

# United Nations Mission and Conflict Resolution in Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, 1991-2019

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**Abstract:** This research work investigates the United Nations Mission and Conflict Resolution in Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic 1991-2019. The Western Sahara has been in a state of political crisis since Spain granted the territory to Morocco and Mauritania in 1975. In April 1991, United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was established by Security Council Resolution 690 of 1991 with Military and civilian observers though without resolution thus the present study. The study adopted historical and descriptive research design. A total of fifteen military personnel who have served or currently serving in MINURSO and two relevant civilians were interviewed via Skype, WhatsApp, Messenger and directly while other information were gathered through journals and published books. The Realist Framework of Pugh in 2004 was the theory adopted and seen as relevant for this study. Three research questions and objectives were formulated for the study. The data collected were analysed using contextual and descriptive approach. From the analysis, it was found that the unresolved disagreement over the status of Western Sahara has persisted as a result of several factors including among others: poor performance of UN mission mandate, regional supremacy squabbles between Algeria and Morocco, and finally the combined super powers' self-interest and struggle for supremacy which is making resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara difficult. Base on the study findings, the study recommends among others that UN should proceed to the transitional and referendum stages of the Settlement Plan. Again, major powers should stop prioritising their own self-interests at the expense of the wellbeing of the generality of the local population affected by the conflict in Western Sahara.

**Key words:** United Nation, Conflict Resolution, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Western Sahara and United Nations Mission.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *Background to the Study*

The First and Second World Wars constituted wars of unprecedented magnitude in human history. In order to save succeeding generations from similar horrifying conflicts, the United Nations (UN) was founded shortly after the end of the Second World War in 1945. According to the UN Charter, their purpose of the body is to maintain international peace and security (UN Charter, Article I).

One way for the UN to reach this goal is to send out peace keeping missions to various conflict zones in the world. The UN peace keeping missions or operations have been one of

the preferred tools to help create sustainable peace in countries that are torn by conflicts.

Since its establishment in 1945, the UN has undergone a series of transformations and changes in visions. These reforms, which were constituted through lessons learned from the previous operations, led the UN to mostly apply multidimensional peacekeeping instead of traditional peacekeeping in recent decades. Today's multidimensional peacekeeping encompasses maintaining peace and humanitarian safety which include: protecting civilians and promoting human rights, assisting in restoring the rule of law and facilitating political process (Fortina, 2008, Daniel, 2013).

Africa continue to experience human suffering in a sense unparalleled in human history. The prevalence of conflict has remained a major feature of post-independence Africa. The hopes that greeted Africa's Independence in the early 1960's have, so far, proved to be largely a mirage for many Africans as the region continues to be devastated by conflicts and the widespread destruction of life and property. Africa is perhaps the most devastated by internal conflicts and with catastrophic consequences. The then General Secretary Sahim Ahmed Salm, emphasised that:

*Conflicts have coast or dark shadow over the prospects for a united, secured and prosperous Africa, which we seek to create..... Conflicts have caused immense suffering to our people and, in the worst case, death. Men, women and children have been uprooted, dispossessed, deprived of their means of freedom and thrown into exile as refugees as a result of conflicts. Conflicts have engendered hate and division among our people and undermined the prospects of the long term stability and unity of our countries and Africa as a whole. Since much energy, time and resources have been devised to meeting the exigencies of conflict, our countries have been unable to harness the energies of our people and target them to development (Salim, 1992).*

In 1912, France was granted a protectorate over Morocco. Later, France permitted Spain to have protectorates over territories in Northern and Southern Morocco. Western Sahara (then known as Spanish Colony) was colonised by Spain in 1886 and fully incorporated as a province of Spain in 1958 (Ovaddame, 2017:p,3). After the Second World War,

Morocco sought independence from both France and Spain. In 1956, the protectorates of France and Spain in most of Morocco came to an end but Spain still held Ifni in Southern Morocco as well as Ceuta and Melilla in Northern Morocco including Western Sahara. After independence, Moroccan nationalists argued that European colonialism has dismembered Greater Morocco. In 1957, Morocco sparked its territorial claims to the territories of Ifni, Western Sahara and Mauritania which gained independence from France shortly after Morocco in 1960 followed its own independent objectives and also claimed Western Sahara as its own territory. Its claims were based on shared ethno-linguistic heritage. Additionally, Mauritania wanted to establish a buffer zone against the expansionist Moroccan state, what refused to accept Mauritania's own independence (Muddy, 2016:281).

The POLISARIO was founded in 1973 as an anti-colonial movement and present itself as the main representation of the Saharawis independence. The POLISARIO was modeled on the basis of other anti-colonial movement; sought to end economic exploitation to advance the rights of women and to end the tribal hierarchy of Saharan society which was considered antithetical to progress and development. The POLISARIO interpreted itself as a political administrator of a state in the waiting, developed diplomatic representation and managed to build up an army, the Saharawi People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The SPLA engaged the Spanish, Mauritania and Moroccan armies. In 1975, when the administration of the Western Sahara was transferred to Morocco and Mauritania, POLISARIO continued with their resistance against both states. This conflict attracted the attention of United Nations Peace keeping mission. In recent years, the UN Peacekeeping missions are involved in almost all conflicts in all continents of the world.

