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THE YEARS OF EMBERS IN MAURITANIA: ETHNICITY AND NARRATIVES

by

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B.A. July 2019, University of Nouakchott Al Aasriya

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

THE YEARS OF EMBERS IN MAURITANIA: ETHNICITY AND NARRATIVES

Hawa Saidou Barane Ba
Old Dominion University, 2024
Director: Dr. Jesse Richman

The borders in Africa were drawn according to the interests of colonial powers and without consideration of the continent's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic realities. Thus, roughly 80% of African countries borders were drawn without considering the crucial and pre-existing realities of pre-colonial African societies, splitting ethnically and culturally homogenous groups and grouping diverse others under the same political unit. (Beck, 1993; Lefebvre, 2011). Consequently, many African countries end up with an ethnically diverse population that faces the challenge of living harmoniously together in social cohesion, creating an environment prone to ethnic conflicts, political instabilities, and weak national identities. Mauritania, for example, is home to diverse ethnicities with distinct cultures, languages, and traditions. The competition for power and identity differences between these entities, particularly between the Arab-Berbers and Afro-Mauritanians, among other groups, have led to instabilities and injustices that left collective memories and traumas that fortified the social fragmentation. This study explores the effect of ethnicity, among other variables, on a Mauritanian's view of the country's ethnically driven instability between 1986 and 1991, referred to as the Years of Embers, by exploring narratives and responses to the event. After designing a survey collecting qualitative and quantitative data and using statistical tests and NVivo, my findings highlight a spectrum of opinions, awareness, and acknowledgment across ethnicities, showing the need for dialogue and understanding to bridge diverse perspectives about the same shared history.

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This thesis is dedicated to the victims of the Years of Embers and the martyrs who lost their lives because of human greed and folly. It is also dedicated to these strong women who lost their husbands, fathers, sons, and family members and are steadfastly and continuously fighting for justice and for their voices to be heard. Last but not least, I also dedicate this thesis to every single Mauritanian who stands for justice and profoundly believes in the equality between different components of Mauritanian society.

Our linguistic, cultural, and identity diversity makes us beautiful. Let's embrace that beauty and be grateful for it.

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Finally, I cannot but mention Joseph Martínez, my amazing husband, who has been here for me since the beginning, listening to my ideas and encouraging me every step of the way. Thank you for supporting me emotionally and believing in me when I was convinced, I couldn't make it and was tempted to give up. This wouldn't have been possible without you.

NOMENCLATURE

DEFINITIONS:

Arabization: orchestrated process of cultural change that includes assimilation, Arabic language adaptation, and administrative changes.

MANIFESTE DES DIX-NEUF: first document authored by Afro-Mauritanians to denounce their people's injustices, discrimination, and marginalization.

LE MANIFESTE DU NEGRO MAURITANIEN OPPRIME: second and most controversial document denouncing the injustices, discrimination, and marginalization of the Afro-Mauritanians and the monopoly of power.

Years of Embers: The term translated from the French phrase “les années de braise” refers to the state-sponsored repression against the Afro-Mauritanians from 1986-1991.

Narratives: “a way of presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view or set of values” (Merriam-webster dictionary)

ABBREVIATIONS:

FLAM African Liberation Forces of Mauritania

RIM Republic Islamic of Mauritania

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

As human beings, we find ourselves grouped according to characteristics we often have no say in. These characteristics range from the most obvious ones, such as our physical appearances (skin color, physical features...etc.) and the language we speak, to the somehow abstract ideas, such as our beliefs and socioeconomic status. With time, these categorizations become our primary source of identity, and we find pride in them. Although beneficial, the diversity born out of categorizing individuals often leads to identity-based divisions that may result in various adverse outcomes, ranging from mildly challenging to severely detrimental, demonstrating the potentially devastating impact of mismanaging diversity by governments and elites. As an example, ethnicity as a form of identity in Africa has historically been linked to adverse outcomes such as ethnic conflicts, violence, civil wars, and, in some extreme cases, genocide. Well known examples include the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda. (Nikuze, 2014) and other inter-community wars in Somalia, Sudan, and different other parts of the continent (Lewis¹ & Iross, 2002). Perhaps that makes it safe to argue that ethnicity as a form of identity is a problematic phenomenon and is accountable for perpetuating outdated morals and “regressive consciousness” and for encouraging violent conflicts, as suggested by (Ake, 1993).

Mauritania, the northwest African country, has also had its share of identity-based crises. Perhaps what makes its case unique from others in the African continent is first its geographical location as a bridge between North and West Africa, which resulted in the extreme identity difference and ethnic divide between its Arab/Berber population and its Black Sub-Saharan African population, and the role played by the Mauritanian Government in it. While there is extensive research on identity-based conflicts in Africa (Caleb & Danjuma, 2018; Ottoh, 2018)

and how things like the media shape narratives about them (Blouin & Mukand, 2019; Salawu, 2009), little has been written on Mauritania and its complex identity-driven period of instabilities. In this realm, this study aims to provide the first comprehensive historical analysis of what is known as the years of embers in Mauritania and its multiple facets. This study accomplishes that goal by first exploring the political evolution of the country that led to the unfolding of the crisis and the numerous and complex events that took place during that historical era. Then, taking as its focus memories of those events, it attempts to suggest a perspective into the role played by ethnicity in propagating and shaping narratives about it. In doing so, this thesis aims to answer the question: “Does Ethnicity correlate with knowledge and perceptions about the Years of Embers among Mauritians?” By asking this question, I seek to provide an understanding of how a Mauritanian’s ethnicity shapes their overall views about the crisis that the country went through, the events, the reasons, and the possibilities for reconciliation. This question is important for multiple reasons. First, determining the role played by ethnicity in Mauritania can provide a broader understanding of the literature on narratives related to identity-based conflicts. Second, it can help policymakers, particularly Mauritanian authorities, develop more effective strategies that can help mitigate the challenges in multi-ethnic settings. Finally, it contributes to filling the gap of the rarity of work on ethnic conflict in Mauritania. To do so, I argue that among all factors, ethnicity is the primary driver of an individual’s stance on the Years of Embers and that factors such as education level, although important, do not play as significant a role in an individual’s perspective.

This thesis is organized into four sections. The first chapter provides a comprehensive historical analysis of the political evolution in Mauritania from independence to the event's unfolding. Using survivor accounts and international organization reports, this chapter also

illustrates the context in which human rights abuses have occurred, with details about events and individual experiences following the timeline of their occurrence. The second chapter starts by summarizing the extant theories about the driving factors behind the Years of Embers, followed by an overall analysis of the literature on the politicization of ethnicity, focusing on Africa. The following chapter presents the methodology employed in this study, including the hypotheses, data collection, handling, and processing. The penultimate chapter analyzes the data and discusses the findings. Finally, I conclude with the last chapter that includes a discussion of the results.

ETHNIC COMPOSITION AND INTERNAL DIVISIONS

Mauritania, also known as the Islamic Republic of Mauritania or الجمهورية الإسلامية الموريتانية, is a sovereign state in Northwest Africa. Roughly twice the size of Texas, with a large land area of 397955.495 mi² or 1030700 km², the country is considered the eleventh largest on the African continent, yet it is among the least known. Its obscurity might be explained by its lack of natural resources or oil, which made other Islamic countries the focus of mainstream media (El-Said & El-Said, 2015). Another plausible explanation is its small and sparse population, which may be a more direct reason for its unpopularity. However, it is worth noting that Mauritania has been able to avoid most of the devastating impacts of interstate and civil conflicts that have plagued its neighbors on the African continent, such as the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, The Darfur conflict in Sudan, and the Secession of South Sudan and the Somali Civil War which made these affected communities the focus of international media and therefore gain popularity. Mainly deserts land, approximately 90% of its territory is situated in the Sahara Desert. Mauritania is bordered by Western Sahara to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Algeria to the northeast, Mali to the east and southeast, and Senegal to the south-west,(Pazzanita, 2008).

Noticeably, it is the only Islamic Republic in Africa (Pettigrew, 2019). Mauritania was colonized by France and remained a French colony for about 60 years, from the early 1900s until the declaration of independence on November 28, 1960, paving the way for modern-day Mauritania. The location of the former French colony, between the Arab/Amazigh Maghreb¹ and Sub-Saharan Africa,² gave the country a natural role of linkage between the ethnically Arab and Amazigh north and the black Afro south while contributing to its immense ethnic diversity and cultural diversity (Salem, 2013).

The country has an estimated population of 4.7 million people who share Islam as a religion and spiritual identity but constitute two major ethnic groups. The first group is referred to as Moors, which is the largest ethno-cultural group in Mauritania. It is made up of two subgroups: the lighter-skinned Moors or Bidhan (a name derived from the Arabic word that means “white”) and the darker-skinned Black Moors or Haratiin (a name derived from the Arabic word that means “freed slave”)(Wiley, 2020). Many terms are used to refer to these groups, but for clarity, the term “Arab-Berbers” will be used throughout the Thesis to refer to the light-skinned Moors, while the term Haratiin will be used to refer to the Black-Moors group. The Arab-Berbers are speakers of Hassaniya³, a variety of North African Arabic. They are traditionally the dominant social group, holding power in the country's political and economic spheres and conspicuously monopolizing political power (Ba Mamadou Mbare⁴ was the only president from a different ethnic group).

¹ Refers to North African countries' members of the Arab Maghreb Union: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania

² Term used to refer to the Black African countries located in the South of the Sahara Desert

³ Hassaniya is a dialect of Arabic and one of Mauritania's local languages.

⁴ Ba Mamadou, also known as Mbare, served as the interim leader of Mauritania for approximately three months following President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz's resignation. His primary role was to ensure the presidential election went smoothly and facilitate the transition of power to the elected. His tenure as interim president earned him the title of the country's first and only black head of state.

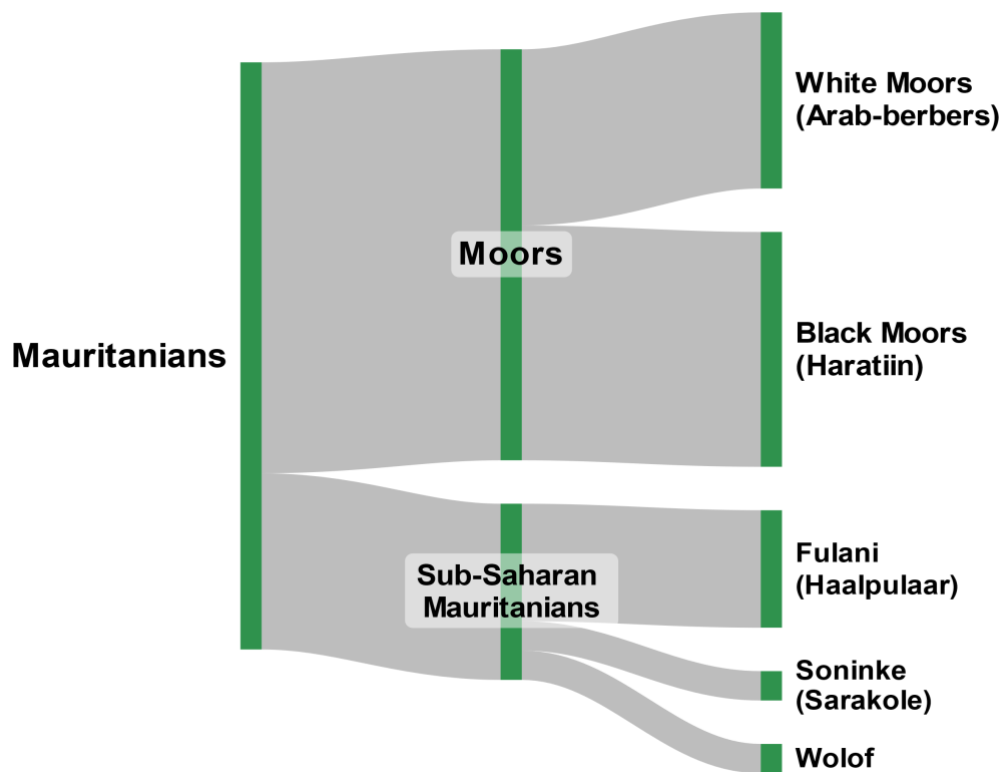
The Haratiin are formerly enslaved people or the descendants of enslaved people. They are the largest group in the country, and over time, they have assimilated with their former or current masters, the Arab-Berbers, with whom they share culture, traditions, and language. The historical legacy of enslavement has had a profound impact on the Haratiin's social and economic status in Mauritanian society. Although slavery was abolished in 1981, the Haratiin still suffered stigmatization, economic disadvantages, and labor exploitation as remnants of long centuries of slavery.

The second group is the Afro-Mauritanian or 'Negro Mauritians' (the term Negro Mauritanian is based on a cultural consideration that designates black Afro- Mauritanians, excluding the Haratiin). These Afro-Mauritanians comprise three significant subgroups: The Fulani or the Halpulaar (Pulaar speakers), the Soninke, and the Wolof. The Fulanis, depending on the tribe, are both nomadic and sedentary and traditionally engaged in agriculture and herding. The Soninke, also known as Sarakole, or speakers of Soninke, are known for establishing powerful empires in the region, such as the Ghana Empire that flourished between the 6th and 13th centuries in southeastern Mauritania and western Mali. The Wolof are the smallest subgroup of the Afro-Mauritanians and are named after the language they speak Wolof. They are mainly found on the southwestern coast of Mauritania and are the dominant group in the neighboring country, Senegal.

Considered a state secret, the official and detailed percentages, statistics, and numbers that each ethnic group represents are not available to the public (Marchesin, 2010),⁵ but estimations suggest that the largest ethnic group in Mauritania are the Haratiin who make up 40% of the population while the Bidhan and the Afro-Mauritanians make up 30% each (Baduel, 1994; Wane, 2018).

⁵ This is discussed further by Marchesin, Philippe in *Tribus, Ethnies et pouvoir en Mauritanie*.

Figure 1. Visual representation of ethnic groups in Mauritania.



With such a diverse population, the challenges of creating a national identity started to rise shortly after the country's establishment. While the Arab Berbers strongly identify with an Arab identity and culture, the Afro-Mauritanians have continued to assert their non-Arabic identity and vigorously defend their African roots and traditions. Soon after independence, ethnically based political groups and movements started to emerge. On the one hand, the Arab-Berbers were divided between Nasserist's, who defend Arab nationalist opinions; the Ba-athists, who were affiliated with the main party based in Iraq and Syria and promote Pan-Arabism, Socialism, and Arab nationalism; and the Alliance for a Democratic Mauritania (alliance pour une Mauritanie démocratique). All these three political groups promoted closer links with the Arab world (International, 1989b). On the other hand, the Afro-Mauritanians were represented through many

organizations and unions, including the Union for the Democracy in Mauritania (UDM), Black Students Movements (MEENA), and the Organization for the Defense of Mauritania's Black Africans (ODINAM). These would all collide to form *the African Liberation Forces of Mauritania* or *Forces de Liberation Africaines de la Mauritanie* known as FLAM dominated by the Fulanis (International, 1989c). Moreover, the former or still enslaved Haratine launched a liberation movement, "El hour" or "the free," which is still present in the political scene today (Baduel, 1994). As suggested by their names or goals, these different organizations, assemblies, and associations mainly promoted interests based on an identity. This rivalry that the former French colony started to face became a very significant player in the Mauritanian political arena. Therefore, an evaluation of Mauritania's political evolution seems necessary.

THE REGIME OF MOKHTAR OULD DADDAH: THE START

Born to a noble Zwaya⁶ tribe known as Oulad Ibeyri, the law graduate Mokhtar Ould Daddah became the first president of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania shortly after its independence in 1960. With his single-party government, the Mauritanian People's Party, or the PPM, Daddah established the country's civilian leadership and attempted to create a national identity and build Mauritania with its different components. Daddah's period marked the beginning of a tangle of measures and policies that, over time, were to split the Mauritanian population and exacerbate community and ethnic tensions (N'Diaye & Resumé, 2004).

After six years of Daddah's regime, in February of 1966, a significant event that would forever shape the country's political landscape took place. The president of RIM⁷ (Republic Islamic

⁶ a coalition of tribes mostly found in the southern Sahara who are nomadic and traditionally follow a religious way of life.

