SWEET HOME

WESTERN SAHARA:

INTERPRETING JUSTICE 44

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Clarification of Concepts

Westphalian State Order: The treatment of the Peace of Westphalia from 1648 is seen as the beginning of the current state order placing a "concentration of power in the hands of states" (Mathews 1997, p. 50 in Karns, Mingst & Stiles, 2015, p. 12). It regulates the state authority over its territory and internal policies removing a higher authority of the church (Karns, Mingst & Stiles, 2015, p. 75).

International Society: In the English school, international society is a form of structure between states concerned for order overcoming anarchy. These states have some common organizations such as the United Nations and shared values such as universal human rights. (Rønnfeldt, 1995)

Organization: According to the English School, the term organization refers to secondary institutions which are a "set of habits and practices" (Bull, 2004 in Parrat, 2014, p. 10) and constitute "a permanent conference for international society" (Parrat, 2014, p. 11) where common interests are implemented.

Order in International Relations: Order is conceptualized as a structure that allows "states [to] co-exist with one another on the basis of international law" (Burchill, 2013, p. 317) in order to overcome the anarchical character of international relations. Order has the priority to maintain international society and respect states sovereignty and then in a long term to establish and maintain peace. (Rønnfeldt, 1995; Bull, 2012)

Justice: Justice is temporal and local as there exist different ideas of what it includes and how far it reaches (Bull, 2012, p. 75; Linklater, 2013, p. 307). Some topics including "just war, humanitarian duty, economic inequality, cultural diversity and political order" are often considered to be components of justice. An attempt to define global justice that is shared across the global describes cosmopolitan moral principles of how to treat every human being. (Linklater, 2013)

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Area

On March 4th, 2019, the European Parliament finalized their agreement to the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and Morocco (Official Journal of the European Union, 2019). Even though the EU has had bilateral fishing agreements with Morocco since 1995, the agreement is controversial as it includes the fishing zone adjacent to the territory of Western Sahara (The European Commission, 2019). This trade agreement is one of the latest developments in a struggle that involves what has been labeled 'Africa's last colony', great power politics, notions of justice and self-determination, international law and a state that was amputated at birth.

A former Spanish colony, Western Sahara is situated at the Atlantic coast between Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria. As decolonization processes were initiated across the continent in the 1960s, the ethnic Sahrawis populating Western Sahara fought against the waning Franco regime to establish a sovereign Western Sahara state. An independence movement, *Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro* (Polisario), was formed in 1973 to liberate the territories of what was known as Spanish Sahara. (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014)

The independence of Morocco in 1956 had bolstered the kingdom's irredentist claims of territories within Greater Morocco, including large swathes of Mali, Mauretania, the easternmost Algerian provinces of Tindouf and Béchar and the so-called 'Southern Provinces' of Spanish Sahara. A war between Morocco and recently decolonized Algeria proved inconclusive, and Morocco instead chose to focus its territorial ambitions on Western Sahara. (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014)

In 1960, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) declared Western Sahara a 'non-self-governing territory', which was to be decolonized. A census was conducted to identify the eligible voters in a referendum, but Moroccan objections to the list led to arbitration by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014). In 1975, the ICJ acknowledged certain "legal ties of allegiance" (ibid., p. 36) between tribes inhabiting the territory that became Western Sahara and the Sultan of Morocco, though those were not sufficient to overturn the principle of self-determination (ibid.).

However, the Moroccan King Hassan II used the ICJ ruling to justify acquisition of Western Sahara (Pham, 2010). In November 1975, shortly after the ICJ ruling, the Moroccan King, Hassan II, launched 'The Green March', which saw the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Moroccan settlers accompanied by the Royal Moroccan Army into Western Sahara with the aim of (re)integrating it into the Moroccan Kingdom (Bhatia, 2007; Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014). Thousands of Sahrawis fled to the Tindouf region in Algeria where they still reside in refugee camps (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014). Others, on the other hand, stayed in the territory and currently experience violations of their human rights through the Moroccan authorities (Amnesty international, 2018).

Polisario, now ruling the self-designated Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in exile in Tindouf, waged a guerrilla warfare campaign against the occupying forces (Bhatia, 2007; Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014). Skirmishes between Morocco and Polisario continued throughout the 1980s, but Morocco gradually asserted control of the valuable areas along the Atlantic coast, leaving the remaining mine filled and uninhabitable land to Polisario control. (Farah, 2009).

In 1988 the UN intervened in the armed struggle and negotiated a ceasefire agreement between the warring parties by establishing MINURSO - the UN Mission for a Referendum in the Western Sahara (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014). However, the parties to the struggle are, to this day, still unable to agree on the list of eligible voters (ibid.; Smith, 2005). As of now, no substantial progress has been made despite several attempts (Zunes & Mundy, 2010).

Several nation-states, including several great powers, are stakeholders in the struggle of Western Sahara, including the countries in Northwest Africa, known as the Maghreb, the former colonial powers of Spain and France, the US and the international organization establishments of the EU, UN and AU (Smith, 2005). The territorial imperatives of Moroccan southward expansion can partly be explained by economic incentives; the presence of valuable minerals, most importantly phosphate, but highly profitable fisheries along the coast are also a significant source of income for the Moroccan treasury (Zunes & Mundy, 2010). The interests of the European Union and especially the former colonial powers of Spain and France partly revolve around the fishing agreements, but the geostrategic importance of Morocco is also crucial; concerns for order and stability in the Maghreb are similarly of paramount importance to Western powers, given the prevalence of illegal immigrants, smugglers, terrorist networks and other criminal elements in the region (Smith, 2005). Morocco has proven a stalwart supporter of US and European counterterrorism efforts in the region and continue to back the US on the Israel-Palestine question (Zunes & Mundy, 2010).

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The contestation of this region coupled with the involvement of great power's national interest, the dominant narratives concerning self-determination, decolonization and the conflicting concepts of order and justice have resulted in different interpretations of what action can and should be taken. Western Sahara is an example of a tense relation between international law securing the rights of individuals and the concern for order and national interest. This tension is visible in court judgments like the above-mentioned ruling of trade agreements.

1.2. Problem Formulation

This research investigates the (a)symmetry between the framing of the Western Sahara struggle by different actors. These differences could be, for example, variations in conceptualizations of the critical issues, e.g. human right abuses in the occupied territories, the plundering of natural resources, or lack of self-determination. The focus will be on the varying interpretations of the causes and perpetuation of the dispute as well as how the chosen actors of interest propose a solution. The actors that will be investigated include varying members of the international society; namely the UN, EU, US, MINURSO and Global Action, an international NGO. Similarly, interpretations stemming from the Sahrawis residing in the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria are analyzed. The interpretations from the camps consist of five groups, youth, (non)educated adults aged 20 - 30, the generation 45 years and above as well as ministers and official representatives of Polisario.

1.3. Research Questions

"For what reason do interpretations of the Western Sahara struggle between the international society, Polisario and the Sahrawi population living in the Tindouf camps vary?"

Working Questions:
- How do the international society, Polisario and the Sahrawi refugees formulate the causes, perpetuations and means to a solution to the Western Sahara dispute? - Why do these discrepancies exist?
- How do the international society, Polisario and the Sahrawi refugees frame a final solution to the Western Sahara dispute? - Why do these discrepancies exist?

1.4. Project Design

This paper starts out with an introduction to the case, i.e. the Western Sahara struggle, and presents the problem formulation followed by questions for research. The second chapter encompasses the research approach by outlining Hermeneutics as the philosophy. With an understanding of the direction of research, the third chapter takes the reader through the case more thoroughly. Here the history of the dispute is outlined as well as the timeline of negotiations during active UN involvement in the search for a political solution between 1991 and 2004. Geopolitics are also expanded upon in this chapter giving context to the history and interests of great powers as well as parties involved in the dispute. The fourth chapter depicts and examines the field of literature relevant for the illustration of a gap in research. Literature pieces are selected that studied the case from different theoretical perspectives; realist, liberal and constructivist, all of which show the research gap of the English School. Hereafter, the methodology of this study is described, including methods for data collection and analysis, as well as limitations and delimitations of this study. The description of choices of interviewees is outlined as well as our method for data analysis. The English School as a theoretical lens is elaborated upon in chapter six where the reader is introduced to the theoretical understandings this research takes in relation to classification of interpretations of the Western Sahara dispute according to the theoretical concepts of *order* and *justice*. The analysis of the various discourses within the struggle are reflected in our findings under the analysis chapter, and implications of those findings are expressed in the discussion. The final chapter concludes this project.

2. Philosophy of Social Sciences

This chapter articulates our philosophical approach. The ontology and epistemology are described in relation to this research as well as the use of a single case study. The methods of measuring validity within the metatheory are then discussed leading into methods of data collection via interviews and data analysis through qualitative content analysis (QCA). Lastly, limitations, delimitations and our pre-assumptions are outlined in an effort to provide transparency.

Hermeneutics as a philosophical research approach utilizes a realist ontology meaning there is a real world independent of our knowledge of it. This ontology also recognizes the various truths depending on the interpreter of reality and sees each interpretation as real. This entails that, within this research, the interviewees, as well as us as researchers interpret a real world. There is, however, variation in the interpretations of that real world. The epistemology of Hermeneutics being interpretative is central to this research as the interviewee's interpretations of the real world is the focal point of the analysis. An interpretivist epistemology centers the study of significance and meaning of texts, signs and speech justifying the analysis method of QCA (Egholm, 2014, p. 89). Knowledge within this research is ascertained then through interpretation by the researchers of the varying interpretations of the interviewees known as the process of double Hermeneutics. Triple Hermeneutics is applied during the research process when the research team interprets the interpretations of the interviewees via the interpretation of a translator, as was the case on multiple occasions.

2.1 Validity in Hermeneutics

Internal validity will be provided by a high degree of reflexivity and the application of the hermeneutic circle, meaning the iterative process of data collection and interpretation of it. Research is judged as valid in Hermeneutics when researchers show reflexivity of their own values and opinions and how these influence the outcome of the research. (Egholm, 2014) Validity within Hermeneutics is also achieved when there are similar interpretations of reality by a multiplicity of people, known as coherence theory. As there are five members of the research team, where three are involved in a separate project partnered with an organization under Polisario, and only two members were involved in data collection while in the refugee camps, there is a strong contrast within the team as to the understandings of the Western Sahara dispute. In this way, reflexivity is achieved through the fusion of our individual understandings to a collective interpretation. Furthermore, our pre-assumptions, as Westerners and members of the project separate from this study, among other elements,

represent the research team's subjective understandings of Western Sahara, and have been discussed multiple times. The pre-assumptions are transparently addressed as limitations to this research further on in this chapter. Hermeneutics acknowledge subjectivity but aims to advance towards objectivity as much as possible (ibid.).

The metatheoretical approach of Hermeneutics facilitates an in-depth assessment of diverging opinions and perceptions of the Western Sahara dispute. Accepting the premise of the inherently subjective reality, empirical data is obtained and analyzed in order to attain knowledge of *"the individual's thoughts, understandings and attributions of meaning* [in order to] *describe perceptions of incidents that have occurred"* (Egholm, 2014, p. 98). Hermeneutics aim to enable *verstehen* of a plurality of interpretations and hence allows this study to examine, describe and compare the different interpretations.

2.2. Pre-Assumptions

Through a reflexive process, it was possible to strengthen our research by acknowledging some of our pre-assumptions and biases. First of all, our interest in this topic has risen by a volunteer project some of us drive with a youth organization of Sahrawi students (UESARIO). This has created some bias during the initial deliberations of the research direction as well as during various phases of the research. The research team has put effort into discussing these biases with members that are not involved in the volunteer project to challenging certain opinions and biases that existed. The aim is to deepen our knowledge of the regional and international politics concerning this dispute and our desire to add a progressive study of the problems formulated as well as the potential resolutions. Thus, some of us had a biased perspective from the beginning due to the fact that we conducted a participatory action research. Two members of the research group conducted the interviews in the camps and have developed an empathic relation to the subject of study. However, through discussions and an assessment of critical literature that both promotes the Sahrawi and the Moroccan case, the opinions within the group have been challenged. On numerous and reoccurring occasions, discussion of different theoretizations of the politics in the region have taken place and secured that this research reflects the collected data instead of the team's own assumptions and feelings. The choice of theory, English School, has been attractive as it combines different theoretical traditions of international politics that members of the research group present and thus add a new perspective on the issue to the existing debate. The team's origin and education mirrors Western norms and practices and have shaped the researchers' view on human rights as just and universal for humanity and is based on the Western value system. In addition, the Westphalian understanding of states, their characteristics and

behavior is based on Western ideas of what constitutes such matters. For instance, an equal, just and democratic understanding of states has motivated the study since the dispute has not provided these conditions.