James Baker during an interview in Houston in 2019 accepted that the conflict in Western Sahara has not been handled well, and that's why it persists. He also reminded the public that when he was U.S. Treasury Secretary, the Moroccans came to them that they wanted help in their war against the Frente POLISARIO. He gave them overhead intelligence and that the U.S military support was instrumental to the Moroccans as they built the sand berm.

Interestingly, the political situation in Western Sahara had witnessed laudable improvements in recent years. Representatives of the two warring parties along with representatives of the neighbouring countries, (Mauritania and Algeria), convened two rounds of UN-sponsored talks in suburban New York in June and August 2007 under the auspices of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. The reintroduced negotiation marked the first direct discussions between the parties to the conflict in more than seven years despite the continued divergence in positions. August 2009 and February 2010 witnessed another round of the deliberations between the disputed nations for further informal meetings. However, all the meetings did not produce any serious progress on the core substantive issues.

As of 2010, consultations over the terms of reference have not resulted in any substantive action and progress.

Hope to overcome the unending war between Morocco and Frente POLISARIO was noticed in December 2018 when President Trump's new National Security Adviser, John Bolton organized another negotiations to initiate a resolution to the conflict in Western Sahara for the first time in six years. The fact that the two major warring parties involved in the conflict surprisingly spoke civilly and agreed to meet again in several months is an indication of final resolution at sight. Similarly, in October 2019, after twenty-eight years of unprogressive ceasefire agreement in Western Sahara, at the instance of the U.S. and at the chargin of Morocco and French diplomats, the UN peacekeeping mandate for Western Sahara was extended by only six months rather than one year as it has always been as an indication of resolution at sight.

John Bolton in 2018 reiterated during the unveiling of Trump Administration's new Africa strategy that he was very eager to end the conflict in Western Sahara because we have to think of the Saharawis, many of whom are still in refugee camps in Tindouf and in Sahara Desert, and we need to allow these people and their children to get back and live their normal lives.

In the mid-1960s, UN peace keeping missions were deployed as follows: between 1965-1966, Mission of the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Dominican Republic (DOMREP) was deployed to Dominican Republic. Similarly, UN deployed its troops to nations that were devastated by civil and internal wars such as: United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA 1989-1992), United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL 1995) in El Salvador, Civil war, United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNNMIH 1993-1996), United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) in 1997, United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMH 1997), United Nations Critical Police Mission in Haiti (1997-2000), United Nations General Assembly International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti (MICAH) in 2000-2007, United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in 2004-2017, United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) in 2017-2019.

In Africa, UN Peacekeeping missions have intervened in the following conflicts Congo crisis (1960-1964), Angolan civil war (1988-1991), Namibian war of Independence (1989-1996), Angolan Civil war (1991-1995), Mozambican Civil war (1992-1994), Somali civil war (1992-1993), First Liberian civil war (1993-1997), Rwandan civil war (1993-1996), Somali civil war (1993-1995), Chad, Libya Aouzou strip dispute (1994), Angolan civil war (1995-1997), Angolan civil war (1997-1999), Sierra Leone civil war (1998-1999), Central African Republic crisis (1998-2000), Sierra Leone civil war (1999-2005), Eritrean-Ethiopian war (2000-2008), Burundi civil war (2004-2007), Second Congo war (1999-2010), Darfur conflict, civil war in Chad (2005-2011), First Ivorian

civil war (2014-2017), Liberia-maintaining peace (2013-2018), war in Darfur (2017), Kivu conflict (2010), Abyei conflict (2011), Northern Mali conflict (2013), Central African Republic Civil war and Western Sahara conflict (1991 to date), (UN Peacekeeping website <https://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping>). Some of these conflicts were resolved while many were not resolved. Nevertheless, the resolved conflicts obviously show that UN peacekeeping missions remain our indispensable tool in promoting peace and security. With Multidimensional peacekeeping, the UN peacekeeping missions came to be regarded as successful and effective in many respects (Bellamy, 2010:23), However, the inability of peacekeeping missions (PKM) to adequately resolve some conflicts in Africa remains a great challenge that deserves thorough research investigation.

The United Nations peacekeeping missions are regarded and designed to protect people in a conflict situation. The UN peacekeeping missions resolve conflict by concentrating on prevention, helping parties in conflict making peace and creating conditions to allow peace to hold and flourish. This has not been the case with the Western Saharawi conflict as the conflict is still not resolved and every day, people in the Western Sahara are affected by the continuation of the conflict. Since 1991, when the UN negotiated a truce to armed conflict between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, affairs between the two groups have remained at a stalemate.

In Western Saharawi, there appears to be challenges that hinder effective resolution of the conflict. This is manifested through continued tension in the region even as UN peacekeeping mission peace process has been active since 1991. The problem therefore is, why is it that conflict in the Western Sahara still continues despite the involvement of UN peacekeeping mission for nearly forty years and the impact of this unresolved conflict on African nations especially Nigeria in relation to the present Mali?

#### *Aims and Objectives*

The aim of this study was to interrogate what the UN Peacekeeping mission has done to resolve the conflict and factors that underlying the failure of UN mission to resolve the Western Sahara conflict.

Specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the causes of Western Sahara conflict
- ii. Examine the efforts of UN peacekeeping mission to resolve conflict in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
- iii. Examine the performance of MINURSO's mandate

#### *Research Questions*

- i. What causes conflict in Western Sahara?
- ii. What has the UN mission done to resolve the Western Sahara conflict?

- iii. How has the UN peacekeeping Mission (MINURSO) performed its mandate?

#### *Hypothesis*

- i. The divergent interests between the belligerent parties (Morocco and the POLISARIO) is directly related to the continuing conflict in Western Sahara.
- ii. The more intensive United Nations peacekeeping missions are devoted to effective implementation of peacekeeping mandate, the more likely, it will solve conflict in Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic.
- iii. The continuing conflict in Western Sahara is directly related to the poor performance of MINURSO mandate.

#### *Significance of the Study*

The study shall immensely be relevant to peace and conflict experts and organizations, as it will seek to address the huge challenges being faced by officials and officers sent on conflict resolution missions by Nations or States and international organizations like the United Nations, especially when such mission is concerned with resolving conflicts in the African continent.

Theoretically, empirically and by policy choice, the study is significant because it explores and explains the challenges of peacekeeping and conflict resolution missions in crisis ridden regions by rigorously investigating the developments and the actions and in-actions of the UN's mission in SADR through a wide range of field works, and exploration of obtained data, both primary and secondary.

Thus, the findings of the study shall provide policy makers in the aspect of conflict resolution with a rich policy choice, provide theorists with an array of phenomena upon which theories of conflict can be developed and also expand foreign affairs components of SADR and indeed those of other African countries.

Also, it is hoped that the work will be beneficial to scholars and students by providing them with an array of research information and further motivate research into the field of study.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Theoretical Framework*

#### *Realist Framework*

In the realist framework, peacekeeping enables governments of contributing states to increase their international clout or to subsidize the maintenance of armed forces (Pugh, 2004:50). As Pugh (2004:1), argues, since peacekeeping mission emerged historically with the diplomatic intent to check dispute escalation caused by imperial powers within the realist/neorealist framework, the focus of interest in peacekeeping missions is not on crisis and operational performance. Thus, realist framework explains peacekeeping missions with self-interest (Bellamy & Williams, 2013:12).

There are two variants of the self-interest argument. First, states whose interests are in favour of preserving the status quo are more likely to contribute to peacekeeping operations as an exercise of foreign policy. Second, as a more recent argument, states are likely to participate in peacekeeping missions in order to preserve or increase their position and prestige in the world (Bellamy & William, 2013).

Self-interest may include economic and strategic goals. In contrast, it argues that it is the moral duty of states to express solidarity by acting against states which are perpetrators of massive rights violations, regardless of the legal criterion determining legitimate humanitarian intervention (Ramsbothan, 2008).

Realist accounts of peacekeeping missions have been overwhelmingly studied in the literature. However, previous researches have not established a common finding for Realist-inspired self-interest, peacekeeping missions. Again, as argue by Dove and Elia (2011:26), threat to global and regional stability, and the number of displaced people is some of the robust explanations for states choosing to intervene.

Critics of the theory also demonstrated that UN peacekeeping operations have evolved from being facilitators in the institutionalization and transmission of various visions of liberal modernity on the periphery of the world system, the buffering of nation-states, to the policing of the international political economy and lately, participation in sensitive and intrusive intricate restructuring of state-society relations to suit the neo-liberal market oriented agenda that guarantee the supply of raw materials to develop economies as designed by former colonial masters. Viewed from a critical theory perspective, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions illustrate the disempowering effects of statist sovereignty through globalization.

### III. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

#### *Conflict*

Conflict can be described as a situation that arise when individuals or groups identify a goal they want to secure in order to satisfy material interests, needs or values and these perceptions lead to actions that come up against the interests, needs and values of others.

Conflict is a very fluid and ambiguous concept. According to the International Alert which is an NGO, 'Conflict is a multi-dimensional social process which is a common and essential feature of human existence: When expressed and handled constructively, it can act as a catalyst for personal, social and political change and transformation, when it is expressed destructively, conflict fosters violence and damage that is familiar in wars and violent clashes. Conflicts are experienced at most levels of human activity and are complex processes which have certain elements.

#### *Conflict Resolution*

Conflict resolution is a comprehensive term, which implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved. Duffey expressed the view that this is a new theory of problem-solving in order to achieve the desired result. He maintains that the traditional settlement method merely settles conflict on the surface rather than resolve conflict as in conflict resolution. Resolution of conflict addresses the deep-rooted sources of conflict, changing behaviour, attitudes and structures. This will ensure that behaviours are no longer violent, attitudes are not hostile and structures are not exploitative. The process of conflict resolution includes becoming aware of a conflict, diagnosing its nature and applying appropriate methods. This is in order to discuss the negative emotional energy involved and enable the conflicting parties to understand and resolve their differences.

