conclusion, realists consider that conflicts arise due to the inherently self-centered nature of autonomous states in an inherently anarchic international system. They therefore assert that the struggle among states for power is essentially ceaseless (Basu, 2012). Realists stress that the international system is competitive and self-help in nature, where the states, guided by their self-interest, seek to enhance their relative power positions regarding other states. Such a perspective places states within an anarchical international system where no central authority can guarantee security, thus leading them to put survival and power aggregation first. Further, realists believe great powers typically cannot extend effort and engagement in peacekeeping if it is not within their sphere of interest. Without consent and active participation by these great powers, effective peacekeeping operations are unlikely to happen

(Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40). The realist approach in the end emphasizes that peacekeeping missions generally have limited effectiveness, as they often fail to create long-term stability within the international system. Essentially, this pessimistic viewpoint mirrors some of the inherent challenges that are bound to be faced in realizing cooperative security arrangements within a world driven by power politics and strategic interests.

2.2 IDEALIST APPROACH TO PEACEKEEPING

Idealism in IR emphasizes the potential for human progress, cooperation, and the establishment of a peaceful world order through collective security mechanisms and international institutions. It draws heavily on the principles of liberalism, which advocate for democracy, human rights, and international law as the foundations for a stable international system (Bell, 2016). The UN established in 1945, embodies many of these idealist principles, aiming to prevent conflicts through diplomacy, collective security, and peacekeeping operations.

Prior to the establishment of the UN, and in order to end the war or at least control it, a whole pack of practices, methods, norms, and institutions were created by idealists to achieve their desires. The pain and suffering experienced in World War 1 (WW1), along with the belief that world affairs could be conducted in a better way than through violence, drove these idealists to establish the said new norms by founding the League of Nations which reserved international peace, order, and security by requiring its members to settle disputes using peaceful means rather than war. Different obligations are therefore placed upon members under the Covenant of the League to prevent war, and it bound them to take measures against aggression. Some of the other obligations of the League included preparing various plans for enforcing disarmament and inspecting and registering all international treaties concluded by members of the League (Beneš, 1932). The most prominent feature of League activities was the creation of the Permanent Court of International Justice, which gave judicial settlement to international conflicts. The League emphasized arbitration and conciliation through model treaties and discussions mainly to improve peaceful conflict resolutions. Some tangible outcomes of these activities were a series of treaties about arbitration and conciliation,

although it was not widely adopted, it did play an important role in decreasing international conflict, especially concerning those arising from post-WW1 reconstruction (Beneš, 1932).

It was post-WW1 when the League of Nations was established with much Idealism that led people to believe that the existing world order may be maintained in its place. This vision was well-received and well-endorsed globally (Hardy, 2010). Post-WW2 players sought to create a universal order of international law and organizations, and formal international organizations grew from about fifty to over six hundred by 1980 (Thompson & Snidal, 1999). The most important institution of them was the UN, whose design was decided by the US, the UK, the Soviet Union, and China at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944 and the Yalta Summit in 1945. The UN Charter, signed in June 1945, created an organization that is aware of the limitation of the League of Nations' idealism. The idealist perspective was embodied in the fundamental premise of the UN such as the refrain from using force and the preference of collective security. The UNSC was the main organ to commission and supervise military operations (Thompson & Snidal, 1999).

Although The Cold War, which began after 1945, hindered these idealistic aspirations and shifted the worldview towards realism, which viewed war and conflict as regular variables in the realm of international relations, the necessity of the UN's security service has been called for in the post-Cold War period. To some, the end of the extreme ideological confrontation of the East and West was viewed as a watershed event, the dawn of a new period where interstate conflicts would be diminished and cooperation between states would not only advance but also embody more hopeful views on the evolution of a more harmonious international society (National Research Council, 2000, pp. 1-37).

After the Cold War, many scholars emphasized the concept of a fresh order as a new beginning for the whole system of relations between the global system, as well as a life of fewer dangers and safer states due to global measures and rules made by the UN to guarantee safety and protection. As intervention rules evolved, the UN could intervene in war zones with greater legitimacy. With the end of the power struggle and the change of power on a global scale, peacekeeping operations became the ultimate sign of reliability and integrity since it was seen as a shared responsibility of the world community, by delegating strong multilateral cooperation with the UN and other international organizations to handle issues

of world security and advance a rules-based international order, all while maintaining respect for international law by enforcing international norms and legal frameworks, including human rights treaties, ceasefire agreements, and UNSC resolutions in peacekeeping operations. (Mazarr, Priebe, Radin, & Stuth Cevallos, 2016, pp. 7-29).

Having discussed the historical context, the approach of idealism toward international organizations can now be examined, idealists believe that security and cooperation between nation-states can come to reality through international organizations like the UN, this approach emphasizes that these organizations have a role in restoring the pace for morality in foreign policy, in which states move towards collective, cooperative interests in maintaining peace and justice. Indeed, they view moral goals as integral to the states' selfish, individualistic national interests as they are to their common interests. They also emphasized the need for democratizing states internally, developing international law, and the reinforcement of global institutions to implement collective security (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40).

Therefore, idealists advocate international cooperation through international organizations by adopting the Wilson Principles, also known as the Fourteen Points, which were created by President Woodrow Wilson in order to facilitate the application of a framework for international cooperation to ensure perpetual peace based on international organizations under equal representations of the nations which help underline the sense of justice, free trade, and democratic governance (Wilson, 2011, pp. 2-10). They wanted to establish a just and peaceful world order in which the causes of serious conflicts were eliminated, and collective security was encouraged. The Wilson principles regarded international organizations as a platform for nations to gather together with the purpose of avoiding war and maintaining peace. In addition, the principles address the provision of equal representation and democratic participation by nations in these international organizations. The Wilsonian Principles, therefore, formed a significant contributing factor to the idealist approach to international relations as they worked toward establishing a world order based on principles of cooperation, mutual respect, and peaceful resolution of conflicts. However, there still were challenges to making it a reality. The League of Nations, by design of such ideals, had proven powerless to prevent the Second World War and limited in its scope

without significant powers like the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Overall, the Wilson Principles and the concept of international cooperation promoted by idealism aimed to create a world order based on collective security, free trade, and democratic governance, with the goal of preventing warfare and promoting peace through multilateral cooperation and international organizations (Wilson, 2011, pp. 2-10).

Moreover, the idealist approach emphasizes eliminating war, and that harmonious state relations are the central goals of peace, power, and security. The idealist approach highlights a view on the elimination of violence in relations among and between states and considers addressing the problem of insecurity by the removal of causes. Furthermore, this approach also emphasizes individuals and the international system as a whole, at the expense of states, and emphasizes the dynamic of harmony at the expense of that of conflict. From a security perspective, an idealist approach believes in viewing individuals and the international system as a whole, at the expense of states, and emphasizes the dynamic of harmony at the expense of that of conflict; it repudiates that the issue of insecurity can be solved and is an approach focused on ways to satisfy the legitimate concerns of the states but not amplifying the dynamics of insecurity amongst states. This approach also requires action at both the national and international levels and aims to balance the struggle for power with the idealism associated with the peace view (Buzan, 1984, pp. 109-125).

Grounded in several fundamental ideas, the idealistic approach to peacekeeping is consistent with humanitarianism, and it contends that the protection of human life and dignity should come first in peacekeeping operations. This humanitarian need drives interventions meant to stop mass crimes, provide humanitarian relief, and support post-conflict reconstruction. Moreover, sustainable peace is seen to depend on the encouragement of democratic government. It is held by idealists that since these components help to create long-term stability and conflict avoidance, peacekeeping operations should assist the development of democratic institutions, free and fair elections, and the rule of law.

The idealist approach to peacekeeping, despite its noble aspirations, has suffered from quite a few setbacks. Poor funding for peacekeeping operations, poor contribution of troops, and logistical limitations seriously affected negatively the ability to enforce mandates in full effectiveness. Without the political will of UN member states, peacekeeping missions tend

to fail, but idealist goals often contradict national concerns, leading to unbalanced levels of support and difficulty obtaining necessary resources and guidance. Finally, multidimensional peacekeeping operations are fundamentally complex because military, civilian, and humanitarian components must be coordinated in the same operation (Weiss, Forsythe, Coate, & Pease, 2014). Achieving coherence and effectiveness in such diverse activities is particularly challenging in volatile and rapidly changing environments (Bellamy & Williams, 2010). Furthermore, the protection of civilians remains a critical and often unachieved objective, despite various reforms. Incidents such as the failures to prevent mass atrocities in Darfur and the Central African Republic highlight the difficulties in implementing robust protection policies (Day, 2019). The idealist view on peacekeeping continues to evolve in response to emerging global challenges. Contemporary conflicts are increasingly characterized by asymmetric warfare, transnational terrorism, and complex humanitarian crises, necessitating innovative approaches to peacekeeping.

Recent initiatives, such as the UN's "Action for Peacekeeping" (A4P) launched in 2018, reflect a renewed commitment to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of peacekeeping operations. A4P emphasizes key priorities such as political solutions, protection of civilians, performance and accountability, and partnerships with regional organizations (United Nations, 2023).

Furthermore, the integration of new technologies, such as drones for surveillance and advanced data analytics, offers opportunities to improve situational awareness and operational effectiveness. Idealists advocate for the use of such technologies to enhance the capabilities of peacekeepers while adhering to ethical standards and protecting human rights.

The idealist perspective on peacekeeping missions emphasizes the possibility of humanitarian intervention, ethical government, and worldwide peace and security promoted by international cooperation. Although great obstacles still exist, the achievements on different missions show the importance of idealistic values in resolving difficult problems and endorsing sustainable peace. The idealist approach will remain essential for guiding the future of peacekeeping and underlining the dedication to a more peaceful and fair society as the nature of world conflict keeps changing.

2.3 IDEALIST AND REALIST APPROACHES TO THE UN CHARTER AND PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Since its adoption in 1945, the UN Charter has been one of the cornerstones of international law and governance, which reflects the old debate between idealist and realist approaches to international relations. Idealist principles can be found in the preamble of this Charter, which essentially links the promotion of social progress, with better standards of life and the establishment of conditions under which justice and respect for international law can be maintained (United Nations, 1945). These values, according to idealists, are upheld by the UN through mechanisms such as peacekeeping operations, crisis management strategies, international cooperation, and protection of human rights so that conflicts can be handled through peaceful means. For example, the deployment of peacekeeping forces is viewed as a manifestation of collective commitment by the international community toward the maintenance of peace and security, by preventing the outbreaks or escalations of conflicts, and reconstruction of post-conflict societies (Bellamy & Williams, 2010).

On the other hand, from the realist approach, the focus is placed on the lasting issues of state sovereignty and the significant element of power politics in the international system. Realists underline that efficiency in the UN, particularly concerning crisis management and peacekeeping, is often contingent on the interests and consent of its most powerful member states, especially the five permanent members of the UNSC: The U.S., United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China. These countries can veto any UN resolution or action that goes against their national interest (Weiss, 2013). This power dynamic often leads to selective and sometimes inconsistent responses to global crises, influenced by geopolitical considerations rather than purely humanitarian or legal principles.

For example, peacekeeping operations are affected when there are political differences among the members of the UNSC, where responses to crises may be late or inadequate. A notable case is the Syrian Civil War, whereby the inability to pass major resolutions at the UNSC is best explained through vetoes used by Russia and China to protect their national interests and alliances (Cohen, 2015). Moreover, the peacekeeping forces are deployed only after complex negotiations and compromises have taken place, therefore reflecting the realist

approach that international relations are driven by the pursuit of interests and power (Thakur, 2017). Furthermore, funding and logistics for peacekeeping operations are heavily dependent on the contribution of member states, which can vary based on the changes in their political will and strategic priorities (Chesterman, 2011).

In Conclusion, while the UN Charter was based on the idealist beliefs of international cooperation, peace, and justice, in practice it has now combined elements of the realist approach in addressing crises and conducting peacekeeping operations. The interplay between these approaches shapes the UN's capacity to address international conflicts effectively, balancing the aspirations for a harmonious global order with the realities of power and state interests.



3. THE EVOLUTION OF PEACEKEEPING: FROM HISTORICAL ROOTS TO MODERN OPERATIONS

This chapter will trace how peacekeeping has changed through history, which provides a clear idea about its growth and importance in keeping the world in a continuous state of balance and peace. Peacekeeping is an interventionist measure typically launched by the UN, to maintain or restore peace in regions of conflict, it also includes sending neutral forces to prevent further hostilities and aid in guiding the implementation of the peace accords (Fortna, 2008). Peacekeeping can be implemented when there is a threat to international peace and security, sometimes with a ceasefire agreement or by a request from the parties concerned about the conflict, following the decision of the UNSC that outlines mandates and the scope of the peacekeeping mission (Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, 2008).

