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Viability and Orientation of a Western Saharan State

An Intelligence Assessment

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Viability and Orientation of a Western Saharan State

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An Intelligence Assessment

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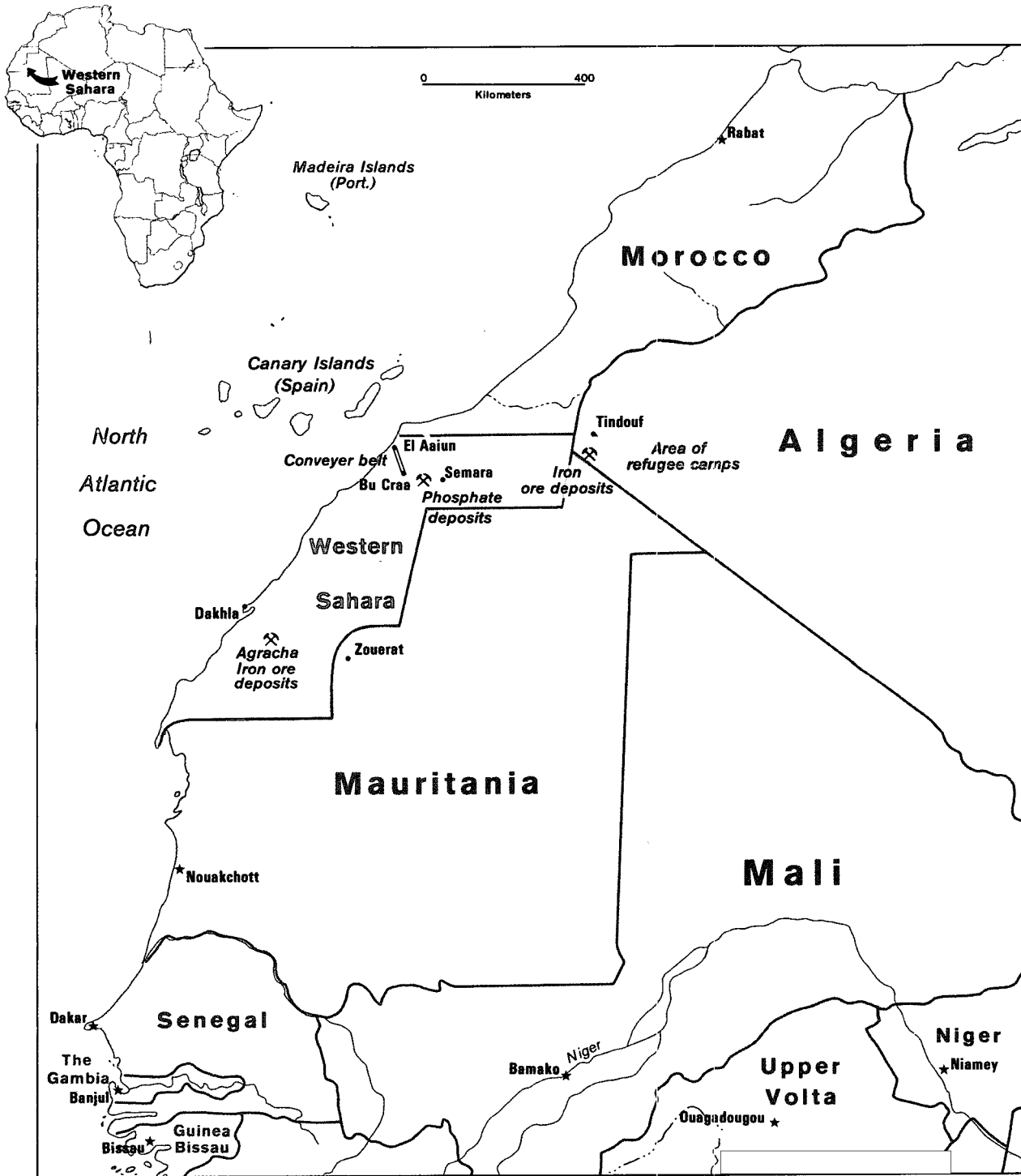
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**Viability and Orientation
of a Western Saharan State**

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Key Judgments

The Polisario Front has suffered setbacks since early 1980 in its war with Morocco for control of the Western Sahara, but it is unlikely that either side will be able to achieve a clear-cut military victory. Eventually, the heavy costs of the war are likely to lead both parties to consider seriously a political settlement. Depending on the progress of the conflict and the relative strength of the combatants, a compromise settlement could result either in the creation of an independent state encompassing all or part of the territory of the Western Sahara, or in a union or federation of a part of Western Sahara with Mauritania. Mauritania administered the southern third of the territory from 1975 to 1979, and its leaders and population have strong ethnic and cultural ties with the Polisario.

An independent Western Saharan state, regardless of whether it encompassed the entire Western Sahara or excluded the phosphate-rich Bu Craa region, probably would be a socialist Arab republic patterned after African and Arab "progressive" states. The government probably would be dominated by the Arab nationalist faction of the Polisario Front, identified with Front Secretary General Mohamed Abdel Aziz. Other factions within the Front, including Marxist and pro-Libyan elements, almost certainly would be represented in the government, but would be less influential. Islam would be the official religion of the new nation, but government policies probably would reflect the religious moderation typical of other North African regimes.

Whatever its boundaries, an independent Western Sahara would require substantial foreign support to pay for food and fuel imports. A state that encompassed the entire Western Sahara, including the Bu Craa region, eventually could become self-sufficient but it would require extensive foreign economic, technical, and managerial support to repair and expand the war-damaged phosphate industry. A truncated state that excluded the phosphate-rich area could not become economically viable. The amount of foreign aid that such a state would require might gradually be reduced, however, by the exploitation of iron ore reserves and the development of a fishing industry.