3. History of the Struggle

This is a summary of the chapter representing the history of the struggle providing the project with context and an understanding of the Sahrawi interpretations. The war of independence between Spain and the newly established Frente Polisario is set into context in the beginning. The geopolitics of the region take the great power interests of Spain, France and the US into account as well as the interests of the parties to the struggle - i.e. Morocco, SADR and Algeria. The final piece to this chapter encapsulates the UN proposed solutions to the struggle occurring between 1997 and 2004 as well as the responses to each solution, various aspects of the negotiations and state of affairs after the resignation of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy James Baker III.

This chapter presents the necessary contextual information about the Westerns Sahara predicament. The historical events leading to disagreements regarding the national borders and the process of establishment of Western states will be outlined. Afterwards the relevant interests of nation states in the North of Africa depicted. Lastly, the negotiations between Morocco and Polisario led by the UN are introduced.

3.1. Withdrawal of Spain

The historical review begins with the process of decolonization as it is the threshold to modern statehood in the Westphalian state order. Events occurring during the decolonization are often very decisive for the structure of national borders, international relations and the success or failure of states (Boukhars & Rousellier, 2014). The colonial borders and power distribution agreements between colonial powers forms the basis for modern borders, called *uti possidetis*, and, in this case, the right of Sahrawis to self-determination. Accepting the decision of the International Court of Justice in 1975 that Morocco has no legal claims to the territory of Western Sahara this paper will not investigate the precolonial demographics of this region. (ibid.)

The territory of Western Sahara is based on agreements between France and Spain about the borders of their colonies and encompasses the regions of *Río de Oro* and *Saguia el-Hamra.* In the 1950s, nationalist movements developed in these regions, claiming their right to self-determination. After the decolonization movement in the 1950s and 1960s several newly independent states were established, and it became clear that there were different visions of what the future Northern Africa would look like. One of these visions was a *Greater Morocco*, which would include the territories of nowadays Western Sahara, Mauritania, Canary Islands and parts of Algeria, Mali and Senegal. Simultaneously, the idea of an independent Western

Sahara arose, made up of the ethnic Sahrawis and based on the borders of the Spanish colony. Different movements were founded, aiming for the liberation of the territories of Río de Oro and Saguia el-Hamra. The last one of these movements to develop was the Polisario. (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014)

In 1960 and 1965, the General Assembly decided on the intention to decolonize the Spanish colony and to encourage Spain to guide this process. In 1966, a resolution by the UN was adopted, tasking Spain with organizing a referendum for self-determination, and in 1974 Spain began to prepare a registration of voters. However, the nomadic population and refugees in neighboring countries were neglected by this calculation. In 1975 the ICJ gave its advisory opinion on the issue and declared that there had been ties between the territories of Western Sahara and the kingdom of Morocco before the colonization, but those were not sufficient to make legal claims to this territory, thus affirming that the Sahrawis consequently had the right to self-determination. (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014)

Morocco's king interpreted this legal opinion in favor of Morocco's interest and the government released a statement saying that the UN recognized Morocco's claim for Western Sahara on the very same day. Only weeks after, the Green March was initiated which led approximately 350,000 Moroccan civilians accompanied by 20,000 soldiers into the territory. While the UN Security Council declared that move illegal, Spain agreed to officially hand over the administrative control over Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania. These two countries occupied the territories agreed upon in the *Agreements of Madrid* and Spain withdrew from Western Sahara, except for economic control over fisheries and phosphate sources (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014). As a result of arrival of both Mauritania and Morocco, thousands of Sahrawis fled through the desert to Tindouf in Algeria where they have stayed for now more than 40 years. Polisario, together with Algeria and the majority of AU's members declared the Madrid Agreements to be invalid and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic was proclaimed by Polisario from the refugee camps in Algeria. Military confrontations between Polisario and the two invaders escalated at a high human cost lasting for years. (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014)

3.2. UN Solution Plans

This section describes the UN brokered solution proposals to the question of Western Sahara between 1991 and 2004. It encompasses the Settlement Plan, the Framework Agreement and the Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of Western Sahara, as well as the relevant responses and reactions to each proposal. These solutions illustrate the stance of the UN,

Morocco and Polisario during the varying phases of negotiation and represent different stages in the development of the struggle. These proposals represent the foundation of varying interpretations between the international society and the refugee camps concerning how to proceed according to the party interpreting. Morocco, Polisario and the UN's interpretation of the struggle are inherent within these proposals and responses and are built upon in the analysis.

The Settlement Plan of 1991

In 1988, the Secretary-General of the UN and the African Union Special Envoy presented 'The Settlement Proposals' to the parties of the Western Sahara struggle, namely Morocco and the Polisario (UNSC, 1990, para. 1). In line with UNGA resolution 1514 (UNGA, 1960), which guarantees independence to previously colonized countries and peoples, the Settlement Proposal suggests a referendum, enabling the ethnic Western Sahara citizenry to choose between independence and integration with Morocco (ibid).

The Settlement Proposal includes four basic aspects carried out by the UN mission for the referendum of Western Sahara (MINURSO); a ceasefire between the parties, identification of approved voters for a referendum for independence, release of prisoners of war and a final vote on the future of the territory (UNSC, 1990). The ceasefire, monitored by MINURSO, initiated an end to acts of military aggression, operation or intimidation by either side requiring confinement of troops to designated UN locations thus halting active armed struggle (ibid., para. 11-18). MINURSO was originally mandated to monitor the ceasefire but was later approved for extension to assist in the implementation of the referendum (ibid.). The Settlement Plan proposal showcases the UN's goal of providing for the option of self-determination for the Sahrawi people and the halting of armed conflict providing more stability within the region.

Problems with the Settlement Plan

Between 1991 and 1997, aside from the establishment of MINURSO, none of the main provisions of the Settlement plan had been implemented due to fundamental differences between Morocco and Polisario (UNSC, 2001, para. 21). Critical issues preventing the agreement and implementation of the Settlement Plan centered around the identification of approved voters for the referendum, as well as a code of conduct by either party during election campaigning and the release of prisoners of war (UNSC, 2003). Establishing an approved voter list was complicated due to the nomadic traditions of the Sahrawi tribes often migrating across territory borders. This complicated the results of the Spanish census to include the

entire Sahrawi population (UNSC, 2001, para. 22). Polisario argued for respecting to the Spanish census from 1974. Morocco held the opposing view that thousands of additional members of various tribes were to be included, such as those in the territory at the time of the census but not counted, those who had fled to Morocco in previous years and those that were from the region but were relocated to Morocco by Spain in the 1950s and 1960s (ibid., para. 23).

Introduction of James Baker

James Baker III, a retired US government official and diplomat, was appointed Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General of the UN in 1997, after a particularly long period of persistent failure of the parties to agree on the details of the implementation of the Settlement Plan (UNSC, 2003, para. 23). Morocco and Polisario met for the first time in Lisbon in 1997, with the aim of finding a solution within the boundaries of the Settlement Plan (ibid., para. 25). Algeria and Mauritania attended negotiations for the purpose of providing legitimacy and a balance of power. With the initial discussions yielding little to no results, the discussion process of 1997 resulted in agreements on several fronts, such as reduction and confinement of troops and issues relating to the release of prisoners of war. While agreement was reached on various details within 1997, Morocco and Polisario persistently illustrated fundamentally different interpretations of the Settlement Plan's correct implementation (ibid., para. 33). According to Baker *"neither party had shown any disposition to depart from a winner-take-all mentality or appeared willing to discuss any possible political solution in which each could achieve some, but not all, of what it wanted"* (ibid, para. 30). The major issues of the voter list for the referendum remained an unresolved issue until 1999 when the parties formally agreed to protocols and organization of the identification process, *"albeit with reservations and misgivings for opposite reasons"* (UNSC, 2001, para. 27). The identification process was completed by the end of 1999 (ibid., para. 28).

The *winner takes all mentality* articulated by Baker, illustrates the parties' respective interpretations on their rights to the territory of Western Sahara, whether historical, citizen oriented or based on international law. Though important gains were achieved, the unearthing of new issues to implementation persisted. Baker held the view that further consultations would be counterproductive *"unless Morocco was prepared to offer or support some devolution of governmental authority* [...] *of the territory"* (UNSC, 2003, para. 37). In 2001, Morocco agreed to discussions on the basis of a proposal in which it was prepared to disclose essential governing authority over the territory to the inhabitants, namely the Polisario-governed

citizenry of Western Sahara (ibid., para. 38). Baker then put together the Framework Agreement, which was presented to Polisario as an alternative to the Settlement Plan.

Framework Agreement - Baker Plan I

The Framework Agreement offers autonomy for the Sahrawis within the Moroccan state giving essential territorial governing power to the inhabitants of Western Sahara (UNSC, 2001, Annex I, para. 1). This entails authority over fundamental elements to governing a state such as executive, legislative and judicial competences as well as essential industries, commerce, infrastructure, culture and social programs (ibid., Annex I, para. 1). Morocco would continue to have authority over foreign relations, the flag, currency, protection of territorial integrity from secessionist movements and the ability to appoint representatives to serve in the Western Sahara administration. All matters of law and order must also comply with the Moroccan constitution, especially in relation to public liberties. (ibid., para. 2) This plan additionally includes a referendum after a five-year transition period overseen by the Moroccan governing authority within the territory of Western Sahara. Rather than relying on the contested voter list of 1999, the approved list would be limited to individuals who have had full time residency within Western Sahara for the preceding year. (ibid., para. 5) The Framework agreement shows the UN's continued willingness to find a political solution by basing a proposal on concessions agreed to by Morocco.

Responses

Though the draft Framework Agreement represented a step forward in Morocco's willingness to negotiate central governing authority within the territory, it was rejected by Polisario (UNSC, 2003, para. 39). Where Polisario refused to discuss the plan, submitting instead a document outlining obstacles preventing implementation of the Settlement Plan, Algeria submitted criticism to the proposal (ibid.). The points of criticism included bias toward integration, contradiction of the Sahrawi right to self-determination and an over focus on a political solution rather implementation of the settlement plan (UNSC, 2001, Annex III) Furthermore, by referring to the *population of Western Sahara* rather than the *Sahrawi people*, the proposal places authentic Sahrawis as a minority against the current Moroccan population within the territory compromising the Sahrawi identity (UNSC, 2001, Annex II, para. 17, 8). Lastly, Algeria criticizes the Framework Agreement proposal for its implementation of the referendum, in that, the allowance for all persons residing in the territory within the year leading up to the referendum to vote in government officials heightens the risk of manipulation of the referendum (ibid., para. 16).

Alternative Options

Due to the parties' unwillingness to negotiate on the basis of the Framework Agreement, and with the consistent disagreement related to implementation of the Settlement Plan, Baker presented the UN with four options for a solution to the struggle in 2003 (UNSC, 2003, para. 43). Unlike previous efforts to find a resolution, these proposals did not require agreement by Morocco and Polisario and represent alternative options to a political solution. In this instance, the Envoy of the UN can be perceived to consider options which challenge the value of interstate diplomacy.

Option one spells out the establishment of the Settlement Plan and a referendum despite objections by either party. The second option encompasses revision of the Framework Agreement by Baker taking the concerns of the parties into consideration without the requirement of their approval of the final draft. Option three would surmount to a division of the territory between Polisario and Morocco. The parties would have a limited amount of time to negotiate, and if consensus was not reached, the parties would be presented with a proposal of division on a non-negotiable basis. The final option would eliminate MINURSO and signify that, after the amount of time and money spent, the UN was simply unable to resolve the struggle. (UNSC, 2003, para. 44-7) The consideration of these options showcases the possibility of the UN in infringing upon Moroccan sovereignty.

Baker Plan II - Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara

The Security Council rejected Bakers alternative solutions in 2003, as they limit Polisario and Moroccan influence as state actors on the future of the territory. Baker then developed a fifth option titled the 'Peace Plan for Self-determination of the People of Western Sahara" or the Baker Plan II. It combines elements of the Settlement Plan and the Framework Agreement including a transition period of self-governance and the opportunity for the 1999 approved ethnic Sahrawis to determine the future of the territory. (UNSC, 2003, para. 48-58)

The second Baker plan would initiate a four to five-year transition period in which authority within the territory follows that of the Framework Agreement. This plan would result in a referendum with an approved list of voters, voting on either integration with the Moroccan state or independence under a Polisario controlled Western Sahara (UNSC, 2003, Annex II, para. 1, 8, 2). Those eligible to vote include persons identified by MINURSO and reflect the voter list of 1999 as well as UNHCR's refugee list and those residing continuously in the territory since December 1999 (ibid., para. 5). The Peace Plan represented the last of Bakers efforts in the

search for a resolution to the struggle in Western Sahara. It was unanimously accepted by all parties with the exception of Morocco (UNSC, 2004).

