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Morocco:
The Succession Issue

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An Intelligence Assessment

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August 1982

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Morocco: The Succession Issue

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An Intelligence Assessment

This assessment was prepared by [Redacted]
of the Office of Near East-South Asia Analysis.
Comments and queries are welcome and may be
addressed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, NESAs, on

[Redacted]

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This paper has been coordinated with [Redacted]
[Redacted] the National Intelligence
Council. [Redacted]

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**Morocco:
The Succession Issue**

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Key Judgments

King Hassan II almost certainly will maintain firm control of Morocco's political system over the next few years. A normal succession would be followed if Hassan died suddenly from illness or assassination. 25X1

Hassan, a 52-year-old traditional monarch, has designated his 19-year-old son, Crown Prince Sidi Mohamed, as his successor to ensure the continuation of the dynasty. A 13-man Regency Council would act in an advisory capacity until he turns 20 in August 1983. 25X1

We believe that Sidi Mohamed would follow his father's moderate, pro-Western stance in the early years of his reign. At least initially, loyalists of Hassan's palace clique are likely to dominate Sidi Mohamed's group of advisers. Their subsequent jockeying for power, however, could weaken Sidi Mohamed's control of the instruments of power. 25X1

A military coup seems a less likely scenario for succession, given the apparent loyalty of the officer corps. A failure by a successor to project strong leadership and at least the appearance of dealing with existing economic and social problems, however, could encourage the military to assume a political role or even to seize power. 25X1

We have only limited information about military attitudes, particularly among junior and middle ranking officers. We are unable to measure accurately whether discontent exists among junior military officers or how serious it has become among younger civilian members of the legal opposition, but there does not appear to be a well-organized military or civilian opposition capable of moving against the King at this time. 25X1


Deep-rooted economic and political problems as well as the continuing war in the Western Sahara and the government's limited ability to satisfy popular expectations will pose continuing challenges for Hassan and the stability of Morocco in the next few years. It is impossible to predict how skillfully Hassan or his successor will manage these problems—some causes of which are beyond his control. 25X1


*Information available as of 2 August 1982
has been used in the preparation of this report.*


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In the event of massive and sustained popular unrest—a possibility in the years ahead if economic problems worsen—the armed forces probably would intervene. We believe that the military would eventually restore civilian rule, probably with a weaker constitutional monarchy. Such a government probably would continue close ties with the United States but would be less willing to be closely linked with US interests in the region.  25X1

Although the possibility is unlikely, a leftist regime could emerge from a military coup staged by junior officers. While such a regime would probably increase ties with the Soviet Union, it would have a socialist rather than Communist orientation. It almost certainly would cancel any transit access agreements with the United States.  25X1

A fundamentalist revolutionary regime is the least likely government to come to power after Hassan dies. Although the extremist religious groups would challenge the legitimacy of Sidi Mohamed, they lack a strong charismatic leader and are not sufficiently well organized to make a successful bid for power.  25X1

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**Morocco:
The Succession Issue** 

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Fifty-two-year-old King Hassan II is very much a traditional monarch who views himself as the protector of his nation and his dynasty, the Alaouites. The concept of rule by divine right pervades Moroccan society and is often used to buttress his legitimacy. Hassan has had provisions written into the constitution to protect the monarchy and ensure a smooth transfer of power in the event of his death or abdication. His designated successor is his eldest son, 19-year-old Crown Prince Sidi Mohamed. 


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Formal Succession Arrangements



The Moroccan constitution specifies that the crown should pass to the King's oldest son unless the King designates another son as his successor. Constitutional revisions in 1980 lowered the age of majority from 18 to 16, making Sidi Mohamed immediately eligible to ascend the throne. If the heir designate is under the age of 16, the constitution authorizes a Regency Council to exercise the power of the throne; if the heir is between the ages of 16 and 20, the council acts as an advisory body. 