The economic and political challenges that an independent Western Sahara would confront raise serious doubts that it would be politically stable. The ability of the new government to obtain sufficient foreign support to provide the essential needs of the population would be a major factor in its survival. In addition, factionalism in the Polisario Front and the inexperience of its leadership could lead to continuing struggles for power.

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In foreign affairs, an independent Western Sahara undoubtedly would support Third World independence movements and such nonaligned objectives as the call for a new world economic order. The aid that Algeria has given the Polisario guerrillas seems likely to guarantee considerable Algerian influence over a Western Saharan government, although relations could be strained if Algeria had pressed the Polisario to accept unfavorable settlement terms. The Polisario desire to continue to receive aid from Libya would also give Tripoli some influence, although this would be limited by a desire not to offend Algeria and by distrust of Qadhafi. Because it would need foreign support, an independent Western Sahara probably would attempt to balance its relations with the Communist states and the West. It probably would establish relations with the United States and avoid close identification with the USSR. At least initially, however, its attitude toward Washington probably would be cool because of US military support for Morocco, and any substantial improvement would depend on US willingness to provide significant economic and technical assistance.

If a Saharan state were to federate with Mauritania, the combined entity's political and foreign policy almost certainly would reflect the "progressive" Arab nationalist orientation shared by the dominant faction of the Polisario leadership and by Mauritanian President Haidalla. The inclusion of Polisario representatives in the Mauritanian Government would numerically strengthen the position of Haidalla against his conservative domestic critics, but would also provide another divisive issue to test Mauritania's delicate political system and projected return to civilian rule. A combined state that did not include the Saharan phosphate deposits would be economically weaker than Mauritania itself, which is already heavily dependent on foreign aid.

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**Viability and Orientation
of a Western Saharan State**



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The war between Morocco and the Polisario Front is now five years old. Despite some recent gains by Morocco, neither side appears capable of winning a clear-cut victory, and there is no indication that either is willing to compromise on its basic demands.



In this paper we do not attempt to predict the outcome of the war in the Sahara or to assess the implications of a complete Moroccan victory in which the whole of the disputed territory might be successfully integrated into Morocco proper. Instead, we examine the ramifications of those solutions that in theory might result in the creation of a new political entity, autonomous or independent, in the Sahara. Such an entity might take one of three basic forms:

- An independent state encompassing all or most of the territory. This is the aim of the Polisario and Algeria, but seems unlikely in view of the Moroccans' increasingly firm hold on the population centers and phosphate deposits in the northwest.
- A truncated independent or autonomous entity made up of a portion of the Sahara with at least the northwest region integrated into Morocco. Conceivably this could allow Morocco to protect its primary interests and still allow the Polisario some political self-determination.
- An integrated Mauritanian-Saharan state with Morocco retaining the northwestern part of the Sahara. This less likely outcome, reflecting the common cultural and ethnic base shared by the Mauritanian and Polisario leadership, would represent a reversion to the 1975-79 period when Mauritania administered the southern portion of the territory, but this time the Polisario would be integrated into a joint government.

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Background

The Western Saharan problem, like many Third World conflicts, has its origins in the process of decolonization. Primarily the product of the conflict between the desire of Saharan nationalists for self-

determination and Moroccan territorial claims, it has been greatly complicated by the longstanding rivalry between Morocco and Algeria. Spain's decision to grant independence to its Saharan colony in early 1976 set the stage for the small-scale war that has been fought since then by the Algerian- and Libyan-backed Polisario Front (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia al Hamra and Rio de Oro) on one side and Morocco and, until August 1979, Mauritania on the other.



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Morocco has long regarded the former Spanish Sahara, as well as sections of Mauritania and Algeria, as Moroccan territory. Although Morocco has abandoned most of its other claims in the area, it has continued to insist that the northern portion of the former Spanish colony is an integral part of Morocco. Mauritania also raised claims to the territory of Spanish Sahara in the 1960s. The UN General Assembly backed the right of the people of the area to self-determination and urged Spain to organize a referendum under UN auspices and in consultation with Morocco, Mauritania, and other interested parties.



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In August 1974 Spain announced that a referendum would be held in early 1975. Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania, however, feared that a Spanish-organized referendum would either affirm Spanish control of the region or lead to the establishment of a Spanish puppet state. In a press conference in October 1974 King Hassan called on Spain to deal directly with Morocco and Mauritania. He also said that if Spain refused discussions with Morocco, he would resort to "other methods." In October 1975 the International Court of Justice ruled that while there were administrative and historical ties between Western Sahara and Morocco and Mauritania, they did not legitimize either Moroccan or Mauritanian territorial claims.