#### *Peacekeeping as a Conflict Resolution Mechanism*

Peacekeeping as presently conceived is traceable to an adaptation of the provisions embodied in chapter six of the UN Charter, mandating the organisation to create an enabling environment for global peace and security. The need for peaceful settlement of disputes, as contained in the UN Charter provisions, stresses the necessity for parties to a dispute to seek solution through negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and the resort to regional agencies or any other peaceful means of their choice. Since parties to a dispute are not likely to resort to negotiation to resolve their differences as long as their forces are engaged in active combat, peacekeeping is intended to create the necessary environment within which the dispute can be negotiated.

#### *Empirical Review*

Diehi (2010, p.2), conducted research on UN Emergency Force (UNEF I). The study used descriptive research method. The researcher analyzed the data obtained using content analysis. From the study findings, the first UN Emergency Force (IJNEF I) was established to supervise the withdrawal of French, Israeli and the UK forces from the Egyptian territory after the establishment of the ceasefire. The mission meant to serve as a buffer zone between the Egyptian and Israeli troops, supervise Suez Canal's cleaning operations, and secure cooperation from the parties in implementing the armistice agreement. Although most of the operation's aims were implemented, however the operation had its shortcomings. This is because war erupted between Israel and Egypt in 1967, which happened immediately after Egypt requested the UN to withdraw UNEF I from its territory. Yet, UNEF I is one of the exceptions that can be deemed a success, as it provided precedents for traditional peacekeeping missions and set general benchmarks for operations until at least the end of the Cold War. For instance, it introduced the term 'holy trinity' of traditional peacekeeping: consent, neutrality, and minimum use of force. The study is relevant to the present study in that both studies used descriptive method and content analytical approach. The study is also related to



the present work because it helps to define the focus of this work. It is situated in Africa, indicating that UN Mission in Africa play useful role in resolving conflict in the continent.

In another similar study, Garb (2014, p.44) did a work on UN Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL), June 1958 December 1958. The researcher employed descriptive research method. The purpose was to investigate the outcome of the mission. The study relied on secondary data and used qualitative technique in the analysis of data gathered for the study. The result of the study shows that the UN Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) was established in response to a complaint by the Lebanese authorities to the Security Council on 22 May, 1958 amid the interference of the United Arab Republic (UAR). The study used three criteria: the fulfillment of the mandate, the political and security situation, and assistance to the local population. It is analyzed whether UNOGIL directly contributed to stabilising the political situation and secure order in Lebanon. The operation was initiated during the complex Middle Eastern political context exacerbated by Cold War belligerents that added regional and international significance. However, UNOGIL's force reached full strength and achieved its mandate only after the situation calmed down and its services were no longer necessary. Yet, the operation's mandate seemed deliberately limited and that was practically all that could be provided by the divided Security Council. Yet, Mesquita and White claim that "though restricted in its tasks, UNOGIL made the most of its mandate and was able to implement it within the realms of its capacity". The study is related to the current one. Apart from the fact that both studies used descriptive method, the findings of the reviewed work are related to the current study as they identified limited mandate as possible problem of peacekeeping mission.

Again Boulden (2017, p.5), carried out research study on UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC). The researcher used qualitative research approach and obtained data from secondary sources. In the analysis, the study revealed that the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC) was created to address the conflict between Belgium and its former territory of Congo, which gained independence on 30 June 1960. The mission's objectives included the withdrawal of Belgian troops and 'foreign military personnel,' including the prevention of a civil war. Given the nature of the changes in the situation on the ground as well as at the international level, the study argues that the achievement of mandate was a significant factor of the operation. Yet, at the peak of divisive and highly charged political climate of the Cold War, both inside and outside of the operation, "restored law and order in Congo, ensured that the country remained a single unit, facilitated a restoration of a functioning government, and oversaw the withdrawal of foreign troops". The relevance of the study to the present research study cannot be over emphasized as it provided literature and focus of the study. It also revealed that well thought mandate and effective

implementation is positive result oriented in peacekeeping. This result also confirms the outcome of the current study.

The work of Mac Queen (2015, p 20) on UN Security Force in West New Guinea (UNSF) was also reviewed. The study used exploratory research method. The study adopted content analysis as the method of data analysis. The result revealed that the UN Security Force in West New Guinea (UNSF) was responsible for providing policing enforcement to the UN Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) for the period of seven months. The mission was initiated amid the relinquishing of colonial rule by the Netherlands and the absorption of the territory by Indonesia. UNSF faced some political and operational challenges in carrying out its functions, especially between the local police and the Indonesian military. The mandate of the mission did not require its forces to directly engage in any serious conflict. Yet, the success of this operation is that it persuaded to accelerate the transfer of the power and the progressive replacement of UNSF personnel by Indonesian forces in the later stages of the handover. The work related to the present work in many ways. First both studies show that operational success of peacekeeping mission is subject to the clarity of its mandate. Both studies relied on secondary source of data and in terms of methodology, both studies used descriptive analysis.