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Sidi Mohamed

Sidi Mohamed has been rigorously groomed since childhood to be the heir to the Moroccan throne, according to US Embassy reporting. He frequently appears in public with his father and sometimes performs ceremonial functions by himself. During the past two years, Sidi Mohamed has been eased slowly into more important official functions; the Crown Prince attended the Fez and OAU summits in 1981 and has been sent occasionally as special envoy to deliver personal messages from his father. 


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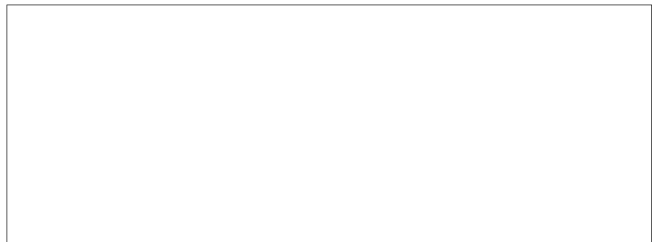
Sidi Mohamed has been educated at the palace school, which provides a careful mix of royal children and selected commoners from proper families. The school appears to revolve primarily around the education of the Crown Prince, as a new grade level is added when Sidi Mohamed is promoted. According to US Embassy , the pupils work hard and are in class almost all day. 

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Figure 1. King Hassan II  25X1



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The Alaouite Dynasty

The Alaouite dynasty, the oldest reigning monarchy in the Arab world, came to power in 1666. It is called cherifien or noble and gains further legitimacy because it can trace its lineage from the Prophet Muhammad. Until recent times, challenges to the sultan came mostly from members of the ruling family. To diminish this threat, the sultan would try to position one of his sons close to levers of power and place him in command of a large number of troops, in part to build a loyal power base as well as to demonstrate that his baraka (divine right) had descended to the designated heir. Mohamed V, Hassan's father and first King of independent Morocco, introduced primogeniture, but in keeping with tradition he charged Hassan with organizing Morocco's postindependence military forces in 1956.

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Little is known about the Crown Prince's personality or his political attitudes.

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Regency Council

The Regency Council is composed of three ex officio members and 10 personal appointees of the King. A 1980 constitutional amendment stipulates that the council's president is no longer the King's nearest and oldest kinsman but the First Chairman of the Supreme Court.

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The council would act as a consultative body until Sidi Mohamed reaches the age of 20 in August 1983; however, the council is prohibited from amending the constitution. The 1980 revisions also changed the composition of the council. The subsequent naming of

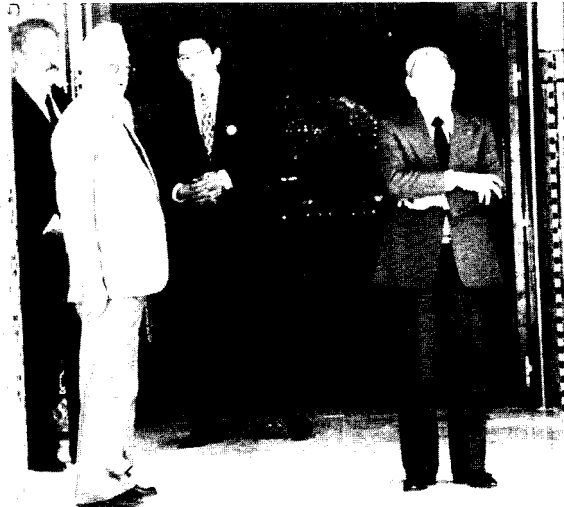


Figure 2. At Fez summit in November 1981; left to right, General Dlimi, General Hafid, Crown Prince Sidi Mohamed, and King Hassan

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the Regency Council members a year later formalized the succession arrangements and was intended to allay public concern regarding the transition. Hassan probably believed a broadly representative council including key interest groups would preserve popular support for the monarchy if the council ever exercised any power.