Morocco's Response

Morocco's rejection of the second Baker plan rests on its divergence from the Framework Agreement of Western Sahara's autonomy within the sovereignty of the Moroccan state (UNSC, 2004, Annex I). Morocco argues that autonomy would enhance stability within the Maghreb region. This point dismisses the option of a transition period leading to a referendum as it would create uncertainty as to the future of the territory and the security of the region contradicting the interest of Morocco. (ibid., para. 10, 11). Morocco's final responds to the Peace Plan states that it is *"out of the question for Morocco to engage in negotiation with anyone over its sovereignty and territorial integrity"* (ibid., para. 11). Morocco delivered its response in 2004, expressing its openness to further negotiations on the basis of Western Sahara autonomy within the Moroccan state exclusively (UNSC, 2004, para. 4-5). After the Framework Agreement proposal, this response to Baker II demonstrates Morocco's evolved interpretation of which form negotiations could take. It equates to Morocco's evolved stance on basing further talks over respect of their territorial sovereignty.

Bakers Resignation

After seven years of negotiations and proposals, Baker resigned as the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, referring to the unwillingness by the parties to cooperate with the UN in the implementation of the Settlement Plan or finding an alternative political solution (UNSC, 2001, para. 8). The final report of the Secretary-General on the activities of his personal envoy suggested two options to the Security Council; the termination of MINURSO and return of the situation to the General Assembly signaling that after 13 years and $600 million, "the UN was not going to solve the problem of Western Sahara", or further work toward the implementation of the Peace Plan (ibid., para. 37). Opting to keep MINURSO deployed, there has, since Baker's resignation, been limited progress on a solution to the question of Western Sahara. Rather than representing the UN in this instance, Baker's resignation demonstrates his unwillingness to continue within the confinements of diplomacy to find a political solution and the UN's insistence in such.

As the first UN proposition to a solution, the Settlement Plan provides the first option for self-determination and begins this section leading into its problems of implementation. The Settlement Plan remained the basis of negotiations until the Framework Agreement proposal by UN Special Envoy James Baker. The Framework Agreement is then articulated and

proposes autonomy of Western Sahara within Morocco. This represents a pivotal point in negotiations, as Morocco refused to negotiate on the basis of anything else proceeding its proposal. With a rejection by Polisario and frustration from Baker, alternative solutions are outlined by the UN, which do not require Moroccan and Polisario consent. This is outlined in an effort to show the willingness of Baker to interrupt the status quo and force a UN solution which neglects the respect of Moroccan sovereignty. Finally, the Peace Plan for Self-Determination of Western Sahara is outlined, giving context to the solution advocated for by the UN as well as Baker's resignation, showcasing his hopelessness in finding a solution. There has not been a UN solution proposed since the final Baker Plan showcasing the stalemate in UN efforts to find a political solution.

3.3. Geopolitics

Though the question of Western Sahara involves two principle actors, the struggle has been 'internationalized' since its beginning, as both have sought to rally and mobilize support abroad (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2013, p. 154). Historically, the relationship between Morocco and Algeria has been tense due to power struggles and territorial ambitions dating back to their independence from France, and Western Sahara has been an obstacle to improving relations between the two countries (Smith, 2005, p. 550; 553). In the first stages of the struggle, Polisario was supported with Soviet military merchandize by Algeria and the renegade Libyan strongman, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi (Bhatia, 2007, p. 292). From the 1990s, Polisario has been supported diplomatically by, among others, South Africa and Nigeria (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014, p. 154), but since their influence on the dispute is limited, they are omitted from the scope of this paper.

Economic Interests

France has been consistently pro-Moroccan due to extensive commercial, political and cultural links between the two countries (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014, pp. 166-7). France is Morocco's main trading partner and principal creditor, and the political class of the two respective countries have close ties (ibid.). Contrarily, successive Spanish governments have been playing a delicate diplomatic game since Spain left Western Sahara in 1975 (ibid., p. 163). The EU Fishing Agreement with Morocco is of considerable importance for Spanish fishing industry, but Spain similarly remains dependent on Algerian gas exports (ibid., pp. 163-164). Aside from phosphate and fisheries, Morocco has signed oil exploration contracts with French and American oil companies (Smith, 2005, p. 551). The aim for the US, France and Spain alike has been to avoid promoting confrontation between the two regional rivals, both

due to the desire to maintain trade relations between all countries involved, but more importantly because of the overarching imperative of ensuring stability (ibid., p. 550).

Security Concerns

Moroccan priorities include resource extraction, but on a larger scale, preservation of the territorial integrity of the Moroccan nation is at stake; allowing the independence of Western Sahara might compel other minorities to claim right to self-determination. Morocco has for decades been grappled by internal democratic unrest against the monarchical rule, and by pursuing a nationalist agenda, the Moroccan monarchy has solidified its position domestically. (Bhatia, 2007, p. 292; Smith, 2005, p. 550) This domestic issue becomes of geopolitical importance, as the stability of the Maghreb is of notable concern for world powers. The assumption is that Sahrawi independence could spur internal unrest in Morocco, which in turn could destabilize the entire region (Smith, 2005, p. 550).

For this reason, Morocco has received considerable military and financial support from the US in return for Moroccan diplomatic support and security cooperation, namely in combating terrorist groups in the Maghreb (Smith, 2005, p. 550). The concerns for security are also significant for Spain; In 1982, Fernando Moran, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared that *"not only we will do nothing to destabilize Morocco, but we will do everything in our power to maintain its stability"* (Quoted in Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014, p. 163). Spanish relations to Morocco are further complicated by the unresolved territorial dispute over the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, located on the coast of Morocco but controlled by Spain (ibid.).

Spain and France, along with other EU countries, are forced to consider Moroccan retaliation to any assertion of the Sahrawi right to self-determination, e.g. by decreasing border security between Morocco and Spain, thus opening for a massive influx of refugees into Europe (Louis & Pinfari, 2017). The EU, notwithstanding formal support for a fair and just solution with respect for human rights, has been aiming to strengthen commercial ties with Morocco and encourage inter-Maghreb trade to promote stability, all the while emphasizing national sovereignty and striving to contain migration (Boukhars & Roussellier, 2014, p. 170; Louis & Pinfari, 2017, pp. 84-7).

4. Literature Review

The assessments of the struggle in Western Sahara are diverse, given the disparity in theoretical positions and prioritization of information. This literature review showcases the theoretical disparity by highlighting the existing orientation of previous academic literature as being situated between realist, liberal and constructivist thought. As the English School encompasses all three of these, the contribution of this study encompasses an analysis of the Western Sahara struggle from an English School perspective, taking the varying interpretations of the struggle as a focal point.

From realism to constructivism

As evidenced by much of the scholarly literature that operates on realist logic, concerns for regional stability and *raison d'état* of the major geopolitical actors showcases the extent to which the international system attributes importance to stability and control. Economic and political interests alongside significant security issues, notably terrorism and smuggling, support a pragmatic approach to the struggle.

In line with this reasoning, Laura Smith (2005) and Justine Louis & Marco Pinfari (2017) provide a thorough account of the national interests of the state-actors involved in the struggle, most importantly US and certain EU member states. Both pieces are conceived in a realist frame and operate in the spheres of geopolitical considerations and transnational diplomacy, making the inherently realist argument that Western Sahara and its native population is a tragic case of *Realpolitik* (Smith, 2005, p. 546). It is stipulated that economic and strategic interests of the Western actors simply outweigh the idealist notions of self-determination and justice, and implies that particularly the geostrategic position of Morocco, in relation to refugee movements and anti-terror efforts in the Maghreb, coupled with economic interests, make it nearly impossible to negotiate a lasting deal. Morocco is largely portrayed as the obstacle to a lasting agreement, introducing unreasonable objections to the list of eligible constituents. These deliberations only provide an analysis of national interest and all the obstacles for a lasting solution, which hence appears unattainable. As realist theory describes the international political status quo rather than identifying areas where the current order could proceed or change, this can be criticized for its lack in allowing change or evolution within international politics.

Staying within the realist orientation, Peter Pham (2010) contributes with his analysis on these premises, however focusing on the internal capacity of Western Sahara as a state. He uses

the notions of statehood and sovereignty to argue that the Polisario-governed SADR is essentially a 'failed state'. An in-depth analysis of the political organization of the self-proclaimed republic and its institutions exposes many flaws and shortcomings of the government, primarily due to the problematic conflation of Polisario and the SADR. Pham uses this assessment to question the viability of the Polisario government and hence the durability of a potentially sovereign Western Sahara. Furthermore, due to the geopolitical significance of the region and the presence of terrorist groups, a weak and independent Western Sahara would be an international liability and potentially become *"another Somalia on the Atlantic coast of North Africa"* (Pham, 2010, pp. 19-20). This presents a very cynical and pessimistic view on the prospects of Sahrawi independence and hence perceives an autonomous Western Sahara under Moroccan rule as the most feasible option within the status quo. Hence, the ideological argument, which emphasize the right to self-determination and justice for the Sahrawis, is omitted.

Where Pham focuses his analysis on Western Sahara as a state, Carmen Gómez Martín (2017) has researched potential options for a solution to the struggle, with an outset in the three durable solutions offered by the UN. As Pham, Martín analyses the issue from a realist perspective, taking into account the national interest of the actors involved, thereby determining the possibility of reaching a solution. Though voluntary repatriation is the solution that the UN most often recommends for large groups of refugees, she points out that such a solution to the refugee problem, along with local integration in the Moroccan occupied territory, would be difficult, as it requires a resolution of the struggle that has lasted for decades. She also points out that a general unwillingness to receive large groups of refugees like the Sahrawis, makes the third option, resettlement, near impossible as well. In addition to the three durable solutions, Martín also mentions the 'autonomy project', which would allow the Sahrawis to return to the occupied territories where they would have autonomy under Moroccan control. However, Martín deems this solution *"entirely inconceivable today"* (p. 42), as she predicts that the peaceful coexistence between the Sahrawi and Moroccans is unachievable, epitomizing the realist notion of a zero-sum game. A lasting solution posed by Martín is settlement in the liberated area, which is valued as improbable as it carries a high risk for a return to war. According to Martín, it is therefore most likely that the camps will continue to be the de facto long-term solution. As it is a very realist perspective based on state interests, Martín does not acknowledge that state interests are constructed and therefore changes over time and depending on the context.

Where Martín is skeptical of the prospects of reaching an agreement between the warring parties, Samuel Spector (2010) presents a slightly more sanguine narrative. Though accepting

some realist premises, Spector argues within the liberalist frame putting emphasis on cooperation and international. He makes the case for a more nuanced understanding of the notions of self-determination, sovereignty and freedom of association, and argues that integration of Western Sahara into a federal Moroccan state would constitute the most viable solution to the struggle. By examining various statutes of international law, the study seeks to broaden the judicial frame of international law regarding decolonization and self-determination and investigates whether and to which extend Sahrawi self-determination and freedom of association could be assured whilst remaining politically integrated within the Moroccan state. Spector invokes examples where autonomous arrangements have been successfully negotiated before, e.g. some New Zealand dependencies in the pacific, and proposes this model to serve as a basis for negotiations. The reasoning supports a moderate belief in international law and interstate cooperation. However, Spector's proposal invariably involves a compromise on the principle of self-determination, which is of paramount importance to the Sahrawis. Polisario opposition to this compromise would render the proposal unrealistic, and Spector himself does acknowledge that the differences between Morocco and Polisario will *"undoubtedly be difficult to bridge"* (Spector, 2010, p. 133).

Anna Khakee (2014) similarly assesses other potential approaches to the struggle, her argumentation rests on a certain confidence in liberal ideas of democracy, universal rights, progress and development. On the basis of pragmatic idealism, she argues for the establishment of a human rights monitoring mechanism within the scope of the MINURSO mission, thus bolstering its mandate. Regardless of the feasibility of realizing such a proposal, Khakee nonetheless argues that a human rights mission would be an important step forward to build confidence between the parties, and that fierce Moroccan opposition to such a motion is undermining its credibility (Khakee, 2014). In another study, she examines the Moroccan Autonomy proposal and stipulates that autonomous integration into an undemocratic state is inherently problematic (Khakee, 2011). Although Khakee seems to regard Sahrawi integration into Morocco as the ideal solution, she seems less interested in the jurisdictional aspect of a potential solution. In her frame of mind, the paramount problem is the democratic deficiency in Morocco and human rights abuses, not lack of self-determination.