⁷ Acronym used to refer to the Republic Islamic of Mauritania

of Mauritania), faced with a nascent pan-Arabism and under pressure from Arab nationalists in his party to emphasize the conception of the country's primary identity as Arab, totally disregarding the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity that characterizes the country, decided to turn to the Arab world by making Arabic compulsory in primary and the secondary education (N'Diaye & Resumé, 2004). This meant for the survivor and eye witness Mohamed Sy that every Mauritanian child, regardless of their ethnicity or mother tongue, would have to start their education in Arabic and learn at school, "I am an Arab, and my country is Arab."⁸ Alarmed by the prolonged effect of this path to Arabization and to assert their non-Arab identity, students from non-Arabic speaking ethnicities or the Afro-Mauritanian expressed their indignations. Protests erupted all over the country, especially in zones traditionally inhabited by the Afro-Mauritanians, mainly Rosso and Kaedi, denouncing what they described as an initiative to transform the country into a purely Arab nation with disregard for the reality of the diverse components of the country. Moreover, nineteen of the most prominent intellectuals and thinkers from the same community wrote a document that they called "*le Manifeste des dix-Neuf*" the manifesto of the nineteen, as an attempt to back up the protestors and described their actions as the following:

"This energetic action only reveals a deep, latent malaise, for it is well known that the compulsory study of Arabic is a cultural oppression for blacks. This measure is a definite handicap in all examinations for black students, who have always consciously rejected the study of Arabic, knowing it to be a hindrance to their cultural and scientific development and against their interests." (FLAM), 1986)⁹.

The document further denounces the monopoly of power and the marginalization of a large population. This reaction to the 'Arabization' policy caused inter-communal violence and necessitated the intervention of the army to alleviate the situation. Although authors of the manifesto were punished by jail and dismissals, their denunciation, along with the students'

⁸ Found in the survivor account L'ENFER D'INAL, MAURITANIE: L'HORREUR DES CHAMPS"

⁹ Quoted from the document "*le Manifeste des dix Neuf*" or the manifesto of the nineteen pages 1.

protests, partially succeeded in decelerating the ‘Arabization.’ Nevertheless, no serious decisions or plans were implemented to address the concept of the “National Question,” which was born from the crisis. On the contrary, the state intensified its links with the Arab world by joining the Arab League in 1973 while simultaneously withdrawing from the West African Monetary Union (N’Diaye & Resumé, 2004).

ENTERS THE MILITARY

For 18 years, with Moctar ould Daddah as president, Mauritania succeeded in keeping the power within civilians, with the military taking their traditional role of national defense and security. However, ~~soon~~, personal ambitions and competition within the army under the influence of tribalism and nationalism would bring the military into politics (N’Diaye & Resumé, 2004). Thus, Mauritania witnessed its first coup d’état in July of 1978, allegedly to restore democracy and revive the economy by the army chief Moustapha ould Mohamed Saleck from a warrior tribe (Badel, 1994). Soon, plots and coups started to occur successively; Saleck was removed a year later and replaced by Bouceif and his party “Comité Militaire du Salut National.” In 1980, Mohamed Khouna ould Haidallah formally became the president of the République. Descended from a tribe based in the western Sahara, Haidallah was perceived as an outsider and compensated for his unpopularity by gaining support from the Haratiin and the sub-Saharan Mauritians. His inclination towards authoritarianism and fierce nationalism would set the stage for the next coup d’état, a turning point in Mauritania's history, particularly for the *Afro-Mauritians*. Previously, only victims of marginalization and discrimination, the Afro-Mauritians, would face systematic and violent persecution under the regime of the next president of the country (N’Diaye & Resumé, 2004).

MAOUIYA OULD SIDA'AHMED TAYA AND THE YEARS OF EMBERS

Welcomed with hopes and dreams, Taya, with the reputation of an honest military officer, became the country's sixth president in 1984 thanks to a somehow “peaceful” coup. His first speeches and decisions, including organizing municipal elections and his close and personal relations with prominent black figures in the country, exacerbated people's genuine hopes for equality and development (N'Diaye&Resumé,2004) Hence, it remains uncertain if Taya’s regime's early characteristics were deliberate manipulations from a “Machiavellian mind” or simply a result of a great leader’s potential.¹⁰

Unfortunately, like his predecessors, Taya failed to address any of the major economic crises caused by the combination of severe years of drought that hit the region and, the corruption of previous regimes and ethnic crises that were becoming more and more prominent. His accession to power accelerated the Arabization of the country, which had begun in the early years of independence, starting with reforms of the school system. His policy was linked to the desire to make Mauritania a pure Arab country: in 1989, the slogan "Mauritania is an Arab country" was increasingly chanted. President Maaouya, therefore, reformed the territorial administration from French to Arabic, changing departments into "Wilayas" and regions into "Moughatas." In 1988, he joined the Permanent Consultative Council of the Maghreb (CPCM7). And then, on February 17, 1989, the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). This Arabization process brought Mauritania a certain amount of support from the Arab world and its organizations, such as the Arab Fund for Economic Development. It also provided the regime of Taya with unconditional support from Iraq and Saddam Hussein, who provided substantial military aid and weaponry to Mauritania, increasing cultural exchange and cooperation between the two countries.

¹⁰ An interrogation found in “Democracy and development journal of west African affairs” Rain Edition 2004. Volume 4. Number

Since the birth of what is coined the “National Question¹¹” during the regime of the country's first president, the ethnic tensions between the different components of Mauritania have started growing. As a result of the 1970s droughts in the region, people began migrating towards bigger cities and the southern fertile lands of the Senegalese valley traditionally inhabited by the Afro-Mauritians. Further, in 1983 and 1984, the government passed land reforms N°83-127/CSMN and N°84-009, which gave the administration the power to confiscate any piece of land in the valley and allocate it to whoever could renovate it (Véronique, 2007). Thanks to these reorganizations and the obvious financial and weight advantage, ownership of the fertile lands was distributed among civil servants and businessmen from the Arab-Berber community, who eventually pushed the previous landowners away, further exacerbating tensions (International, 1989c). The Afro-Mauritians, aware of the adverse effects of the country’s orientation on them, continued resisting even though no systematic attempt at the protest was made by the black African elite of the time except for the nineteen signatories of the *manifesto of the nineteen* ((FLAM), 1986). This document, which systematically denounced the country’s political orientation, was undoubtedly the first significant action of its kind¹². Twenty years after the publication of this document, the Manifesto of the Oppressed Black Mauritanian (Le Manifeste du Negro Mauritanien Opprimé) was drawn up in 1986 by a group of Afro-Mauritanian intellectuals, members of the FLAM (Forces de Liberation Africaines de la Mauritanie), a clandestine organization created in 1983, denouncing the same problems: the politics of the system in place through a global assessment of the situation of the country's Afro-Mauritanian population with figures and statistics and describing it as apartheid, and calling for a rebalancing of positions into the country's multi-

¹¹ which refers to socio-political challenges encompassing historical and societal inequalities that the country is faced with.

¹² Found in the survivor’s account “*j’étais a Oualata: le racisme d’état en Mauritanie*” by Alassane Harouna Boye

ethnic reality (Wane, 2018). This very controversial document, which had such serious accusations, became widely spread internationally. Eventually, it reached the Organization of the African Unity Summit in Zimbabwe, which triggered what Alassane Boye described as “La chasse à l'homme noir,” or the hunt for the black man. This “Hunt” was marked by the dismissals of individuals from the Fulani or Halpulaar community¹³, including Ministers and members of the government, and the arrests, trials, and incarcerations of individuals who are believed to have any link with the organization FLAM. Because of this very controversial document, they were charged with undermining the state through “organization of unauthorized public meetings, posting and distribution of publications detrimental to the national interest, and racist propaganda” (N’diaye, 2010)

In a context where FLAM was presented to the public as an armed terrorist organization whose goal was not only to take power but to put the country to fire and blood by exterminating the Arab-Berbers of the country, there was little to no condemnation to be found in the Mauritanian public opinion.

In light of these events and to make the situation more intense, six black officers from the Fulani community created a clandestine military organization with the goal of “restoring the dangerously disrupted community balance” by taking power once the conditions were met. (Boye & Boye Alassane, 1999). Having reached the army after all the country's institutions, the “virus of racism” manifested in blockages at training courses, unjustified delays in advancement, abusive and programmed failures to exams due to the introduction of the Arabic language, which was not mastered in the secondary school nor in the language of the military training (Boye & Boye Alassane, 1999, p. 21) These conditions set the stage for a plot to overthrow the Government. The

¹³ Like the Authors of *the Manifeste of the nineteen*, the *manifeste of the oppressed 'negro Mauritanian'* Authors were predominantly from this Ethnicity.

coups was planned for the night of October 22, 1987, but never actually occurred due to the regime finding out about the plan and initiating the arrests of the putschists the morning of the same day it was planned to be executed. The authorities declared they had uncovered and thwarted the execution of a coup d'état orchestrated by some fifty black Fulani officers, which included signatories of the manifesto, aka members of FLAM. It is worth mentioning that the Fulani constitute the largest ethnic group among the Afro-Mauritanians. They have historically been the most considerable resistance to oppression and assimilation and were, therefore, considered by the government as the most significant opposing force (Fleischman, 1994). They were charged with “undermining state security by participating in a plot to overthrow the current regime and commit massacre and devastation to the population” under articles 83 and 90 of the Mauritanian penal code (International, 1989c; N'diaye, 2010).

How and when the regime learned about the planned coup is still a mystery. The mainstream hypothesis suggests the information was leaked from within the group, and the government knew about the putsch but waited to react¹⁴. Regardless of the correct hypothesis, this failed coup resulted in the arrests of many officers and non-commissioned officers in all army corps with charges of threat to national security, devastation of property, and massacre of the population. The organization FLAM, accused of being the author of the putsch with its military wing, was presented, once again, to the public as a violent terrorist group trying to exterminate the Arab Berber population. Although both the putschists and members of FLAM denied these allegations, this narrative kept spreading among the Arab-Berbers Community. It would later constitute the primary justification for the subsequent actions committed by the regime of President Maouiyaould Sid'ahmed Taya.

¹⁴ Refer to the survival account *J'etais a Oualata: Le racism d'état en Mauritanie* for a breakdown of the different hypotheses and explanations.

With no access to lawyers during pre-trial detention, three officers, including the alleged head of the Putsch, were sentenced to death. At the same time, alleged participants were either sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor, twenty years with hard labor, or five to ten years with fines. In the end, thirty-five were condemned with no right to appeal, and only seven were declared non-guilty and acquitted (Boye Alassane & Boye, 1999; International, 1989c). Imprisoned in Oualata¹⁵, the putschists met the FLAMists¹⁶ Authors of *‘le Manifeste du negro Mauritanian Opprimé’*, thirty-five putschists and twenty-seven militants FLAMists They would be transferred to Oualata together to purge their sentences. The conditions in which they were imprisoned were harsh and included forced labor, deliberate starvation and thirst, and lack of hygiene and primary medical care (International, 1989a). This resulted in the spread of diseases such as beriberi and diarrhea and the deaths in custody of many prominent figures and intellectuals such as Tene Yussuf Gueye¹⁷ and Djigo Tabsirrou, agricultural engineer and former minister, along with many others.¹⁸ Boye Alassane Harouna, one of the prisoners, wrote: “The death of our comrade, a direct consequence of the appalling conditions of detention, did not seem to bring any immediate improvement in our food or the sanitary plan” (Boye & Boye Alassane, 1999)p.129. The inhumane conditions in which the political prisoners were kept were considered by Amnesty International as a violation of human rights.

In such a climate of extreme tension, it was only a matter of time before the situation degenerated. Soon, the French phrase “Passif humanitaire,” which translates to “human rights

¹⁵ also known as Walata, is a historic city in southeast Mauritania Inscribed on the list of UNESCO’s world heritage. known for its architectural style and an important stop on the ancient trans-Saharan trade routes, the fort of Oualata was transformed into a jail on December 8, 1987.

¹⁶ Refers to any member of the organization FLAM (Forces de Liberations des Africaines de la Mauritanie)

¹⁷ Tene Yusuf Gueye is considered one of the most prestigious writers in Mauritania. The circumstances of his death, along with others, will create international outrage and widespread condemnations.

¹⁸ For a detailed survivor account describing the journey of the detainees from the arrests until the release, See Boye Alassane Harouna, J’etais a Oualata: le Racisme d’état en Mauritanie.

deficit,” was coined and used for many of the following events. This euphemistic term was referring to the government-led campaign against Afro-Mauritians, which involved arbitrary executions, expulsions, land expropriations, and systematic marginalization and discrimination (watch, 2018).

THE SENEGALESE-MAURITANIAN CONFLICT OR L’EVENEMENT

Shortly after Mauritania joined the Union of the Maghreb Arab in February of 1989, and to exacerbate the already ethnically sensitive context in Mauritania and the extant border dispute between Mauritania and Senegal, an altercation between Mauritanian Fulani livestock breeders and Senegalese farmers from the Soninke’s in the Senegal river Valley supposedly resulted in the killing of two Senegalese and the kidnapping of dozens of Mauritians. As a result, xenophobic violence broke out between Arab Berber Mauritians living in Senegal and the Senegalese, leading to the killing of approximately three hundred Mauritians in the capital city Dakar, vandalization, and pillaging of many Mauritanian-owned shops and businesses (سعدوني, 2022). Consequently, violence spread across Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, respectively, the main and the economic capital of the country, targeting Senegalese nationals and other African nationals, which led to a cycle of retaliatory violence (International, 1989c). Despite several attempts to reconcile Mauritania and Senegal by the African Union (AU) and heads of African states, diplomatic relations between the two neighboring countries were severed and eventually cut in August of 1989, and the border between the two countries was closed for the first time. The extant weak equilibrium between the Arab Berbers and the Afro-Mauritians, in addition to the ethnically charged politics, would make the Mauritanian side of the conflict more complex.

The two countries agreed to expatriate their citizens by air and land under international assistance. Nevertheless, the Mauritanian authorities took advantage of the chaos to expel thousands of its citizens belonging to the same ethnic groups as the Senegalese (Fulani, Soninke, and Wolof), forcing them to leave the country by air or by simply crossing the river (HRW, 1994). Initially, the main targets were intellectuals, businessmen, civil servants, and opposition members from Afro-Mauritanian communities. Then, it extended to farmers, herders, and ordinary citizens in the river valley. The authorities justified the expulsion of Afro-Mauritanians as “an attempt to expatriate Senegalese who obtained the Mauritanian nationality fraudulently,” as declared by the secretary of the Mauritanian embassy in Dakar to *the New York Times*, which explains the disregard for Mauritanian national identities of the soon to be expelled. The exact number of the forcefully evicted is not precisely known, but according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some 60,000 Mauritanians were displaced to Senegal and Mali. In addition to expulsions, further devastations and forms of violations of human rights have been carried out by Mauritania’s security forces, including extra-judicial executions, arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual abuses against women, theft, and confiscation of properties (Today, 1995). According to the Human Rights Watch report, “In addition to attempting to alter the ethnic-demographic and political structure of the country, and to enact retribution for the abuses against Mauritanians in Senegal, one of the principals aims of the expulsions was to accelerate the seizure of land from black farmers.”

THE MASSACRES OF 1990-1991

The process of political marginalization and eradication of non-Arabic speaking communities entered a new era that started in November 1990 when somewhere between 500 and

600 black political prisoners were executed or tortured to death by government forces. The victims were among the three thousand arrested, most of whom were Fulanis in the military, including members of the navy and the army, customs officials, police officers, civil servants, and ordinary citizens. The arrested who were taken to the prison of Inal were unaware of the reasons behind their arrests, as mentioned by Mohamed Sy, assistant to a base commander at the time and one of the arrested:

“No matter how hard I try, I cannot find an explanation... I do not think it is because of the Senegalese-Mauritanian events, nor because I spoke Wolof to the "Senegalese." There must be something that justifies the presence of all these prisoners. Little did I know that the Mauritanian government has decided to step up a gear in its policy of ethnic cleansing of the country and that I am living here in the first moments of what has been called, in other times and under other skies, "the final solution.” p 46,

Nor did his inmate, Mohamed Mansour Kane; he narrates:

“On November 21st, Lieutenant Mohamed Mansour Kane joins us. He was arrested on November 19th... he does not know anything either. To the same questions, he gave the same answers; he has absolutely no idea what he is accused of...” p.89.

Two months later, in December, the Government declared that a plot backed by Senegal to overthrow the government was discovered, and the responsible were arrested with no further details, which the Human right Watch described as “implausible” and Senegal denied (Fleischman, 1994). The prisoners, mostly soldiers, were held incommunicado and subjected to horrific torture to extract confessions and information about others. Mohamed Sy Narrates his experience:

“Speak," I told him I had already told Lieutenant Yezid everything I had to say.