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Loyal service to the Alaouite throne is the shared hallmark of the council members. Most have been close confidants of Hassan for at least 20 years, and two are distant relatives. In our view, Gen. Ahmed Dlimi, Hassan's senior military and intelligence adviser, is the only member likely to be a strong, independent political figure. We believe that Hassan may hope that real power and control during a transition period would remain with Dlimi and his closest political adviser, Ahmed Reda Guedira, with the others acting as a rubberstamp to show broad support for the new monarch.

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Other Palace Interest Groups

Under the legal succession arrangements, Interior Minister Driss Basri probably would be the only cabinet member who might have strong influence with

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Regency Council

Ex Officio Members

- *First Chairman of the Supreme Court, Brahim Keddara*
- *President of the National Assembly, Dey Ould Sidi Baba*
- *Chairman of the Religious Regional Council of Rabat, Sheikh Mekki Ali Naciri*

King's Appointees

- *Minister of Royal Household, Protocol, and Decorations, Gen. Moulay Abdelhafid Alaoui*
- *The three Royal Counselors—Ahmed Reda Guedira, Mohamed Aouad, and Ahmed Bensouda*
- *His aide-de-camp and senior military adviser, Gen. Ahmed Dlimi*
- *Secretary general of the League of Arab Ulema, Abdullah Guennoun*
- *Publisher of the religious journal Ar-Risala and Istiqlal Party member, Boubker Kadiri*
- *Minister of State for Tourism and political director of Le Matin du Sahara and Maroc Soir, Moulay Ahmed Alaoui*
- *Minister of State for Posts, Telegraphs, and Telephones and secretary general of the Popular Movement Party Mahjoubi Aherdan*

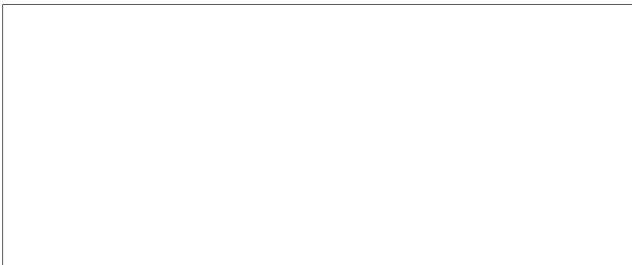


Figure 3. Ahmed Reda Guedira, senior adviser to King Hassan [redacted]

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confrontation between Basri and Dlimi in a post-Hassan Morocco, we judge that Basri lacks a strong power base of his own and probably would serve any successor equally well. [redacted]

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Hassan's youngest son, 12-year-old Prince Moulay Rachid, [redacted]

[redacted] Following Alaouite tradition, it is unlikely that Hassan would change his mind and name Moulay Rachid to be his successor. There is always a possibility that Moulay Rachid as an adult could attempt to usurp the throne, particularly if Sidi Mohamed proved to be incompetent or Moulay Rachid became jealous of his brother's power. [redacted]

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Sidi Mohamed or challenge the opinions of the Regency Council. Embassy reporting indicates that Basri is a tough and efficient functionary who advocates prompt, harsh suppression of demonstrations and disturbances. Loyal to the King, Basri has been left in charge of the country on several occasions when both Hassan and Dlimi have been out of the country.

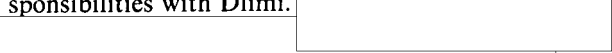
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Basri shares domestic security and intelligence responsibilities with Dlimi. [redacted]

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[redacted] Although there is a good chance for a behind-the-scenes

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Figure 4. Minister of Interior Driss Basri [redacted]

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Potential Political Challenges

None of Morocco's established political parties, labor unions, student groups, or fringe opposition groups are sufficiently well organized in our view to challenge the present succession arrangements.¹ Most of these groups have been manipulated, neutralized, or repressed by Hassan. [redacted]

[redacted] the principal political parties, especially the National Assembly of Independents, periodically are directed by the King to assume the role of loyal opposition on nonsensitive issues, such as criticizing bureaucratic inefficiency, but to avoid criticism of Moroccan policies and institutions. In our view, these parties prefer to remain loyalists. Consequently, the independence and integrity of these groups as effective forces of political opposition have been compromised by their participation in the system. With the partial exception of the left, we believe the political parties would rubberstamp the policies of Sidi Mohamed and the Regency Council or any successor regime supported by the military. [redacted]