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King Hassan asserted that the Court's ruling effectively recognized Morocco's claim to the region and declared that he would lead an unarmed march of 350,000 civilians into the Spanish Sahara to "recover"

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the territory. The march began on 6 November 1975 despite an appeal from the UN Security Council. Although Hassan recalled the marchers after three days, the action led Spain on 14 November to conclude the Madrid tripartite agreement that provided for the transfer of the territory to Morocco and Mauritania by 20 February 1976. Beginning in mid-November Moroccan and Mauritanian troops gradually occupied most of the territory. In mid-January 1976 the last Spanish troops left. [redacted]

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The territory was placed under the control of a regional administration set up by Spain, with the participation of Morocco and Mauritania and the cooperation of the *Jemaa* (the Spanish Sahara General Assembly consisting of 102 prominent Saharans appointed by the Spanish Government). The Moroccans claim that ratification of the tripartite agreement by the *Jemaa* in February 1976 constitutes endorsement of Moroccan control of the territory and satisfies UN requirements for consultation and self-determination. [redacted]

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Algeria had supported earlier attempts by Morocco and Mauritania to end Spanish sovereignty over the region, but after Morocco's unarmed invasion it condemned the Madrid agreement and threw its support behind the Polisario Front.¹ Although Algeria advocates self-determination for the Saharan people, its basic goal in supporting the Polisario is to weaken Morocco, its regional rival, and to establish an independent state in Western Sahara under Algerian influence. Algeria would get access to the Atlantic, which would greatly facilitate Algerian exploitation of its rich iron ore deposits near Tindouf in the southwest. [redacted]

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Algerian assistance enabled the Polisario Front to become a credible fighting force. After November 1975 the Polisario attacked Moroccan and Mauritanian forces from bases near Tindouf. As the conflict developed in 1976 and 1977, the Front concentrated on Mauritania, the weaker of its two opponents. Unable to resist the pressure of the guerrillas, the Mauriticians

¹ The Polisario Front has its origins in the Saharan Liberation Front, formed in Rabat in 1968 by a group of Saharan students brought together by conservative Islamic views. In June 1970 the group staged a political demonstration in El Aaiun, the capital of Spanish Sahara. Harsh action by the Spanish police in breaking up the demonstration, in which several people were killed, is said to have inspired the group to build a guerrilla organization. [redacted]

ultimately lost the will to fight. In July 1978, dissatisfaction in the military with the conduct of the war resulted in a coup that ended 18 years of rule by Mouktar Ould Daddah and brought to power a government committed to ending Mauritania's involvement in the war. A cease-fire between the Polisario and Mauritania, which the Polisario unilaterally declared shortly after the coup, was formalized by a peace treaty between the two parties in August 1979. [redacted]

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After the peace treaty was signed, the Front focused on operations within Morocco. Until early 1980, Moroccan ability to fight an effective counterinsurgency war gradually eroded. Since then, however, the Moroccans have reversed this trend, primarily by using airpower and by allowing field commanders tactical flexibility to counter Polisario moves. [redacted]

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Resources

A Saharan state, whether it encompasses the entire Western Sahara or comprises a smaller area that does not include the phosphate-rich region in the northwest, would require foreign support, at least over the near term. A state that included the phosphate deposits would be highly vulnerable to fluctuations in the world price for its sole export commodity and would be heavily dependent on food and fuel imports. Capital from abroad would be needed to pay for necessary imports and to repair and expand the phosphate industry. Nevertheless, given its small population and the potential earnings from phosphate exports—which at 1980 prices could yield some \$140 million per year—such a state could survive and develop. [redacted]

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A state that did not include the phosphate-rich area around Bu Craa could not become economically viable. The amount of foreign support that such a state would require, however, might be gradually reduced by the exploitation of iron ore reserves at Agracha and the creation of a domestic fishing industry. Meaningful progress in either area, however, would require substantial foreign investment. [redacted]

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If this truncated part of the Sahara were linked politically to Mauritania, the combined state would be only marginally better off than the same area of the Sahara as an independent state. The standard of living of 80

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percent of the population of Mauritania is among the lowest in the world. The iron ore industry in Mauritania has stagnated because of weak world demand for minerals and the damage done by the guerrillas. Although Mauritania's overall financial condition has improved somewhat since its withdrawal from the war, the government is heavily dependent on foreign donors for budgetary support. [redacted]

exclusively on developing the region's phosphate reserves. Morocco's major interest has been in establishing military control and enhancing its naval capability by upgrading port facilities at El Aaiun and Boujdour. but even these efforts have been modest. [redacted] 25X1

The desert climate makes construction and maintenance of modern transportation facilities exceedingly difficult. Roads, mainly along the coast, are difficult to maintain because of shifting sand dunes. The country has no rail lines, although Morocco reportedly has been considering construction of a rail link between Marrakech and El Aaiun, one of the Western Sahara's two major ports. [redacted] 25X1

There are approximately 80,000 Western Saharans living in Western Sahara and perhaps an equal number of refugees in Algeria or Mauritania.² In addition, as many as 10,000 Europeans—half the 1976 total—live in El Aaiun, Semara, and Dakla. Since the late 1960s many Saharans have been forced by drought and continued civil strife to settle in or around the few towns and villages or to seek sanctuary in neighboring countries. Many refugees would presumably return to Western Sahara following independence and most would probably settle in the north. With the low literacy rate of its population, an independent Western Sahara would be critically short of technical and managerial skills. [redacted]

The rich Bu Craa phosphate deposit has an estimated 2 billion tons in reserves. In the early 1970s Spain invested more than \$500 million in mining, processing, and transportation facilities associated with Bu Craa. A 98-kilometer (km) conveyor system was built in lieu of a railroad to carry the phosphate from the mine to a treatment plant on the coast at El Aaiun. [redacted] 25X1

The Arab, Berber, and Negro peoples of Western Sahara are divided into a variety of ethnic groups within a complex and highly stratified society. The most important groups are the Reguibat, Tekna, and Delim tribes. The Reguibat, comprised of Arabized Berbers who speak Hassaniya Arabic, are the largest group and form the core of the Polisario Front. Nomadic herdsmen, the Reguibat inhabit the eastern half of the country as well as parts of Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania, where they have winter pasturelands. The Tekna tribe is of mixed Arab and Berber origin and speaks a Berber dialect. Seminomadic, they inhabit the northern part of Western Sahara and southern Morocco. The Delim tribe is ethnically more Arab than the Reguibat or the Tekna and speaks Hassaniya Arabic. The Delim, located in southeastern Western Sahara, comprised the backbone of the native police and military forces under the Spanish. [redacted]