- you did not say anything; we already knew everything you said.
- I do not know anything else.
- that is what we are going to see. Tie his hands," he adds to the station chief. Then, as if for the first time, he wrapped the belt around my neck and handed one end to the soldier. Each of them puts a foot on my side as a support, and they start pulling so hard that the belt breaks in two. Ely starts beating me savagely as if I were responsible for the deterioration of the belt; he has become entirely hysterical. He takes off his turban, and

folds it in four and repeats several times until I lose consciousness. After a while, he stops and says to me: Do you know how many times I have strangled you?
 -no, I have not counted
 -seven times, and one more to go, but that will be after dinner
 -I would like to know why all this violence; did I happen to hurt you in the past?
 -the most significant harm you've ever done to me, and still do, is to exist. we should have got rid of you all a long time ago.” P 75-76.

On the night before the 28th of November 1990, the Eve of the independence of the Republic Islamic of Mauritania, 28 of the detainees were numbered from 1 to 28 and hanged as a way of celebrating the independence, as mentioned by a chief warrant officer in an interview given to Human rights watch (Fleischman, 1994p.72) and as noted by the eye witness Mohamed Sy in his book, *l'enfer d'inal*.

CONCLUSION: HOW IT ENDED

The manifest human rights abuses under Taya, ignored at first because of the country's international obscurity, gained indignation from the international community; the voices demanding respect and restoration of human rights became louder and louder, even going so far as to threaten the withdrawal of international aid. The failure of Saddam Hussein, causing the regime to lose the military aid it was receiving from Iraq, and the withdrawal of all Kuwaiti and Saudi loans, combined with Western conditions for further aid, led the regime of Taya to change its survival strategy. In April 1991, the residents set the country on the road to controlled democratization. While not addressing the human rights abuses, a constitutional referendum was proposed for July 1991, promoting the rule of law, freedom of the press, and a multiparty system. Military and civil prisoners were released to complement the new strategy. Some resumed their functions while others were compelled to retire (Baduel, 1994; Boye & Boye Alassane, 1999). To provide further insight, Mohamed Sy wrote :

“ Le 14 avril, un communiqué officiel annonce, en début de soirée, la fin du Ramadan. Nous veillons un peu plus tard que d'habitude à cause de la particularité de l'événement. Vers une heure du matin, un véhicule entre dans la base. Quelques minutes plus tard, de retentissants coups sont frappés aux portes des cellules. La nôtre est ouverte et une lumière émanant d'une lampe torche se promène sur nous. La voix du capitaine Moctar me parvient à travers un voile de sommeil : "aujourd'hui, c'est la fête du Ramadan, en ce jour sacré, le Président de la République vous a pardonné. Le chef d'état-major me charge de vous dire d'oublier ce qui s'est passé et qu'en bons musulmans, vous devez mettre tout cela sur le compte de la fatalité. Venez nous rejoindre au mess des officiers où vous pourrez faire votre toilette et vous raser en attendant l'arrivée du comptable pour la paye et les camions pour vous déposer chez vous en ville". Je lui réponds : "il est vraiment très fort le Président, il nous arrête, nous torture, nous tue et c'est lui qui nous pardonne !

Immediately after prisoners were released, voices demanding justice and investigations began to rise. The survivors created associations and wrote letters to the government, foreign diplomatic missions, and international organizations detailing their experiences and denouncing the unfounded accusations. They also demanded independent investigations to shed light on the massacres perpetrated, punish and sanction the responsible, and compensate the victims, including widows and orphans, who in turn created their associations with similar demands. Nonetheless, the demands remain unheard; instead, the government continued denying the accuracy of this violation (Sy, 2000). It passed the amnesty law of 1993, granting immunity to perpetrators of any serious human rights violations committed during the years of embers. It voided all judiciary records and investigations regarding any party who qualifies for amnesty under this law. The wording of the Law in French is as follows:

“ Loi numéro 93-23 du 14 juin 1993 portant Amnistie.

Article premier- Amnistie pleine et entière est accordée :

- 1) aux membres des forces armées et de sécurité auteurs des infractions commises entre le 1er janvier 1989 et le 18 avril 1992 et relatives aux événements qui se sont déroulés au sein des forces et ayant engendrés des actions armées et des actes de violences.
- 2) Aux citoyens mauritaniens auteurs des infractions subites aux actions armées et actes de violences et d'intimidations entrepris durant la même période.

Article 2 toute plainte, tout procès-verbal ou document d'enquête relatif à cette période et concernant une personne ayant bénéficié de cette amnistie, sera classé sans suite.” Quoted from the official text of the amnesty law of 1993 Journal officiel de la république Islamique de Mauritanie (REPUBLIQUE, 1993)

The Mauritanian authorities vaguely and generally acknowledge that State agents committed serious abuses during the Humanitarian Passive. However, they maintain that they have adequately provided justice and reparations to victims by complying with the 1993 Amnesty Law and taking steps since then to compensate victims and survivors, measures endorsed by a gesture of national healing (watch, 2018)2018).

In this chapter, we dived into the political evolution of Mauritania, from the early days of the nation to the unfolding of the country's most controversial period also known as the Years of Embers. The unaddressed inequalities between its diverse and multi-ethnic population and the succession mediocre successive regime in addition to the politization of identity and unresolved tensions and disparities have resulted in instabilities that still affect the cohesion of the country to this day. Looking back at these multiple factors, it is obvious that the Years of Embers didn't suddenly emerge; it is rather a combination of decades of unresolved divides and growing issues.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORIES ABOUT THE YEARS OF EMBERS

At the end of the 1980s, Mauritania, then ruled by Colonel Maouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, was marked by solid racial repressions against Afro-Mauritanians characterized by marginalization, discrimination, and state-sponsored violence. The political crisis and the severe human rights violations that occurred during those years would later be coined by Mauriticians as *Les Années de Braise* or *سنوات الجمر* in Arabic, which translates to the Years of Embers (N'Gaide, 2006).

Theories about the why and the how these events occurred are mainly centered around the country's identity, namely the Arab identity against the African one, and the government's shortcomings in addressing this issue. Since gaining its independence, the republic has faced a significant challenge in building an identity that unifies all Mauritanians. According to many, this challenge is the principal reason for the 1986-1991 instabilities in the country. Some theories argue that the sole reason behind the event is the extremist organization FLAM (African Liberation Forces of Mauritania), influenced and sponsored by neighboring African countries, mainly Senegal, and its separatism ideology that not only denied the Arab identity of the country but encouraged the separation of the south to join Senegal and organized an ethnically motivated coup to eradicate the Arab communities of the country after authoring a racist document that calls for atrocities against them (Ahmed, 2022; Monde, 1987; المامي & غدور, 2023). Others argue that internal identity groups and Arab nationalists, mainly the Ba'athists and Nasserist's close to the military regime, played a significant role in initiating the repression and further taking advantage of the events to eliminate "the black threat" (Marchesin, 2010).

Further, arguments put most of the blame on the authorities during the time, positing that the Mauritanian authorities did everything they could to eradicate the Afro-Mauritanian opposition, represented mainly by the Fulanis, who denounced the military regime's discriminatory policies. The primary goal was to silence these voices that were getting louder in criticizing the government (Fleischman, 1994; Leservoisier, 1995; Marchesin, 2010). The regime's oppression was also rooted in "la question foncière" or the "land question" and its implications for the fertile land in southern Mauritania. In the words of Bernard Crousse, "The coup attempt announced by the Mauritanian government in November 1987, followed by death sentences and three executions in December, had land-related origins. One of the main grievances of the Toucouleurs¹⁹ putschists was the slow dispossession by the Moors of their ancestral customary lands in the Middle Senegal River Valley" (Crousse, 1988).

However, later regimes and heads of the state accused extremists of both sides, i.e., Arab Berber extremists (Nasserist and Ba'athist) and black nationalists - those from the FLAM in particular. The argument was that both were behind the inter-ethnic violence in Mauritania. In this sense, the State could in no way be solely responsible for the atrocities committed against the Afro-Mauritanians. In one of his presidential addresses, Ely ould Mohamed Vall, a high-ranked government personnel official at the time of the conflict, said, "Here and there, there are identity-based tensions and community demands. Fair enough. Nevertheless, then again, we are far from alone. What is specific to us is that, under the influence of two opposing and contradictory extremisms, dramatic events with racial connotations broke out at a given moment. These two extremists are responsible for this" (N'diaye, 2010)

¹⁹ Term used interchangeably with Fulani and Haalpulaar to refer to speakers of Pulaar.

A third theory completely negates identity as the sole cause of the conflict. However, it emphasizes the manipulations that have made belonging to a particular group or ethnic identity a criterion of political opposition. Moreover, the political ranking struggle between the various components of the Mauritanian people is being waged under the guise of ethnic and identity struggles. What is really at stake in this view is the sharing of political power and the equitable distribution of the country's wealth (Villasante-de Beauvais, 2001)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This literature section explores the fundamental definition of ethnicity and how it becomes politicized. It also reviews theories underlying the study of ethnic conflict and ethnic bias within conflict perception. Understanding the extant theoretical frameworks is crucial for examining and exploring how ethnicity, among other demographic variables, shapes perceptions of Conflicts in the form of narratives.

CONCEPTUALIZING ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC GROUPS

Due to having many synonyms, often confused with race, tribe, or caste, and being defined in various ways, the concept of ethnicity is polysemic with meanings that vary depending on the context in which it is used (Ake, 1993). This variance led linguists to pursue many approaches to understanding ethnicity, giving it many current usages (Green, 2006). Starting from the mid-14th century, the term's meaning has changed drastically since it was first coined to refer to gentiles or pagans. It expanded to involve racial connotations and was used around the 20th century to refer to the US immigrants from the global south of non-European descent and migrants from within Europe who were not Anglo-Saxon protestants (Eriksen, 2002). Among the numerous attempts to

attribute a concise definition to the term 'ethnicity,' Cashmore posits that it is "any group possessing some degree of coherence and solidarity composed of people who are, or at least latently, aware of having common origins and interests" (Majeed, 2013; Cashmore, 2002). While Cashmore is already providing a basic understanding of what ethnicity is, a more detailed and broader definition, therefore a better definition, would be.

"a social group or category of the population that, in a larger society, is set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality, and culture. In general, at the core of ethnic identification are what have been termed primordial affinities and attachments derived from the place of birth, kinship relationship, and religion. Language and social practices that come naturally to an individual to attach himself to other individuals from the same background" (Majeed, 2013).

Beyond its definition, Ethnicity has sparked debates with many scholars skeptical about the existence of such a concept in real life; the most prominent views argue that the idea of ethnicity is not real and does not have any "concrete existence" but is instead a figment of our imagination, constructed and invented (Banh, 1969, Eriksen, 2002)

Nevertheless, ethnicity has long been tied to conflicts and civil wars in Africa. Eller writes that, in nature, "ethnicity is the consciousness of difference and the subjective salience of that difference. It is also a mobilization around difference- a camaraderie with or preference for socially similar others" (Eller, 1997, p7).

Does the awareness of difference necessarily lead to conflict? The theories are abundant and very diverse; among the most famous are the two main views: primordialist and instrumentalist theories. The former, or the "primordialist" view (Ignatieff, 1994), considers ethnic differences a biological phenomenon based on history and culture, making ethnic conflict ancestral, deep, and irreconcilable. Ethnicity is significant regardless of time and situation and significantly influences individuals' lives and political choices (Barnard & Spencer, 2002). The Instrumentalism perspective, by contrast, considers ethnicity to be a strategic basis for coalitions to gain more

political and economic power, making perceived ethnicity a tool to restrict resources and gains to a particular group. In this view of ethnicity, leaders purposefully manipulate this form of identity to achieve their objectives, particularly political and or personal goals (Barnard & Spencer, 2002; Brubaker & Laitin, 1998). Despite their core differences, instrumentalism and primordialism emphasize the challenges of reaching and maintaining democratic agreements in multi-ethnic societies (Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972). Both views have been criticized for being too narrow, failing to offer insights into the changing nature of identity, or disregarding the emotional and historical aspects attached to it. Many scholars, instead, see each offering a valuable insight, but it is only by combining the two that a nuanced understanding of ethnic dynamics can be grasped (Kataria, 2018). On the other hand, constructivism proposes an entirely new approach to understanding ethnicity by focusing primarily on its conceptual and situational character to grasp its political dimensions. According to this view, individuals who belong to a particular ethnic group might highlight that belonging, depending on the situation, which influences how different groups interact with each other depending on the context, especially when politics are involved (Barnard & Spencer, 1996)

POLITICIZATION OF ETHNICITY AND COLONIALISM

In Africa, one of the most diverse parts of the globe, ethnicity stands out as a profound form of identity. It assumes a complex role, significantly when it correlates with politics and becomes politicized. The phenomenon of politicization of ethnicity transforms this sole identity variable into a device for political gain. How did this politicization happen? According to many scholars, ethnicity has always existed in Africa since the beginning of time and only became politicized with colonialism and colonial forces. However, some studies argue that politicized ethnic identities in

Africa, especially Rwanda, were already structured and formed before colonialism and the influence of European views of racial and identity contrast (Lemarchand, 2000; Newbury, 1988).

During colonization, there was a disproportionality between the ambitious project of controlling vast territories and the actual administrative corps on the field. To remediate this disproportionality or lack of personnel, the colonial power had to rely on pre-existent traditional forms of authority embodied in ethnicities and tribes. This reliance involved these groups, which altered relations within ethnic groups from mere interactions and co-existence to political competition and rivalry (Dilante, 2015). Further, when choosing the group to cooperate with, colonial masters showed preferential treatment to specific ethnic groups while neglecting others in the same colony, perhaps as a result of strategic calculations or merely as reward for loyalty and docility. This was mainly obvious in structuring post-colonial ruling elites and armed forces, which would later be the most significant players in violent ethnic and other identity-based conflicts throughout the continent (Alao & Olonisakin, 1998).

As a result of this favoritism, after gaining independence, it was easier for elites to take advantage of ethnicity to inherit power and governance (Ray, 2016). In a time and context where awareness of democratic values was not widespread, these elites, usually from influential ethnic groups and large in number, could use ethnic ideologies to gain support and followers, thereby using identities to consolidate power (Ray, 2016). For example, the decolonization process in Nigeria was designed to align with the three most dominant and most prominent ethnic groups of the country and their respective territories. Thus, the British colonizers handed or transferred power and authority according to how these specific groups were structured, dramatically creating an early political landscape shaped by ethnic divisions (Joseph, 1978), (Ake, 1993). As political ethnicity became stronger in post-colonial African countries, the challenge of ruling with

democratic values grew. As a result, the disappointed entities, usually from non-governing identity groups, formed oppositions faced with repressions and injustices from the post-colonial state. This repression emphasized the view of other groups as antagonistic and dangerous. It made people turn further to traditional solidarity groups, which became the ultimate and most potent form of resistance to the state's hostility (Ake, 1993).

Regarding ethnicity as a driver of identity-based conflicts in Africa, some studies showcase how the mere existence of ethnic diversity is likely to weaken political stability and economic growth in Africa (A. Alesina, 2019; Easterly, 1999; Easterly & Levine, 1997). In contrast, other prominent arguments posit that unless triggered to do otherwise, ethnic groups co-habit peacefully with each other. This trigger comes mainly as a result of socio-economic inequalities and marginalization against minorities sponsored by the state or the ruling entity between different identity groups, which in turn have the potential to hinder the stability of any country to address these inequalities (Dahrendorf, 2019; Majeed, 2013; Ottoh, 2018). Prior to the colonial era, Tutsi and Hutu were living in a relatively less tensioned environment until the Belgian colonial entity operated with preferential treatment to the Tutsi, favoring them in education and employment and eventually administrating identity cards that identified individuals with their Hutu or Tutsi identity; this would enrage the Hutus and set the stage for one of the bloodiest genocides in the history of the continent (Blouin & Mukand, 2019; LO, 2001). Moreover, in South Africa, the apartheid rule has been based on socioeconomic disparities that expanded beyond wealth to include employment and education opportunities. Although the apartheid ended, the socioeconomic inequalities were persistent, leading to ongoing racial tensions and xenophobic violence (Demombynes & Özler, 2005). Finally, a study in Nigeria concluded that conflicts are widespread when diverse population growth does not positively correlate with “sociocultural integration and economic prosperities for

all” (Olademo et al., 2021). Sen (1973) concludes that there is a close link between rebellion and all socioeconomic equality, as illustrated by previous examples. Socio-economic inequalities may correlate with rebellion and resistance. However, only when factors such as religion and ethnicity are included do they become strong predictors of identity-based conflicts (Midlarsky, 1988).