To give a suggestion for how well Western Sahara will fare if they attain independence, Jacob Mundy (2007) looks at the identity and norms that have been constructed in the camps. To do this, he investigates different forms of Western Saharan nationalism. These forms include ideological, political and social nationalism. He considers the camps to be a "*pre-figurative lived model, of what an independent Western Sahara would, and still could, look like*" (p. 275). He points out that, even though Polisario has problems with elitist tendencies, the participation

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in the social and political aspects of governing the camps has played a large role in increasing the nationalist ideal in the camps. This has resulted in *"the camps' ability to adapt to changes, to absorb and process political discontent"* (p. 292). Mundy is optimistic that "*there is some hope for them ye*t" (p. 294), if they successfully adapt as they have in the past, even though they would be facing conditions as an independent state that are quite different from the ones they are facing in the camps. Mundy points to the UN as the main reason that Western Sahara has not achieved independence. The promise of a referendum raised the Sahrawi hope of reclaiming their country and has resulted in a large opposition against any solution that does not involve the possibility of achieving full independence, and thereby any solution offering a compromise. This focus on identity and norms represents a very optimistic view on the prospects of an independent Western Sahara and fails to take into account the *Realpolitik* of the issue into account.

Malainin Lahkal (2012) is theoretically situated well into the idealist sphere, namely regarding constructed ideas of justice institutionalized by the UN. Rejecting any justification for foreign control of Western Sahara, he highlights human rights abuses and decries the perceived hypocrisy of Western powers. This perspective invokes a plethora of provisions from international law and argues that the Sahrawis have been and still are victims of colonial oppression perpetuated by the Moroccan regime, which entails not just economic exploitation, but also war crimes, torture and other serious abuses of basic human rights. In Lakhals frame of mind, the prime culprit is an unholy alliance between Morocco, multinational firms and European states (Lakhal, 2012). Thus, the argumentation rests firmly on normative ideas of justice, embodied in various provisions of the UN Charter. However vindicated, the paper can be critiqued for ignoring geopolitical considerations and can thus appear naïve to the concerns of regional and international actors. Furthermore, although the paper invokes self-determination, decolonization and upholding of human rights, it largely rejects other fundamental liberal values, including the possibility of interstate cooperation, peaceful coexistence and mutual prosperity. Rather, Lakhal calls for the international establishment to force Morocco into submission, to serve the agenda of the Sahrawis and right the historical wrongs conducted by what he perceives as a tyrannical, colonial oppressor.

Mohammed Daadaoui (2008) applies a constructivist approach towards Western Sahara and their struggles for self-determination. His theoretical framework aims at challenging the more positivist tendency of the interaction between international law and international relations from a constructivist point of view. He argues that the struggle of self-determination is reduced to a matter of identifying indigenousness, which involves the complex dynamics of culture and identity. Thus, Daadaoui concludes that the definition of who is the 'indigenous people' of the

territory is highly difficult and a paramount reason why this dispute has not found its solution yet. (Daadaoui, 2008) This is both seen in the context of the relation between Morocco and Western Sahara, the UN (MINURSO) and the issue. He criticizes the UN for failing to understand the dynamics of identity, which is necessary in order to address the complex struggle of 'indigenousness' embedded in the region (ibid.). His analysis, however, showcases the struggle within constructivism, which does not suggest any clear solutions to this issue due to the lack of the predictory power of the theoretical framework. According to Trine Flockhart (2016), constructivism does not provide a clear framework of how individuals can overcome struggles linked to structures and identities. However, it is important to state that despite the difficulty of seeing any *"agent-led changes"* (Flockhart, 2016, p. 801) it is still not impossible. Alexander Wendt (1999) states that "*identities may be hard to change, but they are not carved in stone*" (Wendt, 1999, p. 21). However, it is an important aspect of understanding identity and the complexity of such, that typically are left out of other theoretical approaches.

Reviewing the literature in the field, we conclude that several scholars have been operating on one or two theoretical positions in order to analyze the issue of Western Sahara and its potential solution. Whereas liberal scholars have emphasized international law and interstate cooperation, constructivist studies have focused on the constructed norms and identities. In relation to this, realist approaches invariably attribute importance to order, stability and national interest. This study acknowledges the importance of all of these notions, thus the use of the English School allows us to include a pluralist angle, spanning realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism.

5. Methodology

In this chapter, the research methodology is presented. This includes articulation of the methods for data collection and analysis as well as limitations and delimitations. Data collection encompasses our methods for selecting interviewees; i.e. who is interviewed and why as well as interviewing strategies. Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is outlined as the method of analysis.

5.1. Methods of Data Collection

This section outlines the data collection process as well as justifications for the selected data. The interview types are outlined in addition to a description of the interviewees selected between the international society and the Sahrawi refugee camps. The accessibility of data in the camps through a volunteer driven project and the biases that come along with that are also outlined as well as the criteria for the chosen documents for analysis are. Finally, reflections about the data collection process are described.

Interviews in the Sahrawi Refugee Camps

A trip to the camps in Algeria allowed two of us to talk to people in the camps and get insights into the life in the camps. These unstructured interviews early in the research process helped to locate a focus for this paper. These interviews enlightened us about the different existing interpretations of the international society and the injustice. Interviewees consisted of mostly students and a few older adults who spoke about their experience during the colonization and the war. Additionally, interviews with two ministers, a parliament member and public officials have been conducted. After having located a clear research puzzle, a second data gathering process was started including two different types of interviews and documents.

The second round of interviews from the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria, conducted over WhatsApp, were semi-structured. the varied levels of English language skills within the camps meant that wording was changed constantly in an effort to communicate more effectively depending on the context. One of the Sahrawis living in the camp and cooperating through the Sahrawi student organization cooperating with a Danish student organization in which three members of the research team are involved in, helped the research team to gather interviewees. In addition to this, he and another acquaintance from the camps, functioned as translators during three of the interviews. Though no official 'research bargain' was proposed, there is a risk that the Sahrawi individual expects the researchers to do something in return,

for example propagate their agenda, and, in that way, provide interviewees who would give the picture that they want the world to see. (Bryman, 2015, p. 429)

Interviews conducted during the visit consisted of mostly students and a few older adults who spoke about their experience during the colonization, the war and the building of the camps. Additionally, interviews with two ministers, a parliament member and public officials were simultaneously conducted at this time in order to attain the official perspective of the state authority. Some of the interviews and conversations required a translator. Triple Hermeneutics occurs several times due to the need of a translator. The Sahrawi interviews conducted proceeding the visit were selected on the basis of different criteria such as age, sex and level of education. There are five groups of interviewees within the camps; youth aged 15-20, students and educated adults aged 20-30, non-educated adults aged 20-30 and an older generation aged 45. These groups were chosen to reflect the existence of varying perspective from the Sahrawi society, and to gain heterogeneity in the sampling. This heterogeneity does not, however, mean that the research is generalizable, as it would need a larger sample size to do so (Bryman, 2015, p. 416). Additionally, the interpretation of the Western Sahara dispute and proposed solution were framed massively different depending on if the subject was a student or had an education. The generation which was alive to see the creation of the refugee camps or remember life within Western Sahara, similarly have an interpretation entirely different from the youth. Polisario representatives directly involved in negotiations and international activity had yet another interpretation. these varying perspectives are used for examination of similarities and differences between the Sahrawis. The interviewees and where they fit within the Sahrawi society is listed in the table below.

a) Youth (age 15-20)	b) Students or educated adults (age 20-30)	c) Adults without higher education (age 20-30)	d) Adults above (age 45)
Male, 18 years old, Spanish translated: *Mahfud Salama Mohamed Salem*	Male, 27 years old, Graduated: *Tufah Moulud Daf*	Male, 27 years old, unemployed: *Ozman Bujari*	Female, 47 years old, doctor: *Menenya*
	Male, 27 years old, Graduated in Political Science, Spanish translated: *Lehbib Saleh*		Female, 50 years old, Secretary in Polisario: *Lihbila Mahmud*
	Male, 24 years old, Student of Political Science: *Luali Hama Salama*		Female, over 45 years old: *Alkhedra Algazwan*
	Male, 23 years old, Student: *Salamu Mohamed*		Female, over 45 years old: *Amaila Mahmud*
	Female, 25 years, Graduated: *Addala Saleh*		Male, 49 years old, Public Servant in the Ministry of Water and Environment: *Chakur*

Expert Interviews

Data collection conducted for the purpose of ascertaining the interpretations of the international society consist of four semi-structured interviews. The first was an interview with the former military leader of MINURSO, Kurt Mosgaard, and the second was from an expert named Gretel Martín from a left-wing Danish NGO by the name of Global Aktion working closely with the Sahrawis. During the visit an interview was conducted with the Sahrawi Minister for Water and Environment and a meeting regarding the engagement of youth in civil society through projects from Scandinavia with the Sahrawi Minister of Youth and Sports, the Director of Youth and Director of Sports was attained. This data is seen as representing Polisario's official opinion, and thereby giving the research insight into what the discourse is within Polisario itself.

Minister of Youth and Sport	Ahmed Lehbib
Director for Youth	Jalihenna Mohamed
Director for Sports	Nayem Bashri
Minister of Water and Environment	Brahim Bumajrouta

The previous military leader of MINURSO highlighted that his statements, though coming from experience, represented his personal perspectives rather than that of the UN. However, as an expert on the situation of Western Sahara and extensive knowledge on the functions of the UNSC, this research values this data and sees it as a legitimate representation of a piece of the international society. Gretel Martín, representing an expert within the field of NGO work dealing with Western Sahara, was interpreted by the research team as being highly biased toward the Polisario cause. However, as a representative for an NGO, this research sees her contribution as a valuable interpretation of the issues from within the international society. These two interviews were conducted over phone. Due to time and resource limitations,

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documents were used in the place of interviews to access official interpretations by the international society.

The use of documents rather than interviews for analysis of the international society was chosen due to time and resource constraints. When starting the project, the researchers had an intention to conduct interviews with EU representatives, however, after trying to get in contact with possible interviewees, it was deemed to not bring enough data to the project. Furthermore, this data was accessible in form of documents and thus was very suitable as a second data collection method. Documents selected for analysis include; the renewed '*Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco*' in an effort to represent the EU and its relationship and interests in the territory of Western Sahara. A WikiLeaks document from the US by John Bolton (2006), the current US National Security Advisor, on his assessment of the Western Sahara issue is also included to illustrate the view of the US as a great power. Three solution proposals are taken from the UN, namely, the Settlement Plan, Baker Plan I - The Framework Agreement - and Baker Plan II - The Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of Western Sahara. Even though these propositions are almost two decades old, these are not deemed outdated since there has not been any remarkable progress even though negotiations have started again recently. They facilitate a wide understanding of the UN's approach as the main actor in efforts for a solution.

In summary, the international society is represented by seven pieces of data; two interviews - from the previous MINURSO leader and an NGO representative, three documents from the UN, the fisheries trading agreement by the EU and a WikiLeaks document outlining the US's stance on the situation in Western Sahara.

5.2. Methods of Data Analysis

This section gives an overview of QCA as a method of data analysis. The use of the method via retroduction is articulated as well as a summary of the application. The utilization of coding and categorization is touched upon and a list of the method steps taken are outlined.

Retroduction
During the project, a retroductive approach was chosen. This means that the research goes back and forth between inductive analysis and categorization of data via QCA and simultaneously applies concepts from the chosen theory. This research began with data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews from the refugee camps and developed a

framework for research based on the obtained data. Academic literature was then assessed giving this research a theoretical lens to assess the data. Starting with the categories of justice and order deduced from theory, subcategories were created inductively and later revised and adjusted to the collected data. This process evolved between reflection of the data and alignment within the theory. (See appendix for the final categories.)

Qualitative Content Analysis

Focusing on characteristics of communication and language, though QCA also involves counting words in analysis of language, it has become a flexible method suitable for qualitative data classifying *"large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings"* (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). It allows for simplification of many kinds of data addressing; content, themes or core ideas (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). This method allows for the systematic summarizing of the content of collected data used for comparative purposes (ibid.). It can be used to *"explore new topics, describe complex phenomena in open systems, compare and contrast group differences, and develop and test theories"* (ibid., p. 86). QCA research encompasses descriptive and narrative summaries of texts as they are, further justifying the use of the method (ibid.). This method is appropriate for this study as it allows for the processing of a large amount of interview data into categories which can be easily used for comparative analysis.

