



Model Arab League

Annotated Bibliography for Mauritania

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This annotated bibliography was created to serve as a research resource for students taking part in the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations' Model Arab League Program. With the understanding that research can be intimidating and time consuming, an effort was made to find a set of scholarly articles that give a detailed background and thorough account of the current situation for this League of Arab States member. Included are annotations designed to give a description of the source with the intention of students completing the research on their own. There has been an attempt to focus on more contemporary scholarship, specifically post-9/11 and post-2011 (so-called "Arab Spring") where possible, as these are two phenomena that fundamentally changed politics in the Arab world. These sources should provide students with a solid basis for understanding the country they are representing in both regionally and globally significant issues as well as the interests of other countries within the League of Arab States.

1. Zekeria Ould Ahmed Salem, "Mauritania: A Saharan Frontier-State," *The Journal of North African Studies*, Volume 10, Issue 3-4, September–December 2005, pp.491–506. •• Having borders defined a long time ago by historical colonialism from Europe, Mauritania is a country that joins two distinct regions and cultures: the northern Sahara and the southern Sahel. These two regions within Mauritania are generally defined as Arab and Black African respectively. Up until recently with discoveries of mineable oil and mineral deposits, the northern parts of Mauritania that are characterized by desert were thought to be less "useful", and the southern parts were typically thought of as the centers of economic importance. This article explains the history of Mauritania through its relationships with colonial powers, northern Arab neighbors, and southern African states, and argues that the northern desert regions have historically been at least as significant as the south.
2. José C. Brito, Fernando Martínez-Freiría Pablo Sierra, Neftalí Sillero, and Pedro Tarroso, "Crocodiles in the Sahara Desert: An Update of Distribution, Habitats and Population Status for Conservation Planning in Mauritania," *PLoS ONE*, Volume 6, Issue 2, February 2011, pp. 1-10. •• Despite desert geography and climate comprising the majority of the land in Mauritania, the country is home to interesting and significant biodiversity. Specifically, small niches with water sources are home to small populations of Mauritanian crocodiles. Cultural divisions between the north and the south of Mauritania have led to division in terms of protecting or hunting the crocodiles, which is one cause of their diminishing population. Finally, there is no doubt that human activity (agriculturally, pastorally, and globally) has altered local climates, reducing rainfall and increasing temperatures. These changes undeniably threaten the crocodiles and other biodiversity in Mauritania. This article describes these issues in depth and provides recommendations for protecting local biodiversity.

3. Heather L. Sipsma, Peggy G. Chen, Angela Ofori-Atta, Ukwuoma O. Ilozumba, Kapouné Karfo, and Elizabeth H. Bradley, “Female Genital Cutting: Current Practices and Beliefs in Western Africa,” *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, Volume 90, Issue 2, February 2012, pp. 120-127f. •• Continuing into the modern day, Female Genital Cutting (FGC) is a cultural practice that poses significant health and reproductive issues for women. Among western African countries, FGC is still practiced but is generally on the decline. Even though the trend toward decline is prevalent, in some countries including Mauritania, a significant portion of women believe the practice should continue. This study finds that Mauritania is exemplary in its efforts to curb this practice, but there are still significant steps that need to be taken. Specifically, education is most linked to the decline in belief that FGC should be continued as a cultural rite. A significant stumbling block for the reduction of the practice in many west African countries including Mauritania is the lack of enforced legislation against practitioners.
4. Desha M. Girod & Meir R. Walters, “Elite-Led Democratisation in Aid-Dependent States: The Case of Mauritania,” *The Journal of North African Studies*, Volume 17, Number 2, March 2012, pp. 181-193. •• “Following a 2005 military coup, Mauritania became the first Arab League member to hold free and fair executive elections.” Mauritania’s elections were thought to be out of step with prevailing political theory on aid-dependent states, namely that they received aid from Western powers because of strategic importance and at the expense of democratic reforms. Mauritania however did not have much in the way of natural resources; its strategic importance really only mattered after 9/11 and the advent of the “War on Terror”. At that point, Mauritania became an important strategic ally in combatting terrorism for the U.S., especially against al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Although the push for democratization was borne out of a military coup (another strange feature), the prevailing notion was that by doing so the government could garner more aid funding. This democratic period was short lived however, and another coup in 2008 led to a switch in posture away from the West. This article covers the history of Mauritanian coups and the political circumstances that motivated their initiations.
5. Riccardo Ciavolella, “Huunde fof ko Politik: Everything Is Politics: Gramsci, Fulani, and the Margins of the State in Mauritania,” *Africa Today*, Volume 58, Number 3, Spring 2012, pp. 3-21. •• Modernization policies encounter many problems, often from local and/or indigenous populations that have no desire to assimilate to the modernized state. This has been the case for a section of Mauritanian people called the “Fulaabe”, traditional pastoral nomads originating from areas south of Mauritania in Senegal and Mali. Successive Mauritanian leaders have had a lot of trouble trying to incorporate the Fulaabe into the Mauritanian state, even with policies of decentralization meant to integrate the peripheral regions of Mauritania with the capital, Nouakchott. These

policies created a dichotomy, wherein the Fulaabe wished to maintain their autonomy but find some relief from the harsh rural conditions and the state wanted to exert more control over the bush which it saw as anarchical. This article gives the reader a window into the local political issues that Mauritania confronts and provides theoretical frameworks with which to analyze them.