Adrej (2019, p. 12) worked on Mission of the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Dominican Republic (DOMREP). The study adopted descriptive and historical methods. The researcher reviewed extensively literature on the subject to answer the guided research questions. The Mission of the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Dominican Republic (DOMREP) comprised only a small number of observers to oversee the ceasefire amid the country's civil conflict. DOMREP was also tasked to report to the Secretary-General on the situation leading up to the elections of the new constitutional government. The mission was not the main international actor in the Dominican conflict. Its limited mandate and small resources did not allow for great latitude of actions. Yet, the mission's ability to act independently from the OAS and gathering information on the events in the country played an important role. Bernardo dos Santos argues that DOMREP was able to fully implement its mandate contributing to the country's pacification process and mediating the civil conflict. The study is related to the current work because both investigate the outcome of peacekeeping mission in conflict situation. Both works adopted descriptive method because the subject matter of both studies is not incline to statistical analysis. The result of both studies showed that UN peacekeeping is successful when parties to conflict respect the decisions of the peacekeepers. The work is also related to the current work in the area of methodology.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted construal and descriptive research design and was conducted in the Western Sahara which is a strip of

land along the Atlantic coast of Africa. The territory sits on 266,000 sq. km of land, which borders Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania, and has a total coastline of 1,110 km and a total population of 522,928 (CIA, 2012). Data for the study was derived from secondary sources such as information on evolution of the UN peace operative, assessing the success and failures of the UN peace operations, historical overview of Western Sahara higher, regional supremacy and the escalation of the conflict in the Saharawi Republic. The data collected for this study were quantitatively analyzed. The analysis of data for this study was based on in depth description of the information obtained, mostly from the source. This enabled the study to provide detail narratives on the Saharawi conflict and relate the dynamics to UN Peace keeping Mission.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### *What Causes Western Sahara Conflict?*

*Evaluation and proof of Hypothesis one: Divergent interests between the belligerent parties are directly related to the continuing hostilities in Western Sahara.*

Western Sahara has a long history of conflict that has shaped its history as well as relations between itself and its neighbours. The territory was first claimed by Spain at the 1884 Berlin Conference (Spector, 2009). At the time the population was mostly nomadic and Spain failed to make much of the territory over the years. In 1961 Spain moved the Spanish Sahara's status to non-self-governing territory under the auspices of the UN charter (Spector, 2009). The United Nations, dealing with conflict between Spain and Morocco, would further push Spain towards allowing the Sahrawi a vote for independence in 1965, 1967, 1968, 1972 and 1973 (Marks, 1976, p.81). While facing several nationalist uprisings, Spain would eventually withdraw from Spanish Sahara in 1975. The Polisario Front arose during this period, rising up against Spain in 1973 as a means to assert the Sahrawi desire for independence (Ben-Meir, 2010, p.26).

While Spain was in the middle of war and planning its eventual withdrawal from the territory, other states took interest. Morocco and Mauritania sought to claim the territory through historical links that the international court of Justice rejected in October, 1975 (Spector, 2009). Undaunted, Morocco invaded the territory and Spain, facing the possibility of war and an ailing Generalissimo, France, agreed to terms to divide the Spanish Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania. The Polisario shifted its attention to the new owners of the land, launching attacks on Moroccan and Mauritania Lands and eventually won a peace treaty with Mauritania in 1979. Morocco regained Polisario controlled Lands in the 1980s. To prevent further attacks, the Moroccan government proceeded to build high sand walls known as berms expand over time and created average Zones between the Polisario and the government. These created the perceived "Free zone of the Polisario and the SADR at present the Polisario declared an independent government in exile

from Algeria in 1975 recognized by 75 governments and gain a seat in the organization of African States in 1982. Morocco left the OAU at that time in protest and remains the only African state not a part of the successor organization, the African Union.

The two sides broker a peace accord in 1989 that called for an eventual vote on independence, autonomy or some other forms of governance monitored by the UN. However, debate over the voting lists between the Polisario and Moroccan attempts to remove an independence vote from the list.

In the last decade there has been an emerging movement within Morocco controlled Western Sahara against Morocco, calling themselves the Intifada with uprisings in 2005 and 2010, and the Polisario suggested this would become the new form of protest against Morocco instead of armed conflict (Kai, 2016, p.76).

In 2003 former US secretary of state, Fanees Baker, serving as a special UN envoy on Western Sahara, made an attempt to bring both sides to an agreement on a settlement, which would dismantle the SADR and establish a Western Sahara Authority, which would govern for five years within Morocco upon those five years, the population would vote for integration, autonomy or independence (Michael, 2012, p.43). Even with the allowance of Moroccan settlers in the region-illegal under the auspices of the Geneva Convention, the Polisario and Algeria agreed to the terms, while Morocco rejected them outright. Morocco proposes a new referendum that would allow for autonomy only in 2007, which the Polisario rejected and submitted its own proposal for a referendum. The UN Security Council requested both sides to mediate towards a solution which failed to yield results (Simmawitz, 2009, p.303).

As at 2012 the UN mission to Western Sahara existed, working inside both the Moroccan and Polisario-controlled areas of the territory.

However, the relevant parties in the conflict did not show any willingness to resolve the conflict and still tried to influence the outcome of a possible referendum, and thus opted for a winner takes all option. As Pham (2010, p.10) states, an independent Sahrawi demanded by the Polisario, which the Moroccan government rejected remains a source of continuing hostilities for its people and more broadly, for the region.

Following the analysis, it is obvious that the incompatible goals between the belligerent parties have continued to fuel hostilities in the area.