Coding

Coding has a plethora of uses within QCA. It is employed to develop new understandings of the data, to simplify key meanings within the texts and to reduce and summarize meanings most relevant, providing slightly abstracted but simplified description (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). This research specifically applies a retroductive approach to the research applying a repetitive process of assessing theory for the making of categories. This entails allowing subcategories to inductively evolve, as the coding categories are evaluated throughout the process of analysis according to the theory.

Application of QCA

Using Hermeneutics, this research employs QCA to describe and evaluate interpretations between groups of people by summarizing and condensing interview transcripts. QCA assists the research in the analysis of the varying ways the disputes over Western Sahara are interpreted. This paper compares interpretations and contributes to an understanding of the future of the issue. This means that by this investigation, the paper aims at locating the

inconsistencies between the perceptions of the international society, Polisario and the population in the Tindouf refugee camps.

Steps of Analysis:

1	2	3	4	5
Categories are developed according to the theoretical concepts. Namely, within the framework of justice and order	One interview from the refugee camps is coded according to the categories	Categories are inductively revised to fit the transcription. The same interview is analyzed again with revised categories	Another interview from the refugee camps is analyzed, and another revision of categories takes place	Interview No. one and two are analyzed again after most recent revision of categories. This point finalizes the categories with little revision, occuring only when switching to analyzing the international society.

The analysis process begins with no fewer than two members of the research team code an interview or document according to the finalized version of the categories. A line can hold multiple units of analysis (i.e. within line number one, a unit could include different parts of the line and be coded as; 1a, 1b and/or 1c). This research has adopted a flexible unit of analysis. That is, the number of words within a unit encompass the number of words in which the researchers intuitively find relevant. This is done in an effort to reflect importance within a text, where data could otherwise be skewed to miss-represent the emphasis of the researcher. Each unit is given a number (i.e. 1a) and attributed as a point within the relevant category. The number of units within the categories represents the degree of emphasis and consistency on the concepts of justice and order, that are employed in the categories. The intention is to have a systemized summary of data where interpretations of the Western Sahara dispute are assigned to our subcategories of order and justice. The final outcome should present the alignments of the interviewee's arguments within the English School's conceptualization of order and justice for analysis.

5.3. Limitations

Data Collection

Certain limitations occurred during data collection; the research team has taken notice that the population in the camps perceived the research team as Western people and the collected data is influenced by that. The Sahrawis' hope for this research to promote the Sahrawi cause through the research has been articulated and affects the opinions they presented. An instance of this influence on the data are interviews with representatives of Polisario, as they might have been driven by a motivation to draw a picture of Polisario that would please the Western

states and secure their support. Some data has further been influenced due to the occasionally required use of translator which might have changed the wording of the perspectives of interviewees. This study recognizes that biases from the interviewees occur and the researchers cannot always be aware when the interviewees are stating their own opinion, or whether they are giving the information they think the interviewer wants to hear. During some of the interviews conducted during the visit to the camps, the interviewees could have given the information they thought the interviewer wanted in order to keep the cooperation going. Though this limitation exists to an extent unaware to the researcher, the interpretations presented to the study, according to Hermeneutics, are valid truths, and must be interpreted as their version of reality.

It would have been desirable to interview a more diverse range of people, both within the camps as well as the international society to gain a more nuanced perspective on the issue under study. Due to factors such as accessibility, resource limitations and a restricted time-frame, the research team has decided to focus on official documents from the EU UN, and US as representatives of the international society. This does not mean that official documents from other important actors such as Spain, Morocco, Algeria etc. are not important, but they have not been prioritized because of the restraints mentioned above.

Data Analysis

Though this research attempts to legitimately analyze interpretation between the refugee camps and the international society, the study recognizes that the research data itself is skewed in its representation of each group. Within the international society, the UN is over-represented with three documents for analysis and one interview by a previous MINURSO leader while the US and EU are represented with only one document respectively. Additionally, the US is the only great power within the data pool. The refugee camps are over-represented with twelve interviewees and four Polisario representatives against the five actors of the international society. Furthermore, there is an over-representation of men within the data from the camps. Semi-structured interviews also created some problems when analyzing the data, as the questions were not standardized.

5.4. Delimitations

During the study, it was decided to focus on the perspective of Sahrawi people from the refugee camps in the Tindouf province in Algeria, as access to these were offered through a research trip and local contacts. Due to limitation of resources, mainly in regard to time, this study does not include a Moroccan view or the view of Sahrawis living in the occupied territory.

This shapes a one-sided view and cannot offer a full picture of the interpretations of the issues and potential solutions. However, the decision to limit the object of investigation to the perspectives of refugees in the Sahrawi camps, Polisario and international actors, i.e. the EU, UN, US etc., was made with the intention to prioritize an in-depth understanding of these interpretations. Secondly, an investigation into the historical claims to the territory is not included in this paper. This departure is based on the decision made by the ICJ that Morocco did not have sufficient claims to the territory before occupation. Rather than multiple representations from each great power and party to the dispute, this study chose interpretations of the Western Sahara struggle within the bounds of the time and capacity allocated to the research team. Therefore, this research is missing the view of France and Spain, the colonial powers previously in control of Morocco and Western Sahara.

The purpose of this study is limited to interpreting and understanding events and developments in international relations and politics due to the philosophical approach of Hermeneutics. This purpose is in coherence with our choice of theory, as the English School does not attempt to make any predictions for future events or international relations.

Our method for data collection challenges the quantitative aspect of QCA. QCA, in order to systematize large amounts of qualitative data, utilizes counting of categorized content. However, due to the unstructured character of interviews, the counting of categories was implemented intuitively as the amount and nature of questions varied and thus influenced the ideas articulated by the interviewees.

6. Theory

This chapter outlines the application of the English School on this study. The school of thought is presented in a general sense, giving a brief history of its emergence, assumptions and contribution to the study of international relations as well as its relevance for this study. The concepts of international system, international society and world society and their related scholars are then introduced in addition to their application. Order and justice are also invoked, illustrating this study's conceptualization of Western Sahara dispute reflected in the analysis. Finally, the concepts are connected, showcasing the theoretical lens of this research in the detailed elucidation of the disparity within the interpretations of the Western Sahara dispute.

6.1. The English School

The backbone of the English School, developed in the United Kingdom from the 1960s to 1980s, and builds upon three traditions; realist, rationalist and revolutionist. The realist thought, based on Hobbes, acknowledges the struggle for power between states in an anarchical system. (Burchill & Linklater, 2013, p. 88) However, the lack of inter-state conflicts since the end of the cold war cannot be explained, which led scholars to consult a second tradition, the rational assumption. These assumptions inspired by Hugo Grotius added the possibility of cooperation between nation-states despite the anarchical character of international relations. Grotius brought forth pluralism which limits states' cooperation to a small degree (Bain, 2013, p. 159). Contrary to pluralism, solidarism characterizes states as being capable of feeling a solidarity and thus engaging in deeper cooperation beyond *"the enforcement of law"* (Bull 1966, p. 52 in Bain, 2013, p. 159) Lastly, the revolutionist tradition opposes to the realist notion and assesses *"the possibility of replacing international order with peace and justice"* (Burchill & Linklater, 2013, p. 85). This vision is based on the Kantian notion of perpetual peace and goes beyond international law and universalized norms. Scholars operating within the English School tradition are situated within the trichotomy of ideas of international relations (ibid., p. 88).

One of the most prominent features in English School theory is the inquiry into the scope of international cooperation, even given the conditions of anarchy in the geopolitical sphere. In *Why Is There No International Theory* (1960), Wight rejects the Hobbesian position of the world in a constant state of war and anarchy as inconsistent with reality, given the prevalent norm of relatively peaceful coexistence between states and the long-standing culture of diplomacy (Wight, 1960). Similarly, Bull (2012) examines forms of cooperation between members of the international system of states, and to which extent this cooperation can facilitate and uphold a

world order. To a degree, Bull acknowledges the realist assumption of anarchy and self-interest, but equally emphasizes that anarchy is not the normal state of international affairs. (Bull, 2012; Burchill & Linklater, 2013)

As traditional theories had faced difficulties explaining some of the contemporary developments in international relations, the English School of Thought was developed to take the most prominent thoughts of established theories to the discussions about international relations. These different concepts are a well-suited tool to explain the inconsistent, contradictory development in the disputed territory of Western Sahara. Additionally, the importance of organizational actors involved in the struggle and their responsibility ascribed by Sahrawi refugees and scholars alike, and the challenging of the state as the central actor, make English School a relevant theory. Furthermore, the concepts within the English School allow this research to classify the varying aspects of interpretation of the dispute, as they incorporate normative as well as pragmatic elements.

International System, International Society and World Society

Bull argues that when states bilaterally interact with one another with a certain regularity, such dynamics is what constitutes an *International System* (Little, 1998). If states then further share a perception of values and interests that are being manifested in rules or laws within an organizational frame, these dynamics would make up an *International Society*. States constitute the central actors in these forms of international order to which the concern for order and stability is central. Within an International society, regional actors add norms such as human rights to the debate, which Bull argues as being as a secondary concern after *order*. (Rønnfeldt, 1995; Hurrell, 2013) Lastly, *World Society* promotes a universal definition of values that constitute common interests for all individuals of the world (Little, 1998). It focuses on the individuals that constitute the world society allowing both individuals and non-state actors beside nation states as agents, opposing the focus on states in the international system and society. Beside a need to establish order, notions of justice are emphasized that are argued to be universal and justify interventions violating states sovereignty if human beings are not treated just. (Rønnfeldt, 1995) Human rights are sometimes criticized for not constituting a universal but a western concept of justice (Burchill & Linklater, 2013). However, the existence of customary law and international law treating individuals is considered an evidence for the transition to world society (Rønnfeldt, 1995).

Order and Justice

This research draws from Bull (Bull, 2012; Rønnfeldt, 1995; Hurrell, 2013) and Little (1998) in their concepts of justice and order. Bull (2012) defines *order* as the predominant state of affairs between states. He developed the concept of *order* to conceptualize states' political maneuverability in the anarchical world. Order between states is represented as the persistent respect of state sovereignty putting the monopoly on power within state territory. Pluralists within the English School such as Bull would argue that their focus on order is the only way to secure peace and stability and overcome the anarchical system (Hurrell, 2013). This aspect of international structure largely represents the realist aspect of the English School, existing prominently within the concept of the international system and international society. According to Bull, order can be established through five institutions which are made up of balance of power, diplomacy, great power management, war and international law. International law is like in international society followed as long as order is maintained. (Bull, 1977 in Rønnfeldt, 1995)

The concept of *Justice* (Bull, 1977 in Rønnfeldt, 1995; Hurrell, 2013) is developed to encompass a cosmopolitan morality concerned for individuals across different states. However, Bull leaves justice to be open for individual interpretations based on the values someone holds (Bull, 2012). In accordance with Bull, this research considers justice the prioritization of moral standards expressed within norms and international laws over the respect of state sovereignty and order among states. In that sense, the concept of just war describes the process of violating sovereignty for the sake of lasting justice. While order encompasses mostly law, the notion of justice accepts norms and values even without the support of any legal backing (ibid.). This includes instances where states or organizations would allow the intrusion of state sovereignty prioritizing the rights of individuals over state interest. This morality is visible in humanitarian interventions and the practice of responsibility to protect. This conceptualization finds itself within *world society* rather than *international system* or *international society*.

6.2. Application of Concepts

The concepts of *order* and *justice* and with those the concepts of international society and world society are applied within the analysis in an effort to classify varying discourses concerning the question of Western Sahara within the English School. Classifying interpretations to express sentiments of either justice or order, these concepts are used to illustrate whether the opinions concerning the central issues are similar to the discourses proposing a solution. Attempting to identify where interpretations are aligned between justice

and order, this research attempts to compare the discourses within as well as between the groups of interest (i.e. the international society and Sahrawis in the Tindouf refugee camps and representatives of Polisario). Using QCA, our categories represent our theoretical concepts.

Categories for Analysis

This section describes the subcategories used within QCA under justice and order. This method of data analysis assesses the interpretations between the interviewees according to the English School. Though the English School conceptualizes order and justice as a spectrum, the use of binary categories was necessary in order to identify where the interpretations lie.

Justice

The first subcategory includes unspecified narratives within both the sub-subcategories of *status-quo*, and *solution*. Being under the broad category of justice, *non-categorized status-quo* captures the notions of experienced injustice of the current situation. Here, rather than just acknowledging the order, focus lies on the articulation of the injustice of the status quo. Non-categorized solution contends the just solutions envisioned for the future as opposed to the current perceived injustice of the status-quo. The proposed solutions in the category would enhance the global justice.