Moreover, this chapter will further explain the difference between peacekeeping and other related concepts such as peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Additionally, it will present an overview of the primary peacekeeping operations and discuss their success and failure. To conclude, this chapter aims to highlight its critical role in international relations and conflict resolution by exploring the historical context and evolution of peacekeeping

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO PEACEKEEPING

3.1.1 Definition and Purpose

Peacekeeping is a technique applied by international organizations, mainly by the UN, to manage and solve conflicts among states and within regions. However, over time, the UN evolved as an alternative to collective security and balance of power mechanisms from which the anarchical nature of the international system and the strategic consequences of the Cold War impeded it. Peacekeeping's main focus is conflict prevention and peace establishment, which ranges from classical inter-positional peacekeeping to inter-personal conflict resolution, peace enforcement, post-conflict reconstruction, and development (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40). Usually, the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations heavily rests on the political will of member countries, the support of great powers, and the alignment of national interests with the mission's goal.

Furthermore, the UN peacekeeping operations require three basic principles upon which it must base its operations, and from which it drives its success and legitimacy. First is the consent of the parties, which is essential since the UN employs the peacekeeping mission only after the main parties in the conflict have consented. Such consent affirms the commitment of the involved parties to a political process alongside offering support to the peacekeeping mission. The second principle is impartiality since the UN peacekeepers shall be impartial in their support of the political process and implementation of agreements on the peaceful settlement without taking sides. The third one is the non-use of force other than self-defense and defense of the mandate. This principle emphasizes that UN peacekeeping is not an enforcement tool since force may only be applied at a tactical level by using authorization from the UNSC to protect the mission or to ensure the implementation of its mandate. These principles offer a framework that ensures legitimacy, credibility, and effectiveness at the functional level of UN peacekeeping operations to maintain international peace and security (United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2008).

Moreover, the primary objectives of peacekeeping include a list of activities that can help stabilize the conflict areas and pave the way for permanent peace. Monitoring ceasefires and peace agreements is one of its major agendas to ensure that all parties adhere to the terms and prevent a resurgence of violence. Peacekeeping operations generally provide security and protection to civilians, refugees, and internally displaced people. Moreover, peacekeepers facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance as well as the protection of human rights, therefore ensuring that aid, as well as legal safeguards, reaches the most vulnerable sections of society. Supporting the political process is also one of the significant objectives because peacekeepers help create the right environment for the political process to begin safely within communities, hence fostering an atmosphere where all parties can discuss and work out their differences. Contributing towards the restoration of law and order involves training and supporting local police and decision-makers. Finally, peacekeepers support post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in order to help rebuild societies and foster sustainable development (Woodhouse, 2020).

3.1.2 Historical Background and Origins

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the concept of peacekeeping was primarily developed and conceptualized by the UN to avoid the escalation of conflicts in the context of the Cold War. In 1948, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was set up in the Middle East, followed by The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) which was set up immediately afterward in 1949 (United Nations, n.d.). The tasks in the early missions were more limited and included mainly the supervision of ceasefires and manning of clearly defined protective areas. During this period, peacekeeping operations were stationed by the consent of the state, with the deployment of unarmed or lightly armed military personnel. The principle of impartiality was critical, as peacekeepers were expected to act as neutral observers and refrain from taking sides in the conflicts they monitored (Bellamy, 2010).

3.1.2.1 Cold war era peacekeeping

Peacekeeping missions during the Cold War era were severely constrained by the geopolitical rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. However, the Cold War period saw the deployment of thirteen UN peacekeeping operations, which were characterized by their relatively small size and narrow mandates compared to later missions. These operations were heavily constrained by the superpower rivalry within the UNSC, which limited the UN's ability to act decisively in many situations (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015). Regardless of these limitations, the UN managed to launch a number of notable missions. The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), deployed at the time of the Suez Crisis in 1956, marked an important milestone because it was the first armed UN peacekeeping force. The successful implementation of UNEF's mandate to supervise the cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of forces proved the potential effectiveness of peacekeeping as a conflict resolution tool.

The Cold War era did, however, also present some challenging issues. For example, in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, the UN's incapacity to act boldly in conflicts where the interests of the superpowers were directly involved revealed that peacekeeping was limited by the framework of a bipolar world order. Though faced with great challenges,

even missions like the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) during the 1960s revealed the changing role of peacekeepers in progressively complicated and volatile surroundings (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015).

3.1.2.2 Post-cold war expansion and the early 21st century era

The end of the Cold War marked a huge change in the nature and role of peacekeeping operations. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the easing of superpower confrontations, the UN adopted an activist stance toward resolving conflicts. An increase in peacekeeping missions marked the early half of the 1990s, the trademark of which was the multi-dimensional operations meant to address the causes of conflicts and to foster and bring about a comprehensive approach to peace (United Nations, n.d.). Furthermore, the major development at this time was the expansion of mandates to encompass tasks such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, monitoring elections, promoting human rights, and supporting the rule of law. The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, established in 1992, was the witness to this new approach: It incorporated military, civil, and humanitarian components to support the transition to peace and democracy (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015).

Despite these advances, the 1990s were also faced with the failures and difficulties of peacekeeping. Highly publicized failures—like failing to stop the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the massacre in Srebrenica in 1995—led to intense criticism and scrutiny of UN operations. These tragedies exposed the need for robust mandates, appropriate resources, and clear rules of engagement to protect civilians effectively.

The early 21st century has seen peacekeeping adapt to increasingly complex and diverse conflicts. Modern peacekeeping missions are often deployed in environments characterized by fragile states, asymmetrical warfare, and transnational threats such as terrorism and organized crime. This has necessitated a shift towards more flexible and dynamic approaches. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), established in 2004, demonstrated the ability of peacekeeping missions to operate in post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization roles. Similarly, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

(UNMISS), created in 2011, reflects the contemporary focus on protecting civilians and supporting nascent state institutions in highly volatile settings (United Nations, n.d.).

Technological advancements have also influenced peacekeeping. The use of advanced surveillance technologies, drones, and enhanced communication systems has improved situational awareness and operational efficiency. Additionally, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of integrating gender perspectives and protecting vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, in peacekeeping operations (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015).

3.1.2.3 Challenges and future direction

Despite its evolution, peacekeeping faces ongoing challenges. Issues such as inadequate funding, troop shortages, and the complexity of mandates often hinder the effectiveness of missions. Moreover, the political will of UN member states remains a critical factor in determining the success of peacekeeping operations. The reliance on voluntary contributions of troops and resources can lead to inconsistencies in mission capabilities and outcomes (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015).

Looking to the future, peacekeeping must continue to adapt to the changing nature of global conflict. This includes addressing the root causes of violence, such as poverty, inequality, and political instability, and enhancing cooperation with regional organizations and other international actors. The development of more robust rapid deployment capacities and the implementation of comprehensive training programs for peacekeepers are also essential for improving mission effectiveness.

In conclusion, the evolution of peacekeeping reflects a continuous process of learning and adaptation. From its origins in monitoring ceasefires to its current role in supporting complex peace processes, peacekeeping has proven to be an indispensable tool for maintaining international peace and security. However, to meet the challenges of the future, it must remain flexible, adequately resourced, and responsive to the evolving dynamics of global conflict.

3.1.3 Major Peacekeeping Operations: An Overview

This sub-chapter addresses some of the historic missions of the UN peacekeeping operations, with a description of their context, aims, and results. The first section examines the determination of success and failure of a peacekeeping mission. The following section will narrow down some primary missions while giving an overview of the challenges that occur during these missions. By reflecting on such assessments, this sub-chapter intends to seek a better understanding of how peacekeeping has been evolving in its nature and impact on global peace and security.

3.1.3.1 Assessment of success and failure of a peacekeeping operation

The success and failure of UN peacekeeping missions can be assessed through several measures. First, the key indicator for success can be reflected in the actual execution of the peacekeeping mandate that was defined by the UNSC, while the effectiveness of the mission will then be measured by the achievement of particular objectives, such as monitoring ceasefires, protection of civilians, and support for peace agreements (Howard, 2015, pp. 6-13). In addition, there is an investigation into the post-departure development of a country as far as several years after peacekeepers have left, including civil war recurrence and general benefits accrued from the peacekeeping operations. Moreover, the number of violent deaths is highlighted as a crucial indicator, in addition to the reduction in violence is seen as a positive outcome. Another measure of success is the conflict resolution itself whether it terminates with a negative peace (ceasefire and absence of violent fighting) or positive peace (normalization of political, social, and economic relations) (Howard, 2015, pp. 6-13). The overall view presented by current UN missions offers a general evaluation of progress in violent deaths, containment of conflict, resolution of conflict, and implementation of the mandate.

Ultimately, while it is challenging to measure success and failure in peace operations, it is essential to evaluate the UN's progress toward implementing mandates, recognizing that the UN's strength lies more in implementing peace after a peace accord is in place rather than enforcing peace through military means.

3.1.3.2 Key historical missions

Within the span of all these years, quite several missions have been implemented to try and solve conflicts worldwide. This sub-chapter presents some of the most vital peace operations and their subsequent achievements, successes, challenges, and impacts on global stability.

The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was the first UN peacekeeping operation, formed in 1948. Its core mandate included observation of ceasefires, supervision of armistice agreements, and further prevention of hostilities from recurring in the Middle East, especially after the Arab-Israel Wars of 1948. UNTSO observers have played a participative role in diffusing tension and keeping up diplomatic dialogue between Israel and surrounding nations (United Nations Security Council, 1948). Moreover, this mission is considered unique in two significant aspects: whereas most peacekeeping missions had mandate periods bounded and needed renewal yearly, UNTSO was mandated to monitor compliance with ceasefire agreements until the achievement of peace, also one notable difference between UNTSO and other operations concerns geographical deployment, as most peacekeeping operations work within a single country or between the forces of two countries whereas UNTSO activities typically spread over several countries comprising Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Israel, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Rubinstein, 1998, pp. 138-149). Although the mission has not resulted in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict to date, it has contributed considerably to maintaining ceasefires and providing a mechanism for dialogue.

The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) was launched in 1960 and deployed in response to the crisis that broke out after the Democratic Republic of Congo achieved independence from Belgium, with a mandate to stabilize the country from civil war and support the newly independent government (United Nations Security Council, 1960). However, ONUC faced difficult challenges, such as hostile local factions, and geostrategic dynamics fomented by the Cold War. Despite ONUC's innovative structure, it had flaws including the lack of defined strategic objectives, different methods of operation between the troops in the field and headquarters staff officers, and poor gathering and interpretation of information. This brought about disastrous decisions with regard to UN troops

deployment, such as at Niemba, where the troops were ambushed while on patrol, and at Jadotville, where Irish troops were unnecessarily put in danger (Power, 2013, pp. 121-136). Despite these significant challenges, the mission managed to score early successes in government stabilization and prevented the immediate collapse of the Congolese state, although it also highlighted the critical need for clear strategic objectives and effective intelligence in peacekeeping operations.