The mine presently has an annual production capacity of 3 million tons, and annual production could reach 10 million tons per year within five to 10 years if the necessary investments are made. Production at Bu Craa, however, has been shut down since 1978, when Polisario guerrilla attacks damaged the conveyor system and powerlines and put the system out of commission. Restoration would require substantial foreign funds and expatriate technicians to repair and run the facilities. Other phosphate deposits, although unlikely to be as rich as Bu Craa, are either unevaluated or undeveloped. [redacted] 25X1

If production can be restored to a level of 3 million tons annually, it would be possible to earn some \$140 million per year at the 1980 price (\$47 per ton) for phosphate. This would be more than adequate to pay for necessary consumer imports, as well as equipment and technicians for the phosphate industry. Although it is impossible to estimate the area's gross domestic product, the production and export of phosphates alone could yield a per capita income of perhaps \$1,000 to 1,500—sufficient to rank the country with the higher income less developed countries. [redacted] 25X1

² Population estimates for the area are based primarily on a controversial Spanish Government census conducted in 1974 and are approximations at best. [redacted]

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The Sahara will continue to depend on imported food-stuffs whatever the political outcome of the dispute. Less than 1 percent of its land area is considered arable, and the only crop grown on a significant scale is barley. The survival of even that crop depends on the adequacy of rainfall which, even in good years, is sparse and infrequent. Some small-scale irrigated farming is done in an area east of Al Aaiun in the Saguia el Hamra Valley, where cereals, fruits, and vegetables are grown. But the topography of the Western Sahara—a nearly total desert wasteland—precludes the development of anything more than subsistence farming and cattle herding by the seminomadic people. [redacted]

Fish are abundant along the 1,110-km coastline, but a Saharan state would have great difficulty in protecting its resources against foreign fishermen or raising the capital to exploit those resources itself. Presently, even Morocco cannot enforce its restrictions on fishing within its territorial waters. A viable fishing industry would require a modern fishing fleet and associated patrol boats, as well as refrigeration and canning facilities. This substantial investment could not be generated internally. The Sahara presumably could realize a substantial income, however, by licensing foreign fishermen to exploit these resources. [redacted]

There are some indications that the territory may possess other mineral wealth beside phosphates. Extensive high-quality iron ore deposits are in the vicinity of Tindouf, Algeria, near the Saharan border, and preliminary exploration for iron ore at Agracha in southern Spanish Sahara has offered encouraging results. In addition, a UN report suggests that Spanish Sahara probably has quantities of titanium, vanadium, bauxite, copper, zinc, manganese, and uranium. [redacted]

Oil shale deposits discovered just north of the border with Morocco probably extend into the Western Sahara, but there is no domestic energy production at present. Spain and Morocco have encouraged oil exploration in the region, and as late as 1978 Morocco granted prospecting licenses to British Petroleum and to Phillips Petroleum. All exploration efforts, however, have proved fruitless. For the foreseeable future Western Sahara will be completely dependent on imported fuel. [redacted] 25X1

Political Orientation

An independent state, regardless of whether it consisted of the entire Western Sahara or a smaller part of it, probably would be patterned after African and Arab “progressive” states. The interim constitution adopted at a Polisario congress in September 1976 declared the realization of Arab socialism and the implementation of social justice as the Front’s political objective. Although Islam was declared to be the state religion and the source of its laws, an independent Western Saharan government, like the regime in Algeria, would be likely to stress moderation in religious affairs and discourage religious extremism. The National Action Program, also adopted at the 1976 congress, emphasized the Arab and African characteristics of the Saharan people and called for a fair distribution of wealth as a means of eliminating differences between rural and urban areas. It stressed care for the family as the nucleus of society, social and political equality between men and women, and the provision of compulsory, free education and access to medical facilities. [redacted]

A Western Saharan state in federation with Mauritania, probably would be like the present Mauritanian state, nominally an Islamic republic but under the control of a ruling military council. Given the increased emphasis that Islamic justice has received under the regime of Mauritanian President Haidalla, Islam would play a significantly more important role in a Mauritanian–Western Saharan federation than in a separate Western Saharan state. If Haidalla played a major role in the government of the federated state, he probably would be inclined to support policies favoring the Moorish sector of society at the expense of the black community. [redacted]

The policies of an independent Western Sahara almost certainly would reflect the views of the Polisario Front leadership. Only limited information is available, however, on the political affiliations and aspirations of the major figures in the Front. Moreover, most Polisario Front leaders appear to be primarily concerned with achieving independence and have been reluctant to discuss the details of the administration and policies of a new state until the conflict with Morocco is won. [redacted]

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It is known that most of the Polisario leaders are in their thirties. Some who claim to have been born in Western Sahara, however, have family ties in Mauritania, and a few have relatives in Morocco. In addition to the original nucleus of Saharan students who studied in Rabat in the late 1960s, the leadership reportedly also includes opponents of the Ould Daddah regime that governed Mauritania until 1978. [redacted]

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The secretary general of the Polisario Front, Mohammed Abdel Aziz, has held his post since August 1978. Abdel Aziz, other key leaders, and much of the fighting force belong to the Reguibat tribe. Tribal origins, however, may be slowly losing their significance; the educational program implemented at the refugee camps appears to be intended, at least in part, to eliminate tribalism and to forge a sense of national identity. [redacted]