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The Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), the country's only independent opposition party and the

[redacted]

smallest of the major parties, represents the interests of the urban lower classes, those most affected by economic hardship. If a normal succession is carried out, the USFP probably would attempt unsuccessfully to press the monarchy for social change. The party would have difficulty, however, in becoming an influential voice in a post-Hassan Morocco because, [redacted] its leadership has been virtually emasculated and its activities restricted. [redacted]

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The local Communist party has little popular support and is tolerated only as a symbol of Moroccan liberalization. It supports the government on most controversial regional issues, being careful not to get too far out of line. In our view, it would not be a threat to Sidi Mohamed's regime. [redacted]

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The religious community is potentially a strong catalyst for generating opposition to succession arrangements. The King is the recognized head of the country's Islamic establishment. Hassan is conscious of his religious authority, which serves as a major factor in legitimizing his rule in the minds of many conservative Moroccans. [redacted]

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[redacted] Muslim fundamentalists recently have begun criticizing Hassan's interpretation of the Koran and have increased appeals to rally popular support against the monarchy. [redacted]

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Hassan has an established record of successfully using his title of "Commander of the Faithful" to offset religious criticism from religious groups. Whether his son will be as adept at co-opting the religious community is not known. If a coalition of Muslim fundamentalists and the orthodox religious community publicly challenged Sidi Mohamed's authority as Commander of the Faithful, we believe this could seriously undermine his legitimacy. The formation of such a coalition would be hard to control since Islam pervades Moroccan society, and Islamic activism has a special appeal in Morocco. [redacted]

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Figure 5. Hassan's children from left to right, Princess Lalla Myriem, Crown Prince Sidi Mohamed, Prince Moulay Rachid, Princess Asmaa, and Princess Hasnaa [redacted]



The Military's Role

Hassan faced serious challenges to his regime in two brief military-led coup attempts in the early 1970s. The King reacted by restricting the movements and authority of the military establishment and centralizing command and control in the palace. Through postcoup purges and attrition, potential contenders for

power disappeared from the military. In their place emerged a military establishment that is conservative and seemingly loyal to the King. It is not a homogeneous group, however, and in our view it contains diverse groups split along social, economic, generational, and regional lines. [redacted]

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The military, especially the senior officer corps, has an important stake in preserving the status quo. The senior officer corps is a fairly homogeneous group: all are about the same age—in their late forties and early fifties—and enjoy a special camaraderie since many were commissioned in 1957, the first group of officers to graduate from military academies after Morocco's independence from France in 1956. The senior officers, by royal design, lack power and autonomy in command and control. US officials have reported that these officers are loyal to a system that has comfortably rewarded their service. Embassy officials have speculated, however, that their loyalty could shift in order to preserve their privileged status. [redacted]

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Dlimi, the only Regency Council member with direct authority over the Moroccan military and security apparatus, probably would attempt to consolidate his authority over the armed forces and emerge from the council as the de facto power behind the throne. US observers have reported that Dlimi is loyal and does not aspire to replace the monarchy as the legitimate political institution of Morocco. He has suggested on several occasions that he probably would retire if Hassan were no longer King. He would not, however, hesitate to neutralize potential rivals or crack down harshly on civil disturbances or militant opposition groups that might threaten the survival of the monarchy. [redacted]

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Junior officers, about whom little is known, appear loyal to the monarchy despite their chronic complaints about the competence of senior military leaders, a politicized promotion system that rewards loyalty rather than competence, and the protracted war in the Western Sahara. In general, the younger officers are better educated and have more advanced technical skills. In our view some of the junior officers and enlisted men are sympathetic to the economic and political grievances voiced by their civilian counterparts. [redacted]