The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was initiated in the year 1992 and went on to become one of the most troublesome and controversial peacekeeping missions carried out by the UN. Its tasks included ensuring deliveries of humanitarian aid, supervising ceasefires, protecting designated safe areas, and guaranteeing protection of people, especially during the Yugoslavian Wars (UN Department of Public Information, 1996). However, critical issues undermined UNPROFOR's effectiveness, especially in relevance to the Srebrenica safe area in particular, such as mandate confusion that resulted from UNPROFOR's vague mandate in relation to the use of force which caused inner confusion. In addition, force limitations since the mission was both understaffed and ill-equipped militarily in order to guard the safe areas and provide adequate protection (Burg & Shoup, 1999). Moreover, the resurfacing of the debate of neutrality versus impartiality, where the UN's fear of being perceived as biased resulted in the failure to report human rights violations during the first two years of deployment in Srebrenica. Furthermore, the reluctance to authorize air support because of the UN's fear of making UNPROFOR a party to the conflict led to the compromise of the force's effectiveness in responding to aggression. In July 1995, when Srebrenica was attacked, UNPROFOR, with a Dutch infantry battalion as its representative (Dutchbat), could not protect the population of Bosniaks from crimes against humanity in the face of such limitations and confusion (Rapp, 2015, pp. 1-35). In conclusion, unclear mandates, insufficient forces, and the misinterpretation of neutrality and impartiality crippled UNPROFOR's work in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in Srebrenica, which caused a tragic failure of the peacekeeping mission in preventing the genocide against civilians and ethnic cleansing.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), established in 1993, was mandated to monitor and observe the implementation of the Arusha Accords aimed at ending

the civil war in Rwanda, which included observing ceasefire arrangements, providing humanitarian assistance, and urging on with the political process. However, despite the presence of UNAMIR, the genocide in Rwanda unfolded, and the number of massacred people is estimated to be 800,000 during 100 days starting on April 6, 1994 (United Nations, n.d.). Numerous key issues led to this failure, firstly early warnings were ignored such as the January 1994 cable from Canadian General Romeo Dallaire warning of plans to kill Tutsis and the existence of a major weapons cache, where the international community's response was conventional and diplomatic, which may have inadvertently informed the genocide planners of UN concerns (Scheffer, 2004). Moreover, the focus on the Arusha Accords implementation overshadowed the growing political and ethnic tensions that finally led to the genocide. As the genocide began, the priority for many governments was the evacuation of foreign nationals and UN peacekeepers, hence facilitating the genocidaires to carry out their mission. Furthermore, the response was slow and poor since the planning for military or police intervention was not considered immediate, and consideration by the UNSC of the withdrawal of UNAMIR reduced the presence of about 270 personnel, which is a number that is inadequate to deter further genocide (Scheffer, 2004). In the end, the mission was a failure of the world community that distanced itself from reality in Rwanda, and it did not act early enough to prevent the genocide. This pertains to the summarization of UNAMIR's work in Rwanda, marked by a conventional approach toward an unconventional crisis, the obsession with peace accords, and the ignorance of the ethnic tensions, added to the evacuation at the expense of intervention, all contributing to the failure to prevent or effectively respond to the Rwandan genocide.

The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was established in 1999 to deploy and implement the Lomé Peace Agreement, which aimed at ending the war conflict in Sierra Leone. Its mandate includes disarmament, demobilization, reintegration of combatants, and support of the state authority (United Nations Security Council, 2004). UNAMSIL is considered one of the successful missions that included the disarmament and demobilization of over 75,000 ex-combatants. In a public opinion survey, 97 percent of respondents said that their personal security situation had improved since the deployment of UNAMSIL (Curran & Woodhouse, 2007). Furthermore, UNAMSIL forces were involved in some

community-level development activities meant to build trust with the locals, such as constructing roads, health centers, and schools.

In summary, peacekeeping missions are regarded effective, depending on the mandates, degree of international support, and local political context. Even though some have been successful, like UNAMSIL, some have failed, like UNAMIR, because of weak mandates and support. This evolution shows an increased understanding of the requirement for firm and responsive strategies in conflict resolution. Furthermore, peacekeeping missions need to gather commitment and cooperation from the international community to be more efficient and successful.

3.2 CONDITIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR ACTIVATING PEACEKEEPING

The activation of peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN follows specific conditions primarily governed by the UN Charter and the decisions of the UNSC. First, an essential condition for deploying a UN peacekeeping operation is the presence of a peace to maintain which entails that the parties involved should be willing and committed to resolving the conflict politically, which is mostly demonstrated through the signing of a ceasefire or a peace agreement. However, it is important to note that the mere signing of such an agreement does not necessarily guarantee the parties' commitment to peace. Second, the UNSC should agree on and mandate the deployment of a peacekeeping mission by determining if the situation reflects a threat to international peace and security. Third, the UNSC and the UN Secretariat, before deployment, discuss in consultations with countries willing to contribute troops, police, and other personnel. This consultation is only meant to keep all contributory countries fully informed on every step and fully involved in all the decisions that may affect their personnel, thus building up cooperation, and enhancing the effectiveness of the mission (United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2008).

The process for activating a UN peacekeeping operation involves several critical steps. First, UNSC Authorization is required by creating a UNSC resolution specifying the mandate and scope of work of the mission, the rules of engagement, and the mission's area of operation. This step is crucial as it establishes the legal and operational framework for the mission. Next, Mission Planning and Preparation begins. In this phase, both the Department of

Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) are responsible for the technical planning of the mission. They will define force requirements, the initial request for a budget, and the logistical support required to sustain the operation (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015).

Following this, the General Assembly's Fifth Committee needs to approve the financial aspect of the operation since the costs associated with peacekeeping operations are considered a general expense of the UN, according to Article 17 of the UN Charter. They are paid for by the member states through assessed contributions (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015).

The Force Generation phase is the process where the DPKO, in collaboration with its member states, puts together the needed military personnel and police forces to carry out the mission's mandate. It is a critical stage in providing the mission with the human resources necessary for effective functioning. Once the forces are assembled, there is Deployment. The mission is deployed to the area of conflict. How fast and efficient this is depending on the troops and available resources from the member states. The mission then enters the Mandate Implementation phase, where it works to fulfill its assigned objectives. This may cover monitoring ceasefires, supporting peace processes, and facilitating humanitarian assistance (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015).

Finally, review and adjustment of the mission's mandate is conducted by the UNSC. It must adapt to the dynamic situation on the ground to ensure the mission remains relevant and effective in achieving its goals (Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015).

3.3 COMPARING PEACEKEEPING, PEACEMAKING, PEACEBUILDING, AND PEACE ENFORCEMENT

This sub-chapter will explain the key differences between peacekeeping, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peace enforcement. Through definitions and the study of characteristics, the chapter shall give a thorough understanding of how each approach contributes toward the resolution of international conflicts. The distinctions between these concepts are crucial

for grasping their specific roles and applications in various scenarios, which will be explored through detailed analysis and comparative discussion.

3.3.1 Peacemaking

The term 'Peacemaking' refers to the process of reaching a peace agreement between two parties involved in a conflict, which can be defined narrowly as a conflict resolution including processes such as setting standards, mediation-conciliation, arbitration-adjudication, enforcement-sanction, and the use of specific mechanisms and actions taken to address and resolve disputes without resorting to violence, while broadly it encompasses activities directed at establishing conditions that can facilitate a peaceful settlement and attainment of changes in the international order by nonconflictual means. (Forsythe, 1977, pp. 206-220). Peacemaking is one essential phase within the spectrum of conflict resolution that includes peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It thus entails actual mediation and negotiation efforts in settling conflicts between parties. While peacekeeping focuses on maintaining a cease-fire and conflict management, peacemaking is about resolving the underlying conflict through diplomatic means (Greig & Diehl, 2005, pp. 621-645).

Peacemaking as peacekeeping is facing numerous challenges, among these are modernization and state-building, with weak state institutions that characterize the newly independent states or the ones emerging from conflicts, and the uneven political and economic modernization that defines the global system, it creates an environment where conflict persists and the ability to create order and maintain security and law is unachievable. For example, regions or communities that feel left behind in the development process may become disillusioned and seek to address their grievances through violent means. Additionally, another challenge is the uncertain and unpredictable engagement of significant actors and institutions. In other words, the sustainability of leadership by key states in sponsoring peace efforts is often at stake due to conflict fatigue, high costs of peace initiatives, and other security challenges such as terrorism (Crocker, 2007, pp. 1-15).

Moreover, despite the UN Charter has tried to install some standards for peacemaking, these efforts are undermined because member states prefer national autonomy since the efforts of defining aggression and principles of friendly relations remain ambiguous due to contesting

conceptions of legitimacy among states. However, the UN's conciliatory role has been only moderately successful because conciliation has an idealistic approach that frequently goes against the ideological and emotional nature of most conflicts. On the other hand, even the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is rarely effective because states would like to deal with such disputes at the national level and find those conflicts too critical to be left to a third party for binding settlement. The same can be said of economic and military sanction tools, which have been very ineffective in changing impermissible behavior given their inherent problems with loopholes, diverse degrees of support, and different impacts on the general population (Forsythe, 1977, pp. 206-220).

Furthermore, the quest for coherence and coordination of effort diminishes peacemaking efforts because so many mediators have to compete with one another, this leads to a lack of common purpose and an absence of an external leader who can maintain order. Added to this is the proliferation of other actors in the peacemaking field like non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regional organizations, and coalitions of states where a significant knowledge gap stands out in terms of regional institutions. Finally, legal and military expertise assumes more salience, so mediators must contend with questions of jurisdiction and take on tasks related to the management of battlefields. It is underlined by all these challenges that the terrain of peacemaking and mediation is dynamic and complex, thus it requires that practitioners adeptly navigate a variety of issues and actors to effectively install peacemaking initiatives (Crocker, 2007, pp. 1-15).

In conclusion, such narrowly defined UN peacemaking efforts that aim only at resolving conflicts are inadequate to resolve the intractable and dangerous international conflicts plaguing the world. While it is recognized that a permanent structure of change is essential to achieve lasting peace, how far it will succeed remains to be seen, considering the already established values and attitudes determining the basic policies for any new institutions to take root. Broadly defined peacemaking, which involves socio-economic change and security to states through moderation and compromise, must be insisted upon before any narrowly defined peacemaking efforts can find consistent success. The UN peacemaking calls for collective leadership and the building of transnational coalitions for the peaceful management of international conflicts. While peacemaking and mediation are challenging,

they remain critical in pursuing international peace and security. Their success is based on how practitioners adapt to a changing world, work in coordination, and build up from past experiences with lessons learned.

3.3.2 Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding has become a multidimensional approach beyond traditional peacekeeping, it addresses the difficulties of intrastate conflicts by covering activities necessary to prevent the resurgence of conflict and pave the way for lasting peace in countries emerging from or affected by armed conflict (Von Der Schulenburg, 2014). Peacebuilding is political, security, humanitarian, and development-oriented in nature since it addresses the restoration of internal security, reconciliation among societies that are divided, building human rights and facilitating access to justice, encouraging inclusive democratic governance, rebuilding institutions at the national level, and stimulating society's social-economic development (Chandler, 2017). The main aim of peacebuilding lies in the desire to help weak states regain their national sovereignty and take national ownership of the peace process. In the UN context, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) was established on 1 January 2019 after the UN peace and security infrastructure was reformed. Part of the reform entailed merging the then Department of Political Affairs (DPA) with the UN Peacebuilding Support Office. Additionally, the previously separate regional divisions of DPA and the former Department of Peacekeeping Operations (now the Department of Peace Operations, or (DPO)) were combined to create a unified structure (United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, n.d.). The new structure is designed to ensure more coherent political analyses with strategic advice for action, which shall reinforce conflict prevention and post-conflict actions toward peacebuilding. This department is responsible for the activities undertaken after a conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war (United Nations, 2000).

Peacebuilding emerged in the 1990s, fueled by the belief in the assumption that Western liberal institutions could be transplanted into post-conflict societies to create peace. It was characterized by the "solutionist" mentality, where international actors took for granted that

they had the means to fix fractured societies (Chandler, 2017). However, by the 2000s, such a liberal peace project showed clear limitations since the blind universal application of Western models did not bring about sustainable peace which shows that focusing on state-building and civil society-building as the only peacebuilding mechanisms was inefficient and sometimes counterproductive. In response to these failures, a shift towards more localized and organic approaches to peacebuilding began to take hold (Chandler, 2017). The "local turn" of the late 2000s recognizes that peacebuilding must be internally driven within the affected societies, rather than imposed by external players. Furthermore, linear understandings of peacebuilding started giving way to non-linear and process-oriented views that justified the complexity and uniqueness of each conflict context, and by the mid-2010s, it had come to be displaced by a more pragmatic perspective that focused on rethinking the role of international actors in peacebuilding. The focus now changes from universal applications of Western causal knowledge to managing the effects of local and organic processes through policy interventions. This marked the end of peacebuilding as a distinct policy area and reflected a more profound epistemological change away from modernist understandings of causality toward increased scepticism about Western knowledge claims (Chandler, 2017).

Like peacekeeping and peacemaking, peacebuilding also has challenges that highlight some critical issues. First, the UN has no clear vision or definition of peacebuilding that would suffice to respond effectively to the complexities of intrastate conflicts and global security environments, yet it delays an effective strategy formulation and execution. In addition, field operations are highly fragmented, without any command structure or integrated strategy which means that several agencies work in one country without any coherent approach. Moreover, financial constraints severely undermine peacebuilding efforts because these funding mechanisms are so complex, unpredictable, and inefficient which leads UN agencies to compete for resources (Von Der Schulenburg, 2014). Furthermore, Geopolitics, socio-economic issues related to the transformation of political communities, legitimacy of nation-states, poverty, environmental degradation, and weapons of mass destruction make the task of peacebuilding very complicated. Moreover, UN action is often resisted on account of the interests of powerful countries, as in the case of the humanitarian tragedy of Darfur in Sudan and overlooking the ethical dimensions that contributed to the poor success at consolidating

peace (Murithi, 2009). These multi-faceted challenges need a comprehensive reform that will contribute to the coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness of UN peacebuilding.