6. M. Marty, "Mauritania: Political Parties, Neo-Patrimonialism and Democracy," *Democratization*, Volume 9, Number 3, Autumn 2002, pp. 92-108. •• Although at the time Mauritania's population only amounted to 2.2 million, its internal political gaming was no less complicated than that of a much larger country. When early on in its formation there were various political groupings competing for power like pan-Arabists, Ba'athists, and tribal elites, the country had to grapple with political fractures less than what may be seen as the grounds for political pluralism. Later in its history, Mauritania would see Mohammed Ould Taya as its leader, and in the 90's he would try to democratically reform the country. Unfortunately, this was only nominal and was in fact "managed" or "guided democracy", one in which the ruling party maintained power through manipulation of elections. This article gives a detailed history of Mauritanian party politics up until 2002, and explains the flaws of "managed democratization", namely that simply giving equal access to politics is not the same as equal in terms of resources.
7. Hanz Werner-Wabnitz, "Return to the Sources: Revival of Traditional Nomads' Rights to Common Property Resources in the Code Pastoral of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania," *Natural Resources Journal*, Volume 49, Number 1, Winter 2009, pp. 191-218. •• When looking at the amount that pastoral livestock contribute to the Mauritanian GDP compared to the amount that mining activities contribute, one would be surprised at the relative amounts of government budget and donor support these activities garnered respectively. Importantly, pastoral grazing improves the quality of land by fertilizing and self-regulated timing in order to prevent overgrazing. Once the amount that the pastoralists and their animals contributed to Mauritania became apparent, there was a push to enact laws that protected their activities. This came in the form of the "Code Pastoral", which was formulated by the pastoralists themselves along with Islamic *Ulema*. The Code Pastoral is an extremely positive development, as it protects animal grazing (a much more profitable agricultural activity relative to planted farming given the climate) and protects the environment at the same time, mostly through traditional pastoral practice.
8. Bill Berkeley, "Stateless People, Violent States," *World Policy Journal*, Volume 29, Number 1, March 2009, pp. 3-15. •• The UN estimates that there are about 15-20 million stateless people around the world. Most are in small communities; however some are

larger in number like the Kurds, the Roma, and the Black Mauritians. Historically, and up until very recently, Black Mauritians were actually subject to slavery. When not slaves, they were treated terribly still and deported *en masse* from Mauritania to Senegal. After the coup in 2007, the Mauritanian government took concrete steps toward reparations which included a right to return. The President at the time, Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, referred to this process as righting a wrong and closing an open wound. There was another coup in 2008 that set these efforts back, and now there is much work left unfinished in terms of repatriating the Black Mauritians. This article discusses the history of Arab-African relations in Mauritania and puts them in perspective with analogies to other global issues of statelessness and nationality.

9. Sébastien Trape, “Impact of Climate Change on the Relict Tropical Fish Fauna of Central Sahara: Threat for the Survival of Adrar Mountains Fishes, Mauritania,” *PLoS ONE*, Volume 4, Issue 2, February 2009, pp. 1-10. •• Unknown to most, there are fish that inhabit parts of the Sahara. In the parts of Mauritania that intersect with the Sahara, small pools of water with equally as small streams that feed them are known as “gueltas”, and they are home to living fossil fish species. There is no question that climate change, increasing temperatures, and decreasing rainfall threaten the gueltas, both in terms of water level and species diversity. This article details the fish and freshwater jellyfish species that inhabit Mauritania’s gueltas, and explains the level to which they are under threat of extinction. Pictures included in the article show the gueltas and how little water can sustain niche organisms.

10. Ahmed B. Ould El Mamy, Mohamed Ould Baba, Yahya Barry, Katia Isselmou, Mamadou L. Dia, Ba Hampate, Mamadou Y. Diallo, Mohamed Ould Brahim El Kory, Mariam Diop, Modou Moustapha Lo, Yaya Thiongane, Mohammed Bengoumi, Lilian Puech, Ludovic Plee, Filip Claes, Stephane de La Rocque, and Baba Doumbia, “Unexpected Rift Valley Fever Outbreak, Northern Mauritania,” *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, Volume 17, Number 10, October 2011, pp. 1894-1896. •• In late September through the beginning of October 2010, Mauritania experienced an unexpectedly large amount of rain. While a climactic event like this is typically welcomed with joy, the high levels of rainfall were not without negative consequences. Vegetation blooms attracted shepherds from far reaches and stagnant water became breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Camels infected with Rift Valley Fever (RVF) passed the disease onto the human population, and there were widespread deaths reported. While camels can be tested for RVF, external symptoms are rare. This study calls for increased safeguards and sanitary policies in order to prevent outbreaks like this from occurring again.

11. Hannah M. Cross, “Rents, Rights, Rejections and Resistance: West African Migrants, the EU’s Migration Regime and Militarisation in Mauritania,” *The International Journal of*

Human Rights, Volume 15, Number 6, August 2011, pp. 827–846. •• Lately, Mauritania has become a heavily trafficked point of transit for African migrants trying to get into Europe. At the same time, Mauritania can be seen as a rentier state, in the sense that it has resources in materials as well as security cooperation. The interaction of Mauritania's rentierism and its function as a waypoint for migrants has created a peculiar governmental and security environment in a geopolitical sense. In the post-9/11 era, migration itself has become securitized following the Global War on Terror, to which Mauritania has become a U.S. ally in by joining the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership. At the same time, the E.U. sees Mauritania as a functional buffer zone to which the E.U. can return migrants of any African nationality, and Mauritania can further return them to their country of origin. This article explains how Mauritania has become a security partner to both the U.S. and the E.U. within the post-9/11 context of migration and security.