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If Sidi Mohamed failed to consolidate his power in the early years of his reign—a possibility—senior military officers and royal advisers could become destabilizing, contending forces that would undermine the political process and might eventually lead to coup and countercoup activity. The survival of the monarchy as an institution would depend on conditions prevailing at the time, and there is insufficient evidence to predict the outcome with confidence. [redacted]

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Possible Succession Scenarios

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Voluntary Abdication. King Hassan, in our view, is not likely to step down in favor of the Crown Prince unless he is extremely ill and can no longer perform his duties as King. Hassan appears to be motivated by a strong sense of duty and a desire to carry on; when faced with pressure to abdicate, these factors might make him hold on to the reins of power longer than advisable. Hassan, at the moment, is in good health. [redacted]

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The military probably would remain loyal to the monarchy and safeguard legal succession arrangements. We believe the senior officer corps would view itself as the guardian of the monarchy during the early years of Sidi Mohamed's reign, making sure that palace feuds and power plays did not disrupt the daily running of the country. The senior officers might also remind competing factions around Sidi Mohamed that if political infighting began to threaten the country's political and economic framework, they would not hesitate to use force to order or even install a military government if political chaos developed. [redacted]

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Sudden Death or Illness. If Hassan were removed suddenly by assassination or death by natural causes in the next few years, the senior palace advisers, led initially by Gen. Moulay Abdelhafid and the three royal counselors, almost certainly would quickly endorse Sidi Mohamed as King. This group might begin jockeying for power, however, and relegate Sidi Mohamed, [redacted]

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[redacted] to figurehead status. [redacted]

A Palace Coup. The senior officer corps is the faction best placed to stage a successful coup. Many of these senior officers are away from the palace on a daily basis, however, and would require the support of or have to eliminate those officers who actually control the palace security forces—the commanders of the royal guard, paratrooper brigade, and gendarmerie. We believe that a coup plot organized by junior [redacted]

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officers is a more likely possibility, but these officers would need, in our assessment, a large group of conspirators and would have great difficulty evading detection by Dlimi's reasonably efficient security apparatus. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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Military loyalty could be undercut by major military setbacks in the Western Sahara or by widespread civil disturbances resulting from economic hardships. Should Morocco's social fabric deteriorate significantly, senior officers might request that the King abdicate for the good of the country in an effort to preempt a revolutionary situation. [redacted]

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The establishment of a temporary military junta to rule in place of a new monarch could result, especially if widespread public unrest erupted and a public consensus called for the King's removal. An increase in food or housing costs or an issue energizing Morocco's large student population could trigger popular unrest but is unlikely to lead to demands for abdication. On the other hand, tightly enforced austerity measures, a series of corruption scandals directly involving the King, or several major defeats in the Western Sahara are the kinds of events that could induce both civilian and military calls for Hassan's abdication. [redacted]

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In the past Hassan needed only to appear to be making progress toward resolving some of Morocco's social and economic problems to survive. Press reporting suggests that Moroccans are becoming more strident in blaming Hassan directly for the country's ills; in our view, their frustrations will inevitably grow unless tangible results begin to emerge from government policies aimed at resolving unemployment, inflation, or the Western Sahara conflict. Memories of the harsh crackdowns in Casablanca in June 1981, however, still deter would-be agitators. [redacted]

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Should the armed forces seize power, they would most likely restore civilian rule, probably in the form of a constitutional monarchy with greater limitations on

the monarch's personal authority and a greater institutional role for the armed forces. A number of US and local observers have noted over the years complaints within the military and civilian establishment that the palace has too much control over even minor decisions, such as promotions of all military officers and daily management of the bureaucracy. [redacted]

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Morocco's political parties probably would oppose a military coup, but they are incapable of taking power on their own in the next several years. The civilian forces, if sufficiently well organized, could nonetheless try to foster instability in the hope of forcing the military to restore civilian rule. If faced with widespread popular unrest, however, the military in our view would most likely crack down on the political factions rather than agree to relinquish power. [redacted]