Peacekeeping and peacebuilding are related but distinguishable functions within international efforts to maintain and establish peace. Peacekeeping refers to the deployment of international forces to maintain peace, either in an ongoing conflict or immediately after a ceasefire, with mandated missions to monitor ceasefires, separate the combatants, and provide security for the delivery of humanitarian aid, and an aim to targeting immediate security-related needs while focusing on preventing hostilities (Philpott & Powers, 2010). In contrast, peacebuilding is a more comprehensive and longer-term process that is designed to address the root causes of conflict and to create conditions to reinforce sustainable peace. It embeds a wide range of activities, from rebuilding societal structures and institutions, preventing further conflict, infusing peace into the development agenda of nations, and engaging a broad spectrum of actors combining state-level officials, international organizations, NGOs, and civil society. In addition, peacebuilding emphasizes the importance of interdependence among different sectors and requires local participation and ownership of the peace process. Over time, peacekeeping missions have evolved to include peacebuilding functions, especially in post-conflict situations, while realizing that security alone is not sufficient for lasting peace and that broader societal problems have to be considered (Philpott & Powers, 2010). In conclusion, while peacekeeping is mainly focused on the implementation of immediate security, peacebuilding depends on a much more complex and wide-ranging process that pulls together several activities and actors to create lasting peace.

3.3.3 Peace Enforcement

Peace enforcement can be defined as the use of military forces to establish a cease-fire between warring parties in an ongoing conflict where one or more of the combatants might prefer war to peace. It involves the imposition of a cease-fire that is opposed by one or both combatants, which usually requires the violation of state sovereignty, mainly if the mission takes place on the territory of a combatant opposed to peace and has not invited the peace enforcers (Snow, 1993). Moreover, and as a section of peace operations, peace enforcement

resorts to military force as coercive diplomacy at the transition point between peace and war. This implies that it is put into motion to terminate an ongoing conflict, implement a cease-fire, or establish a secure environment in which other peace operations can be successful (Tubbs, 1997, pp. 8-30). In other words, the UN enforces its decisions through peace enforcement where peacekeeping forces are insufficient or if parties in conflict fail to provide the required consent to implement its resolutions (Thakur, 1994, pp. 387-410). Essentially, peace enforcement aims to end fighting and induce non-complying parties to sign peace accords, ensuring a transition from conflict to stability.

The transition from peacekeeping to peace enforcement occurs under certain circumstances where the initial mandate of peacekeeping becomes irrelevant due to the increase in violence and instability. This change can be manifested through the example of the UN's role in Somalia where the involvement of the UN developed from peacekeeping to enforcing peace because of the growing challenges and the mission changing its nature (Thakur, 1994, pp. 387-410). The initial aim of the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) was to monitor a cease-fire arrangement, provide security for UN personnel and supplies, and escort humanitarian aid (United Nations Security Council, 1992). The role designed by the UN fits a traditional peacekeeping role based on consent and non-use of force. However, clan-based battles, banditry, and looting soon disrupted these operations and impeded humanitarian aid delivery. The UNSC responded by sending additional troops to operational zones to strengthen humanitarian operations. Despite these measures, violence continued to escalate with UN peacekeeper losses and the attacks on aid convoys, which resulted in the UNSC allowing for the use of "all necessary means" under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to ensure that such aid be delivered, which shifted the peacekeeping mission to a peace enforcement one (United Nations Security Council, 1992). This was further reiterated by the establishment of UNOSOM II with the mandate to use force in protecting UN personnel and detailing those perpetrating violence. The operation faced criticism for failure to elicit universal obedience and for getting entangled in Somalia's power struggles. Eventually, what has become clear is that transferring the UN from peacekeeping to the peace enforcement mission in Somalia emphasized the complexities and challenges of keeping peace in a volatile civil conflict (Thakur, 1994, pp. 387-410).

The main differences between peacekeeping and peace enforcement lie in their purpose, means, and actors. Peacekeeping is meant to implement peace accords agreed on by warring parties and regional actors together with the UNSC. In addition, peacekeepers do not work towards creating peace but maintain it by enforcing existing agreements. On the other hand, peace enforcement seeks to terminate ongoing conflicts by military means by forcing non-compliant parties to agree to peace accords, yet without necessarily fighting to win in a classical sense (Howard, 2015, pp. 6-13). In terms of means, peacekeeping troops are typically from a mix of countries and often receive little pre-deployment integrated training, they are lightly armored, and may not even share a common language or have interoperable equipment, and the most essential rule they have is allowing the use of force only in self-defense. Peace enforcers, by contrast, must operate as integrated forces with shared languages, combat-ready and interoperable equipment, and undergo joint training to conduct operations akin to warfighting (Howard, 2015, pp. 6-13). With regard to the actors, the UN is responsible for most traditional and multidimensional peacekeeping operations, whereas peace enforcement has remained mainly within the realm of single states, small coalitions of willing states, or regional organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or the African Union (AU). Although this distinction might be clear theoretically, in practice, the lines separating peacekeeping from peace enforcement blurs. Peacekeeping missions are mandated currently with provisions for Chapter VII peace enforcement (United Nations, 1945). However, they cannot usually use force effectively. This has attracted very sharp criticism and protests for a review of the approach the UN is taking in its peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.

4. CASE STUDY: MINURSO

The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was established as part of the UN's efforts to find a settlement in Western Sahara following the crisis between Morocco, which had reintegrated the territory after Spain's withdrawal in 1976, and the Polisario Front, supported by Algeria. The mission was authorized by UNSC resolution 690, adopted on 29 April 1991, with the aim of achieving a just resolution regarding the situation in Western Sahara. In cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, the mission aimed to organize and supervise a referendum for self-determination in Western Sahara as outlined in the UN Secretary-General's report (United Nations Security Council, 1991).

4.1 THE HISTORY OF WESTERN SAHARA OCCUPATION

Western Sahara, is a territory in north Africa occupying a wide-ranging desert (252,120 square km), boarded by the Kingdom of Morocco on the North, the Atlantic Ocean on the north-west and the west, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on the South and the East, and by the Republic of Algeria on North-East. This territory is known to be rich in natural resources mainly phosphate, its 1,200 km coastline is exceptionally rich in fishery products, among the richest in the world. Additionally, the region holds reserves of iron, uranium, gold, oil, gas, and sand, which state and private companies seek to exploit for substantial profits (Naïli, 2019, pp. 135-153).

Consequently, these resources attracted significant interest back in the 19th century from colonial forces that had their eye on the Western Sahara. These countries had commercial ambitions, initially Great Britain, through a Scottish engineer named Donald Mackenzie. At the beginning, he tried to obtain permission from the Moroccan Sultan to settle at Cape Juby (Boubrik, 2023). His project went beyond merely establishing a trading post, he wanted to build a maritime canal between the Atlantic and the Center of Africa to open up this region to trade and civilization. He described this extravagant project in a book published in 1877.

To achieve his aims, Donald Mackenzie contacted the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to gain the friendly cooperation of the Sultan of Morocco for his venture (Mackenzie, 1877).

Although the Sultan refused, Mackenzie set up a trading post called Port Victoria and constructed a fortress known as Casa Mar at Cape Juby in 1879. Funded by the British North-West Africa Company, this project became one of the most notable European presences on the Saharan coast (Mackenzie, 1877). Mackenzie legitimized his presence through an agreement with local leaders of the Azerguiyyin tribe and Mohammed Ould Bayrouk, following the Sultan's rejection of his settlement request (Boubrik, 2023).

Mackenzie ignored all warnings from the Moroccan government to vacate Cape Juby. In response, the Sultan initiated a southern military campaign in 1886 to counteract colonial incursions in the region. The newly appointed caid, Dahman Ould Bayrouk, led a military expedition that year and demolished Mackenzie's facilities, which led to British protests and demands for compensation. After prolonged negotiations, Morocco compensated the damages in 1895 and succeeded in defending the territory against this initial colonial effort disguised as a commercial enterprise (Boubrik, 2023). The agreement of March 13, 1895, affirmed the Sultan's control over the area, including Oued Draa and Cape Bojador (Cour internationale de Justice, 1980). By acknowledging Moroccan sovereignty, France challenged Spain's future attempts to expand its influence in the north of Cape Bojador.

Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas del Castillo of Spain, as part of King Alfonso XII's colonial expansion effort in Africa, which was known as the 'Scramble for Africa', declared the area from Cap Blanc to Cap Bojador a Spanish protectorate in December 1884 (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2024). Meanwhile, the Berlin Conference, which started on November 15, 1884, and concluded on February 26, 1885, opened the doors to European colonies to spread through African territories (Miller & Stitz, 2021). This Conference gave a legitimized cover to Spain to occupy Western Sahara starting by establishing the 'Compania Comercial Hispano-Africana' drawing from the experience of Mackenzie's project in Cape Juby.

Captain Emilio Bonelli Hernando led a unit to Villa Cisneros, known currently as Dakhla, where he established a new settlement that encouraged the captain to ask the government to establish further stations along the coastline (Mercer, 1976, pp. 106-107). By April 1886, Spain succeeded in extending their colony deep into Western Sahara territory, which led them to appoint Captain Bonelli as their first Governor in the region.

The Local tribes refused to accept the Spanish occupation and declared rebellion. This uprising continued alongside the French interest in the region, which resulted in delaying the complete occupation of Western Sahara by the Spanish till 1936 when they deployed various troops to maintain their power over the territory that they named ‘Spanish Sahara’ with defined borders as seen in Figure 1 (Hodges, 1984, p. 6).

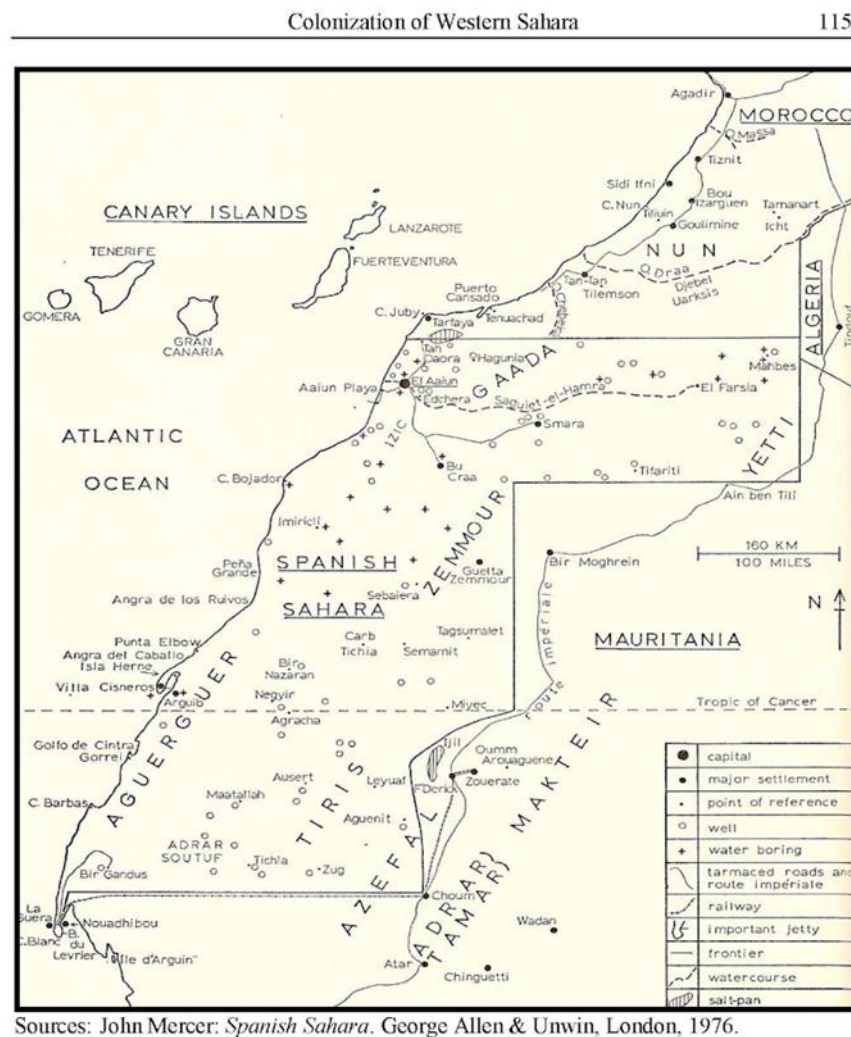


Figure 4.1: Spanish Sahara (Western Sahara border by 1936)

Source : Boubrik, R. (2023). *La question du Sahara : Aux origines d'une invention coloniale, 1884-1975*. La Croisée des Chemins.