Under justice is also *nationalism,* which is used when the interviewees point to the distinct Sahrawi identity, distinguishing themselves as being different from Morocco. This subcategory represents the movement towards a Sahrawi nation-state.

In order to categorize where responsibility of finding a solution or perpetuating the Western Sahara dispute is expressed, the subcategories of organizational and great power responsibility were created. Within both, the sub-subcategories of *status-quo* and *solution* are used. In the category of *solution*, organizations such as the EU and UN or Great Powers are seen as being responsible for creating and securing the justice of individuals. *Organizational* and *Great Power responsibility status-quo* is invoked when the organizations are claimed to be responsible for keeping the status-quo i.e. keeping the injustice alive. This enables them to prioritize justice over the sovereignty of states. The responsibility of international organizations shows a clear cosmopolitan morality for a global society in which justice is prioritized over the respect of sovereignty and organizations possess authority to implement inter-state norms.

International law is an institution within the conceptual frame of the English School and constitutes a set of norms, rules and practices customarily or formally ratified in treaties, which are recognized by state actors as legally binding frames that govern state relations. The sub-subcategories within this encompass various provisions under international law; *self-determination* refers to a clause in the UN Charter, which calls for emancipation of colonized territories, whereas *referendum* is a democratic expression of that clause. Finally, protection of *human rights* is protected under humanitarian law, but all three sub-subcategories revolve around the exertion of justice and entails intrusion of national sovereignty when enforced.

Another institution in English School is the notion of *armed struggle,* which constitutes a mean to achieve justice. The means of war are seen as a legitimized effort under the idea of *just war* as it serves to accomplish a bigger object, namely a lasting justice.

Finally, *freedom* is used as a subcategory when the value of such is invoked when articulating the wish for freedom. This categorizes interpretations based on unwillingness to accept the status quo, while arguing for a more just freedom than accepting Moroccan authority. Freedom is seen as the state of possessing universal human rights. This is seen as opposed to being under occupation.

Order

When assessing interpretations of the Western Sahara dispute which acknowledge the order without attributing any normative notions of (in)justice, the category *non-categorized* is used. This entails that the narrative falls within order without invoking diplomacy, national interest or peace.

The subcategory of *organizations* is invoked when there is discourse concerning an organization such as the UN or EU and when that organization is perceived as supporting the status-quo in order to strengthen the order of the system.

Great power is used when Morocco or a great power such as France, Spain, the US, Russia, China or the UK are invoked as supporting the status-quo due to national interest. Main state interest is the maintenance of state authority in form of sovereignty over a territory and security concerns. It can also consist of economic interests in the form of international trade and cooperation or the extraction of natural resources.

Diplomacy encompasses the facilitation of inter-state relations as conducted through bi- or multilateral negotiations between state actors or organizations. This concept respects the

sovereignty of states and acknowledges them as the legitimized actors to engage about intra-state affairs. Diplomacy might enable states to compromise in order to overcome power struggles and reach a level of cooperation.

Lastly, the subcategory of *peace and order* is used as a realist understanding of the importance for order in the form of peace and stability in the international society. Peace is seen as the absence of war and conflict. Strong state authorities are conceptualized as increasing the order since they provide stability. Unlike the subcategory of *freedom* under *justice*, *peace and stability* is used as a category when notions of peace are articulated as possible within the order.

7. Analysis

Taking the data gathered through the research process, this section selects relevant results found through the QCA of the interviews and documents used to assess the individuals and actors under study. Rather than detailing the results of the entire data set, this section exclusively presents the analysis of main findings deemed relevant by the research team in relation to the research question. This entails that some actors and individuals are left out of description in certain areas due to the research team ascribing more or less importance to certain elements of the findings. For access to the entire corpus of data in form of transcripts and QCA, see the appendix. It is outlined how and why the interpretations differ in relation to the causes and perpetuations of the dispute. Next the discrepancies in interpretations in regard to the means to a solution are analyzed and explained and finally the variations in a final solution are outlined. This section aims to illuminate the dynamics and (a)symmetries between the different groups respectively.

For what reason do interpretations of the Western Sahara struggle between the international society, Polisario and the Sahrawi population living in the Tindouf camps vary?

7.1. (A)symmetry in Problem Formulation

The first finding treats the differences in the framing of the problem among Sahrawis, from the refugee camps close to Tindouf and Polisario's official position alike. While some Sahrawis emphasize the need for a Sahrawi national state as the core problem, others focus on stating the perceived injustice in the form of, among others, the refugee camps, human rights violations and a national sentiment. Most international actors, on the other hand, neglect the Sahrawi national identity when framing the problem of the struggle.

Within the Camps

When going through the interviews with Sahrawis, one noteworthy finding is the difference in perceptions of what the root of the issue is. Two perspectives can be explained by different prioritizations of justice and order, respectively. On one side is the pluralist conceptualization, which is mainly raised by five of the interviewees (Meneneya, Appendix D1; Tufah, Appendix B1; Lehbib, Appendix B2; Mahfud, Appendix A1; Lihbila, Appendix D2). It promotes the Sahrawi national identity as being different from the Moroccan, which is used to justify full Sahrawi authority of Western Sahara. This is exemplified in the rhetoric by Tufah, where he says, "*we are not like Morocco, the culture, the language, the history, we are not the same in*

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anything" (Appendix B1, 84). Living in refugee camps or under Moroccan authority as well as the absence of a Sahrawi state is perceived as being unjust for Sahrawis due to the national identity. This narrative is based solely on justice for the Sahrawis, excluding the justice of other people, for example Moroccans, based on identity and their understanding of indigenousness attached to Western Sahara. This opinion is, among other places, manifested in Luali's remark about Morocco and the extraction of resources in Western Sahara, where he says that "*as a country,* [Morocco] *don't have anything but it's not our* [Sahrawi] *problem*" (Appendix B3, 74-5). They are therefore seeking justice, not for everyone, but rather based on feelings of nationalism. Of the interviewees who tend to invoke nationalism (Luali, Appendix B3; Chaker, Appendix D5; Ozman, Appendix C1), all emphasize international law as well. Even though that offhand would indicate a leaning towards a more cosmopolitan morality. International law is almost exclusively invoked to further the Sahrawi cause, as they are focusing on a self-determination for Sahrawis.

In opposition to the state morality, three other interviewees (Luali, Appendix B3; Chaker, Appendix D5; Ozman, Appendix C1) proposed a more cosmopolitan narrative when phrasing what the root of the struggle is, focusing on the experienced injustice of the status quo. Where some of the interviewees use the Sahrawi national identity as the reason why they have the right to self-determination, other interviewees invoked freedom. The inherent injustice of the status quo is also highlighted by several interviewees; it is argued that "[s]*ometimes, to die martyr* [is better] *than to live your life in exile and the bad condition like this to waiting nothing*" (Chaker, Appendix D5, 31-2). Like Chaker, Luali puts a high emphasis on the injustice of the status quo, and a high focus on international law, with equal focus on human rights, referendum and self-determination. However, looking into Luali's argumentation, a clear inconsistency is revealed, as he, throughout the interviews, refers to the Sahrawi people, rights for Sahrawi people and abuse of the Sahrawis in the occupied territories. While the problem framing revolves around a cosmopolitan morality, the solutions proposed reflect a national and thus pluralist view. This shows that pluralism and solidarism are not an either or, but a spectrum, on which the interviewees are situated. However, when looking into the rhetoric, it is clear that, though they use different arguments for it, all the interviewees from the camps petition for a new order, because they find it just, as they value nationalism higher than rights.

Similar to this perspective, the ministers representing Polisario focus on highlighting the perceived highly unjust status quo rather than conveying nationalistic sentiments. By doing that, they appeal to the highest inter-state authority, the UN, and frame the struggle as a struggle of injustice more than a nationalistic movement. This has been emphasized by the Minister of Water and Environment by stating that "[w]*e are not* [a] *secessionist movement"*

(Appendix 7, 317) but instead *"[w]e are [a] decolonization issue. We are in the agenda of the United Nations since 1963."* (ibid., 323-4). Thus, this struggle is framed as a problem regarding justice instead of order in an effort to justify a change in the current order of states.

International Actors

The Sahrawi view on the perceived problem is contrasted by an overall focus on order in the international society. The UN is not mentioning the unjust status in any way, and the EU, US and Kurt Mosgaard are only mentioning it slightly. As the analyzed UN papers are solution plans, it makes sense that they have a focus on what a just solution would contain. As the other actors are also not directly involved in the issue, they also have a much higher emphasis on finding a solution that could result in a more stable situation, than on the current injustice perceived by the Sahrawis. When comparing this to the narrative in the camps, there is a clear variance between what our interviewees state is needed in the camps and the occupied territory, and what the international society contributes. Two of the Sahrawis are going even further, blaming these organizations for the problem as well (Nayem, Appendix 6; Luali, Appendix B3).

MINURSO is not authorized to monitor human right violations. The UN focuses on suggesting solutions that intend to accommodate the parties' interests, in this case a national sentiment and Morocco's economic interest. Since MINURSO has so far only implemented the ceasefire out of all of their tasks, it can be argued that the UN is part of upholding the order rather than implementing justice. One of the ministers of Polisario levied this criticism and criticized MINURSO for that by expressing that, *"[M]inurso as for many many of us means an instrument to maintain the status quo. They have been there for 27 years. Their mission was to organize a free and fair referendum in 1992 because they came there in 1991. [The] referendum was supposed to take place in February 1992 and we are in 2019 February and they haven't organized the referendum so for us it is an instrument with no value at all"* (Minister of water and Environment, Appendix 7, 163-8).

In summary, the Sahrawis often invoke a pluralist, nationalist form of justice when framing the core problem within this dispute as can be seen by their high focus on Sahrawi national identity and discourse pertaining to the injustice of a lack of a Sahrawi state. This form of justice is also invoked when International law is mentioned as a justification for their perception of the injustice of the status quo. Conversely, the international actors place more emphasis on a lack of cooperation between the warring parties.

7.2. (A)symmetry in the Means to a Solution

This section examines the divergent positions between and within the groups regarding the means to resolving the Western Sahara dispute. Given the Sahrawi frustration with the lack of progress in the negotiations, some of our interview participants consider armed struggle as the only way to proceed due to the perceived obstruction by great power national interest. Other interviewees retain belief in a peaceful resolution, arbitrated by international law, diplomacy and the efforts of liberal institutions and organizations. International organizations restrain from phrasing armed struggle as a solution and focus on diplomacy and international law as the legitimized means to solve this struggle.

Armed Struggle and National Interest

The notion of armed struggle is consistently invoked by Polisario and the Sahrawis, whether discussed, condoned or discarded. Officially, Polisario is committed to a peaceful and diplomatic resolution of the issue, but one Polisario minister repeatedly expressed his understanding for those, namely the Sahrawi youth, that wants to return to armed struggle due to frustration with the current state of affairs (Minister of Youth and Sports, Appendix 5, 171-2, 90-4). The fact that US American politician and diplomat John Bolton noted in 2006 that the Polisario delegates *"have argued that they are nearing the end of their patience"* (Bolton, Appendix 12, 51), indicates that the relative inclination of the Sahrawi youth to reengage militarily with Morocco is and has been used as political leverage to pressure the negotiating parties to prioritize Sahrawi justice. However, it is evident that the Sahrawis living in the camps are adhering to the Polisario party line, whether it is a reaffirmation of their commitments to the peaceful struggle or a call to arms (Nayem, Appendix 6, 307-12; Luali, Appendix B3, 120-2). The Polisario stance on the means to achieve justice is thus somewhat ambiguous, but whichever cause they would take, the Sahrawis would support it. One of the Sahrawis mentions that *"if Polisario said to them* [Sahrawis]*: tomorrow, we are going to armed struggle. I think even in the occupied territories, it will explode"* (Nayem, Appendix 6, 311-3)*.*

The thinly veiled threat of a return to war is, however, representative of a sentiment which is genuinely shared by some of our interview participants (Ozman, Appendix C1, 11; Lehbib Appendix B2; Nayem, Appendix 6). The inclination to restart the armed struggle is rooted in a realist assessment of the situation, where the ability of the United Nations to bring about a solution is impeded by national interest of the great power stakeholders to the dispute (Chaker, Appendix D5, 35-6). In this realist frame, emphasis is on the international order of nation states, and a solution, or simply a change in status quo, would thus require a shake-up in the order. In one interview, the change in leadership in the US was taken into consideration;

Trump, given his somewhat unpredictable foreign policy, could potentially *"do good things for the world, at least for Western Sahara!"* (Nayem, Appendix 6, 305). In this narrative, the close Moroccan ties to France and Spain are also brought to attention (Chaker, Appendix D5, 59-60; Luali, Appendix B3; Lehbib, Appendix B2, 5). The Sahrawis at times remark the perceived hypocrisy of European countries in the conflicting notions of committing to the decolonization clause, but still maintaining ties with the Moroccan monarchy. The Minister of Sports and Youth asserted that *"Morocco, in the view of the European politician is* […] *like a prostitute. You like to spend time with her, but you don't like that people speak about your relationship"* (Appendix 5, 205-6). This profane analogy hints at the current diplomatic strategy of Polisario, namely raising international awareness about the seemingly contradicting policies of the great powers involved, something that according to our expert interviewees could potentially change the picture (Mosgaard, Appendix 8, 270-1; Gretel, Appendix 9, 121-2).