ETHNICITY AND BIAS

According to studies in psychology, ethnic biases are strongly influenced by “psychological motivation” linked to emotional connections or “antipathy,” respectively, governed by perceived similarities to or differences from an ethnic group. In other words, psychological processes determine a person’s biases towards an ethnic group he does not belong to (Sambanis & Shayo, 2013; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Studies have shown that conflict affects an individual’s behavior, especially towards their surroundings. This is because the exposure to violent identity-based conflicts is considered for many a collective experience rather than an individual one. With time, these collective experiences become collective memories that continuously influence individuals regardless of whether they have experienced violence personally or an identity group they identify (Voors et al., 2012; Zubrzycki & Woźny, 2020). Moreover, the awareness of ethnic violence inflicted upon one’s ethnic group by another or an entity that members of a different group represent is possibly capable of solidifying ethnic identities, making one picky when it comes to their views about strengthening ethnic identification (Shayo & Zussman, 2017). Nevertheless, it is essential to note here that the extant relationship between ethnic identity, bias, and ethnic violence is not necessarily linear and requires many other factors, including local interethnic balance (Heath et al., 2015).

A thorough analysis of the extant literature on ethnic conflicts in the world and Africa also reveals that while there is substantial research on the matter, there is a considerable lack of specific focus on identity-based crisis and the role played by ethnic groups and bias in the context of Mauritania. The few studies that have been done on the subject primarily focus on the political and territorial aspects, with less attention given to the underlying societal factors that shape narratives and opinions about the same crisis, as we elaborated on in the first section of this review. To fill that gap this study, by providing an initial assessment of the relationship between an individual's ethnicity and their views of the instability in Mauritania, offers crucial insights for policymakers and leaders. It serves as a valuable tool in their efforts to foster interethnic peace and national reconciliation, directly informing their decision-making processes.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Demographic variables, including ethnicity and education level, have been shown to significantly influence individual's views on various events around them, especially those that display any aspect of these demographic variables they identify with. Such variables can affect information processing, narratives, and political leanings, leading to biases and shaping perspectives. In the context of the Years of Embers in Mauritania, analyzing how such variables, particularly ethnicity, correlate with narratives and attitudes towards the event can provide an interesting ground for understanding the underlying reasons for different accounts and narratives about the same event and the potential impact on conflict resolution and national reconciliation. In this realm, this research proposes hypotheses organized into the following themes:

THEMES AND HYPOTHESES

Theme 1: The Role of Education

- *H1a*: A Mauritanian's education level influences their views about the Years of Embers.

Explanation: higher education level is likely to expose individuals to a range of different perspectives and information triggering critical thinking which may challenge the conventional views.

Theme 2: Denial (or Not) of Events

- *H2a*: Individuals of the Arab-Berber ethnicity are more likely to deny the events during the years of Embers
- *H2b*: Individuals belonging to the Fulani ethnicity are less likely to deny the events during the years of embers.

Explanation: The dominant ethnicity may deny historical atrocities to avoid responsibility or maintain the status quo while the group who experienced these atrocities is less likely to deny atrocities their own group have experienced.

Theme 3: Justification of the Government's Conduct

- *H3a*: Individuals from the Arab-Berber community are more likely to justify the government's actions during the Years of Embers.
- *H3b*: Individuals from the Fulani ethnicity are more likely to denounce the government's actions entirely during the years of embers.

Explanation: During the event, the government led by a member of the Arab Berber group justified its actions as a defense mechanism against external and internal threats to the country's security and the safety of its people, while the Fulanis were the recipients of the fallout of these defense mechanisms (as discussed in the background and history chapter above.)

Theme 4: The Independence Celebration

- *H4a*: Individuals from the Fulani ethnicity are less likely to celebrate independence.
- *H4b*: Individuals from the Arab Berber and Hartani ethnicities are more likely to celebrate independence.
- *H4c*: The execution of the 28 Fulani Soldiers in Inal is the reason behind the decision not to celebrate the independence of the country by certain Mauritians.

Explanation: The twenty-eight soldiers killed on Mauritania's 30th independence celebration in 1990 were all from the same Fulani ethnic group; therefore, people belonging to the same ethnic group are more likely to consider this a day to mourn the "martyrs" rather than a celebration. While individuals from non-affected ethnicities, i.e., the Arab-Berbers, naturally commemorate the Independence Day of the nation.

Theme 5: Views of FLAM

- *H5a*: Fulanis are more likely to hold favorable views of the African Liberation Forces of Mauritania (FLAM)
- *H5b*: Mauriticians from the Arab Berber ethnicity are more likely to view FLAM negatively.

Explanation: The African Liberation Forces of Mauritania, as the name suggests, is an organization specifically created to advocate and defend the interests of the Afro-Mauriticians. Predominantly founded by Fulani elites who constitute most of its members, people from the same Fulani ethnicity are more likely to have positive views towards an entity that supposedly was or is still their sole voice and representative. However, starting from the years of Embers to this day, the organization is villainized in the eyes of the Arab Berbers, making them more likely to hold negative views.

Theme 6: Attitude Towards the Regime of Taya

- *H6a*: All Mauriticians, regardless of ethnicity, are more likely to have negative views of the regime of Maouiyaould Sidahmed Taya.

Explanation: This military regime, which lasted for two decades, was the longest that the country has witnessed. Instabilities, human rights abuses, corruption, and tribalism prevailed in this era. Therefore, it is more likely that Mauriticians view the regime negatively.

Theme 7: Reopening the Chapter

- *H7a*: Individuals from the Arab Berber ethnicity are more likely to believe reopening the chapter of the Years of the Embers is harmful and therefore support moving forward
- *H7b*: Individuals of the Fulani ethnicity are less likely to believe reopening the chapter of the Years of the Embers is harmful and therefore oppose moving forward.

Explanation: The period exacerbated ethnic divide and led to many atrocities which may explain why certain Mauritians i.e. Arab Berbers oppose reopening the chapter. on the other hand, the Fulani were mostly the victims and are likely less likely to favor reopening the chapter.

To test our study hypotheses, a survey was designed in three languages: Arabic, the country's official language; French, the language of public life, also encountered in education and media (Taine-Cheikh, 2021); and English for eligible respondents who are non-speakers of the two previous languages. This is done first to give the respondents the option to choose the language in which they are the most comfortable and to ensure a diverse demographic background of the respondents to collect a wide range of perspectives. Aware of the controversy and sensitivity of our research topic and to encourage engagement and participation, we ensured that the respondents' identities were completely anonymous, even to the researchers. This was done by guaranteeing that no personal information (names, addresses, exact age, occupations, etc.) was collected. The participants were also informed of the research objectives, the fact that participation was voluntary, and the measures taken to ensure their anonymity.

The survey was designed to measure the influence of a Mauritanian's ethnicity, among other variables, on their perspectives about several aspects of the years of embers, including:

1. Their perceptions and feelings about the events, the regime, the entities involved, and the implications.
2. The impact, if any, of these events had on them.
3. Their perceptions of mechanisms to reach national reconciliation.

To do so, this study employs a survey-based research design to collect data on a Mauritanian's perceptions of the years of embers (as detailed above). Numerous statements were made to represent the different narratives circulating among the Mauritanian population, which are not

necessarily true or false. Moreover, the primary goal of this research is not to assess the truthfulness or the accuracy of narratives but rather to understand and capture the patterns that govern their existence and spread. This approach allows the research to explore the underlying biases, beliefs, and identities that might influence opinions about the crisis.

Recognizing the complex interplay of societal factors in general crisis response, the survey specifically aimed to examine how the opinions on these statements varied across different identities, focusing primarily on the effect of ethnicity and education level, if any.

With the help of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, which is also the primary platform used by Mauritians, the survey was distributed with posts inviting people to participate and share with their followers, friends, and family. As a result, the respondents were included in recruiting other potential subjects, also known as the snowball method. The different posts in different languages included links to all three survey versions and detailed the research objectives and the anonymity and confidentiality of responses. This method allowed me to collect 267 responses in a relatively short period²⁰. To be eligible, the participants must be Mauritians or legal residents of the country, 18 years of age, and consent to participate in the study. These participants were presented with a questionnaire of thirty-one questions. The versions in English, French, and Arabic of the survey are in Appendices A, B, and C, respectively.

Section 1: Narratives

The first section of the survey consisted of Questions from 2 to 18 with different purposes:

- The questions from 2 to 16 are dedicated to understanding the extant narratives circulating.

The statements found in this section were not presented as factual but as an illustration of different talking points that have circulated within the public discourse concerning the

²⁰ Data collection slowed down and drew to an end when Facebook suspended my account due to multiple reports from individuals who perceived the research as offensive.

years of embers events and may, therefore, lack veracity. These talking points were derived from various narratives found in public discourse, social media discussions, and survival accounts. They were carefully transformed into statements designed to reflect the diversity of narratives. In doing so, I aimed to capture what respondents believed to be accurate or inaccurate, thereby the frequency of certain beliefs and how they correlate with a participant's ethnicity and other demographic information (collected later in the survey).

- Questions 17 and 18 complement each other. They aim to capture the respondents' view of the independence celebration by first asking them if they celebrate it or not, indirectly assessing the impact, if any, of the alleged execution of the 28 soldiers during the 30th independence celebration mentioned in Question 13 and following up with an open-ended question asking the respondents to elaborate on their previous response. This allows them to reflect on their answer and articulate their reasons.

Section 2: Knowledge and Self-assessment

After the narratives assessment section, Question 21 was included to allow the participants to self-assess their knowledge. The placement of this question was intentional and aimed to enable the respondents to reflect on their understanding after the exposure to detailed and conflicting statements about the crisis.

Section 3: Steps to Reconciliation

In this section, we move the focus from the narratives circulating about the years of embers to proposing further steps to solve the crisis and reach national reconciliation. We present five statements followed by a Likert scale for respondents to indicate their level of agreement, neutrality, or disagreement with the given statement. The questions included in this section are:

- Questions 22, 23, and 26 indicate a willingness or not to engage in awareness-spreading, investigations, and tangible actions toward a solution (repatriation of refugees). They aim to evaluate the views of open discourse, independent investigations, and repatriation of refugees as a form of acknowledgment and to address the wrongs that may have happened.
- Question 24 opposes 22, 23, and 26 and somewhat indicates an unwillingness to engage in any actions that necessitate reopening the years of the Embers chapter and associating it with hindering peace.
- Question 25 indicates a further denial of events and a more apologetic stance towards the government.

Also found at the bottom of this section is question 27, which was purposefully put towards the end of the surveys after the respondents had been exposed to multiple aspects and narratives about the event. This is to assess the respondents' opinions about the regime in time. After this question, the participants were asked to elaborate on their responses, allowing them to reflect more on their initial choices and provide additional information or explanations beyond the scope of options previously, enriching our data with qualitative insights. The open-ended question allowed an opportunity to elaborate, giving the respondents more room to express their views and get the reasons behind their responses.

Section 4: Demographic Information

To enrich the analysis and identify groups, the final section included demographic questions to gather respondents' age, gender, education level, and ethnicity to analyze our data based on these variables. The demographic questions were purposefully positioned as the last part of the survey to minimize response bias, considering the sensitivity of the general topic of the research. The goal was to prevent influencing participants' responses to previous questions in the

previous sections. Doing so ensured that answers to earlier questions reflected the participants' genuine opinions, not influenced by self-reflection on their demographic realities and characteristics.

DATA MANIPULATION AND PROCESSING

After being on the field for some time, the responses from the three survey versions were combined into one dataset, with all responses transformed into English except for the open-ended questions, which were kept in their original language. When downloading the data, we noticed the length of some of the survey questions and, therefore, decided to transform them to keep their essence while making the variable handling easier. The results are presented below in Table 1 presents the transformations of the survey statements and questions into variables.

Table 1. Transformation of survey questions into variables.

Question number	Variable name	Concept
1	InstabilityMauritania	Acknowledgment of the crisis
2	ViolenceAgainstCivilians	Atrocities against Black Mauritanian Civilians
3	AtrocitiesAgainstArabBerbers InSenegal	Justification of the crisis as a retaliatory response to atrocities faced by Arab Berbers in Senegal
4	EthnicallyMotivatedCoup	Justification of the crisis: An ethnically motivated coup orchestrated by Sub-Saharan Mauritians

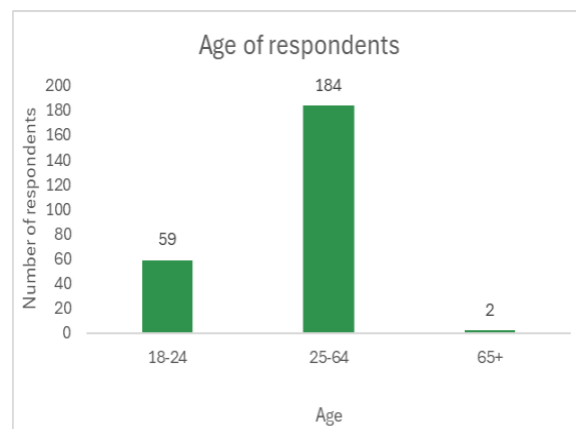
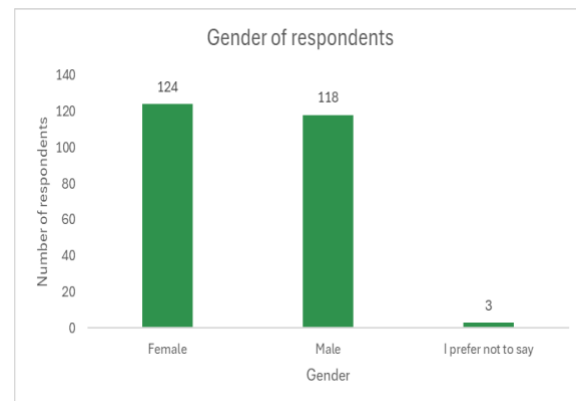
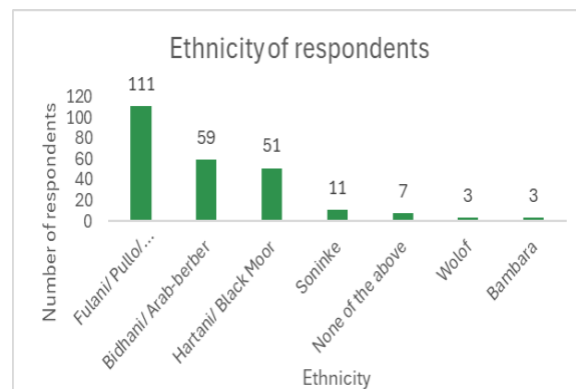
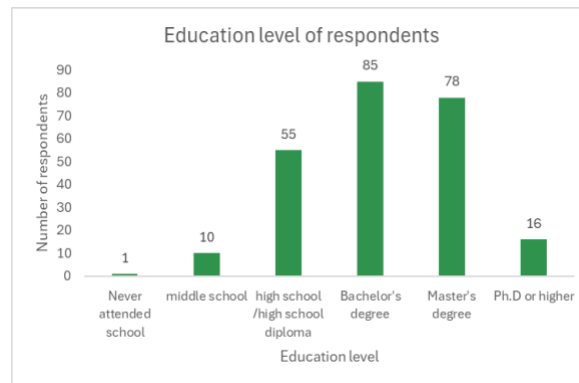
Table 1. Continued.

Question number	Variable name	Concept
5	FLAMAAuthorOftheCoupe	The African Liberation Forces of Mauritania as the orchestrator of the ethnically motivated Coup
6	FLAMPacifist	The African Liberation Forces of Mauritania, as a Pacific entity
7	CoupJustificationOpposition	Rejection of the coup as a justification for the punishment of all the principals responsible
8	L'evenement	The Mauritanian-Senegalese Conflict of 1989 and the repatriation of nationalist to their country of origin
9	ExpulsionOfSubsaharianMauritanians	The Mauritanian-Senegalese deal of repatriation of nationalists to each other's countries resulted in the expulsion of Sub-Saharan Mauritanians.
10	1989atrocities	Atrocities on both sides of the Senegalese River and property theft on the Mauritanian side effect mostly sub-Saharan Mauritanians.
11	1990Massacre	Violence against the Fulani community in the 1990s.
12	1990IndependenceEve	Execution of 28 soldiers from the Fulani community on the Eve of the Independence
13	HangingAsPunishmentForPutschists	The punishment of putschists is execution no matter who they are, providing the example of other putschists from the Arab Berber executed for attempting a Coup.

Table 1. Continued.