*What has the UN Peacekeeping Mission done to resolve the Conflict?*

### *Evaluation and Proof of Hypothesis two*

Hypothesis two: The more intensive United Nations peacekeeping mission are devoted to effective implementation of peacekeeping mandate, the more likely it will resolve conflict in Sahrawi Democratic Republic.

To prove the above hypothesis, the study assessed the role of United Nations in attempting to resolve the conflict in Western Saharawi through its peacekeeping tagged "MINURSO". Firstly, MINURSO, was deployed in September, 1991, its mandate originally has eight objectives; monitoring the ceasefire, reducing the amount of Morocco troops in the western Saharawi; monitoring the armies of Morocco and the POLISARIO, ensuring the release of Saharan political prisoners, facilitating the exchange of prisoners of war (POWs) repatriating Saharan refugees, identifying and registering voters for a self-determination, referendum and finally, organizing a referendum (Kai,2016,p.8 ). A careful analysis of these objectives shows that some of the mandate objectives relate to the criteria of the conflict resolution, conflict containment and limiting casualties. As rightly observed by the study, the mission was to organize `in referendum on independence, and registration of voters. These were mainly stepping to achieve the final objectives, such as identification and registration of voters. These objectives are crucial UN role in regards to conflict resolution, as these were to be the process to resolving the conflicts. The continuation of MINURSO was conditional upon the ceasefire being kept by both Morocco and the Polisario. As the ceasefire was ultimately held, there have been no deaths attributable to the Moroccan army. The MINURSO's mandate was continually renewed on the implicit understanding that both parties to the conflict extend their good faith and willingness to allow the United Nations to follow their mandate.

MINURSO has not resolved the conflict, this does not necessarily mean that the role of United Nations has been negligible.

The UN intervention in Western Saharawi conflict began inauspiciously. The UN offered both parties in conflict good office from 1986 that created settlement plan which would have form the basis of resolving the conflict. The UN settlement and implementation plans were agreed to and signed by both parties on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1988, but MINURSO was not deployed until September 1991 and at that time, there were subtle changes to the mandate.

From the monitoring of ceasefire, the United Nations Mission played significant role. The monitoring of the ceasefire was predicated on traditional peacekeeping values and the ceasefire retained the consent of both Morocco and the Polisario throughout the deployment of MINURSO in the territory to observe the ceasefire (Kai,2016,p.43). The deployment of MINURSO signals the beginning of the transitional phase. The ceasefire was monitored by observers from ten team sites in the Territory. There were six team sites in the Polisario-controlled Western Saharawi (Tifariti, Birlahlou, Mehaires, Mijek and Agwanit) and four team sites in Moroccan-controlled Western Saharawi (Mahbas, Smara, OumDreyga and Awsard). The ceasefire held and there was no resumption of fighting, nor were there any casualties resulting from fighting between the two sides. As clearly

noted by this study, MINURSO had been proactive in its monitoring of the ceasefire and averages 600 ground patrols and 140 aerial patrols. While the implementation of the ceasefire had several flaws, it has broadly been successful in limiting casualties and containing the conflict. In this regard, the monitoring mandate has led to containment and eventual cessation of violence between Morocco and the Polisario and the conflict has also generally been localized to the territory of Western Sahara (Zartman,2015,p.56).

In order to reach the ultimate objective of organizing a referendum, MINURSO identified and registered voters. This was vital to the resolution of the conflict. The completion of the voters list was crucial to the fulfillment of the two mandate objectives of repatriation and organizing the referendum, despite the lack of progress on the voters list, MINURSO did attempt to ensure in the event, that the voters list was completed, the voters could be transferred to western Saharawi and a referendum organized efficiently. Necessary arrangements were put in place. However, powers of the UN special Representative in regards to the referendum was significant as it was envisaged that he would have powers to overrule national laws which may impinge upon a free and fair referendum. Despite both sides agreeing in principle to a code of conduct agreement for the referendum, both sides were reluctant to sign any code of conduct agreement. From the above analysis objective one, research question one and hypothesis one, it clear that the UN had played significant role in MINURSO towards the resolution of conflict in Sahrawi. The role of UN in limiting casualties has been successful. The ceasefire came into effect from the UN department of MINURSO and has remained throughout the time span examined. The ending of the military conflict between the Polisario and Morocco has resulted in no direct casualties from the conflict. The progress of MINURSO by clearing the mine fields of Western Sahara was not as immediate, the work of the UN and UN affiliated organizations such as the WFP, alongside the international donors, has alleviated the worst of the malnutrition, during the period, the conflict has not resumed nor has it extended into other states. There have been occasions when tensions have risen in the regions such as the Dakar rally of 2001 and the road-building by Morocco. However, the UN, MINURSO, succeeded in de-escalating my potential conflict. On the whole, the UN, through MINURSO, has provided the framework and opportunity for both the belligerent parties to negotiate a resolution to the conflicts.