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All members of the Polisario Front leadership can be described as Arab nationalists. In addition, three general ideological tendencies can be identified. The dominant, moderate, pro-Algerian group includes Secretary General Abdel Aziz, Deputy Secretary General Bachir Moustapha Sayed al-Ouali, and a majority of the members of the Executive Committee and the Politburo. Other identifiable groups are a pro-Libyan group, some of whose members have Marxist tendencies, and a much smaller group of hardline Marxists. Distinctions are not clearly drawn, however, between the political sympathies of individuals, and some persons have been identified by different observers as belonging to different groups. [redacted]

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On military issues, the Polisario Front leadership reportedly divides along different lines. In September 1980, for example, Polisario leaders were reported to have split into a hardline faction favoring greater use of armed force to achieve independence and a more moderate group favoring greater emphasis on political dialogue and compromise. The hardliners include Secretary General Abdel Aziz; Minister of Defense Ibrahim Ghali Ould Moustapha; and Sidi Ahmed al-Batal, a member of the Executive Committee. The compromisers include Mohamed Lamine Ould Ahmed, Prime Minister of the group's government-in-exile; Bachir Moustapha Sayed al-Ouali; and Mohamed Salem Ould Saleck. The hardliners reportedly advocate

using aid and equipment from Libya to increase pressure on Morocco proper and also reportedly favor the use of urban guerrilla tactics. The softliners adhere to the political line espoused by Algeria, which urges that military activity be limited to Western Sahara to gain the support and sympathy of members of the Organization of African Unity. [redacted]

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Despite the presence of Marxists in the Polisario leadership, it appears unlikely that an independent Saharan government would have a strongly Marxist cast. The Polisario's consistent emphasis on Arab socialism, unity, and nationalism demonstrates the preeminence of the nationalist group. Arab nationalist rather than Marxist principles appear to be the basis for the Polisario's training, propaganda, and educational systems. [redacted]

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The Polisario would have significant influence on a federated state made up of Mauritania and a part of the Western Sahara, but it would be hard-pressed to achieve dominance. Although the pan-Saharan nationalism of the Polisario appears more vital than the less militant Mauritanian national idea, far more Mauritians, including blacks, possess the skills needed to run a government and manage an economy. As a consequence, Mauritania—with its much larger 1.5 million population—would stand a good chance of emerging as the dominant partner. [redacted]

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Political Institutions

[redacted]

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[redacted] the government of an independent Western Sahara probably would resemble, more or less, the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR) established by the Polisario Front as a government-in-exile in February 1976 (see figure 1). It seems likely from examining the overlapping structures of the Front and the SDAR that an independent Saharan state would be dominated by a strong executive made up largely of the present Polisario leadership. [redacted]

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Figure 1**Saharan Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR)****President**

Mohamed Abdel Aziz

**Council of Ministers
(September 1980)****Prime Minister**

Mohamed Lamine Ould Ahmed

Minister of Defense

Ibrahim Ghali Ould Moustapha

Minister of InteriorMahfoud Laroussi
(Mahfoud Ali Beiba)**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Ibrahim Hakim (Hakim Adel)

Minister of Information

Mohamed Salem Ould Saleck

Minister Counsellor

Mohamed Ould Sidati

Minister of Justice

Mohamed Ould Ziou

Secretary General of Ministry of Commerce

Moulay Ahmed Ould Baba

Secretary General of**Ministry of Communications and Energy**

Hamoudi Ahmed Ould Baba

Secretary General of**Ministry of Education**

Ali Ould Mahmoud

Secretary General of**Ministry of Health**

Saleck Ould Babeh

Saharan National Council**President**

Sidi Ahmed Ould Mohamed

Vice President

Bachir Moustapha Sayed al-Ouali

41 members,**including a 21-member Politburo**

The four-member Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) of the Polisario is the real locus of power and makes all significant political and military decisions, although the nine-member Executive Committee is the formal executive body of the Front (see figure 2). The most important member of the Council, Mohammed Abdel Aziz, is the secretary general of the Front, President of the SDAR, and also serves as a member of the Executive Committee. Council members hold the most important portfolios in the government: Mohamed Lamine Ould Ahmed, also known as Lamine Amin, is Prime Minister; Ibrahim Ghali Ould Moustapha is Minister of Defense; and Mahfoud Laroussi, also known as Mahfoud Ali Beiba, is Minister of Interior. Other members of the Polisario leadership who play an important role in policymaking are Bachir Moustapha Sayed al-Ouali, deputy secretary general of the Front, and Omar Hadrani, reportedly an assistant and protege of Bachir Moustapha Sayed.

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Largely in an effort to provide itself with a greater legitimacy, the Polisario Front created a Saharan National Council as the legislative arm of the SDAR. Residents of the Polisario Front camps in the Tindouf area of Algeria are organized into cells of 11 members each. The cells elect representatives to *da'ira* (orientation) committees, which in turn elect representatives to the 41-member National Council. The National Council in theory approves the SDAR Council of Ministers, which is chosen by the Revolutionary Command Council of the Polisario. A 21-member SDAR Politburo reportedly is selected from the members of the National Council, which also in theory selects the nine-member Executive Committee of the Front. In practice, however, the National Council, as well as the National Congress, which apparently meets every two years, merely approves decisions already taken by the Front leadership, and this relationship would continue after independence.