In order to safeguard their previously acquired rights against the French and other European nations, the Spanish reached a mutual agreement with France to address the contentious border disputes by seizing Moroccan and Mauritanian territories. The initial French and

Spanish border agreement, resulting from the negotiations, was officially approved on 27 June 1900. This agreement was subsequently modified through undisclosed agreements signed on 3 October 1904 and later on 27 November 1912 (Besenyő, 2010).

The French intervention in Western Sahara can be traced back to at least 1902. The past mentioned agreements defined the borders, which were endorsed by all the powerful states, except for the Kingdom of Morocco. The borders were delineated as part of a newly formed agreement in 1954. Though the Spanish and French diplomatic cooperation was practical in the more peripheral areas, the areas where the French could succeed faster and more productively were the Sahara regions, while the Spanish were largely practical (Boubrik, 2023).

Therefore, Sheikh of Smara Ma El-Aynin, a religious leader of Mauritanian descent, sought the assistance of the Moroccan ruler in combating the French in 1905. This renowned religious and military figure, commonly referred to as 'Ma El-Aynin' (Water of the Eyes), was not part of any Sahraoui tribe, Mohammed Mustafa Ould Sheikh Mohammed Fadel, was born in 'Hodh', in close proximity to the River Niger, approximately in 1830-31. His family originated from Tafilalet, a region in South-East Morocco, and relocated to "Hodh" during the 17th century. His father, Mohammed Fadel Ould Mamun, was a highly esteemed religious leader in the city, known for establishing the Kadirija denomination of Sufism (a school of Islamic spirituality) (Boubrik, 2023). In 1859, Ma El-Aynin was just a tradesman, relocated to the North-Western region of the Sahara, near Tindouf city. Upon his arrival to this region, he had already completed his pilgrimage to Mecca, which earned him significant respect among the local tribes who had never made the journey themselves. It is not surprising, given his strong connections with the members of the Alavita dynasty, that in 1887 the reigning Monarch of Morocco appointed him as his official envoy to the nomadic tribes of the Sahara, who already saw him as a saint. Ma El-Aynin then caused additional problems for France when he renewed the Moroccan Sahraoui rebellion against the French in early 1910. During that period, the French sought to extend their dominance in Northwest Africa, with Mauritania as their final objective. Despite Ma El-Aynin's ultimate defeat, his sons and the tribes persisted in their resistance against the occupation. The historical record shows that in 1934, the holy city of Smara collapsed for the second time (Besenyő, 2010).

This destruction occurred as a result of a joint action led by two major nations against a significant African power. It was only after this event that Spanish and French forces were able to restore some level of peace in the region. Nevertheless, the pursuit of freedom and liberty persisted until the ultimate independence of the area from the intruding forces.

4.2 THE BIRTH OF POLISARIO FRONT

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia El Hamra and Rio de Oro, known as the Polisario Front, is one of the main parties involved in the Western Sahara conflict. The founding of the Polisario Front on May 10, 1973, could have been understood only by going back to the previous years when the first political insubordination movements against the Spanish authorities began to take shape involving the Sahrawis.

In 1942, Mohamed Sidi Brahim Basir, popularly known as Basiri, was born in what was then the colony of Cabo Juby, in the current Moroccan city of Tan-Tan. Basiri is of Moroccan nationality but belongs to the Sahrawi tribe in Erguibat, he completed his journalism studies in Syria. Upon his return to Morocco, he founded Al-Shihab (The Torch), a nationalist Sahrawi newspaper. In 1968, the Advanced Organization for the Liberation of the Sahara (OALS) was established, where Sahrawi youth began to organize to claim their rights against colonial Spain (Olsson, 2006).

The situation of the Sahrawis, even those who had obtained Spanish nationality was in its worst phases, especially since the Spanish government was reluctant to favor their inclusion. The unemployment rate among the Sahrawi population was high, they were poorly paid in the sectors where they worked, and most jobs were held by the Spanish. Sahrawis were employed in the Fos Bucr  a mine, in the Nomadic Troops (very difficult to access), in companies building roads, and in small businesses and services where, in general, salaries were insufficient to support a Sahrawi family (Boubrik, 2023). Additionally, Sahrawis lived in tents or makeshift wooden and sheet metal shacks. Regarding education, there were no university-educated Sahrawis, and there was only one school in Smara and two in El Aai  n, where there was also a high school.

Observing this panorama, it is logical that a movement to channel indignation and demands would eventually emerge. Initially, the OALS focused its activity on establishing contact with neighbouring countries, Algeria and Mauritania, seeking support. The group was formed in secret, and to join, one took an oath on the Quran. The movement sought to resolve the uncertainty regarding the future of Western Sahara, accepting possible Spanish tutelage for a few years after decolonization to establish a Sahrawi government (Boubrik, 2023).

Furthermore, the Polisario Front was founded on May 10, 1973, and emerged from the union of two nationalist groups: those from Tan-Tan (Morocco), where Sahrawi students were located, and the Sahrawis from Zouerate, Mauritania, where the Front was established. Many Sahrawi workers and soldiers from the Spanish Sahara also joined the Front (Freire, 2022). The objective was clear: the independence from Spain and the formation of an independent Sahrawi state. This is reflected in Article 1 of the Polisario Front Statutes: "*The Polisario Front is a National Liberation Movement, the result of a long Sahrawi resistance against all forms of foreign domination, in which Sahrawis voluntarily mobilize for the struggle for national independence and the recovery of Sahrawi sovereignty over the entire territory of the SADR.*" (Ruiz Miguel, 1995, p. 160).

The Polisario carried out its first armed action on May 20, 1973, when they attacked a Spanish detachment guarding a well north of Echeiría. Later, on September 30 of the same year, their fighters killed a corporal of the Territorial Police. The year 1974 began with clashes, and by autumn, there was sabotage of the FosBucraá conveyor belt, and on December 18, there was a fierce confrontation resulting in the death of a sergeant of the Legion and five territorial policemen. In 1975, various acts of aggression by the Front took place, notably causing a battalion of Nomad Troops to desert. In September, a prisoner exchange was carried out between Spain and the Polisario, after which no further acts of aggression between them were known, although Spanish repression of any sovereign expression by the Sahrawi people continued (Freire, 2022).

4.3 INVOLVEMENT OF ALGERIA AND MAURITANIA IN THE WESTERN SAHARA CONFLICT

The conflict in Western Sahara can be traced back to the colonial period as discussed in the previous sub-chapters. By the decolonizing process, initiated in the mid-20th century, Morocco and the Polisario Front had come up with rival claims, hence the beginning of a long struggle for sovereignty (Zoubir, 1990).

Shortly after the Spanish withdrawal in 1975, the conflict spread to both Algeria and Mauritania. Their involvement in the beginning was marked by Algeria's support for the Polisario Front, and Mauritania claiming part of Western Sahara as its territory (Boukhars, 2012). This sub-chapter examines the involvement of Algeria and Mauritania in the Western Sahara conflict, with a focus on what motivations could have driven their actions and how they impacted regional dynamics.

4.3.1 Algeria's Role In The Western Sahara Conflict

Algeria's involvement in the conflict over Western Sahara is based on multiple motivations, all of which emanate from its overall geopolitical design and ideological posture. Algeria has consistently stood for the right to self-determination, which is a principle that it so deeply embodied within the Algerian foreign policy framework since the country itself faced its struggle for independence from France. This support is established in the ideological commitment to the anti-colonial and liberation struggle, something that aligns it with the Polisario Front's quest for independence from Moroccan governance over the Western Sahara (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995). Moreover, for Algeria, Morocco's claims over Western Sahara represent a threat to its strategic interests and regional stability, since the annexation of Western Sahara by Morocco would increase its territorial and political influence in the region, which may potentially disturb the established power balance of the Maghreb region. Algeria's opposition to Moroccan expansionism is thus partly motivated by a desire to counterbalance its regional rival and prevent the emergence of a hegemonic Morocco that could undermine Algerian influence in North Africa (Boukhars, 2017). Furthermore, the potential economic benefit that would be derived from Western Sahara's natural resources, primarily phosphates and offshore oil reserves is another factor in Algeria's involvement.

This strategy guarantees that the previous resources are under the ownership of an independent Western Sahara rather than Morocco. A situation like this allows Algeria to pressurize Morocco in terms of the conflict and use it for greater regional and international negotiations that would benefit its case even more.

Algeria's involvement in the conflict is multifaceted and covers all dimensions ranging from political to military. Tindouf camps within the nation host tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees who fled as a result of conflict processes (Zunes & Mundy, 2010). However, these camps have also been the subject of criticism and human rights concerns. Reports from various human rights organizations have documented issues such as restrictions on freedom of movement, lack of access to adequate education and healthcare, and allegations of forced labor and recruitment of child soldiers. For instance, Human Rights Watch has highlighted the limited freedoms and challenging living conditions faced by the camp residents (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Amnesty International has also reported on the human rights violations in the Tindouf camps, including the lack of transparency and accountability in the administration of aid and the overall governance of the camps (Amnesty International, 2018). In addition, these camps became an excellent base where Polisario could not only be safe but also regroup and coordinate their activities. Furthermore, military training, arms, and logistical supplies were received by the Polisario Front from Algeria. This has been very essential in enabling the Polisario Front to sustain military efforts against Moroccan forces. This means that Algerian military support would not be limited to providing resources, but it would also ensure the training and effectiveness of the Polisario fighters (Zunes & Mundy, 2010). Politically, Algeria had also been a fierce defender of the Polisario Front point of view, by using its diplomatic influence to rally support for the Polisario Front within the African Union, where it played a key role in ensuring that SADR remained as one of its recognized members (Zoubir, 2010).

At the UN level, Algeria has consistently voted in favor of resolutions calling for a referendum toward self-determination for Western Sahara. It has worked to keep the conflict on the international agenda, underscoring the necessity for a lasting solution respecting the rights of the Sahrawi in self-determination (UN General Assembly, 2018). The current diplomatic mission of Algeria to the UN has been active in terms of lobbying for the

recognition of international opinion in favor of the Polisario Front while countering Moroccan diplomatic efforts (UNSC Report, 2019). In conclusion, what explains Algeria's huge investment in the Western Sahara conflict is based on ideological commitments born from self-determination, geopolitical strategy balancing against Morocco, and interests of an economic and strategic nature. Either way, Algeria has been important in maintaining international interest on the issue and in shaping conflict dynamics through its important political, military, and diplomatic support to the Polisario Front.

4.3.2 Mauritania's Involvement In The Western Sahara Conflict

Mauritania got involved in the Western Sahara conflict from the very first as it voiced territorial claims over southern Western Sahara, which led to the direct involvement of the country in the conflict. These claims are based on historical and strategic grounds from their side, however, the reality of war soon imposed severe economic and military pressures on Mauritania. The strain of sustaining the conflict, coupled with internal instability, led to Mauritania reassessing its position. This rethink resulted in the eventual withdrawal of its claims after the signing of a peace treaty with the Polisario Front in 1979, which marked Mauritania's exit from the conflict (Boukhars, 2012).

After its withdrawal, Mauritania moved into a more neutral position where it sought to balance its diplomatic relations with both Morocco and Algeria. The shift was primarily driven by a desire to be free from the prolonged territorial dispute and to focus on solidifying internal stability and economic development. The neutral stance allowed Mauritania to rebuild and address pressing domestic issues without the burden of an external conflict (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020).

Currently, Mauritania does not support any party in the Western Sahara conflict. The country constantly says that the solution to the problem lies in negotiations and peaceful means while emphasizing the importance of stability in the region. Mauritania's diplomacy is determined to develop cooperation with all parties involved to prevent additional involvement in the conflict (Boukhars, 2012). Such a policy will allow Mauritania to contribute, to some extent, toward regional peace and stability without burdening itself with the heavy costs and complications that would result from any active involvement in the conflict (Africa Center

for Strategic Studies, 2020). This position expresses strategic neutrality that places Mauritania as a potential mediator, committed to peaceful resolution of crises and regional cooperation.