Social Upheaval. According to US Embassy [redacted] the overwhelming majority of Moroccans support the monarchy on the surface. Most Moroccans still respect the institution, and many seem to give credence to Hassan's claim to a divine right to rule. [redacted]

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Although many Moroccans in the street blame the King for the country's ills, the level of discontent, according to US Embassy reporting, has not been effectively organized to challenge the regime. Morocco's economic difficulties, however, have already generated serious spontaneous outbreaks of civil disorder followed by government repression. Local officials reported that hundreds of Moroccans were killed or injured and more than 1,000 demonstrators arrested in economic-related riots in Casablanca in June 1981. [redacted]

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It is impossible to predict how severe the pressures must become before widespread instability develops, but it is clear, according to US Embassy officials, that many Moroccans believe that their living standards are declining. We believe that spontaneous civil disturbances spawned by economic hardships probably will increase over the next few years. If the disturbances were recurring and widespread, they could seriously undermine the loyalty of the junior officers and enlisted men. [redacted]

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Abolition of the monarchy would most likely come about as a result of massive civil unrest. A prolonged succession crisis during which the senior military officers and a new monarch jockeyed for power could encourage leftists or fundamentalists to make a bid for power. [redacted]

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A leftist regime probably could emerge successfully only through a military coup initiated by junior officers. The policies of such a regime are difficult to predict [redacted]

[redacted] We speculate, however, that while such a regime probably would improve Morocco's relations with the Soviet Union, it would insist on close adherence to a nonaligned foreign policy. Such a regime would probably cancel any transit access agreements with the United States and adopt a socialist orientation in its domestic economic and social policies. [redacted]

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The fundamentalists, encouraged by events in Iran and other Muslim countries, might contribute to social disturbances, but in our view they lack the charismatic leader and the capability to foment a Khomeini-style revolution. [redacted]

Policies of a Moderate Post-Hassan Regime

A regime headed either by Sidi Mohamed or a conservative military junta initially would be preoccupied with consolidating its hold on power. It would respond slowly to major foreign policy initiatives and focus on ameliorating domestic pressures. We expect that the security forces and, if necessary, the military would follow the precedents set by Hassan and effectively handle civilian disturbances. During this transition period, there would be relatively little change in Morocco's moderate, pro-Western orientation. [redacted]

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A successor regime will probably encounter the same social and economic problems that have beset Hassan. Economic issues would probably be left to the already semiautonomous and quasi-governmental institutions like the Ministry of Finance and the Cherifien Office

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of Phosphates. We believe that neither Sidi Mohamed nor a military regime would feel sufficiently qualified to manage directly a general economic reform. It is more likely that such an endeavor would be assigned to a highly respected and competent technocrat. [redacted]

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Western Sahara. Morocco's foreign relations toward particular countries in our view would continue to be governed, to a large extent, by how those relations could advance Morocco's claim to the Western Sahara. It is likely that a moderate successor regime would take a more aggressive posture in the Western Sahara—a position that some military officers, including Dlimi, have already urged on the King. Resolution of the Western Sahara conflict does not appear likely unless all the parties to the dispute become more willing to compromise. Should this conflict become a contentious public issue, the successor regime would probably seek increased US military support. [redacted]

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Algeria. Morocco's strained relations with Algeria, its principal regional rival, are not likely to improve dramatically even if the Western Sahara conflict is resolved. Neither Rabat nor Algiers can afford politically to appear to yield to the other's demands regarding the Polisario—a posture that only encourages bad relations. Attempts by both Morocco and Algeria to dominate regional politics will continue to impede smooth relations. [redacted]

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Libya. Although Morocco and Libya restored relations last year, the Moroccans do not look favorably on Oadhafi's regime, which also backs the Polisario.