For the proponents of armed struggle, the ongoing bi- and multilateral negotiations, which are mediated and facilitated by the UN, are attributed little value (Chaker, Appendix D5, 39), and the realist conclusion of the argument is that armed struggle might be inevitable (Nayem, Appendix 6, 248; Addala, Appendix B3, 88). This assessment is representative of the idea of a 'just war', which is a legitimate way to ensure the right to self-determination: one Sahrawi remarked that *"I think it* [armed struggle] *is a possible way, a legitimate and justified way to resolve, sure"* (Lehbib, Appendix B2, 28-9).

Diplomacy, International Law and Organizations

As opposed to armed struggle, some of our interview participants from the camps are still pinning their hopes on the execution of justice in the form of an organizationally negotiated solution that would encompass a referendum in accordance with the self-determination clause (Addala, Appendix B5; Luali, Appendix B3; Lihbila, Appendix D2; Tufah, Appendix B1). The importance of respecting international law is similarly expressed by Polisario and ordinary Sahrawis alike (ibid.) These ideas embody a certain belief in international law, diplomacy and negotiated agreements (Tufah, Appendix B1, 24), the notion that justice can be achieved and facilitated by the international order.

Diplomacy

A prevalent sentiment among the Sahrawis is the idea of diplomacy as a mean to get the Moroccans to accept the Sahrawi position (Ozman, Appendix C1, 40), as one interviewee phrased it, to *"convince them, I just want to convince them that we are not the same"*. (Tufah, Appendix B1, 113). The sentiment is emblematic of the Sahrawis' conceptualization of

negotiations and arbitration by international courts, namely that they will eventually have Morocco submitting to Polisario's demands. International law and armed struggle are both means that would facilitate the establishment of a Sahrawi nation. However, diplomacy almost invariably involves a compromise on that ideal, and the failure to compromise corresponds with James Baker's description of the "*winner-take-all mentality*" (UNSC, 2003, para. 30). By these standards, diplomacy might not yield many results.

Organizations and the International Society

For the international organizations, EU and UN alike, preservation of stability and a continued belief in and commitment to transnational agreements and international law is naturally central to their rhetoric. Officially, the EU supports the UN efforts in finding a *"just* [and] *lasting*" solution, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions (EU, Appendix 10, 111). The EU Fishing Agreement with Morocco is emblematic of EU's position on Western Sahara. On the one hand, the European Court of Justice's (ECJ) ruling on the case affirms EU commitment to UN efforts in finding a negotiated solution that allows for self-determination (EU, Appendix 10, 110-2). However, it also declares that EU vessels are allowed to *"sustainably exploit"* fish in the contested waters adjacent to the territory of Western Sahara (ibid., 149; 117-9), something that amounts to unjust 'plunder' of natural resources in the view of Polisario (Minister for Sports and Youth, Appendix 5, 20-2). The court further affirmed that there is *"nothing in the terms of the Fisheries Agreement* […] *which implies that it* [EU] *would recognize the Kingdom of Morocco's sovereignty* […] *over Western Sahara"* (EU, Appendix 10, 164-5). The justification for the ECJ ruling is based on a clause in the agreement, the so-called 'sectoral support' (EU, Appendix 10, 120), which ostensibly guarantees local development for Western Sahara. Regardless, this court ruling epitomizes the EU position, where the liberal order in the form of organizationally mediated trade agreements is paramount. The EU concerns for order, especially economic, is thus not seen as a hindrance to justice. A few of our interviewees from the camps commented on this somewhat equivocal position of the EU (Salamu, Appendix B4, 8; Neyem, Appendix 6, 269-73), further questioning the EU's commitment to a just solution; if the EU officially supports the UN efforts of implementing the self-determination clause, maintaining trade relations with Morocco would prove counterproductive.

Nine of our Sahrawi interviewees (Addala, Appendix B5; Lihbila, Appendix D2; Nayem, Appendix 6; Lehbib, Appendix B2; Mafud, Appendix A1; Meneneya, Appendix D1; Ozman, Appendix C1; Luali, Appendix B3; Tufah, Appendix B1) and the Minister for Water and Environment (Appendix 7) attribute, to a varying degree, the responsibility to find a solution to the international organizations. For instance, it is emphasized that "*if the UN follow*[s] *the laws in the international law, and give*[s] *the people for instance Sahara the right for self-*

determination, [...] *in order to arrange the referendum, just referendum, and equal referendum,* [...] [a] *solution could be possible*" (Lihbila, Appendix D2, 30-2). However, in the Settlement Plan, one can gauge the responsibility the UN is prepared to take, when they suggest that "*the Secretary-General* [...] *will have sole and exclusive responsibility over all matters relating to the referendum, including its organization*" (UN, Appendix 11a, 317-9). That Polisario, the Sahrawis and the EU all ascribe the responsibility to the UN, obscures the fact that the lack of progress is owing to Morocco and Polisario's unwillingness to agree to any of the UN's solution plans. The failure to achieve a lasting and mutually acceptable agreement can hence be attributed to the warring parties' failure to commit to the various solution plans and accept a compromise. Thus, the Sahrawis, Polisario and the international society all agree that the UN should provide a solution in accordance with international law - the discord appears when it comes down to the practicalities of the solution.

In sum, the failure of the organizational establishment to support the rhetoric and deliver on the promise of self-determination has led, according to our research, to disenchantment within parts of the Sahrawi community. The absence of the long-promised resolution leads to disillusionment and erosion of trust in the international establishment, and the possibility of inter-state cooperation is perceived to yield little result when it comes to resolving the struggle. The logical conclusion of this argument is to take executive action to secure justice, as the threat of instability is detrimental to the national interest of the powerful stakeholders involved. Unsurprisingly, the prospect of armed struggle is not favored by the UN and EU, who favor a politically negotiated solution, something which is still officially supported by Polisario and ordinary Sahrawis alike and hence lies within the possibilities of order. Thus, there is divergence in the vested trust in the ability of the international order to facilitate a solution. A negotiated solution, mediated by the international organizations, are presented as a way forward, but is mainly conceived by the Sahrawis as a means to 'persuade' Morocco to submit. Thus, within the camps both armed struggle and diplomacy is entrenched in realist assessments of the issue and justice based on Sahrawi national identity. In the words of the former Head of MINURSO, *"the whole conflict of Western Sahara* [can be conceived] *as a choice between the international rights and realpolitik. And realpolitik is exactly what is going on"* (Mosgaard, Appendix 8, 218-9).

7.3. Justice for Who?

This section analyzes data surrounding differing ideas of a final solution based on diverging notions of justice. In the discourse from the refugee camps, a specific idea of justice has been invoked throughout all interviews. This idea differs from the cosmopolitan view on justice

represented by mainly the UN. While Sahrawis have an idea that justice means that they would attain independence and their right to self-determination that was granted to them 40 years ago by the UN, the UN is willing to compromise and suggested throughout the negotiation process varying solutions that represent different ideas of justice. The EU presents their trading agreement as being just for the whole population which is doubtful due to previous Court rulings in 2016 and 2018 saying that the trade agreements were illegal since Morocco does not have any authority to deal with Western Sahara resources.

Being unaware of their pluralist view on state relations, Sahrawis present their propositions for solutions as being just. However, they do not reflect over that their self-determination for Sahrawis excludes and thus violates self-determination of some Moroccans born and living in the occupied territory. Norms such as human rights and, in particular, the right to self-determination, which is institutionalized by the UN, are conceptualized as securing rights of individuals across national borders. When Sahrawis refer to these rights, they do, however, base these on a nationalistic sentiment of the Sahrawi indigenous identity, which is argued to be very distinctive from the Moroccan. The majority of the interviewees from the camps emphasized their Sahrawi identity as separate from the Moroccan population in the occupied territories (Tufah, Appendix B1; Lehbib, Appendix B2; Nayem, Appendix 6; Lihbila, Appendix D2; Menenya, Appendix D1; Mahfud, Appendix A1). When the UN affirmed the Sahrawis' right to self-determination in 1975, it was referring to the recently decolonized population consisting of Sahrawis. Moroccans settled in the territory were thus not included in the vision of who should determine the future of this territory. These settlers have by now lived there for generations, though, and thus have a right to be included according to global notion of universal justice.

When talking about the connotations of justice, some of the interviewees have pointed out that such matters as human rights are used hypocritically, due to the argument that "*the human rights it's a* [...] *thing that Western world* [...] *use*[s] [...] *they don't respect human rights.*" (Chaker, Appendix D5, 101-2). Furthermore, "[n]*o one in the Western world respect[s] the human rights, only they take it like slogan but in the reality they don't practice that*" (ibid., 105-6), which showcases the frustration that the 'Western World' does not respect human rights. The great powers are argued to purely "*protect interest inside this colonial order*" (ibid., 42-3). This shows the frustration with a lack of resolution of the struggle that grows in the camps as they perceive a high degree of injustice.

Polisario expresses the same one-sided justice in their narrative. This shows that within the camps a consistency exists in having a one-sided idea of justice, which Polisario invokes by saying that "[n]*o Moroccan will be included in the list even if he has been born in the territory and lived there for 45 years*" (Minister of Water and Environment, Appendix 7, 285-6). Even though, it is referring to rights from the charter of the UN, these are not applied to create a universal justice for all global citizens, but merely for a just solution for Sahrawis.

Nationalism aside, Polisario emphasizes the high degree of justice and order their state would create. Polisario declares,

"First of all we will not intervene in internal affairs of any state [...] *we will also offer refuge to whoever is looking for refuge be it political or social or as a result of natural catastrophe in the future. That we will consider is our duty, our responsibility and something we have to do to those who have helped us while we were refugees"* (Minister of Water and Environment, Appendix 7, 335-43).

This might lead to more support from international actors and the global civil society and thus present Polisario as the provider of a better future. The Polisario government, corresponding with the Sahrawis general narrative, expects other states and international organizations to secure the Sahrawis' rights, even though it is against their own national interest regarding trade and border security, by stating "*that is not a reason why not support the international law and legality and support the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination. I mean you cannot say no I don't support your right because Morocco may open the doors and let illegal immigration* [to] *come in*" (Minister of Water and Environment, Appendix 7, 135-9). Asked about the voters in the referendum, one minister responds that "*to decide the future only the originals of the territory will decide the future of the territory on the basis of the 84.000 people established by the* [...] *the United Nations commission*" (ibid., 288-300).

According to Sahrawis within the camps as well as representatives of Polisario, the final solution articulated involves the creation of a Polisario controlled Sahrawi state. This is articulated as comprising of historically identified ethnic Sahrawis and is argued from a justice standpoint invoking justice for Sahrawis explicitly. This notion of justice shared by Polisario and the camps excludes the self-determination and rights of Moroccans living in the territory currently and separates the Sahrawi interpretation of a final solution from other arguments based on cosmopolitan justice.

Shifts in Justice by the UN

The UN proposed three different solutions over time which arouse different notions of justice. Firstly, the Settlement Plan presented an approach mirroring the pluralist justice for Sahrawis since it proposes a referendum with Sahrawi as voters exclusively. Further, the UN intends to emphasize the high degree of universal justice in their solution by expressing *"that the following proposals represent a compromise and a practical and reasonable basis* [...] *taking the two parties' interests into account."* (UN, Appendix 11a, 49-52). This matches with the perception of a just solution of the Sahrawi population. However, the Moroccan population settled in the occupied territory was not taken into account. This one-sided justice was consequently rejected by Morocco as it does not represent a compromise.

The second proposition, the framework Agreement, focuses on order and solving the struggles by upkeeping the existing order under Moroccan authority. In this instance, justice was introduced in a cosmopolitan manner as the whole population of the territories would be allowed to vote on the future of the territory. While having shifted to universal morality, this plan still very much focuses on establishing order based on the prevailing status quo and is thus fairly pragmatic since it intends to settle the struggle.