Question number	Variable name	Concept
14	Coupjustificationrejection2	Coups are considered normal in the country's history; therefore, they do not justify the execution.
15	HistoryOfTheYearsOfEmbers	Support for awareness spread about the events during the years of Embers
16	Investigations	Support for investigations as a solution
17	ReopeningTheChapter	Opposition to reopening the years of Embers chapter and favoring "peace."
18	ReasonableGovernment	Support for the Government's actions and considering narratives as exaggerations
19	RepatriationOfExpulsed	Support for the return of refugees as a solution
20	AmnestyLaw1993	Likelihood of the existence of the Amnesty Law of 1993
21	Elaborate on response (open-ended questions)	To be determined after NVivo coding
22	IndependenceCelebration	Independence celebration
23	Elaborate on response	
24	RegimeMaouiyaTaya	Assessment of the regime of Maouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya
25	Elaborate on response	
26	Age	Survey participants age
27	Gender	Survey participants Gender
28	Education	Survey participant's Education Level
29	Ethnicity	Participants Ethnicity

Figure 2. Demographic characteristics of the study participants.



A demographic analysis of the survey participants demonstrated that they were largely adults aged 25-64 (75.1%), followed by young adults aged 18-24% (24.08%) and finally, seniors aged 65+ (0.82%), which closely mirrors the broader population of Mauritania where these ages represent respectively (36%, 21%, and 3.22%). Moreover, the survey respondents were made up of 50.6% female and 48.2% male, which is also representative of the gender distribution of the country of focus, made up of 51% female and 49% male. However, the ethnicity of respondents does not reflect the actual ethnic composition of the Mauritanian society. In reality, the afro-Mauritanians (Fulanis, Soninke's, Bambara, and Wolof) as a group make up 30% of the population, Arab-Berbers (30%), and the Haratiin (40%), which is not completely reflected by the survey respondents constituted of 52.2% of the first group, 24% of the second and only 20% of the third. Additionally, there is a high proportion of college-educated individuals (73%) compared to the country's literacy rate of only 67%. While our sample is generally representative of the gender and age distribution, it is important to be prudent when generalizing the results to individuals with lower education levels.

NVIVO AND OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

To analyze the survey's three open-ended questions asking the respondents to elaborate on respectively their view about the Independence celebration, the regime of Maouiya Ould Sidi Ahmed Taya, and the Manifesto of the Oppressed Black Mauritanian, I used the software NVivo, a leading tool for qualitative analysis. The following details the main steps taken to ensure a proper data analysis: The analysis started with creating a new project randomly named "cleaned data last found" and exporting the data containing the open-ended questions and demographic information in Excel format. After the file was successfully exported, the coding process started with creating

an initial node for each open-ended question named after the variable each represents [Independence, Regime, and Manifesto]. Following this step is the creation of subtrees for each of the initial nodes arranged respectively as [Affirmative; Negative], [Positive1; Negative1], and [Positive2 and Negative2]. After familiarizing more with the content of each response and coding them accordingly to the right subtree, themes were developed from these subtrees, mainly focused on putting responses together according to the themes they revolve around. I ended up with five themes for Independence, two of whom were under the subtree Affirmative [National day for all Mauritians; No reason not to celebrate], which will later be merged into one, and under the subtree Negative [There is no independence to be celebrated; Mourning the 28; injustices]. Moreover, fourteen themes for regime five of whom explained the subtree Positive 1 [Nationalism, Equality and Democracy, Economic prosperity, Achievements, better than others] detailing the reasons behind the optimistic view of the regime of Taya, while the remaining nine explained subtree Negative 1 [Tribalism, Social rift, Injustices, Human rights deficit, Forced Arabization, Ethnic cleansing and killings, Dictatorship and Authoritarianism, Corruption, Long term negative effect]. Finally, for the node *manifeste* and subtree Positive One and Negative 2, themes were developed as follows: [Genuine revendications], [Racism, Separatism] to summarize the reasons behind the positive and negative views of the *manifeste*. Note that additional nodes were created to document thoughts, ideas, and emotions coded as [General statements, personally affected] for statements that are not particularly relevant to the open-ended question but might help provide deeper insight and understanding for the overall study and [other] to contain profanities and incomprehensive statements.²¹

²¹ Note also that additional nodes and subtrees were created but have yet to be mentioned in the above summary, as their role was solely to facilitate the coding process, not to bring any insight into our analysis.

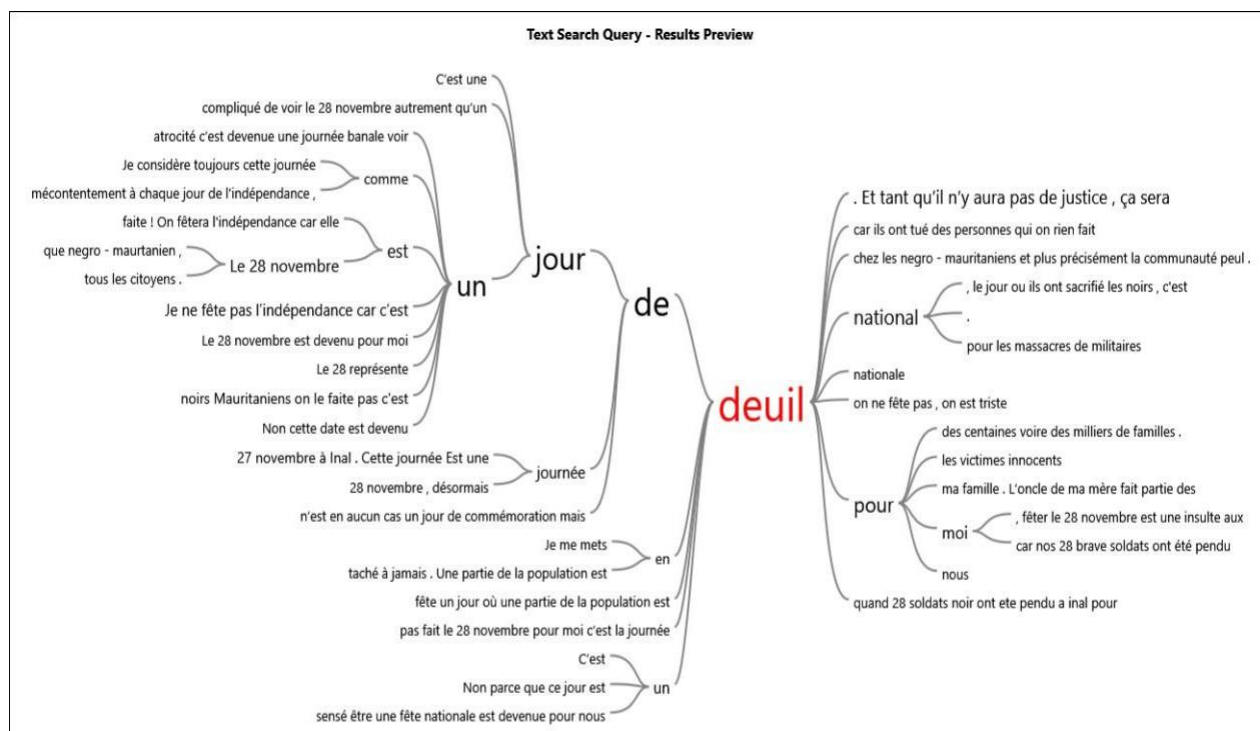
The main objective of this part of the study is to determine if demographic characteristics, particularly ethnicity, have an impact on individuals' views about the Independence celebration, the regime of Maouiyaould Sid'ahmed Taya, and the *manifeste* of the oppressed black Mauritanian and its authors (FLAM). To do so, it was essential to ensure the accuracy of NVivo's automatic attribution of IDs to participants by manually checking that each piece of data was correctly linked to the right person's ID and, consequently, the correct demographic information. Then, using NVivo's auto-coding feature and based on the data structure, each row represented a participant's ID; NVivo created case nodes for each row. Once these case nodes were created, the NVivo auto-classify feature was used to classify the previously created cases with the demographic information. When the coding and the analysis reached an advanced level, visual representations of the progress became necessary for testing the relationships; thus, queries, reports, and charts were created (see Figure 3, 4 and 5).

Figure 4. Text search query for “regime” the most frequent word.



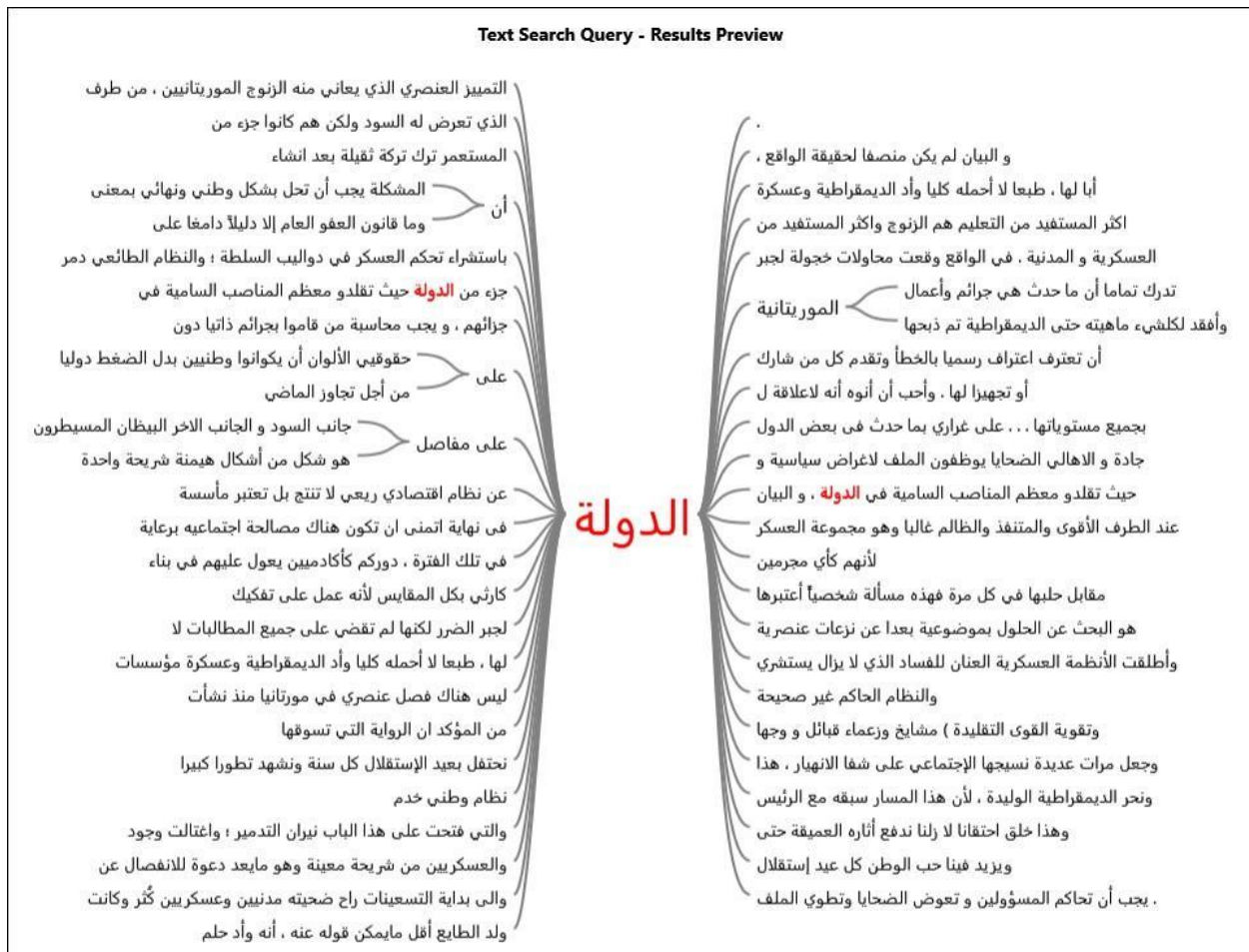
The term “regime” is mainly used to answer the question that asks participants to elaborate on their views about the regime of Taya. Therefore, most statements are like “The regime of Taya is...” or (during this regime...).

Figure 5. Text search query for “deuil” as the second most frequent word.



One noticeable theme revolving around using the term “deuil” or mourn is a response to the independence celebration. All the responses that involved the term “deuil” mentioned directly or indirectly the twenty-eight soldiers executed on the Eve of the 30th independence celebration in 1990 as a reason for not celebrating the independence.

Figure 6. Text search query for “الدولة” as the third most frequent word.



The previous image shows the use of the term “الدولة” in the context of the state and country. There is not a single theme, to sum up its use, rather multiple themes that range from blaming the state for allowing and sponsoring certain atrocities, for not doing enough to address the issue of the years of members, the destruction of the statehood, the necessity of building the state for future generations and the equality and access to employment and multiple other themes, which might explain why the word is the third most used.

RESULTS FROM STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The correlation coefficient values between the variables of interest and the variable of comparison, obtained from Pearson's, were used for the analysis. These Pearson's correlations were then transformed using the Fisher Z score. This transformation allowed us to estimate confidence intervals and compute a test of significance across the different variables using the programming language R. The results were used to verify the statistical significance of the correlation value and to assume a correlation between the variables. If the p-value is less than 0.05, there is statistical significance for an association between variables.

The study employed several statistical tests to investigate the relationship between multiple variables, including correlation analysis, Pearson's correlation test, and Fisher's Z score combination. These tests were followed by a couple of other statistical tests, such as Factor analysis and ANOVA, ensuring a robust and reliable interpretation of the data. The initial correlation test helped measure the direction and strength of the relationship between the different variables, while Pearson's correlation provided further insight into the association between these variables. Finally, for results that showed several correlations of various magnitudes, Fisher's Z score combination allowed us to obtain more precise correlation estimates by providing an overall combined correlation. The results are presented below:

For Theme 1, 2, and 3 and their multiple hypotheses, the results obtained from Pearson's tests were not conclusive. In other words, we obtained several correlations of various magnitudes, and interpreting the results was very challenging. To remedy this, we used the Fisher Z score test to compute an overall combined correlation, which allowed us to obtain a single combined P-value.

Theme 1: Hypothesis (H1a)

The values of the comparing variable (Education) were changed to a scale of 1 to 6 of ascending order, 1 being never attended school through 6 being Ph.D. or higher. Following are the correlations of the Pearson's test p-values between the variables and education level and the results of the Fisher Z score test:

Table 2. Education level and views about the Years of Embers.

Variable	Correlation	Pearson's test p-value
YearsOfEmbers	0.0399	0.616
ViolenceAgainstCivilians	0.1688	0.033
AtrocitiesAgainstArabBerbersInSenegal	0.0442	0.579
EthnicallyMotivatedCoup	0.0059	0.941
FLAMAuthorOftheCoup	0.2117	0.007
FLAMpacifist	0.1228	0.122
CoupJustificationOpposition	-0.0204	0.798
L'evenement	-0.1149	0.148
ExpulsionOfSubsaharianMauritians	0.1129	0.155
1989atrocities	0.0112	0.888
1990Massacre	0.1241	0.118
1990IndependenceEve	-0.0099	0.901
HangingAsPunishmentForPutshists	0.0106	0.894
Coupjustificationrejection2	-0.0029	0.971
YearsOfEmbers2	0.0057	0.943
Fisher P-value		0

The result of our analysis, presented in the table above, displays statistical significance (P value < 0.05). Results are again mixed and relatively weak. This suggests that we find minimal support for our theory that education level does influence a Mauritanian's view of the events. This might be explained by individuals being informed by a sense of identity rather than education level. In other words, individuals are more likely to adopt behaviors and opinions that are prevalent in their identity group and resist change. It might also be explained by the emotional implications for people whose ethnicity is directly involved, which can overshadow the rationality, different perspectives, and critical analysis education may provide. Despite some degree of statistical significance, the correlations vary from positive to negative and are still considerably weak; this means that the relationship between education level and views about the events is dependent upon the specific event and aspect that the variable incorporates. For instance, the most considerable positive correlation is 0.21 for FLAMAuthorOftheCoup, suggesting a moderate positive relation between believing that the FLAM are the authors of the coup and the high education level. To further explore, a factor analysis and an ANOVA test were run, and the results are below.

Table 3. Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances 1.

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Uniqueness
Years Of Embers	0.8426	-0.1614	0.264
Violence Against civilians	0.7044	-0.0328	0.5028
Atrocities against Arab-Berbers	0.1871	0.4536	0.7592
Ethnically motivated coup	-0.0893	0.5916	0.642
FLAM Author of the coup	-0.3422	0.7223	0.3612
FLAM pacifist entity	0.6064	-0.3963	0.4753
Coup Justification	0.5034	-0.0411	0.7449
L'évenement	0.4275	0.3475	0.6965
Expulsions	0.8201	-0.0488	0.325
Atrocities	0.7836	-0.0461	0.3839
1990 Massacre	0.7667	-0.1061	0.401
Independence celebration	0.7452	-0.2318	0.391
Hanging as punishment	-0.1628	0.6101	0.6013
Coup justification	0.5505	-0.2013	0.6565

Table 4. Summary of scores for factor1 by education level.