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Figure 2

Polisario Front

(September 1980)

	<p>Secretary General Mohamed Abdel Aziz</p> <p>Deputy Secretary General Bachir Moustapha Sayed al-Ouali</p>	
<p>Committee for External Affairs Habib Allah Ahmed Baba Ould Ahmed Miske Jumal Zakari Hamdi Ali Ibrahim Hakim</p>	<p>Executive Committee (nine members) Mohamed Abdel Aziz Secretary General, Polisario Bachir Moustapha Sayed al-Ouali Deputy Secretary General, Polisario Mohamed Lamine Ould Ahmed Prime Minister, SDAR Ibrahim Ghali Ould Moustapha Defense Minister, SDAR Mahfoud Laroussi Interior Minister, SDAR Ayoub Lahbib Mohamed Lamine Ould Bouhali Sidi Ahmed al-Batal Omar Hadrani (Mohamed al-Ouali)</p>	<p>Revolutionary Command Council Mohamed Abdel Aziz Mohamed Lamine Ould Ahmed Ibrahim Ghali Ould Moustapha Mahfoud Laroussi</p>

[Redacted]

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A Saharan-Mauritanian state probably also would be dominated by a strong executive, with most important decisions being made by a president with the support of a military council. Although the Mauritanian National Assembly, which was dissolved at the time of the coup against Ould Daddah in July 1978, or a similar institution might be reestablished, it is unlikely that a legislature would play a significant role in a combined state. [Redacted]

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Foreign Relations

A Saharan state under Polisario Front control would align itself with "progressive" Arab and African na-

tions. Strongly influenced by Algerian positions on international issues, it would pursue nonalignment, a commitment to Third World independence movements, and an economic order stressing control by Third World countries of their natural resources and the obligation of developed countries to provide assistance. The tendency of the Polisario Front to support Third World positions will be reinforced by the number of Third World states that have recognized the SDAR. [Redacted]

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Unclassified photo from *Jornal De Angola*, 27 February 1980 ©

Mohamed Abdel Aziz



Unclassified photo from *Revolution (African)*, 1976 ©

Mohamed Lamine Ould Ahmed



Unclassified photo from *Africa Magazine*, No. 74, October 1977 ©

Mahfoud Laroussi

The new state would also be likely to follow the Algerian lead in opposing great power involvement in the area. It probably would seek to balance its relationship with the Communist states and the West, although US military support for Morocco could impede the development of good relations with Washington. [redacted]

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In the Middle East, an independent Western Sahara would be likely to side with Algeria, the other hardline states, and the Palestine Liberation Organization in condemning Egyptian President Sadat's peace initiative and US efforts to secure a Middle East peace. Relations with Libya, Syria, and South Yemen, all of which have recognized the SDAR, probably would be good, while relations with Saudi Arabia, which has supported the Moroccan war effort, would be likely initially to be poor or nonexistent. [redacted]

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In recent years, the principal foreign policy goal of the Polisario Front has been to gain recognition of the SDAR (see table). The Front has not secured the

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Table

Countries That Recognize the
Saharan Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR)

	Date		Date
Africa		Asia	
Algeria	6 Mar 1976	Afghanistan	20 May 1979
Angola	11 Mar 1976	Iran	27 Feb 1980
Benin	9 Mar 1976	Kampuchea	11 Apr 1979
Botswana	13 May 1980	Laos	9 May 1979
Burundi	29 Feb 1976	North Korea	16 Mar 1976
Cape Verdi	4 Jul 1979	South Yemen	1 Feb 1978
Chad	3 Jul 1980	Syria	15 Apr 1980
Congo	2 Jun 1978	Vietnam	3 Mar 1979
Ethiopia	24 Feb 1979		
Ghana	23 Aug 1979	Latin America	
Guinea-Bissau	15 Mar 1976	Cuba	Jan 1980
Lesotho	Oct 1979	Dominica	Aug 1979
Libya	15 Apr 1980	Grenada	Jul 1979
Madagascar	1 Mar 1976	Guyana	31 Aug 1979
Mali	3 Jul 1980	Jamaica	Sep 1979
Mozambique	12 Mar 1976	Mexico	Sep 1979
Rwanda	31 Mar 1976	Nicaragua	Sep 1979
Sao Tome and Principe	20 Jun 1978	Panama	22 Jun 1978
Seychelles	5 Oct 1977	Santa Lucia	Sept 1979
Sierra Leone	28 Mar 1980		
Tanzania	9 Nov 1978		
Togo	16 Mar 1976		
Uganda	Sep 1979		
Zambia	Oct 1979		
Zimbabwe	3 Jul 1980		

recognition of the Arab League, but it has made steady progress in gaining the support of the African states and came very close to gaining membership in the Organization of African Unity in July 1980. Although it was apparently supported by a majority of the members of the OAU, the threat by Morocco and several of its supporters, including Zaire, Gabon, and Ivory Coast, to withdraw from the organization forced a compromise that temporarily referred the Sahara question to an ad hoc mediation committee. The Front nevertheless seems likely to win OAU recognition—perhaps as soon as the next OAU summit in 1981.

The foreign policy of a state composed of a part of the Western Sahara in federation with Mauritania probably would be similar to that of an independent Western Saharan state. Unity with Mauritania might lead to better relations with such important Arab states as Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Both of these governments have been key financial backers of Mauritania, and this relationship might allow them to establish good relations more quickly with a Saharan entity. 25X1