4.4 THE STATUS-QUO

The conflict began in 1975 when Spain withdrew from Western Sahara (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.), which at the time was its most significant remaining colony in Africa. Morocco and Mauritania immediately proclaimed their sovereignty over this territory. The Polisario Front, created to achieve the territory's independence, began an armed struggle against Spain in 1973. On November 7, 1975, King Hassan II of Morocco gathered 350,000 unarmed citizens to enter the areas under Spanish control and assert Morocco's rights over the territory. The Green March, as named by the King, pressured Spain, and rather than ordering its soldiers to fire on the demonstrators, Spain decided to leave the territory (Lehtinen, 2001).

The Madrid Accords, signed on November 14, 1975, by Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania, marked a pivotal shift in the status of Western Sahara. The agreement facilitated Spain's withdrawal from the territory by February 28, 1976, and established a temporary administration comprising Spanish, Moroccan, and Mauritanian officials, with Spain maintaining significant economic interests, particularly in phosphate mining (Hodges, 1983). This accord divided Western Sahara, allotting the northern two-thirds to Morocco and the southern third to Mauritania, contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which denied sovereignty claims by both nations (Damis, 1983). The Polisario Front and Algeria rejected this agreement. The ensuing war saw the Polisario achieve rapid military victories, forcing Mauritania to withdraw in 1979, although thousands of Sahrawis sought refuge near Tindouf in the years that followed. However, Morocco strengthened its control over Western Sahara, notably through the construction of protective walls, known as the sand wall (Hacene-Djaballah, 1985). In 1991, with the conflict at a military stalemate, both parties accepted a settlement plan under the auspices of the UN. As shown in Figure 2, this initiative introduced a ceasefire that divided the territory along the sand wall and created a buffer zone and a restricted area to separate the two sides. This plan

also aimed for a resolution of the conflict through a self-determination referendum to be organized by MINURSO (United Nations Security Council, 1991).

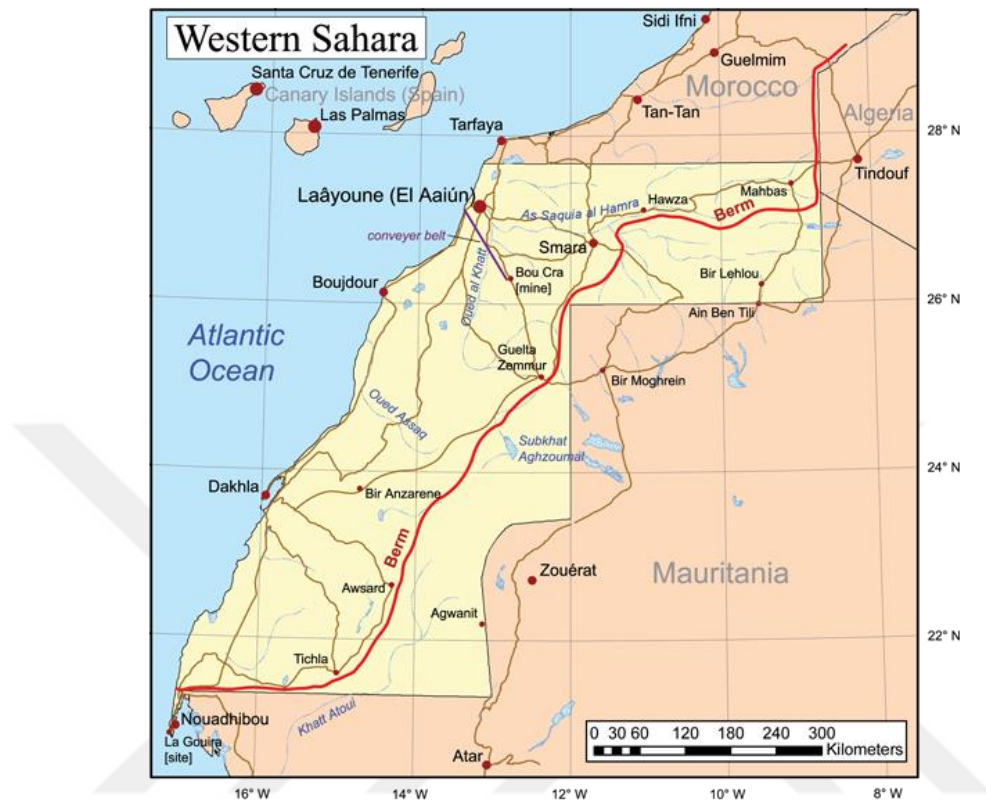


Figure 4.2: Western Sahara map 1991

Source: EN Monitor. (2023, January 15). Germany and Morocco end tensions over Western Sahara.

4.5 THE CREATION OF MINURSO

The MINURSO was established in 1991 after years of fighting between Morocco and the Polisario Front over Western Sahara (United Nations Security Council, 1991), dating back to decolonization in the mid-20th century as it was stated in detail in previous chapters. After Spain withdrew from Western Sahara in 1975, both Morocco and Mauritania claimed the region, while the Polisario Front aimed to declare independence (Lehtinen, 2001). In this context, it triggered a long-lasting war with thousands of casualties and spread displacement. In answer to the mounting international pressure and an increasingly worsening

humanitarian situation, the UN intervened to mediate a ceasefire and came up with a framework for a peaceful solution.

The UN, aware of the imperative need to intervene to solve this humanitarian crisis and pave the way for a political solution, adopted Resolution 658 in 1990, calling for a ceasefire and a referendum to be conducted to determine the future status of Western Sahara. This was followed by Resolution 690 in 1991, which formally established MINURSO to supervise the ceasefire and manage a free and fair referendum in which the Sahrawi people would have a choice between independence and integration with Morocco (United Nations Security Council, 1991).

Logistical problems and political disagreements were part of the beginnings of the MINURSO mission. The deployment of UN peacekeepers and civilian staff began in September 1991, but the process was derailed by disputes over voter eligibility. Morocco and the Polisario Front each produced conflicting lists of eligible voters, which were promptly delayed by claims of manipulation. Despite the challenges, MINURSO was successful in establishing a buffer zone and managing the withdrawal of Moroccan troops from certain areas, which helped to reduce immediate hostilities and stabilize the area to some extent (Durch, 1993).

Later on, MINURSO continued its work throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, mediating between Morocco and the Polisario. The role of the mission expanded in an attempt to establish humanitarian assistance, clear minefields, and monitor human rights abuses (United Nations Security Council, 2000). The referendum process remained locked up, however, as the disputes over voter eligibility never seemed to find resolution. Several rounds of negotiations brokered by the UN, which involved key international players, were initiated to break the deadlock but never came to a lasting agreement.

With the beginning of the new century, increased international attention came to focus on the Western Sahara issue, coupled with the appointment of high-profile UN envoys who tried to revive the peace process. James Baker, former secretary of state from the U.S., was the UN Secretary General's personal envoy for Western Sahara from 1997 to 2004. Baker proposed a series of plans that were aimed at bridging the gap between Moroccan

sovereignty and the Polisario Front by Sahrawis. These plans include the Baker Plan II, put forward in 2003 (United Nations Secretary-General, 2003).

The Baker Plan II, also known as the Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara, sought to give an end to the long-standing conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front by proposing a compromise solution between the two—Moroccan sovereignty and Sahrawi self-determination. The plan included a four- to five-year transition period where Western Sahara would be administered as an autonomous region under Moroccan sovereignty. An autonomous local Sahrawi Authority should be established with extensive self-government powers over matters such as education, local police, and economic development. In contrast, Morocco would be responsible for defense, foreign affairs, and currency. After the transitional period, a referendum would be held to choose between full independence, continued autonomy, or complete integration into Morocco. In regards to voter eligibility, contentious issues of voter identification have been specified as those on the 1991 voter list and proven to have resided in the area continuously since 1999. During the transition phase, MINURSO would administer the plan in order to implement it (Arieff, 2014).

The Baker Plan II has seen mixed reactions. In its earlier reactions, Morocco was willing, although later it became reluctant due to the option for independence in the referendum. The Polisario Front accepted this plan, for they believed that this was a balanced way to pay due respect to Sahrawi's self-determination. However, reactions from the international community remained divided, with some treating it as a possible path to peace, while others were less convinced it could work (Zoubir, 2009, pp. 69-85). The plan covered various fields, yet it had great challenges to overcome which is the lack of mutual trust and political will between Morocco and the Polisario Front, and regional geopolitical considerations (San Martín, 2004, pp. 651-660). James Baker resigned in 2004 because of frustration from the stalemate, shelving the plan. Nevertheless, the Baker Plan II stands as one of the most important points of reference in the continuing quest for the resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara and portrays an example of the complexities of balancing sovereignty with self-determination in the quest for conflict resolution.

Despite setbacks, MINURSO has done much in keeping the ceasefire and even providing the means for dialogue. Its presence has perhaps forestalled a return to all-out conflict and given some sense of stability to an often-turbulent part of the world. Moreover, through humanitarian efforts, it has managed to mitigate some of the suffering brought about by the long war with its relief and other operations that assisted the dislocated Sahrawi communities.

Apart from monitoring the cease-fire agreement, MINURSO has been heavily engaged in mine action initiatives. The Western Sahara is still heavily contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordnance, which bring serious threats to locals and peacekeepers. The cooperation between MINURSO and international partners in clearing mines has drastically minimized these dangers. The mission not only physically removes mines but also organizes mine awareness campaigns, in which communities are taught the risks and dangers related to unexploded ordnance. These efforts have been vital in enhancing the safety and security of the region and facilitating the safe return of displaced persons by making previously inaccessible land accessible again (UNSC, 2023).

Another core aspect of the MINURSO mandate is the support of the political process in Western Sahara, by offering constant logistic and technical support to UN-led negotiations for a political solution to the conflict. Although such talks have been stretched out over time without any definitive resolution, the role that MINURSO plays in facilitating dialogue between Morocco and the Polisario Front remains very important (UNSC Report, 2024). The mission's efforts in this domain underscore the importance of continued diplomatic engagement and the pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the long-standing dispute (UNSC Report, 2023).

MINURSO's operations face significant challenges, particularly through restrictions on the freedom of movement in the areas controlled by the Polisario Front. This has made it most difficult for the mission to monitor the ceasefire or any other essential task. The situation has been further complicated by the breach of the ceasefire in November 2020 when the Polisario Front announced an end to the 1991 ceasefire following a Moroccan military operation conducted in the Guerguerat buffer zone. The era that is patrolled by UN peacekeepers saw increased hostilities as Moroccan forces sought to reopen a blocked road by the Polisario

Front, leading to the Polisario Front declaring renewed conflict (Middle East Eye, 2020). Furthermore, these logistic and operational problems of MINURSO will be further worsened by the breach of the ceasefire, such as re-supplying team sites or issues involving the safety of peacekeepers (UN News, 2020). These limitations are thus enhanced due to the fact that Western Sahara is a huge territory and remote, making any continual and effective operation hard to conduct. Another key responsibility of the mission was to monitor and verify ceasefire violations, however, these restrictions impact these efforts as possible violations are unchecked and unreported. Moreover, the resumption of hostilities increased the risk to the UN personnel of MINURSO due to their operation in an environment where active conflict has resumed. Both Moroccan and Polisario forces have engaged in sporadic clashes, further complicating the mission's mandate and highlighting the fragile security situation (Africanews, 2020).

In conclusion, while MINURSO has made significant contributions to maintaining peace and stability in Western Sahara, the mission continues to face substantial challenges. Restrictions on freedom of movement, logistical difficulties, and the ongoing political stalemate hinder its effectiveness. Continued international support and a renewed focus on achieving a political resolution are essential for MINURSO to fulfill its mandate and facilitate a peaceful future for the people of Western Sahara.

4.6 THE FAILURE OF MINURSO'S FIRST MANDATE: ORGANIZING THE REFERENDUM FOR SELF-DETERMINATION IN WESTERN SAHARA

MINURSO's primary mandate was to prepare and conduct a referendum in which the people of Western Sahara would decide either to opt for independence or to join Morocco. Despite the enormous international support, the mission has not succeeded in fulfilling its initial mandate because of various political, logistical, and even diplomatic complications. First, the deep political conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front can be seen in their point of view regarding the future of Western Sahara, while Morocco emphasizes its sovereignty over the Western Sahara and offers limited autonomy to Sahrawis to remain within the Moroccan state, the Polisario Front insist on complete independence. This fundamental difference stopped any consensus over electoral rolls for the referendum (Lehtinen, 2001).