Education Level	Mean	Std.Dev
Never attended school	0.81601697	0
Middle school	-0.17135961	1.4298335
High School	0.09022599	0.7096418
Bachelor'	0.01092481	0.94355069
Master's	-0.03060055	0.99547681
Ph.D or higher	-0.15727439	1.2673815
Total	-8.12E-10	0.95613949

Analysis of variance

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	1.878072	5	0.375614311	0.41	0.8445
Within groups	220.2732	238	0.925517608		

Bartlett's test for equal variances: $\chi^2(4) = 14.5868$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.006$

Overall, there is little evidence for a relationship between education and views about the years of embers. The F-test for the ANOVA is not statistically significant, with an F-statistic of only 0.41. The appropriate conclusion appears to be that education has little impact on views.

Theme 2: Denying the Events (H2a, H2b)

- a. For this hypothesis, Arab-Berbers are more likely to deny that the events of the Years of Embers happened, seven variables were aggregated into 1 (denying) for the responses “False” and “Partly False” and 0 (not denying) otherwise. The ethnicity was changed to

1 for Arab-Berbers and 0 otherwise. Table 5 presents the correlations and p-values of Pearson's test between the variables and Ethnicity.

Table 5. Test of Hypothesis H2a: Arab-Berbers vs denying.

Variable	Pearson's Correlation	Pearson's test p-value
ViolenceAgainstCivilians	0.2805	0
CoupJustificationOpposition	0.2433	0
L'evenement	0.018	0.779
ExpulsionOfSubsaharianMauritanians	0.2594	0
1989atrocities	0.2726	0
1990Massacre	0.2006	0.002
1990IndependenceEve	0.2156	0.001
Fisher P-value		0

The result of the Fisher P value is significant (<0.05), which permits us to reject the null hypothesis and confirm our hypothesis about Arab-Berbers being more likely to deny the events. This might be influenced by a lack of information about the scale of the events, which downplays what took place. It is important to mention that the correlations, although positive, are still moderate, suggesting that while being from the Arab-Berbers is an indicative or an important factor in explaining the denial of events, it cannot be concluded as the only determinant; instead, it is likely that other important factors also play an essential role in such behavior.

- b. The same variable scaling was done as in 2a but in this case, the ethnicity was set to 1 for Fulani and 0 otherwise. These are the correlations of the Pearson's test p-values between the variables and Ethnicity.

Table 6. Test of Hypothesis H2b: Fulanis vs denying.

Variable	Pearson's Correlation	Pearson's test p- value
ViolenceAgainstCivilians	-0.2249	0
CoupJustificationOpposition	-0.2468	0
L'evenement	-0.0084	0.895
ExpulsionOfSubsaharianMauritanians	-0.1517	0.017
1989atrocities	-0.1887	0.003
1990Massacre	-0.1577	0.013
1990IndependenceEve	-0.2115	0.001
Fisher P-value		0

According to the results presented in the table above, the Fisher p-value shows statistical significance ($P_{value}=0.0 < 0.05$), which supports our hypothesis that Fulanis are less likely to deny the events that occurred during the years of Embers than other groups. Despite this statistical significance, the results revealed weak to moderate negative correlations (ranging from -0.0084 to -0.25) between Fulanis and the denial of the event, which suggests. In other words, as we hypothesized, Fulanis might be less likely to deny the events that took place during the years of embers. However, the strength of the relationship between this ethnicity and the denial of events varied and was generally moderate to extremely weak.

To better understand the two previous hypotheses about denying the events, further analysis was conducted using factor analysis and ANOVA and the results are below:

Table 7. Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances 2.

Variable	Factor 1	Uniqueness
Violence against civilians	0.6943	0.5179
Coup Justification	0.4835	0.7662
L'evenement	0.4067	0.8346
Expulsion of Afro-	0.8139	0.3376
1989 atrocities	0.7774	0.3957
1990 Massacre	0.7998	0.3603
Independence eve massacre	0.7417	0.4499

Table 8. Summary of scores for factor1 by ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Mean	Std. Dev
Arab-Berber	-0.75933458	1.2728188
Fulani	0.39236923	0.4664787
Hartani	0.08211487	0.54960712
Other	-0.12250423	1.1306638

Analysis of variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	51.81166	3	17.2705542	25.63	0
Within groups	162.4068	241	0.673887142		

Bartlett's test for equal variances: $\chi^2(3) = 97.9294$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.000$

The factor loading, and unique variance table shows very high and relatively high loading on factor 1 for the variables (Expulsion of Afro-Mauritanians (0.8139), 1990 Massacre (0.7988), 1989 atrocities (0.7774), independence eve massacre (0.7417 and violence against civilians (0.6943)) and low uniqueness ≤ 0.5 . The high loadings and low uniqueness demonstrate strong representation and significant variance. In other words, these variables are well explained by factor 1 and may noticeably be interpreted to represent a common theme. However, the variables (Violence against civilians (0.4835) and L'évenement (0.4067)) present moderately low loading and very high uniqueness (≥ 0.77), suggesting that much of the variance is not explained by Factor 1 and is largely independent of it.

According to the summary of results in the factor 1 table which presents how different ethnicities score on factor 1, Arab-Berbers present a negative mean of (-0.759), suggesting a smaller association with the factor with large variability (Std. Dev = 1.27) while the Fulanis present a positive higher mean of (0.39) with small variability (0.46). With a negative mean score, these results suggest that the Arab Berbers are indeed more likely to deny the events while Fulanis, with a positive mean, are less likely to deny and more likely to acknowledge the events aligning with both hypothesis H2a and H2b. Furthermore, the F statistic of 25.63 and the p value significantly below 0.05 shows that there's indeed a significant difference between the different groups in regard to factor 1 which brings additional support to the idea that how their events are perceived (Denied or acknowledged) varies strongly depending on the individual's ethnicity.

Theme 3: Justification of the government's conduct: (H3a, H3b)

- H3a assesses how ethnicity influenced justifications offered for the government's actions.

The four variables *AtrocitiesAgainstArabBerbersInSenegal*, *EthnicallyMotivatedCoup*, *FLAMAutorOftheCoup*, *HangingAsPunishmentForPutshists*, and *ReasonableGovernment*

were aggregated into 1 (justifying) for the responses “True” and “Partly True,” and 0 (not justifying) otherwise. The variable *ReasonableGovernment* was aggregated into 1 (justifying) for the responses “Agree” and “Strongly agree” and 0 (not justifying) otherwise. Again, the ethnicity was changed to 1 for Arab-Berbers and 0 otherwise. for the variables. Table 9 reports the correlations of and p-values between the variables and Ethnicity.

Table 9. Test of Hypothesis H3a: Arab-Berbers vs justifying.

Variable	Pearson’s Correlation	Pearson’s test p-value
AtrocitiesAgainstArabBerbersInSenegal	0.0256	0.69
EthnicallyMotivatedCoup	0.1874	0.003
FLAMAuthorOftheCoup	0.3519	0
HangingAsPunishmentForPutshists	0.0663	0.302
ReasonableGovernment	0.2726	0
Fisher P-value		0

The results obtained from running Pearson's correlations on the specific variables were mixed: atrocities against Arab Berbers in Senegal and Hanging as a Punishment for Putschists do not seem to divide ethnic groups, unlike the other variables. Overall, however, the Fisher Z score shows significance ($P \text{ value} = 0.0 < 0.05$). Consequently, we found support for H3a about Arab Berbers being more likely to justify the government’s actions. The correlations in this context are positive and range from very weak (0.02) to moderate (0.35), suggesting a weak positive

relationship between justifying the events and being from the Arab Berber ethnicity. Moreover, FLAMAuthorOftheCoup presents the strongest association with the ethnicity of focus, suggesting that there seems to be a stronger relationship between viewing the FLAM as the author of the ethnically motivated coup, which may justify the actions of the government.

The same variable scaling was done as in H3a but in this case, the ethnicity was set to 1 for Fulani and 0 otherwise. These are the correlations of the p-values of Barlett's test between the variables and Ethnicity.

Table 10. Test of Hypothesis H3b: Fulanis vs justifying.

Variable	Pearson's Correlation	Pearson's test p-value
AtrocitiesAgainstArabBerbersInSenegal	-0.104	0.105
EthnicallyMotivatedCoup	-0.2414	0
FLAMAuthorOftheCoup	-0.4263	0
HangingAsPunishmentForPutshists	-0.3247	0
ReasonableGovernment	-0.2819	0
Fisher P value		0

Despite the negative correlations (showing that Fulanis are slightly less likely to justify the government's actions), the results of the statistical tests were not conclusive for the first variable; however, the Fisher Z score shows overall significance ($Pvalue = 0 < 0.05$). Consequently, we found support for our seventh hypothesis about the Fulanis being less likely to justify the

government's actions. Interestingly, while still ranging from weak to moderate positive correlations, the association between FLAMAuthorOftheCoups and the Fulani ethnicity is the strongest of all.

Table 11. Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances 3.

Variable	Factor1	Uniqueness
Atrocities	0.4237	0.8205
Ethnically motivated coup	0.5848	0.658
FLAM Author of the coup	0.7129	0.4918
Hanging as punishment	0.6593	0.5654
Reasonable government	-0.4291	0.8158

Table 12. Summary of scores for factor 1 and ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Mean	Std. Dev.
Arab-Berber	0.45864097	0.67816951
Fulani	-0.4766862	0.78008503
Hartani	0.35752134	0.58151023
Other	0.3174484	0.81246271

Analysis of variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	prob> F
Between groups	46.5707	3	15.52357	29.76	0
Within groups	125.7035	241	0.521591		

Bartlett's test for equal variances: $\chi^2(3) = 6.5312$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.088$

The factor loading and unique variance table show very high and relatively high positive loading on factor 1 for the variables (Flam author of the coup (0.713), Hanging as punishment (0.659) and ethnically motivated coup (0.585)), indicating strong association with the factor. On the other hand, variables such as (Atrocities (0.423) and Reasonable government (-0.429) present lower loadings with high uniqueness values (respectively 0.820 and 0.816) which indicates that a significant part of the variance is not explained by the factor and might be influenced by other factors not captured in the analysis. Based on the variables and their loadings, Factor 1 seems to capture extreme political measures such as coups and hangings. The negative loading on the variable “reasonable government” provides more insight with this analysis showing that increasing values in factor 1 corresponds with lower values of perceiving the government as reasonable.

According to the summary of results in the factor 1 table, which presents how different ethnicities score on factor 1, Arab-Berbers present a positive mean of (0.459), suggesting a higher association with the factor, while the Fulanis present a negative mean of (-0.477). The positive mean of 0.459 suggests that Arab Berbers are more likely to be inclined to justify the government’s conduct, while the negative mean of (-0.459) suggests that Fulanis have a less tendency to justify or agree with the government's conduct as predicted in hypotheses H3a and H3b. Additionally, the F statistic of 29.76 and the p-value significantly below 0.0001 shows that there’s indeed a significant difference between the different groups in regard to factor 1, which brings additional support to the idea that how the government's actions are perceived (justified or not) varies strongly depending on the ethnicity.

Theme 4: The Independence Celebration (H4a, H4b, H4c)

- H4a explores the likelihood of Fulanis to celebrate independence. The variable *IndependenceCelebration* was aggregated into 0 for the responses “No,” 1 for the responses

“Maybe,” and 2 for “Yes,” reflecting on how likely they are to celebrate independence. Again, the ethnicity was changed to 1 for Fulani and 0 otherwise. These are the correlations of p-values of Pearson’s test between the variable of focus (Independence celebration) and Ethnicity.

Table 13. Test of Hypothesis H4a: Fulanis vs independence celebration.

Variable	Pearson’s Correlation	Pearson’s test p- value
IndependenceCelebration	-0.3323	0

The results displayed in the table above show statistical significance that supports our theory about independence commemoration. Moreover, the moderately strong negative correlation (-0.33) shows that Fulanis are less likely to celebrate independence.

H4b assesses whether Arab-Berber were less likely to celebrate independence or not. The aggregation was the same as in Hypothesis H4a, and the ethnicity was changed to 1 for Arab-Berber and Hartani and 0 otherwise. These are the correlations of the p-values of Pearson’s test between the variables and Ethnicity.

According to the results of our tests, we found statistical significance (P value = 0), which supports our theory about the independence commemoration. Moreover, the moderately strong positive correlation (0.38) shows that Arab-Berbers and Hратиin are more likely to commemorate the day.

Table 14. Test of hypothesis H4b: Arab-Berbers vs independence celebration.

Variable	Pearson's Correlation	Pearson's test p- value
IndependenceCelebration	0.3842	0

Across the tests for hypotheses 8 and 9, the moderately strong negative and positive correlation coefficients between the independence celebration and the respective ethnicity of focus offer valuable insight that deserves attention, reflecting potential divergent meanings of this day for different groups within the society. A chi-square test was conducted to deepen the analysis and further examine the relationship between ethnicity and celebrating independence. The results are displayed in the tables below.

Table 15. Chi-square test of independence between ethnicity and independence celebration.

Ethnicity	Independence celebration			Total
	Yes	No	Maybe	
Arab-Berber/ white Moor	45	10	4	59
Fulani/ Pullo/ Haalpular	13	87	11	111
Hartani/ Black Moor	32	7	12	51
Other	12	10	2	24
Total	102	114	29	245

Pearson $\chi^2(6) = 101.7081$ Pr = 0.000

According to the results in the table above, the chi-square statistic has a value of 101.7081 and a P-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is smaller than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, showing an association between an individual's ethnicity and the independence celebration. Further, this table provided further insights into how celebrating or not independence corresponds with an individual's ethnicity; hence, 78.38% of our respondents from the Fulani ethnicity indicated not celebrating, while 76.27% and 62.75% of the respondents belonging respectively to the Arab-Berber and Hartani indicated celebrating the independence proving our hypotheses that Fulanis are less likely to celebrate the independence. At the same time, Arab-Berbers and Hartani are more likely to do so. However, the results unexpectedly showed that while the majority of the collected responses are persistent with our hypotheses, there is an unexpected finding that suggests some spectrum of attitudes towards the independence celebration, with 11.71% of Fulani respondents celebrating the independence while 16.95% and 13.73% of the Arab-Berbers and Hartani indicated not celebrating.

The previous two hypotheses (H4a, H4b) analyzed the likelihood or not of celebrating independence. The following hypothesis H4c explores the reasons behind the reluctance in celebrating independence by some respondents. An open-ended survey asked the respondents to elaborate on their responses about celebrating independence or not. Out of the 88 responses elaborating on the choices of not celebrating, 81 or 92.05 % revolved around the themes of the execution of the 28 soldiers. With 96 % directly mentioning mourning and grief for the soldiers hanged on the eve of the 1990 independence celebration, we found strong support for our hypothesis regarding the 28 executed as the reason behind not celebrating the independence.

Theme 5: views of FLAM: (H5a and H5b)

- H5a assesses whether Fulanis are more likely to see the organization as a pacifist or not. The variable *FLAMpacifist* was aggregated into 1 for the responses “True” and “Partly True,” and 0 otherwise, reflecting the favorable view or not toward FLAM. The ethnicity was changed to 1 for Fulani and 0 otherwise. These are the correlations of p-values of Pearson’s test between the variable and Ethnicity.

Table 16. Fulanis and the perception of FLAM as pacifist.

Variable	Pearson’s Correlation	Pearson’s test p- value
FLAMpacifist	0.5426	0

The results above display statistical significance supporting the theory that Fulani is more likely to view FLAM positively. The correlation coefficients indicate a strong positive relationship between the positive view of FLAM and the Fulanis, which suggests that ethnicity is a strong explanatory variable of the views about the FLAM. The strength of the relationship being 0.54 indicates that a significant portion of the variance in the positive views about FLAM is explained by being from the Fulani ethnicity.

H5b examines whether Arab-Berbers were particularly likely to see FLAM as not pacifist. The aggregation was done as in the previous hypothesis. The ethnicity was changed to 1 for Arab-Berbers and 0 otherwise. These are the correlations of p-values of Barlett’s test and Pearson’s between the variables and Ethnicity.

Table 17. Arab-Berbers and the perception of FLAM as pacifist.