*Why is it that there is continued conflict in Western Sahara despite the UN Peace keeping mission involvement?*

*Evaluation and Proof of Hypothesis three:*

*The continuing conflict in Western Saharawi is directly related to the poor performance of MINURSO's mandate*

*Establishment of MINURSO*

The Royal Moroccan Army and the Frente POLISARIO Military Force accepted the UN proposals and as a result a

ceasefire was declared on 6 September 1991. MINURSO was established by Security Council Resolution 690 (1991) in April 1991 with the agreement of the parties, to organize a referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The Settlement Plan was a classic decolonization programme. Ten years were spent so far on the working on its implementation but eventually, both the implementation and subsequent initiatives such as the Framework agreement and the 'Baker Plan' were rejected by One or the other party. The most controversial aspect was the identification of who had, or had not, the right to vote in the referendum. This continued to be the stumbling block for any proposals or attempts to advance the process.

The MINURSO military component's mission is to monitor and assist the two parties in complying with the ceasefire provisions in accordance with the Settlement Plan and Military Agreements numbers: 1, 2 and 3. MINURSO military component will conduct and support confidence building initiatives among the parties, support the political peace process and work with the two warring parties and non-political organisations to reduce the risks posed by landmines and unexploded ordinances.

#### *Roles of MINURSO*

The main roles of MINURSO among others include:

- i. To conduct vehicular ground patrols and air reconnaissance in order to monitor the ceasefire implementation according to the Military Agreement numbers 1, 2 and 3.
- ii. To investigate and verify violations, requests, notifications and allegations as reported or claimed by any of the warring sides.
- iii. To gather information in order to ensure that the two warring parties are adhering to the conditions as agreed as agreed to in the Military Agreements.

#### *Operational Objectives of MINURSO*

The operational objectives of MINURSO include:

- i. Enforce the Military Agreement numbers 1, 2 and 3 and the Settlement Plan.
- ii. Establish and maintain the confidence of the Royal Moroccan Army and the Frente POLISARIO Military Force through absolute impartiality.
- iii. Monitor the Royal Moroccan Army and the Frente POLISARIO Military Force to collect and record strengths and disposition of both parties to establish a baseline against which changes in the military force of either party can be measured.

#### *Settlement Plan*

The Settlement Plan is the agreement made in 1991 between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco on the organization of a referendum, which would constitute an expression of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, leading either to full independence, or integration with the kingdom of

Morocco. It resulted in a cease-fire which remains in effect (more or less) to this day. During the ceasefire monitoring phase, it is MINURSO military component's mission to monitor and assist the two parties in complying with the ceasefire provisions in accordance with the Settlement Plan and Military Agreements Numbers 1, 2 and 3.

The phases of the Settlement Plan include:

- i. *Phase 1 – Ceasefire Monitoring.* This is the current phase. It focuses on the continued monitoring of the ceasefire between the two warring parties in order to create the right conditions for the political peace process to move forward.
- ii. *Phase 2 – Transitional Phase.* This phase will be triggered by the publication of the list of persons authorized to vote and will lead to reduction and confinement of the Royal Moroccan Army forces and the confinement of the Frente Popular de Liberacin de Saguia-El-Hamra y Rio de Oro forces. This phase is also in charge of the provision of security to the refugees in the affected cities.
- iii. *Phase 3 – Referendum Phase.* The referendum phase is the phase that will focus on the military support required for the successful holding of the referendum. The phase will also take care of other activities for the period outlined in the Settlement Plan.
- iv. *Phase 4 – Post-Referendum Phase.* The post-referendum phase is planned to cover the drawdown and subsequent withdrawal of the military and civilian components from the Western Sahara once conditions permit.

#### *United Nations Security Council Resolution 690*

This was adopted unanimously on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1991. Consequently, the UNSC established MINURSO (see below) to implement the Settlement Plan (see above). United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) – UN peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara established in 1991 under United Nations Security Council Resolution 690 as part of the Settlement Plan, which had paved way for a cease-fire in the conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front (as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic) over the contested territory of Western Sahara (formerly Spanish Sahara).

#### *MINURSO Mandate*

The Secretary-General's implementation plan, approved by the Security Council, provided for a transitional period during which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General would have sole and exclusive responsibility over all matters relating to a referendum in which the people of Western Sahara would choose between independence and integration with Morocco. The Special Representative would be assisted in his tasks by a Deputy Special Representative and by an integrated group of United Nations civilian, military and



police personnel, to be known as the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

UNMCRSADR/MINURSO was originally mandated to:

- i. Monitor the ceasefire
- ii. Verify the reduction of Moroccan troops in the Territory
- iii. Monitor the confinement of Moroccan and Frente POLISARIO troops to designated locations
- iv. Take steps with the parties to ensure the release of all Western Saharan political prisoners or detainees
- v. Oversee the exchange of prisoners of war (International Committee of the Red Cross)
- vi. Implement the repatriation programme (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
- vii. Identify and register qualified voters
- viii. Organize and ensure a free and fair referendum and proclaim the results