Whereas Morocco wanted the settlers who travelled to Western Sahara after 1975 to be included, the Polisario Front insisted that the voters should be limited to those in the Spanish 1974 census and their descendants. This disagreement in identifying voters has been recognized as one of the main reasons for the failure to organize the referendum (San Martín, 2004, pp. 651-660). Moreover, the vast, arid, and sparsely populated territory of Western Sahara made preparing a referendum highly difficult. The identification and registration of potential voters have been hampered by severe logistical issues, such as disputes over tribal affiliations and accusations of voter fraud. Additionally, the UN faced the challenge of supervising and controlling large demilitarized zones in a volatile environment, which made ensuring security and impartiality a considerable obstacle international diplomacy has also complicated the referendum mandate (CRS Reports, 2014). Historically, Morocco has the support of France and the U.S., while Algeria and other African countries have been backing up the Polisario Front. This involvement of influential states has introduced several vetoes within the UNSC, thereby causing diplomatic paralysis over many resolutions concerning Western Sahara (Lehtinen, 2001). The limited mandate of MINURSO has also been one major factor in its failure. This was a peacekeeping mission oriented mainly toward organizing the referendum, without any broader mandate for settling new political and humanitarian issues that emerged with time. This lack of flexibility, coupled with insufficient resources, has constrained its ability to respond to emerging situations at ground level. In addition, this mission has been inadequate in funding, personnel, and capacity in general, making it difficult to identify the voters effectively and ensure security in the region (CRS Reports, 2014).

In conclusion, the inability of MINURSO to carry out the self-determination referendum in Western Sahara has been due to profound political disagreement between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front, massive logistical problems over the voters' identification, diplomatic entanglements among the forces that are involved internationally, and the constraints imposed by the limited mandate and inadequate support for the mission. For any future resolution to be successful, there needs to be a renewed commitment from the international community, alongside greater flexibility in addressing the core issues, and a more robust and comprehensive approach to peacekeeping that goes beyond the narrow

focus of organizing a referendum. Until these conditions are met, the prospects for self-determination in Western Sahara remain uncertain.

4.7 MOROCCAN PLAN FOR AUTONOMY AS A REPLACEMENT TO THE REFERENDUM

The Moroccan Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara, first proposed in 2006, offers a political solution to the long-standing conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front by granting a degree of self-governance to the Sahrawi people while maintaining the Moroccan sovereignty (United Nations Secretary-General, 2006). The plan emphasizes creating an executive, legislative, and judicial local government of Sahara to function over the land with authority over education, health, and infrastructure, with its parliament and government autonomously elected by the locals (Anjaiah, 2024). In addition, the administrative powers include local management of administration, taxation, and budget. This will make it possible for the region to have its own laws, which still need to remain attached to Morocco's constitution and legal framework. However, Morocco will retain control over the defence, foreign affairs, and monetary policy, with national symbols such as flags and currency remaining in use with their regional laws being consistent with Moroccan law. Furthermore, the autonomous region would also have its judiciary, although the highest judicial authority would be the Supreme Court of Morocco, and local courts would operate within their jurisdiction under the name of the King of Morocco. The plan also emphasizes continued Moroccan investment in infrastructure and economic development to improve the living conditions of the Sahrawi people (United Nations Security Council, 2007). Internationally, the plan has significant support from countries like France, Spain, and the U.S., who view it as a realistic and credible proposal balancing self-determination aspirations with geopolitical stability (US Policy on the Western Sahara, 2014).

After the submission of the plan by Morocco to the UN Secretary-General in April 2007, it was subsequently discussed within the framework of the UNSC, and this marked the official presentation of the plan as a potential solution to the Western Sahara conflict (United Nations Security Council, 2007). Furthermore, in June 2007, the plan was further discussed during the UN-led negotiations held in New York. These talks aimed to bring together Morocco

and the Polisario Front to negotiate the terms of the plan and explore its viability as a framework for peace (Al-Monitor, 2022).

The UNSC then adopted the Resolution 1754 on April 30, 2007. This resolution welcomed the Moroccan proposal and called for negotiations without preconditions. It emphasized the need for a mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The resolution marked a significant moment in the formal consideration of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan within the UN framework (United Nations Security Council, 2007).

This plan has received international support, though very opposed by the Polisario Front and its allies. The Polisario Front rejects any solution that does not include the possibility of full independence by a referendum. They hold the position that the autonomy plan is a way of undermining the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people and neglecting their historical grievances (United Nations Secretary-General, 2006).

The Polisario Front's strongest supporter, Algeria, also criticized the plan and remained supportive of a referendum. The already strained relations between Morocco and Algeria, marked by the severance of diplomatic relations initiated by Algeria in 2021, further make a settlement negotiated between the parties difficult (CRS Reports, 2014).

The situation on the ground remains complex, with periodic flare-ups and a very fragile ceasefire. The UN is still urging the two parties to find a politically acceptable solution, reiterating that “talks should continue without preconditions or hindrances” by both parties.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 REALIST PERSPECTIVE ON MINURSO

Any analysis of MINURSO operation from this realist perspective, which depends on the security and stability of the state and stresses the importance of the balance of power, should focus on the power politics at stake and the constant struggles for leadership and domination in the international system.

First, as discussed in the theoretical chapter, realism underscores the fact that any state is interested first and foremost in its survival in a world of reigning anarchy and chaos (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40). Realist MINURSO interpretation is related to the broad role given to this mission in securing the stability of the region and conflict prevention provided the region is geopolitically sensitive. This conflict of Western Sahara reaches out to all main regional actors, Morocco and Algeria, and extends to broader North African stability. Moreover, from the vantage point of Morocco, the Western Sahara is not merely an issue of territory but significant to its national security. This area provides them with strategic depth and good natural resources. Thus, the territory of Western Sahara is essential for Morocco's territorial integrity and regional influence. The infrastructure and development investments it makes in the region are equally strategic to advance its claim and solidify the territory's integration into the national dimension.

Furthermore, for the international community, and principally the UN, the main intent of the MINURSO has been to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict and to prevent the failure of the ceasefire. However, the realist approach to international institutions, including the UN, is that it has minimal influence on state behavior and cannot fundamentally transform the anarchic nature of international relations or significantly reduce violent conflicts between states (Mearsheimer, 2001). In addition, realist thought, international relations are usually a balance of powers or a zero-sum game; by definition, the gain of one partner is another's loss. In the context of MINURSO and the Western Sahara conflict, this zero-sum perspective highlights the power competition between the state of Morocco and the Polisario Front, which is backed by Algeria. This means that there is no point in mediation since neither Morocco nor Polisario Front will waive their right to a zero-sum solution.

Additionally, from a realist position, the Moroccan Autonomy Plan declared in 2007, can be valued as an opportune solution for this conflict. The plan offers very thorough autonomy to Western Sahara while saving the sovereignty of Morocco. Realism believes the fact that this scheme takes into account the real power balance on the ground, where the strongest state with larger resources and international supporters, Morocco, is in a better position to impose this scheme and make the political solution sustainable. Also, MINURSO efforts are unlikely to succeed without the consent and active participation of great powers, which typically do not engage in such missions unless they align with their strategic interests (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40). However, the Autonomy plan gathers support from powerful players in the international arena such as the U.S. and France, which leads us back to believing that the Moroccan autonomy plan is still the best solution to end this conflict with Morocco being the only Winner.

Realism supports the solutions proposed by the stronger state, and this is Morocco. The argument follows, if Morocco has the political will, economic capacity, and military ability to maintain authority over Western Sahara, then a solution that appeals to Moroccan interests is more likely to prove stable and sustainable in the long term. Such a realist view would argue that the international community should have accepted the Moroccan Autonomy Plan, realizing that the balance of power favors Morocco and that a plan like this one could offer a framework for stable long-term relations. Realists view this as a way to achieve state-centric stability and security, but in practical terms, the implementation of the autonomy plan may provide substantial benefits to the Sahrawi population.

Realism, as an approach, has always recognized the reality of weak idealistic solutions to an issue where power struggle and power relations are involved. While the demand of the Polisario Front for a referendum on full independence resonates with the principles of self-determination, realists would opine that such a thing is almost impossible under the prevailing geopolitical realities (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40). Instead, they press for a compromise that will mirror the power game, like this plan of autonomy, which, although far from ideal, is a good and workable solution that will ensure the balance of power is intact.

In conclusion, from a realist approach, the mission of MINURSO can be seen as an imperfect attempt to manage a complex geopolitical conflict. The focus on security, stability, and

power dynamics brings out the fact that the realization of power within the region needs to be acknowledged. The Moroccan Autonomy Plan, though criticized in many aspects, presents a realist resolution to the conflict by granting a solution that will satisfy the interests of the stronger state and offer scope to possible development and stability within the Western Sahara. Realism implies that, by following this route, the international community and the UN might have achieved a more stable and realistic solution to this conflict, which would have benefited both Morocco and the Saharawi people by providing a stable political environment.

5.2 IDEALIST PERSPECTIVE ON MINURSO

Based on idealist analysis, MINURSO's humanitarian outcome stands in complete contrast to the realist view, international cooperation, and the pursuit of win-win solutions in peacekeeping operations. As opposed to the realism approach, idealism pays much of consideration to human rights, ethical standards, and humanity itself than power (Bell, 2016). Therefore, the primary goal of MINURSO from this window of this approach should be in line with its use to help protect and promote the human rights of Sahrawis and to pursue their ways of self-determination. However, Idealists argue that the ultimate goal of MINURSO should be to facilitate a free and fair referendum that permits the determination of their political destiny. Self-determination is one of the fundamental tenets of the inalienable rights of humans, according to the UN. This is grounded in humanitarianism since idealist approaches to peacekeeping prioritize the protection of human rights and dignity, democratic governance, and long-term stability (Weiss, Forsythe, Coate, & Pease, 2014). In addition to this humanitarian aspect of the Sahrawi people is also being put into consideration by the MINURSO. The Sahrawi refugee camps, which are situated in Algeria and accommodate many Sahara residents, are now facing massive challenges, and the refugees there barely receive some basic services such as health care, education, and clean water. Idealists would argue that MINURSO coordinates humanitarian aid and enhances the living conditions in these camps so that the preliminaries in basic human rights for the Sahrawi people might be sustained prior to the political process.

Furthermore, Idealism would put faith in international cooperation and multilateralism above all other instruments necessary in the quest for lasting peaceful and secure coexistence (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40). MINURSO is an application of idealistic principles as the international community comes together to address the conflict in Western Sahara.

The idealist perspective, therefore, underlines that win-win solutions are possible for international conflicts, where from every walk of an agreement, possible benefits can be derived. This is the thing that this work, regarding the approach to MINURSO, tries to capture: a solution that can address the concerned and aspirational sides of both Morocco and the Sahrawi people. But unfortunately, after the failure of the Baker plan which was the lead plan that could achieve this win-win solution, the MINORSU could not bring another solution that embodies this approach. A win-win solution should also insinuate development in economic and social terms in Western Sahara because of the acts of idealists who argue that by investing in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, there can possibly be more prosperity, increased stability, and the like in the region (Thompson & Snidal, 1999). Furthermore, international cooperation and aid will help to create such an environment in which the Sahrawi people will flourish and help in the general development of the region.

From this idealist perspective, the analysis of MINURSO comes to focus on humanitarian purposes, international cooperation, and win-win solutions. Idealists believe that real peace and stability in Western Sahara can only prevail if the rights and aspirations of the Sahrawi people are achieved by international dialogue and cooperation and if international interaction leads to win-win solutions for each party involved. While realists focus on power dynamics and the interests of states, this idealist approach will underline the need for the accountability of the parties involved to ethical principles, human rights, and multilateralism in the resolution of the Western Sahara conflict. In this respect, MINURSO will contribute to a more just and peaceful resolution that accounts for the necessities and claims of both Morocco and the Sahrawi people.

5.3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The best understanding of the effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term effect of the MINURSO can be found by the application of both realist and idealist views. The realist

view of this mission is based on security, stability, and power, which is very clear while favoring the stronger, Morocco. The idealist view contains humanitarian results, cooperation across nations, and seeking a win-win solution in keeping the peace, such as the protection of Sahrawi people and their rights and quest for self-determination. The following comparison of these two views shows that while the idealist offers the best path in consideration of principles and values, the realistic view is the only practical solution to end this conflict that will reach 50 years soon.

From this realist perspective, the greatest concern for MINURSO should be regional stability and the maintenance of a power balance that is wholly to the benefit of the dominant state actor, Morocco. According to the realists, peace and security are best achieved when the power equation is recognized and handled in a rational and sensible fashion. The Moroccan Autonomy Plan as a workable formula works out within this paradigm insofar as it guarantees a limited measure of self-rule in Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty. In this way, it preserves Morocco's strategic interest as the most powerful player in this conflict. The realists believe that guarantees will take place by mitigating a weak, possibly even failed state, and will maintain Morocco's control over the strategically important territory. In addition, they assert that a better and more effective state apparatus and a richer economy are in Morocco and that it will be easier to maintain and implement the autonomy plan there than from a contentious and ultimately impossible decision through a referendum.