Variable	Pearson's Correlation	Pearson's test p- value
FLAMpacifist	-0.5066	0

The results above display statistical significance that supports the theory that Arab Berbers are more likely to view FLAM through a negative lens. The correlation coefficients indicate a strong negative relationship between the view of FLAM and the Arab-Berbers, which suggests that ethnicity is a strong explanatory variable in the views about FLAM. The strength of the relationship, being—0.50, indicates that a big portion of the variance in the negative views about FLAM is explained by being of Arab-Berber ethnicity. A chi-square test was conducted to deepen the analysis and further examine the relationship between ethnicity and the view of the organization FLAM as pacifist. The results are displayed in the tables below.

Table 18. Chi-square test of independence between ethnicity and the perception of FLAM as pacifist.

Ethnicity	FLAMpacifist					Total
	False	P. false	Don't know	P. true	True	
Arab-Berber/ white Moor	30	10	11	5	3	59
Fulani/Pullo/ Haalpular	4	0	10	11	86	111
Hartani/Black Moor	5	12	10	8	16	51
Other	5	0	6	1	12	24
Total	44	22	37	25	117	245

Pearson $\chi^2(12) = 132.5132$ Pr = 0.000

According to the results displayed above, the chi-square statistic has a value of 132.5132 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the P-value obtained is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, showing an association between an individual's ethnicity and their views of FLAM as a pacifist organization. Moreover, as hypothesized, the results suggest that 67.80% of our respondents from the Arab-Berber do not view FLAM as pacifist while 87.39% of the respondents from the Fulanis view the organization as pacifist.

Theme 6: attitude towards the regime of Taya (H6a)

- This hypothesis examines the attitudes of Mauritians towards the regime of Taya. The hypothesis posited that all Mauritians, regardless of ethnicity, are likely to hold negative views of the regime of Taya. To test this, a cross-tabulation test was conducted, and the results are displayed in the table below.

Table 19. Cross-Tabulation of ethnicity and the perception of the regime of Taya.

Ethnicity	Don't know	Excellent	Very good	Fair	Poor	Terrible
Arab-Berber	2	7	0	7	15	25
Bambara	0	2	0	0	0	1
Fulani	3	1	0	7	11	89
Hartani	2	1	1	14	11	22
Soninke	0	1	0	0	1	9
Wolof	0	0	0	0	0	3
None of the Above	0	0	0	3	2	2

X-squared = 83.661, df = 30, p-value = 5.802e-07

According to the results above, a robust statistical significance supports hypothesis(H6a). In other words, there is support for our theory that, generally, Mauritians have a negative view of the regime of Taya. Fulanis led these perspectives, with 89 out of 111 respondents from this ethnicity choosing the option “terrible,” 11 choosing “poor,” and only one choosing ‘excellent.’ In the context where the Years of Embers took place during this regime, such results were expected considering the collective memories prevalent within this ethnicity. Moreover, when asked to elaborate on their choices, the majority mentioned the Years of Embers, themes related to its events, and the leader's character. For instance, a respondent wrote, “You can't call a bloodthirsty regime good or excellent. For others, perhaps, but not for us, the victims, who have not stopped suffering discrimination, torture, and so on.”.

Further, despite not being victims of the years of Embers, most of the Arab Berbers participants also expressed negative views of the regime, with 45 out of 56 responses ranging from ‘terrible’ to ‘Poor’ while only 14 out of 56 ranged from ‘Excellent’ to ‘Very good.’ Their elaborated responses, in addition to mentioning the injustices between 1986 and 1991 and general human rights abuses, comprised more diverse perspectives, including themes of corruption, regression of the economy, tribalism, and social rift. The responses included:

“Taya, the worst president in the history of this country, found a close-knit and loving people; he came as a virus and worked to divide, oppress, and racially discriminate people. He also was the primary cause of the ignorance and backwardness of the country compared to neighboring countries in terms of education, health, and infrastructure.”

“There is no doubt that the most difficult period that the country lived through was the period of Maouiya Ould Taya, during which the Years of Embers took place; the Black

people were victims of many injustices, and the spread of corruption, bribery, misappropriation of public fund, and plundering of resources.”

“The regime was Disastrous in every sense of the word because it dismantled the state and strengthened traditional forces and enforced tribalism, regionalism, and ethnocentrism.”

Despite some responses praising the regime as “the best regime that the country experienced” or “at least better than the regimes that followed” and the various reasons behind the negative views, at the general level, the negative views about the regime are prevalent among our respondents regardless of ethnicity.

Theme 7: Reopening the chapter (H7a; H7b)

The final two hypotheses examine the attitudes towards reopening the chapter of the conflict. The hypotheses posited that Arab Berbers are more likely to believe that reopening the chapter is harmful and therefore support moving forward (H7a) while the Fulanis are less likely to perceive reopening the chapter as harmful and therefore oppose moving forward (H7b). The variable *ReopeningTheChapter* was aggregated into five levels: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree), reflecting the level of perception of reopening the chapter of the Years of the Embers as harmful. The ethnicity was changed to 1 for Arab-Berbers and 0 otherwise. These are the correlations of p-values of Pearson’s test between the variables and Ethnicity.

Table 20. Arab-Berbers and opposition to the chapter reopening.

Variable	Pearson’s Correlation	Pearson’s test p- value
ReopeningTheChapter	0.2906	0

The positive correlation shows that Arab-Berbers are more likely to perceive it as harmful and therefore rather avoid any reopening of the years of the Embers chapter. Since the p-value is smaller than 0.05, we rejected the null and found strong support for our hypothesis.

The same aggregation was done for hypothesis H7b but this time the ethnicity was changed to 1 for Fulani and 0 otherwise. These are the correlations of p-values of Pearson's test between the variables and Ethnicity.

Table 21. Fulanis and support for the chapter reopening.

Variable	Pearson's Correlation	Pearson's test p- value
ReopeningTheChapter	-0.3236	0

The negative correlation shows that Fulanis are less likely to see it as harmful to reopen the chapter therefore support reopening the years of Embers' chapter. Since the p-value is smaller than 0.05, we can reject the null and support hypothesis(H7b).

To further our Analysis, we run a chi2 test to analyze the participants responses to the question of reopening the chapter including discussions and investigations. The results are displayed in the chi2 table below:

Table 22. Chi-square test of independence between ethnicity and attitude towards the chapter reopening.

Ethnicity	Reopening The Chapter					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	agree	strongly agree	
Arab-Berber/white Moor	19	14	5	11	10	59
Fulani/Pullo/Haalpular	11	21	4	9	66	111
Hartani/ Black Moor	11	14	3	8	15	51
Other	4	5	4	2	9	24
Total	45	54	16	30	100	245

Pearson $\chi^2(12) = 41.3543$ Pr = 0.000

The χ^2 table shows that approximately 60% of respondents from the Arab-Berber disagree with reopening the chapter while only 29% of the Fulani respondents oppose it which further supports hypothesis H7a and H7b. On the other hand, 35.5% and 67.5% of Arab-Berber and Fulani respondents respectively support the investigations of the events and discussions for national reconciliation. When asked to elaborate on their responses, respondents gave suggestions and recommendations on ways to reach national reconciliation including:

1. Not digging into the harmful past and rather forgive and forget.
2. Acknowledging the events and injustices that took place during the years of embers and fostering a healthy and safe environment for discourse and national dialogue.
3. Repealing the amnesty law of 1993 that prevents trials and justice from taking place and launching an independent investigation of the events and human rights abuses that

occurred, which will result in bringing to justice former and current government officials, military individuals, and civilians found responsible.

4. Responding to the victims, orphans, and widow's demands of retrieving the graves and remains of the people killed during the events and buried in mass graves. Indemnifying and restituting the affected, including the widows, orphans and victims and their families
5. facilitating the return of all Afro-Mauritanian refugees in neighboring countries and assisting them with all necessary means until their integration into the everyday life of the Mauritanian society.
6. Seriously addressing the issues of the "national question" that led to the events in the 1990s, including forced Arabization, monopoly of power, and systematic inequalities between the different components of Mauritanian society.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

After thorough analysis, support was found for the majority of the hypotheses except for the first one (H1a). Our results did not support the claim that a Mauritanian education level influences their views of the Years of Embers. However, theme 2' hypotheses, respectively positing that Arab Berbers are more likely to deny the events (H2a) while the Fulanis are less likely to do so (H2b), were substantiated. Regarding theme 3 views about the government's conduct, there was sufficient proof for hypothesis H3a, that Arab Berbers are more likely to justify the government's actions, and for hypothesis H3b, that Fulanis are less likely to justify the government's actions.

Next, theme 4 evaluated views about the independence celebration with hypotheses (H4a; H4b and H4c), which posited that Arab-Berbers and Hartani are more likely to celebrate

independence (H4a) and the Fulanis are less likely to do it (H4b), with strong support for both hypotheses. There was also support for the claim that the reason why some people don't celebrate is because of mourning the twenty-eight soldiers executed on the 30th commemoration of the independence (H4c) in the open-ended responses the most recurrent theme was the 28 executed with over 90 percent of responses using the word "mourn." or 'grief.'

There was also significant support for Theme 5's hypotheses (H5a, H5b) regarding attitudes towards the organization FLAM (p values =0, correlations = 54 and -50); Fulanis are significantly more likely to view FLAM positively, while Arab-Berbers are more likely to view it negatively.

The variable, RegimeOfTaya, allows us to assess the last theme of attitudes towards the regime of Taya and its sole hypothesis (H6a), positing that regardless of ethnicity, all Mauritians are likely to have a negative view of the regime of Taya. With an X square p-value= 5.802e-07, there is significant evidence to support the theory that Mauritians hold negative views of Taya and his regime, regardless of ethnicity. However, all groups have predominantly negative views.

Finally, the variable ReopeningTheChapter, helped assess the likelihood of perceiving reopening the chapter of the Years of Embers as harmful. Support was found for both hypothesis H7a and H7b positing respectively that Arab barbers are more likely to oppose reopening the chapter and see it as harmful while Fulanis are less likely to do so.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

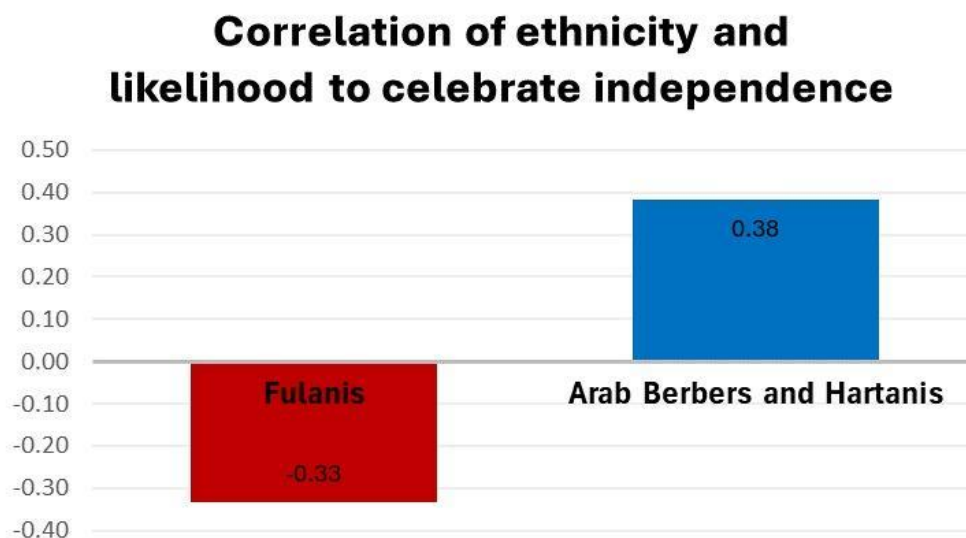
At the most general level, the above analyses show that there's indeed a correlation between respondents' ethnicity and their views on different aspects of the years of embers including, the reasons behind it, the government actions, the views regarding the principal actors, the paths to national reconciliation, and the effect it left on individuals, supporting many of our specific hypotheses laid out in earlier sections. Although these correlations exist, it is essential to note that this does not necessarily entail that ethnicity is the sole explanatory variable, especially considering that several of the correlation coefficients showed weak to moderate levels of association, leaving a large amount of variability unexplained. Against this backdrop, we found a stronger association of ethnicity with views about FLAM and the independence celebration (long-term effect of the events), which will be explored in more detail below.

THE INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION

“I chose yes, but I wanted to say yes, and no. Mauritania is still my country, and November 28th marks its independence. However, the 28th of November is also the worst thing that has ever happened to us.” Posited one of our respondents.

This view was probably the most accurate summary of our findings, where Mauritians differed the most, commemorating independence. Thus, we found support for the idea that Fulanis are less likely to celebrate independence while Arab-Berbers and Hartanis are more likely to celebrate it. Data from the subsequent question indicated that the reluctance to celebrate is influenced by the execution of the twenty-eight soldiers on the eve of the 30th independence. The correlations are presented in the figure below:

Figure 7. Correlation of ethnicity with the likelihood of celebrating the independence.



The diversity of opinions regarding the independence celebration might be explained by correlating the ethnicity of the executed with the ethnicities of those who celebrate. According to the eyewitness Mohamed Sy and according to the last names found in public archives, all twenty-eight hanged were from the Fulani ethnicity, and our research found that the individuals from that same ethnicity usually don't celebrate the day as it coincides with the day of the execution, highlighting the profound impact of collective experiences and memories. One respondent articulated this sentiment, stating, "As a Fulani myself, I can't see this day as a day of celebration, of liberation from colonization, but rather as a reminder of the murder of my people, people who look like me" this response not only underscores the respondent's stance but presents a broader sentiment prevalent within the Fulani ethnicity as shown by many similar responses. Another participant pointed out:

"Every citizen wants to celebrate his country's independence and take part with pride in any event honoring the glory of his people. I only took part in Independence Day celebrations when I was very young. Still, since I've become aware of this painful history, it's been impossible, even unworthy of me, to celebrate it because it's inconceivable to

sacrifice 28 soldiers on the country's Independence Day, a day when we're supposed to rejoice. Instead, you execute the sons of the country, people like me...in the name of what exactly?"

This second statement exemplified how shared experiences, especially those characterized by injustices and animosity toward a particular group, dramatically influence a person belonging to that group regardless of whether they have personally experienced any of the animosity. Thus, in the context of the independence celebration in Mauritania, the awareness of the experiences of someone's peers is enough to exert a powerful impact on their choices to participate in the commemoration.

Our study also sheds light on the various responses among the Arab Berbers towards the same celebration. Many take the default stance of viewing the day as a national day and, therefore, must be celebrated, as some of our respondents indicated:

"Yeah! I do celebrate as a Mauritanian citizen. I see it as a duty." Or
 "We celebrate Independence Day every year and witness a great development of our country and increase our patriotism every Independence Day."

These responses present the view of the day as holding a historical significance, marking the liberation and freedom of the country from colonialism and the initialization of self-governance, which is seen as a day of pride, nationalistic sentiment, and patriotism. Moreover, perhaps influenced by prevailing cultural norms and talking points, an individual asserted:

"Celebrating Independence Day is normal, and the fact that some people claim that killings happened somewhere in the past does not delete and will never delete its celebration."

This might indicate a broader tendency to overlook perhaps or minimize other ethnicities' collective history with injustices. This stance is, however, not adopted by all Arab Berbers, with many approaching the celebration with a nuanced understanding, acknowledging the pain that occurred while still commemorating the day of liberation from slavery and colonization, as one of our respondents indicated:

“Like any Mauritanian, I celebrate the independence and liberation from colonization, but at the same time, I always remember the Inal executions and participated twice in peaceful demonstrations with the victims and widows. A painful incident that reminds us of a dark era in the history of our country; of course, the Inal Incident is not the sole terrible event that took place; other offenses preceded and followed it, But the ethnic character that accompanied it and the symbolic timing makes it unique in criminality and makes its organizers, executors and supporters deep in evilness, may God have mercy on the victims and we hope, God willing, that such things will not be repeated. As for the relatives of the victims who don't celebrate, I have nothing to say to them; I can't imagine the enormity of what they go through when they remember.”

Another respondent pointed out: “Despite the painful memories it carries, it is a national holiday that should be celebrated.”