Lastly, the Baker Plan II, The Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of Western Sahara, introduces a cosmopolitan morality that allows the whole population, i.e. Sahrawis and Moroccans living in the occupied territory, to exercise their right for self-determination. In this instance, the UN assumes more authority as, once the two parties agreed to the plan, the UN *"whose decision shall be final and without appeal"* (UN, appendix 11c, 37-8) would be authorized to implement the plan. This last proposition for a solution represents a clear position of the UN as a global governance actor being concerned with a universal standard of justice. Mismatching ideas of justice expressed by Sahrawis and Moroccans lead to barriers in the diplomatic process.

Other international actors invoke different ideas of justice. The EU represents their trading agreement as just for the Sahrawi population, even though the agreement has been criticized several times and rulings of the European Court of Justice had been opposing the agreement in the past (EU, Appendix 10, 20-1). The EU is interested in pursuing the economic interest of its member states and European companies which confirms the narrative articulated by several Sahrawis, such as Nayem expressing, *"the European Union* [...] [y]*ou know, all about the court decision but you know also about the European Parliaments vote for this agreement. So this is frustrating."* (Nayem, Appendix 6, 249-52).

Gretel as a member of the global civil society takes a stand on the Sahrawi perspective, in which she supports the argument that an armed struggle would most likely draw attention to the situation of the Sahrawis due to the fact that "*every time you have a war, every time there was something, there was some kind of attention growing, between Morocco and Polisario*" (Gretel, Appendix 9, 121-2). She, like the Sahrawis showcases that such a solution is justified through nationalistic ideals that is built up by this indigenousness attached to Western Sahara; "*Sahrawi nationalism, they are a nation, they are a society, a community that they are united, so it's more difficult to divide them.*" (ibid., 203-4).

To sum up, Sahrawis, including representatives of Polisario, as well as the NGO expert interviewed, all articulate a final solution based on notions of Sahrawi justice often excluding justice for Moroccans in the territory. The UN can be placed within all three of these depending on the time period and past negotiation process. It places itself, however, currently within cosmopolitan justice proposing a solution including Moroccans within Western Sahara as having the right to take part in the referendum for the self-determination of the people of the territory.

7.4. Discussion of Findings

Derived from the analysis, Polisario and the people in the camps seem to exclusively accept a solution in which full authority over the area of Western Sahara is attained. On the other side of the negotiation table, Moroccan national interests are conflicting with the requirements of the Sahrawis. Such dynamics contribute to the frustrations that are experienced throughout some of the interviews which for some Sahrawis establishes a justification for an armed struggle. Nationalism and national interest constitute a clear obstacle to negotiations and it is left for someone else to figure out a compromise. However, some, both international actors and Sahrawis have shown faith in diplomacy, which is still the official political status on the issue, even though diplomacy has not shown much success in the past The two parties are in unequal positions where Morocco is in a position to decide between maintaining the current situation which benefits their national economic interest or to engage under the UN in negotiations and go for a compromise. There has not been any remarkable progress since the establishment of the ceasefire.

While Sahrawis, similarly to suppressed ethnicities in other struggles, expressed an expectation for the UN to solve their struggle. The UN is expected to take the lead on managing

intra-state issues. Polisario and Morocco are not willing to fully submit authority to the UN to enact on this, though. This leaves the UN in a difficult situation where it cannot satisfy the two parties' interests at the same time and will, no matter what, be accused for either being unjust or violating state sovereignty. In relation to these dynamics, one might ask into the UN's abilities to overcome issues like this. This paradox can be identified within the fact that the UN has provided proposals for possible solutions. The responsibility to resolve an inter-state dispute without holding the authority to overstep sovereignty, i.e. change the current state of order, creates a dilemma. Furthermore, the limited capacities in form of financial resources for missions, and the current constellation of the Security Council and its veto rights, challenges the cosmopolitan character of the UN. By becoming aware of obstacles to a cosmopolitan world society we can assess the engagement of the UN as a candidate to take upon the tasks of a global governance.

Conclusion of Analysis

One of the major findings in this analysis was the notion of nationalism found within the data from the camps. The Sahrawis justify their nationalistic right to this territory with historical claims, international law and identity. This Sahrawi notion of justice is prevalent throughout most interpretations on the dispute, the just solution to the struggle and the mean to get this articulated by Sahrawis. The (a)symmetry between the international society and the camps are apparent within the concepts of order and justice, as international actors are more focused on the continuations of negotiations in keeping the order. This finding represents the biggest discrepancy between the international organizations and the Sahrawis. Finally, the question of 'justice for who' illustrates the varying interpretations of an ideal final outcome to the dispute. While there is coherence within Polisario and the Sahrawis of a final Sahrawi state showcasing a narrative of justice for Sahrawis, the international society and in particular the UN, advocates for a solution with a more cosmopolitan conceptualization of justice for all. This includes the option for self-determination for all the inhabitants of the Western Sahara territory rather than the Sahrawis exclusively.

8. Perspectives

This chapter takes a step beyond the research process and critically evaluates building blocks making up the final outcome. This section begins by assessing the use of the research model continuing into critique of various aspects of the research. The chapter finishes by reflecting the use of an alternative research approach in relation to the study's philosophy.

8.1. Assessment of Research

It is worth assessing the validity of the paper in a post-analytic perspective in order to make reflective assessments regarding our philosophical approach and limitations that occurred during the implementation of the study. As the study applies an interpretivist approach to the research, the data consists of interpretations by both private and official actors involved in the struggle. This data is fruitful for understanding the foundation and the frames from where the Sahrawis are working from and within. Based on theoretical concepts of the English School, this paper facilitates an understanding of the varying interpretations of an inter- and intra-state dispute similar to this one. While the findings are not generalizable to a different context and depend on the local and temporal characteristics, they might reveal something about similar struggles. The interpretations change over time and are influenced by discourses of local, national and international actors. These interpretations, and our theoretical analysis of them, do not forecast any development of the struggle, but rather reveal an understanding of the perspectives of Polisario, the Sahrawi population in the refugee camps and some international actors. It gives an understanding of the past process of the struggle and tells something about the contemporary situation. The findings support an understanding of the difficulties of the negotiation rounds between the UN, Polisario, Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania and thus offer an understanding to the progress, or more accurately, the lack of progress. Our model enlightens the reader about obstacles to the current negotiations led by the UN. Having based the findings on these interpretations, we were thus able to make an in-depth picture of different interpretations of what the core problem constitutes and what a solution could entail. This contributes to an understanding of the obstacles in the negotiation process. To start with, Hermeneutics values validity of interpretations of reality higher the more coherent individuals interpret reality.

In hindsight, there are multiple aspects of this research that could have been conducted with more validity in accordance with the philosophy of Hermeneutics. In an effort to increase the validity of the findings, the research team, if unhindered by time constraints, could have conducted QCA of the documents and interview transcriptions together, i.e. where five people

categorize the data in a group, rather than interpreting the data in duos twos. With a group consensus in where each data points belongs within the categories within the categories, validity in interpretation of the data would have increased. The research team noticed, on several occasions, that categorizations of data vary based on the pair of researchers interpreting and analyzing. Additionally, the categories used during analysis were not always fully representative of the interviewee and could have been developed further to better represent categorization of discourse within the English School. This is suspected to contribute to the occasional ambiguity of the categories and confusion of how to interpret an interview or document during analysis.

Due to time constraints and change in focus, this research was not able to analyze the alternative solutions laid out by James Baker mentioned in the history chapter. These alternative solutions illustrated the opinion of Baker as well as the Secretary-General in eliminating the options of choice for Morocco and Polisario suggesting that the UN implement solutions by force within requiring the approval of either party. Though these suggestions were rejected by the Security Council, the fact that they were even proposed illustrates the power of the UN, and the ability to implement a solution without consent by affected parties. Taking this a step further, research could be conducted analyzing the power of the UN in this and similar disputes.

Furthermore, more data on the EU could have revealed change in policy towards the region. EU is, due to spatial closeness to the region and thus shared interest regarding security and trade, an influential partner to the Maghreb. The EU often plays a role when it comes to the spreading of human rights and their western notion of just values. By including more perspectives from within the Union might allow to conclude any policy development for the future. Within this study, only data from the trade and law departments has been analyzed and thus the inclusion of more committees within the EU would give a better insight in the different prioritizations of justice and order.

8.2. An Alternative Approach

A Hermeneutic approach can be criticized for not offering emancipatory tools to this study. Critical realism, for instance, would have intended to give a guidance on how to overcome the struggle. The struggle can be argued to represent a colonial power struggle; there is a group of people whose culture is treated as superior, the Moroccans, and these people benefit economically from the resources of a territory that is not their own. Since the Sahrawis are argued to have the legitimized right to the land according to the ICJ, Morocco's occupation is

an act of colonialism. The superiority of Moroccan culture can be argued to have led to the intense feeling of nationality. Further, the lack of a nation-state created the national identity of Sahrawis in the first place since these used to be divided into tribes before Spanish colonization. Due to the struggles and the necessity to justify their existence, both during colonial times under the Spanish flag as well as under the current occupation, Polisario has been part in creating an extinctive national identity of the Sahrawis with isolation in the refugee camps.

Critical realism, being interested in the underlying structures, would research the strong feeling of nationalism by investigating the reasons for this sentiment among Sahrawis. It could be argued that oppression, isolation in the refugee camps and colonialism, among other things, are the mechanisms that lead to nationalism. Taking then nationalism as the obstacles to continuation of negotiations from both parties, this research could instead have investigated the underlying structures and mechanisms of this obstacle attempting to emancipate the Sahrawis and Moroccans, thereby empowering the parties to find a solution.

This would not influence the choice of method, as critical realists also work reductively, collecting data from the surface level, which they would then dig deeper into in order to reveal the structures behind the data. The selection of theory, and thereby choice of categories in the QCA, would have been influenced by critical realism since identity creation would have been the object of investigation. However, this approach would not have allowed us to investigate the perspectives of the struggle and solutions of international actors.

9. Conclusion

The central aspect concerning the differences in interpretations of the Western Sahara dispute, according to this study, diverge mainly due to conflicting interests, respectively a Sahrawi nationalistic sentiment and Moroccan economic interest in the territories. This is illustrated when assessing disparities in relation to formulation of the core problem, the means to a solution and the formulation of a preferred final solution depending on the respective party. This research, by laying out a foundation for understanding the main obstacles to a solution to the question of Western Sahara, presents an opportunity for all parties involved to obtain a better understanding of the reasons persistent obstacles have occurred during negotiation and provides an explanation to the occurrence of challenges diplomacy. Furthermore, by outlining the ways in which interpretations differ within this dispute, according to the English School, this research provides a nuanced understanding to the obstacles providing a foundation on which further investigation could be conducted.

9.1. Further Research

As one of our main findings is the constructed sense of nationalism, it leads us to conceive the struggle for independence as a so-called 'ethnic conflict'. The Sahrawis are explicitly distinguishing themselves from Moroccans, as they have different cultural and social practices. If we were to take this research further, one perspective could be to compare it to other ethnic conflicts, such as the IRA fighting for a united Irish Republic or the ETA fighting for an independent Basque country in Spain. Though the Irish case seems more like a religious conflict, people did not join the IRA because they were Catholics, but rather because they sensed a feeling of injustice about who governed the territory, which makes the case very similar to the Western Saharan. Just like the IRA, the Sahrawis emphasize that they do not have an issue with Moroccans, rather, it is a mobilization against the mistreatment of their people. A lot could, hence, be learned by comparing the two cases. As both cases are an instance in which a minority is suppressed by another group and thus led to armed struggle, it could be interesting to research what the differences are between the two cases, resulting in the Sahrawi case being peaceful at the moment. What are the risks of it turning into a violent struggle? Though small groups of both republican and loyalist paramilitary groups are still active in Ireland, the conflict has been politically resolved. Can the experiences from the IRA give an indication for how a possible solution can be found for Western Sahara as well? Are there different underlying structures that led to violence in one conflict but not the other?

Another interesting point for further research could be to do an identical study, but include interview members of the Moroccan population, as well as its political elite. It would be interesting to see whether there is consistency within Morocco, if the people for support of the occupation of Western Sahara and perception of it being a natural part of Morocco. It might reveal that there is, as some of our interviewees claim, support for the Sahrawi cause. Comparing these results to the results of this research could also show whether there is inconsistency in the problem framing as well as the solution framing between the two groups, and whether it would be possible to find areas on which they would be willing to compromise. Lastly, it could provide us with the Moroccan view on the international society, as Morocco is benefitting from the current order and thus does not have a big incentive to change it. Does this affect their view on what the role of the international society should be? And does it correlate with that of the international society?

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