The idealist perspective, however, emphasizes the rights and aspirations of the Sahrawi people, and the need for a free and fair referendum that will determine their political future. Idealists insist that the operation of MINURSO should be based on international norms of self-determination and rights so that the will of the Sahrawi people can be ascertained. This ideally arises from the belief that justice and respect for fundamental rights are prerequisites to lasting peace. Idealists would also ascribe international cooperation and multilateralism as keys to resolving the conflict (Islam, 2004, pp. 24-40). They would point to the fact that there is the minutest of detail that the UN and other international players have to iron out in facilitating dialogue, extending humanitarian aid, and standing by the people of Sahrawi in their development. An idealist approach seeks a solution that is a win for both Morocco and

the Sahrawi people, allowing for the core objectives of the two camps to be met and, hence, establishing peace and cooperation in the long term.

Comparatively, realism can provide a more immediate and pragmatic solution to the Western Sahara conflict. With its strong belief in recognizing and supporting the stronger state, which is Morocco in this case, realists believe that MINURSO could assure regional stability while saving the region from protracted uncertainty. The Moroccan Autonomy Plan, while not giving full independence, clearly provides the frameworks of governance that might be implemented quite promptly and efficiently. In a pragmatic approach, further conflict and instability in a region that is already torn by geopolitical tensions must be warded off. Moreover, the realist approach takes into account two important things: first, the limitations of international interventions; and second, the complexities of enforcing a referendum on a contested territory. The other side of the argument is that, although the idealist approach is in line with ethical principles and international norms, it is practically difficult to apply. The idealist dimension of the referendum on self-determination forms an integral part of the approach in question. However, it has been postponed on various occasions due to disputes over the eligibility of voters and political conditions. Idealists argue that only through patience and persistence in a long process can a just solution be found, but on the other hand, the time lag reduces the credibility of the process and the chances of ending the conflict with peace. Moreover, the idealistic shift towards humanitarian outcomes and international cooperation, as noble as it is, very often fails to chart a course past the immediate concerns with security preoccupations and power that dominate the conflict in question.

The long-term implications are also quite different for either strategy. A strategy of interest maximization through a pragmatic resolution is, in the long run, aimed at establishing a secure governance structure that may lead to economic development and improve the Sahrawi citizens' living standards under the umbrella of Morocco. This kind of stability is important in attracting investments and creating growth; however, it might be unable to address the underlying concerns of the Sahrawi people, bringing rise to future unrest and resistance.

On the contrary, an idealist approach, if successful, would promise a just and fair settlement doing right by the Sahrawi people's rights. This may be a way to more profound and

sustainable peace that emanates from the legitimacy of a free political future. The impediments to making such an idealist vision a success story are huge, and uncertainty dragged to time could add up to humanitarian crises and influence regional stability. In a nutshell, though, both realist and idealist perspectives as much as they offer contesting illumination to the MINURSO mission, the realist approach is offering an immediately practicable solution to an old problem: the Western Sahara dispute. The realists argue that through the support for the Moroccan Autonomy Plan, MINURSO can assure regional stability and open prospects for economic development, at least to sketch a way forward that is not excellent but that would be able to deal with the immediate power dynamics and security problems now in place. The expectations of justice and the high-flown idealism of what is right and just in the international order, associated with idealism, are points that uphold human rights but are often subordinate to difficulties in their implementation. In other words, the UN in pursuing its high-flown idealism, must occasionally temper its wind with some cold realism in order to get its job done, to accomplish as much stability as is possible within the system of the world's politics without trying to foreclose all hope for development to come.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Analysis of MINURSO can be done from both realist and idealist approaches on the effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term implications of the mission. In this regard, realism lies in the preservation of security, stability, and power balance, and thus it would seem that the most realistic way to resolve the crisis effectively is to support the stronger state, Morocco. This research has noted that a workable option is the Moroccan Autonomy Plan which allows limited self-governance for the Sahrawi people under Moroccan sovereignty and, therefore, deals with the question of regional stability and denies the forces of a weak, possibly destabilizing state. The realist approach is all about recognizing the realities of power and managing those realities in a way that best leads to peace and security.

The idealist approach concerns itself with the humanitarian results, in which they feel the best way possible would be to address issues that would ensure the dreams of rights and self-determination for the Sahrawi people. Idealists argue that real peace can only be found wherein justice and fundamental rights are respected; hence, the call for a just and fair referendum, in which Sahrawis may determine their fate. In other words, the idealist view expects that international cooperation and multilateralism are contained in the resolution of the conflict and that a win-win solution is arrived at, to serve the core interests of both parties.

The comparative outlook states that the idealist option is in tandem with ethical consideration and international views, whereas the realist method offers a more near-term and practical solution to the conflict. Ideological solutions are noble, but their practical implementations may attract numerous challenges. The Moroccan Autonomy Plan is a governance framework that is rapidly and efficiently applicable, thus reducing further conflict and instability. Realists concede that international interventions are often contentious and problematic in ensuring the solidarity of a referendum in a disputed territory. The idealist options meet numerous practical challenges, among them delays by disputes over voter ineligibility and political climate.

A. The main research question for this study was:

How do idealist and realist approaches in IR influence the effectiveness and outcomes of UN peacekeeping operations, specifically in the context of the MINURSO?

In this regard, both realist and idealist views give the most profound understanding of the efficiency, sustainability, and long-term effects of MINURSO. However, realism offers security and stability through the belief on behalf of Morocco's ability to achieve power balance through the autonomy plan, whereas the idealist approach is more ethical and tries to achieve a win-win solution, in reality, realism can provide a faster way out of this conflict.

B. The research Sub-questions were as follows:

a. How do the realist and the idealist approach to peacekeeping define the role and effectiveness of UN operations in maintaining international security?

For the realist approach in peacekeeping, the role and effectiveness of UN operations are understood mainly in terms of security, stability, and power dynamics. Realists emphasize that the international system is anarchic, with struggles between states for power and existence, therefore, whatever is carried out by such global institutions as the UN bears little effect on actors' actions. Thus, peacekeeping operations are still seen as mechanisms to implement ceasefires and to keep order in minor conflicts. Still, they are usually too weak to settle disputes between great powers or to provide lasting peace.

The idealist approach to peacekeeping tends to believe in humankind's capacity to progress, cooperate, and create a peaceful world order using mechanisms for collective security and international institutions. It seeks to uphold democracy, human rights, and international law as bases for a stable international system where every solution needs to be a win-win for all players. Idealists want global peace achieved through diplomacy, international cooperation, and enforcement of international norms, which is exemplified by the principles and activities of the UN.

b. What are the common factors that assess to the success or failure of major UN peacekeeping missions?

In the case of UN peacekeeping missions, success or failure depends on several criteria. The leading indicators of success include the effective execution of the outlined peacekeeping

mandate set by the UNSC. Other relevant criteria include minimizing the relapse into civil war after ending the conflict alongside the reduction in violent deaths. Ultimately, the success of a peacekeeping operation is often seen in the UN's ability to implement peace after accords rather than enforcing it through military means.

- c. Why did MINURSO fail in its first mandate to organize a referendum for self-determination in Western Sahara?*

The primary cause is the political conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front over voter eligibility, which involves serious logistical complications and diplomatic problems with influential states that caused the failure to organize the referendum in Western Sahara. Adding to this, the limited mandate and insufficient resources that MINURSO received further reduced its potential effectiveness. These combined aspects made it impossible for the mission to fulfill the original mandate.

- d. How does the Moroccan plan for autonomy serve as a replacement for the referendum, and what are its implications for the conflict?*

The Moroccan Autonomy Plan is a replacement for the referendum because it provides a compromise solution where under it, the Sahrawi people get to exercise self-government within the framework of Moroccan sovereignty, thereby sidestepping the contentious referendum issue. This attempt tries to strengthen the stability of the region by addressing the political needs of local governance without losing control, especially on defense and foreign policy matters concerning Morocco. On the other hand, it has implications for international support for the practical solution, however, at the same time aggravates the conflict between the Polisario Front and Algeria since they are convinced of its damaging effect on the self-determination right of the Sahrawis.

- e. From a realist and an idealist perspective, what factors contributed to the challenges and limitations of MINURSO, and how does it explain its failure and its success?*

The challenges that the MINURSO faces, according to realists, lie in power politics and states' security concerns. First, the unwillingness to engage in meaningful negotiations by actors significantly reduces the scope as well as the effectiveness of the mission. Furthermore, the geopolitical rivalry between Morocco and the Polisario Front, backed by

Algeria, alongside the inherent limitations to the UN's influence in an anarchical international system, further diminishes the potential for the success of MINURSO in terms of the effective achievement of lasting peace. Most importantly, realists believe that this inability of the UN to resolve any conflict lies within the organization's pursuit of a win-win solution, without adequately accounting for the power dynamics at play.

From an idealist approach, the success of peacekeeping efforts in MINURSO can be seen in its capability to protect human rights, promote humanitarian assistance, and foster international cooperation. Idealists appreciate the mission's attempts while trying to organize a free and fair referendum on Sahrawi self-determination, which aligns with the democratic principles and would give long-term stability. However, the failure is attributed to the mission's inability to achieve a win-win solution that addresses the aspirations of both Morocco and the Sahrawi people, thus reflecting the challenges of implementation of idealist principles in a complex geopolitical landscape.

6.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

This research goes on to weigh in on the debate on international relations and peacekeeping policy by fathoming an in-depth analysis of how the MINURSO mission operates from both the realist and idealist angles. The work reiterates the need to balance ethics with practicality in the performance of peacekeeping operations. Research shows that even though idealist approaches are demanding in justice and human rights, realist approaches could further provide instrumental solutions on how to attain instant stability and security. This way, the discussion on the peacekeeping agenda is brightened due to the understanding of how different theoretical frameworks could possibly influence policy decisions and hence the output in the mission arena.

The significance of current international cooperation and multilateralism comes out clearly in this study of complex conflicts. It shows how concrete the involvement of international actors, such as the UN, can be in terms of facilitating dialogue, delivering humanitarian assistance, and fostering development in regions of conflict. It can consider instruments from both realism and idealism approaches regarding effective and ineffective measures, which offer valuable insights for the scholarly public in terms of contemporary international peace

operations and the challenge of making peace sustainable in areas already affected by conflicts.

6.3 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In full realization that solutions cannot always be idealist, the UN should apply a realistic approach and take into account the prevailing power dynamics on the ground. An expressed appreciation for the Moroccan Autonomy Plan may serve to implement a practical framework of governance that ensures regional steadiness and economic development, allaying immediate security anxieties. Moreover, the UN needs to be encouraged to venture into more multilateral activities in terms of facilitating dialogue between Morocco and the Polisario Front. Every diplomatic drive should be geared toward trust-building and the commonality that spaces the peace process forward.

In addition to political resolutions, the humanitarian situation of the Sahrawi population has to be properly catered to. Humanitarian support has to be increased in the camps by the international community through the means of infrastructure, education, and healthcare to improve living conditions. The UN should boost the mechanisms in place to monitor human rights in the Western Sahara. Respect for international standards of human rights by both parties will be of great assistance in rendering the peace just and equitable.

6.4 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

To make peacekeeping missions like MINURSO more successful in the future, there is a need to firstly, future studies shall be conducted on the relationship between human rights monitoring and success in peacekeeping operations over some time. This type of study needs to underscore how human rights abuses affect the general processes of peace while drawing lessons to safeguard the vulnerable while serving justice. Moreover, there is an urgent need for a critical analysis of multilateralism and peacekeeping, which would entail an effective assessment of multifunctional mechanisms in resolving complicated conflicts and the establishment of best practices and lessons learned from success and failure through detailed case studies of diverse peacekeeping missions. Third is the comparative analysis of various models of peacekeeping. Such analysis would contrast different models applied in various

conflict zones, showing their strengths and weaknesses, and also propose improvements for best practices. In short, integrating realist and idealist perspectives shows that although an idealist approach is normative, applying realism presents practical solutions to provide immediate stability and security. In summary, the UN has to engage in a pragmatic approach that is open more to realistic solutions that might not adhere to the concept of win-win solutions to offer a lasting solution for the return of peace in Western Sahara and also other complex crises. Future research in these domains should enhance peacekeeping efficiency and engender new methods for ending conflicts worldwide.



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