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Inter-Arab Relations. In regard to Morocco's position in the Arab world, Morocco joined the Arab consensus in breaking relations with Egypt and denouncing US Middle East peace initiatives. Morocco, however, most likely would continue its special intermediary

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role between the Arabs and Israel. Although US Embassy reporting suggests that Morocco may be one of the first moderate Arab states to welcome Egypt back to the Arab fold, it will not do so without assurances from Saudi Arabia and other like-minded Arab states that it will not stand alone for long. Rabat is financially dependent on Saudi Arabia to sustain its war effort in the Western Sahara. A new regime probably would not jeopardize this crucial assistance by drifting closer to the more radical Arab camp. []

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The Soviet Presence. A moderate successor regime would not significantly change its outlook toward the Soviet Union. Rabat and Moscow have political differences but maintain cordial relations in part because of mutually beneficial commercial relations. []

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[] Rabat distrusts Soviet intentions and machinations in the region and is convinced that Moscow is supporting the Polisario. The most important Moroccan-Soviet commercial ties appear to be in the phosphate and oil industries, where the Moroccans have been trying to develop their phosphate and oil shale reserves. []

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Western Europe. Morocco's relations with Western Europe have focused primarily on France, Spain, and the European Community. Despite cool relations because of Paris's rapprochement with Algiers, France will remain Morocco's primary commercial and military partner for the next several years. A moderate regime probably would seek to balance Morocco's relations between the United States and France, taking care not to lose either as a supporter. A successor regime would be less likely to endorse Hassan's interest in establishing a strategic alliance with Spain. Press reports indicate that problems between Spain and Morocco have arisen on occasion as a result of misunderstandings over the use of bases by the United States in either country and the ultimate disposition of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. []

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Implications for the United States

Since late 1981 Washington and Rabat have been strengthening their military, political, and economic ties, including a transit access agreement to support military operations in Southwest Asia. The United

States has also pledged to increase its FMS and PL-480 assistance at least through 1984. The King, however, remains sensitive to allegations by Morocco's political parties that Morocco might become an American pawn. [] 25X1

Closer ties with the United States have been initially well received in Morocco, but they may eventually become the focus of strong opposition rhetoric. The transit facilities agreement could strain US-Moroccan relations over time and, if perceived as intended to support Israel, could be grounds for Rabat to cool relations with Washington. According to US Embassy [] well-educated Moroccans as well as the 25X1 fundamentalists are sensitive to any infringement on their country's sovereignty or too much Western influence. [] 25X1

A moderate post-Hassan leadership probably would continue to improve commercial as well as military relations with the United States as long as it perceives an American interest in tacitly supporting its efforts in the Western Sahara and recognizing its regional role. A new regime probably would be less willing to be closely identified with US objectives in the region and more sensitive to the Arab consensus. The Western Sahara conflict remains a major obstacle for two US goals in North Africa—regional stability and improved relations with Algeria. Unrealistic Moroccan expectations of US assistance could damage relations between Rabat and Washington. []

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It is likely that the interests and objectives of a moderate successor regime will continue to coincide with those of the United States on some international issues. Moroccan support could be valuable in matters concerning the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa as well as in international organizations. []

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Outlook

Hassan, for the short term, is likely to maintain firm control of Morocco's political system. He will continue to use his proven techniques of divide and rule, manipulation, and co-optation of political parties to control the activities of the opposition. The military

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and the domestic security apparatus will closely regulate dissident activity and will obey orders to suppress sporadic civil disturbances. [redacted]

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Morocco is facing a number of serious social, economic, and political problems as well as enduring the seemingly interminable Western Saharan conflict, which together could pose a threat to internal stability, King Hassan's survival, and the monarchy as an institution. If, as seems likely, the present system fails to satisfy rising popular aspirations, social pressures probably will eventually generate demands for major political change.² [redacted]

political freedom that has temporarily pacified much of the population. Although an obedient cabinet has accepted Hassan's circumscribed democracy, local observers report that middle-level party members—not co-opted by the King—have expressed a desire to exert more autonomy to chart Morocco's future. [redacted]

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Under any new regime, we anticipate that Moroccans will seek political liberalization and decentralization of authority not found in the existing patronage-dependent system. According to US Embassy officials, Hassan's efforts to slowly "democratize" Morocco's political system have provided a modicum of

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