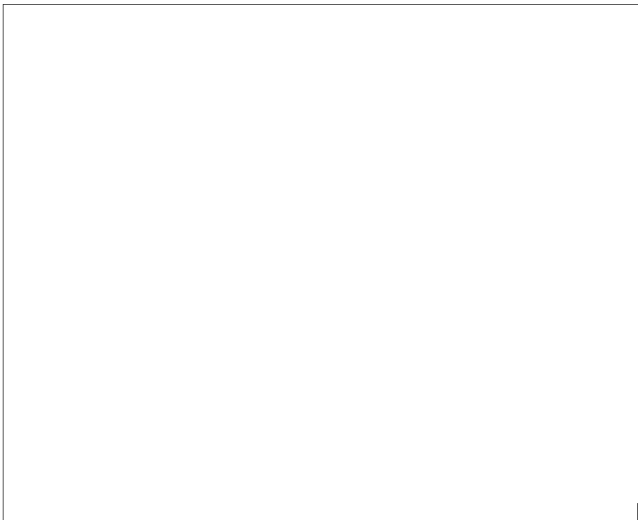
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Relations With Neighboring States

The support that *Algeria* has given the Polisario Front would give Algiers considerable influence with an independent Western Sahara, although the closeness of the two states could be adversely affected if the Polisario leadership comes to believe that Algeria has forced it to compromise on its basic demands in independence negotiations. [redacted]

As of 1980 the guerrillas were receiving most of their equipment, much of their military training, and nearly all of their logistical support from Algeria. Especially important has been the sanctuary that Algeria provides in the camps around Tindouf, where 75,000 to 100,000 Saharan refugees live. Before mid-1974, the Front obtained most of its weapons from Libya, and it operated from bases in Mauritania and in the Sahara itself. As it became apparent that King Hassan intended to seize as much of Western Sahara as possible, Algeria gradually increased its aid. It decided to back the Polisario fully after the Moroccan unarmed invasion of Western Sahara. [redacted]



Although there were indications in 1980 that some within the Algerian leadership—including President Bendjedid—believed that the Polisario should moderate its demands, Algeria has continued publicly to back the Polisario as the sole, legitimate representative of the Saharan people, and to insist that full independence be granted to Western Sahara. This policy serves Algerian interest at the expense of Morocco, and it helps curb Libyan inroads among the Polisario. Per-

haps equally important is the longstanding Algerian support for national movements in general, a position that the Bendjedid government has no desire to abandon [redacted]

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Relations between Algeria and a Mauritania–Western Sahara federation would also probably be good, although they also could suffer if the Polisario believed that the Algerians had forced them to agree to an unreasonable settlement. Algerian-Mauritanian relations have steadily improved since the conclusion of the peace treaty between the Polisario and Mauritania in August 1979. President Haidalla has subsequently made two trips to Algeria, the most recent in September 1980, and Algeria has reportedly agreed to provide financial support to Mauritania, including a \$20 million loan to construct an oil refinery and a \$10 million loan to build a sugar refinery. [redacted]

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After Algeria, *Libya* is the most important backer of the guerrillas. Libyan influence with an independent Western Sahara, however, probably would be limited by its need for good relations with Algeria and by the Polisario's perception of Libyan leader Qadhafi as an erratic, unreliable ally. This would not prevent the leaders of a new state from using the prospect of closer relations with Libya as a means of extracting more aid and support from Algiers. [redacted]

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Although Libyan support had been limited largely to financial aid and included only small amounts of equipment, Tripoli in 1980 reportedly began to supply the guerrillas with more sophisticated weaponry. In April 1980 Libya formally recognized the SDAR, prompting Morocco to break relations with Tripoli.

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[redacted] the Libyans have attempted to exploit differences between pro-Algerian and pro-Libyan factions within the Polisario leadership, but this effort seems unlikely to bear fruit. The pro-Algerian faction within the Polisario leadership is reportedly larger and more influential than the pro-Libyan faction. Moreover, Libyan aid to the Polisario is less than that provided by Algeria, in part because the Algerians work to control all aid reaching the

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guerrillas. [redacted]

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The leadership of a federated Mauritanian-Saharan state, like the Haidalla government in Mauritania, would be afraid that a close relationship with Libya might tempt Qadhafi to interfere in its domestic affairs. After Mauritania withdrew from the Western Saharan conflict, its relations with the Libyans improved [redacted]

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Governments in *Mauritania* have favored the Polisario Front since the overthrow of Moktar Ould Daddah in 1978. As a consequence, relations between an independent Saharan state under Polisario leadership and Mauritania probably would be good if President Haidalla remained in power, given his clear predisposition toward the guerrillas and the close tribal ties between Haidalla and his supporters in the Mauritanian leadership and the Polisario. [redacted]

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President Mohamed Saleck, who led the group of military officers who deposed Ould Daddah, carefully observed the cease-fire declared by the Polisario in August 1978. Both Saleck and Prime Minister Bouceif, who took power in a bloodless coup in April 1979, moved to withdraw Mauritania from the conflict while at the same time attempting to avoid unduly offending Morocco. Haidalla, who came to power in June 1979 after Bouceif died in an airplane crash, has tacitly favored the Polisario. In August 1979, the Haidalla government concluded an accord with the Polisario that provided for Mauritanian withdrawal from Tiris al-Gharbia, recognized the Polisario as the only legal representative of the Saharan people, and called for a "just" and comprehensive peace and peaceful coexistence within preindependence borders. [redacted] provisions called for the Mauritians to turn over all territory held by them in Western Sahara to the Polisario seven months after the conclusion of the treaty (March 1980). Since the signing of the accord, the Polisario's use of northern Mauritania as a base for operations against Morocco has increased. [redacted]

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Despite Haidalla's clear predisposition toward the Polisario, however, Mauritania has resisted pressures to recognize the SDAR, fearing that such action would cost the Mauritanian Government what support it retains among Mauritania's blacks. Blacks believe allegations that the Polisario has massacred captured black prisoners, and they have always regarded their country's Saharan involvement as strictly a Moorish cause. Moreover, Haidalla wishes to preserve some semblance of neutrality in the hope that he can play a role in the political settlement of the conflict. [redacted] 25X1