The Western Sahara conflict tends to endure due to MINURSO poor performance of its mandate. The analysis of data in view of hypothesis two revealed in the study that the role of UN and MINURSO's mandates in the Western Sahrawi conflict has been negligible. This finding is in agreement with (Andrej,2019,p.23) who observe that the ceasefire stipulated that both Moroccan and Polisario troops, weapons and equipment would be confined simultaneously to location to be decided by the special Representative and that an observer group will be responsible for supervising the ceasefire. This did not take place at the onset of the ceasefire and the withdrawal of the troops to designated positions has yet take place to this day. In the same vein (Jensen,2002,p.8) noted that there was disagreement within the UN over the decision to enforce the ceasefire agreement and in particular the decision to remove the ceasefire from D-Day. Jensen (2002, p. 31-33) stated his belief that before the ceasefire both sides were mutually frustrated by the deadlock in the military statement. The result of this study is confirmed by the outcome of the study of Gizelis and Dorussen (2013, p. 388) revealed that the size of a UN peacekeeping mission and operation can affect the scope of the mission and the ability to foster cooperation between the parties. The small deployment, relative to the size of the territory meant that MINURSO was continually unable to verify reports of disturbances and demonstrations in large part due to lack of military observers and the purpose of the military observers was just to confirm and supervise the ceasefire. From MINURSO's deployment on September, 1991 until January 2016, there were 258 ceasefires violated noted by the UN in its reports of the 258-violation army, the vast majority were low-level infractions. Although this is a large number of violations, 156 of these violations were committed in the first 24 months of MINURSO's deployment. The fact here is that the original deployment of only 200 military observers negatively impacted upon the ability of MINURSO to reduced and restrict ceasefire violations. As revealed by (Kai,2016,p.21), despite the UNSG urging the UNSC to take a more proactive

role in MINURSO, the UNSC was content to maintain the identification of both party's eligibility of their individuals in regards to the referendum propose settlement plan. It should be noted that MINURSO continue with the Settlement Plan without the support of either party, but implicitly requires the UNSC to authorize MINURSO chapter vii powers and that require a strong commitment from the UNSC members particularly, military and financial while there was a consensus among the UNSC to continue the talks, this was a decidedly low-level consensus. Therefore, MINURSO's attempted to facilitate the repatriation of Saharawi was marred by a lack of progress. Another position that justifies the result of this study is that of (Erick,2005,p.67). He noted that the UNSC as a whole did not wish to make any decisions on the parties or to take any alternatives options Erik (2005, p.265)'s result confirmed the finding and proof of hypothesis two. The examined every stage of UN-MINURSO involvement in the Sahrawi conflicts negotiations and demonstrations of repeated failure. He observed that the United Nations Security Council refused to consider sanctions or any form of pressure to bring the two parties to compromise. He also explained how the ceasefire perpetuated the world's ignorance of the importance of conflict.

Anna (2006.3) averred that:

*The security comment, while having expressed support for resolution to conflict in Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, proved unwilling to ask the parties to make the different decisions required to solve the conflict. When Morocco rejected the peace plan, the council despite having unanimously supported it, did nothing*

In the year book of the United Nations; (2007), the special committee for peacekeeping operations, discusses MINURSO's staffing challenges and shows that MINURSO operates with a chronic shortage of personnel. The commission was alarmed to find, the police force responsible for ten sites in Western Sahrawi shrank from 47 to 26, which prevented it from performing basic functions in protecting UN assets and personnel.

The UN special committee also criticized the quality of the civilian staff in the peacekeeping operation mission. In its review of policies and procedures, including those pertaining to MINURSO, the report states that:

*The roster for civilian peacekeepers was ineffective and inadequately supported, advertising of vacancies was limited, the grading system for yearly recruited staff was inflexible, the interview process was inadequate, and missions seldom participated in the selection process for international staff*

Selection of the military contingents assigned to peacekeeping operations (PKO's) is a problem MINURSO started in 1992, when UN peacekeeping operations transited from first-generation mission model that is composed of national-

balanced, small-military contingents to the concept of second-generation missions, which combines civilians with a larger and robust military force. The selection of these military units is based largely on the official, and interoperability, rather than political affiliation. These practical requirements, combined with a UN-mandated official language (usually French, English) favour Western or western-trained forces. The result is a peacekeeping mission element that lacks cultural and political understanding of the conflict. Again, Western-oriented decision makers to a peacekeeping operation contingency find it hard to maintain objectivity. In North Africa and the Sahel, where the French and American have military footprint, MINURSO would require French or American-trained senior decision makers for peacekeeping operations high office since these government officials would presumably be Moroccan and moreover, since the French military has carried out many campaigns against the Polisario, French affairs would likely perceive insurgents as antagonists or at minimum, display a pro-Moroccan posture.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study set out to appraise the UN peacekeeping operations in Western Sahara conflict with the view to determine why is there a continued conflict in Western Sahara after nearly forty years of conflict and ceasefires, negotiations and UN involvement. From the analysis the study conclude that incompatible position of the POLISARIO front and morocco combine with foreign actors aligned in armed conflict, UN incompetency in staffing and intelligence, Algeria support to polsario regional alliance, the pursuit by France and United States interests in the region and finally the social, political, and economic disorganization generated by evolving phases of the conflict made it difficult to resolve.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis, the following recommendations were made:

1. The UN peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara should proceed to the Second and Third phases of the Settlement Plan (Transition and Referendum). This will give the Saharawis a sense of belonging anywhere they win and govern.
2. Moroccan government should uphold the sovereign status of the Western Sahara as recognized by other nations. This will resolve the protracted conflict.
3. The UN peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara should resolve issues and inconsistencies surrounding identification and registration of others to enable them conduct referendum as key part of its role to conflict resolution in Western Sahara.

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