Haidalla probably envisions a political settlement in which Morocco would retain the northern portion of the Western Sahara, with the remainder joined in a federation with Mauritania. The Polisario, however, has consistently maintained that it would agree only to a settlement that provided for full independence for all the Western Sahara. Despite their refusal to recognize the SDAR, the Mauritians, at least publicly, have supported the principle of self-determination for the Saharan people. [redacted] 25X1

Mutual need would probably lead *Morocco* and an independent state created by a political settlement of the Western Sahara conflict (whatever its borders) to establish relations. The Polisario could conceivably use relations with Morocco to balance pressures from other area countries, especially Libya and Algeria. Possibly with this in mind, Polisario officials have told US representatives that they do not seek to overthrow King Hassan nor inflict a crushing military defeat on Morocco. On the contrary, they claim to see a stable Morocco as a vital necessity for Western Sahara. [redacted] 25X1

A settlement that joined the southern portion of the disputed Sahara to Mauritania would be much easier for Morocco to accept than one that resulted in the creation of a separate independent state or any solution that deprived Morocco of the population centers and phosphate deposits of the northwest. Although relations between Morocco and Mauritania have been strained since August 1979 and deteriorated even further in 1980, problems between the two states would be resolved for the most part by a settlement of the conflict in Western Sahara. [redacted] 25X1

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Relations With Communist States

An independent Western Sahara would be virtually certain to establish relations with the *USSR*. Such a state would, however, be suspicious of the Soviets because of their refusal to recognize the SDAR during its struggle for independence, and it would want to appear sufficiently neutral to attract aid from the West. Algeria, which has consistently resisted the growth of major power influence in the region, probably also would press the new government to avoid too close an identification with the Soviets. Relations between the USSR and a Mauritanian–Western Saharan federated state would probably be correct, although such a state would also want to balance relations between East and West. [redacted]

The Soviets have maintained at least a surface neutrality on Western Sahara to avoid offending Morocco, with which they have extensive commercial dealings. They have also been dissuaded from dealing directly with the guerrillas by the knowledge that such action could offend the Algerians, who regard the Western Sahara as an area of special interest. They have supported Algeria's calls in the UN for self-determination for the Sahara and have provided indirect support for the Polisario through Algeria and Libya. [redacted]

Soviet officials have alleged [redacted] that their government does not regard the Polisario as a genuine liberation movement worthy of support, and Soviet diplomats have been ordered to avoid contact with Polisario representatives whenever possible. This position, however, probably is motivated more by a desire to maintain the best possible relations with both Morocco and Algeria than by any major disagreement in principle with the aims of the Polisario. [redacted]

In recent years *Cuba* has provided medical teams to treat Polisario personnel in Algeria, and Cuban vessels have been involved in supplying the Polisario. The Cubans have also strongly supported the Polisario in international forums and in propaganda and have provided training to Polisario personnel in Cuba. Thus, relations between Cuba and a Western Saharan state, whether as an independent entity or a federated Mauritanian–Western Saharan state, probably would be warm. Once again, however, the need to maintain a balance between Communist states and the West and the desire to stay on good terms with the Algerians

would limit the new state's receptivity. Like the USSR, the Cubans, fearful of losing trade with Morocco, were reluctant to recognize the SDAR. By late 1979, however, trade with Morocco had been greatly reduced, and in February 1980 Havana finally extended recognition to the SDAR. [redacted]

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Relations With the West

Until early 1980, Polisario leaders regarded *Spain* as a major source of aid, trade, and political support after independence. Historic cultural, linguistic, and commercial ties between Spain and Western Sahara seemed to make such a relationship almost inevitable. Polisario officials believed that Madrid, hoping to secure access to Saharan phosphate deposits, would be prepared to offer the new state significant financial and technical aid. The decision by the opposition Socialist Workers Party in 1977 to support the Polisario, as well as Prime Minister Suarez's subsequent encouragement of informal contacts between his party and the Polisario, seemed to support this view. [redacted]

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The Polisario's seizure of Spanish fishermen off the Western Saharan coast last May and of additional Spanish vessels later in the year, however, soured Spanish attitudes. In a visit to Morocco in October 1980, Spanish Foreign Minister Perez-Llorca promised the Moroccans that Spain would adhere to its commitment to the 1975 tripartite agreement, thus implying continued nonrecognition of the Polisario. To secure the release of the fishermen, however, Spain declared in December 1980 its support for the "legitimate aspirations" of the Saharan people. This move has angered Morocco while easing—at least temporarily—the strains between Spain and the Polisario. [redacted]

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Polisario attitudes toward the *United States* have been shaped to a considerable degree by the closeness of US ties with Morocco, particularly the military supply relationship. Predictably, the Polisario described the US decision in late 1979 to increase its military support to Morocco as a violation of UN resolutions and as interference in African affairs. Nevertheless, an independent Western Sahara would be open to diplomatic relations with the United States and would seek economic aid. [redacted]

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The Polisario almost certainly believed that a visit in late 1980 by US representatives to the Tindouf region, the informal contacts over the previous year, and US support for OAU efforts to work out a political solution marked a shift away from close identification with Morocco. Although the United States does not recognize the Moroccan claim to sovereignty to the Western Sahara, it has acknowledged Morocco's administrative jurisdiction in the area. At the same time the United States has continued to encourage the parties to concentrate on achieving a settlement through negotiation. [redacted]

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Relations between the United States and a federated Mauritanian–Western Saharan state, like US relations with Mauritania itself, almost certainly would be correct. A political settlement could open the way for improved relations with Washington. [redacted]

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