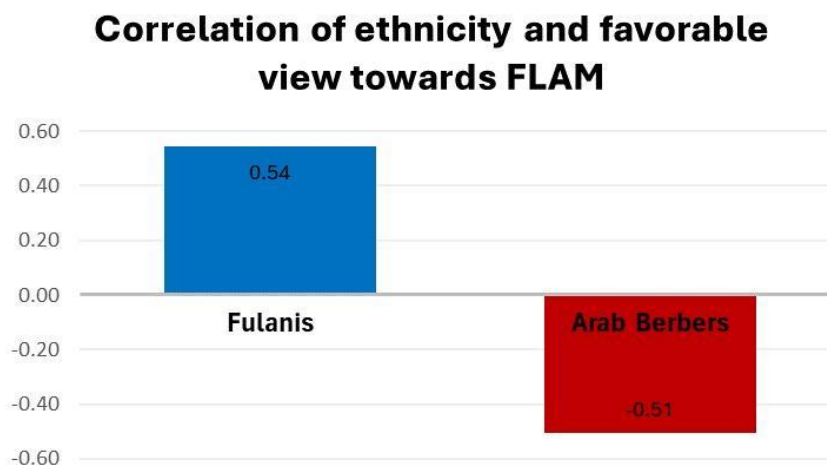
Moreover, despite not belonging to the ethnic groups that experienced animosity, it is essential to highlight that some Arab-Berbers and Hartani not only are aware of the historical injustices but honor the grief of their compatriots and prefer not celebrating while others are mourning, as indicated by our respondents.

“The Independence Day has become associated with the unfortunate execution of citizens like us; it has become associated with injustice, and a painful memory should not be celebrated.”

Overall, the diversity in opinions regarding the independence celebration, from solemn remembrance and grief to joy and celebration, shows Mauritania's challenge in unifying its various ethnic groups.

FLAM (AFRICAN LIBERATION FORCES OF MAURITANIA)

Figure 8. Correlation of ethnicity and perception of FLAM.



Despite being primarily founded by Fulanis, FLAM described itself as a “Multinational, non-ethnic, non-racial organization fighting for an egalitarian, democratic society.” This clandestine organization emerged in 1983 and gained popularity after authoring and publishing *THE MANIFESTE OF THE OPRESSED BLACK MAURITANIAN*, in which they describe with harsh language what they referred to as “the state racism and apartheid’ against the Afro-Mauritanians and the monopoly of power by the Arab-Berbers. What was supposed to be a critique of an inegalitarian system, especially in the case of power monopoly, can be perceived by individuals from that group as a personal attack and accusations of privilege and racism and, therefore, enmity, which triggers defensiveness and projections as a response. When applied to the case of the Arab-Berbers’ view of FLAM and its manifesto, traces of such defensiveness and projection are evident in some of our responses:

“A biased, one-sided, black-only document that blames the Arab-Berber for the status quo when it is the responsibility of a system that also includes black and high-ranking officials

and officers. It ignores the suffering and abuses that the Arab-Berbers face, even though these abuses are of a different nature.”

“The FLAM is a racist organization loyal and a proxy to other countries; it has political ambitions and is not a peaceful intellectual movement.” or “The so-called manifesto was full of inaccuracies and served a foreign agenda.”

"These events were dictated by the reality of the constant aim of some neighboring countries to harm the country. The coup plotters were nothing, but Mauritanian Flamists caught in the act of high treason. "

“The FLAM is a racist organization loyal and a proxy to certain other countries; it has political ambitions and is not a peaceful intellectual movement.” These quotes show strong denunciation and disapproval of the organization and its activities that necessitate throughout explanation:

Movements advocating for the rights of a particular race or ethnic group at the expense of another in power have been met with vilification and resistance from the latter. Such obstruction and rejection can come from a deep-rooted fear of losing one’s privileges with any minimum change in the status quo. In such cases, the default defense mechanism becomes opposition and pushes negative narratives and opinions to undermine any legitimacy the resistance group might have. This might be a plausible explanation of the negative perception of the African liberation forces of Mauritania (FLAM); however, exploring the complex historical context gives emergence to another explanation that provides a more nuanced understanding of the stance of the Arab Berbers. Before all else, FLAM was a clandestine and illegal political organization created in 1983 in Senegal, outside of the country’s territory, with its general headquarters based in Dakar, the capital city of Senegal, and Paris. Created mainly by individuals from the Fulani ethnicity from Mauritania, who also constitute one of the dominant ethnic groups in Senegal, the organization gained support and areas of power in the country's southern regions, particularly in the Senegalese-Mauritanian border and within the Fulani communities. Second, the 1987 coup attempt was, rightfully or not, considered ethnically motivated and attributed to FLAM and was perceived as an

attempt to take power forcefully and violently and “massacre the population,” i.e., the Arab-Berbers. Although the organization on its official page describes itself as “pacific” and affirms “physical violence is neither the goal nor the credo of the organization.”, it also points out that “the organization reserves the right to resort to armed struggle if forced to do so” which leaves room for interpretation of how pacific this organization is. Finally, the 1989 Mauritania-Senegalese conflict, although primarily affecting the Fulanis, also resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Arab-Berbers and many others through violence against them in Senegal. On a related note, the authorities of the time accused the FLAM of being associated with Senegal (**parties politiques en Mauritanie**). In such context and following the points previously outlined, fear and dislike seem legitimate, especially when stimulated by misinformation. If Arab Berbers were exposed to a discourse or narratives highlighting the animosity that FLAM has towards them, in the light of the events and context mentioned above, negative views towards such an organization would seem like a legitimate response.

The Fulanis, in contrast, showed more positive views towards the organization as multiple responses illustrate: “It is a group of intellectuals who want the development of Mauritania.”; “It was a group of black intellectuals who were against Arabization and denounced the educational reforms whose aim was to eliminate blacks intellectually.” “The black Mauritanian movement FLAM was a peaceful and democratic movement that simply denounced the injustices and inequality in the Mauritanian government.”. These responses, among many others, highlight the common pattern of endorsement and approval that the FLAM benefits from within the Fulanis. An explanation might be, as shown by research, that experiencing or being exposed to injustices and violence based on one’s ethnic group tends to strengthen support for ethnically based organizations and entities. (Hadzic et al., 2020). Hence the endorsement of the organization. FLAM might

represent a form of solidarity and community effort for the Fulanis to combat the injustices and address systematic and historical traumas and grievances that they have or are still experiencing in a more subtle form. Such shared experiences strengthen the bond that goes beyond shared cultural identities to include community solidarity around the exact cause.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The years of Embers are a crucial and complex period of the history of Mauritania characterized by the weaponization of identity and ethnicity, which have left collective memories and traumas. These collective memories strengthened social fragmentation within the different components of the Mauritanian society, undermining national unity and social cohesion. As an attempt to explore the relationship, if any, between ethnicity and the views about that historical period, our research findings illustrate associations between a Mauritanian's opinions about different aspects of the years of Embers and the ethnicity he/she identifies with, including their attitude towards the government's actions and FLAM, the effect on the independence commemoration and his perception of ways to reach national reconciliation among other themes. These findings significantly advance our understanding of the role of ethnicity and ethnic bias in post-conflict narratives in general and in the case of Mauritania in particular. While very insightful, it is important to note that this research encountered some limitations, such as the lack of representativeness and possible homogeneity of responses due to the sampling methods choices. However, it opens doors for future research that might explore the political implications of this ethnic divide and its role in delaying or preventing the resolution and investigation of this distressing chapter. It is also an attempt to shed light on a crucial yet forsaken historical era that continues to affect and shape Mauritania's politics, policies, and political discourse to this day. Finally, the study is a call to engage in dialogue and discourse to foster understanding and work towards addressing historical injustices and reaching national reconciliation while embracing Mauritanian society's cultural, linguistic, and identity differences.

LIMITATIONS

It is important to note that although very useful in providing insights and a general idea of a Mauritanian's view on the years of embers in relation to his/her ethnicity, this research study has limitations that stem from the data collection methods. Using Facebook and the snowball sampling method required the reliance on initial participants to share and recruit from their immediate circles and networks, which may have resulted in similar or related views or some level of homogeneity in responses. Furthermore, our data collection methods, i.e., Facebook, led to a highly educated sample of respondents, with 73% of the participants holders of a college degree that ranges from Ph.D. and master's to bachelor's degree, 22.5% with a high school diploma and 4% with a middle school level, making 95.5% of our respondents. Considering that the country of focus, Mauritania, has a literacy rate of only 67%, this suggests some lack of representativeness, which might have undermined the capability to capture or establish the role played by education level (H1a) and limited the generalizability of our findings beyond the relatively small portion of society with access to higher levels of education. Further research should expand to include participants from a diverse educational background, which might necessitate the inclusion of additional languages, particularly Pulaar and Hassaniya, in the research design and the adoption of a face-to-face survey modality.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH SURVEY IN FRENCH

#	Question	Options
Q1	1. Êtes-vous citoyen ou résident de la Mauritanie ?	Oui, Non
Q2	2. La Mauritanie a connu une période d'instabilité entre 1986 et 1991, dénommée les "années de braise", qui a donné lieu à de nombreuses atrocités, notamment des meurtres, des tortures et des déplacements de milliers de personnes, principalement au sein de l'ethnie peule.	Fausse, Partiellement Fausse, Partiellement Vrai, Vrai, Je ne sais pas
Q3	3. Au cours des années 1986 à 1991, non seulement les militaires négro-mauritaniens ont subi des violences, mais aussi de nombreux civils et citoyens ordinaires, notamment des écrivains, des étudiants, des professeurs, des agriculteurs...etc.	
Q4	4. Cette instabilité, qui a duré de 1986 à 1991, était une réaction de représailles aux meurtres, aux coups, aux harcèlements et aux dommages matériels infligés aux Mauritaniens de l'ethnie Arabo-berbère au Sénégal pendant le conflit Sénégal-Mauritanien, qui ont notamment été brûlés vifs dans des fours.	
Q5	5. L'instabilité s'est produite à la suite d'un coup d'État à motivation ethnique dont le but ultime était d'éradiquer les communautés non noires de la Mauritanie.	
Q6	6. Ce coup d'État a été planifié et orchestré par l'organisation FLAM "Force de libération Africain de la Mauritanie, un groupe à motivation ethnique dont l'objectif ultime est de prendre le pouvoir quel qu'en soit le prix.	
Q7	7. Les FLAM étaient un groupe de Noirs mauritaniens pacifistes qui utilisaient leur plume pour dénoncer les injustices et les discriminations subies par leur communauté et n'étaient associés à aucun coup d'État ou action militaire.	
Q8	8. En 1987, toutes les principales personnalités impliquées directement ou indirectement dans le coup d'État ont été arrêtées le jour même où elles avaient l'intention de commettre le coup d'État, le 22 octobre 1987. Elles ont été condamnées à des peines allant de la peine de mort à l'emprisonnement à vie, en passant par les travaux forcés et les amendes, et seules quelques-unes ont été acquittées Par conséquent, la tentative de coup d'État ne justifie pas ce qui s'est passé au cours des années suivantes	

RESEARCH SURVEY IN FRENCH (continued)

#	Question	Options
Q9	9. Deux ans plus tard, en 1989, commençait ce que l'on appelle "l'évènement ou Tasfir" à la suite d'un différend entre Mauritaniens et Sénégalais. Cet incident conduira finalement à des centaines de morts des deux côtés de la rive du fleuve et à des déportations massives de citoyens des deux pays vers les territoires de l'un et de l'autre.	
Q10	10. Alors que l'on affirmait que seuls les Sénégalais étaient expulsés vers leur pays, de nombreux Négro-Mauritaniens, principalement issus de la l'ethnie peul, ont également été expulsés sans tenir compte de leur citoyenneté mauritanienne. Cela a conduit à l'expulsion de milliers de Négro-Mauritaniens, principalement des Peuls, qui ont fini par devenir des réfugiés dans les pays voisins (Mali et Sénégal)	
Q11	11. Des centaines de morts ont été enregistrées sur les deux rives du fleuve, accompagnées de vols massifs de biens du côté Mauritanien du fleuve. De nombreux Négro-Mauritaniens ont ainsi perdu leurs terres, leurs fermes et leurs propriétés.	Fausse, Partiellemen t Fausse,
Q12	12. En 1990, de nouvelles arrestations massives de civils et de militaires, notamment de l'ethnie peule, ont eu lieu et les détenus ont été soumis à des tortures, des meurtres et des humiliations en divers endroits, notamment à Jreida et à Inal.	Partiellemen t Vrai, Vrai, Je ne sais pas
Q13	13. Dans la nuit du 28 novembre 1990, à l'occasion de la célébration du 30e anniversaire de l'indépendance de la Mauritanie, 28 soldats de la communauté peul ont été numérotés de 1 à 28 et pendus.	
Q14	14. Les soldats qui ont été pendus avaient l'intention de participer à un coup d'État, ce qui représentait une menace importante pour la sécurité nationale. Ils ont donc été punis conformément à la loi, comme d'autres putschistes avant eux (le coup d'État du 16 mars 1981 de Kader et Ahmed Salem).	
Q15	15. Les coups d'État ne sont pas un phénomène étranger à l'histoire du pays et ne peuvent donc en aucun cas justifier ce qui est arrivé aux putschistes de 1987 et à d'autres qui n'y sont pour rien	
Q16	16. La loi d'amnistie de 1993 est une loi qui accorde l'amnistie à tout individu ou militaire impliqué directement ou indirectement dans des actes de torture, de violence ou d'injustice contre des civils ou des militaires pendant les années de braise (1986-1991). Quelle est la probabilité qu'une telle loi existe ?	Très peu probable, Probable, Extrêmemen t probable, Peu probable
Q17	17. Fêtez-vous l'indépendance de la Mauritanie le 28 novembre ?	Non, Peut- être Oui

RESEARCH SURVEY IN FRENCH (continued)

#	Question	Options
Q18	18. Pouvez-vous développer votre réponse précédente ?	-
Q19	19. Avez-vous déjà entendu parler du Manifeste du Négro-Mauritanien Opprimé ?	Non, Oui, Peut-être
Q20	20. Veuillez développer votre réponse précédente	-
Q21	21. Comment évaluez-vous votre connaissance des événements qui se sont déroulés pendant les années de Braise?	Médiocre Moyenne Aucune Exceptionnelle Bonne
Q22	22. Les Mauritaniens devraient pouvoir connaître l'histoire des années de braise et toute la série d'événements qui s'y sont déroulés.	Tout à fait d'accord, D'accord, Neutre, Pas du tout d'accord, Pas D'accord
Q23	23. Pour favoriser la réconciliation nationale, une enquête indépendante devrait être menée afin de se concentrer sur les événements qui se sont produits. Cela permettra de demander des comptes aux responsables, d'indemniser les victimes et de contribuer à la réconciliation nationale.	
Q24	24. Les années de braise ont constitué un chapitre noir de l'histoire de la Mauritanie. Cependant, rouvrir ce chapitre fera plus de mal que de bien. C'est pourquoi chaque Mauritanien devrait privilégier la paix et s'abstenir de fouiller dans le passé.	
Q25	25. La période 1986-1991 est une période importante de l'histoire mauritanienne, souvent racontée avec beaucoup d'exagération. Le gouvernement de l'époque a agi raisonnablement, comme il était censé le faire, pour protéger les Mauritaniens des menaces extérieures	
Q26	26. l'une des choses essentielles à faire pour résoudre ce conflit est de permettre le retour de tous les réfugiés négro-mauritaniens dans leur pays d'origine.	
Q27	27. Comment qualifier le régime de Maouiya ould Sid 'Ahmed Taya ?	-
Q28	28. Pouvez-vous développer brièvement votre réponse précédente ?	-
Q29	29. Quel âge avez-vous?	24-64, 18-24, 65+

RESEARCH SURVEY IN FRENCH (continued)

#	Question	Options
Q30	30. À quel sexe vous identifiez-vous ?	Homme, Femme, Je préfère ne pas le dire
Q31	31. Quel est votre niveau d'éducation ?	Licence Master's, Doctorat ou diplôme supérieur, Lycée / diplôme d'études secondaires, L'école secondaire/ college
Q32	32. Quelle est votre origine ethnique ?	Fulani/ Pullo/ Halpulaar, Hartani/ Black Moor, Soninke, Wolof, Bidhani/ Arab-berber, Bambara

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH SURVEY IN ARABIC (نص الإستبيان باللغة العربية)

#	Question	Options
Q1	هل أنت مواطن أو مقيم في موريتانيا	لا، نعم
Q2	شهدت موريتانيا فترة من عدم الاستقرار بين عامي 1986 و 1991، عُرفت باسم "سنوات الجمر"، والتي أدت إلى ارتكاب العديد من الفظائع، بما في ذلك جرائم القتل والتعذيب وتهجير آلاف الأشخاص، خاصة داخل مجتمع البولار	
Q3	خلال السنوات من 1986 إلى 1991، لم يكن العسكريون الموريتانيون السود فقط من تعرض للعنف بل عانى من ذلك العديد من المدنيين والمواطنين العاديين، بما فيهم الكتاب والطلاب والأساتذة والمزارعين... الخ	
Q4	هذه الاضطرابات، التي استمرت من عام 1986 حتى عام 1991، كانت رد فعل انتقامي على القتل والضرب والمضايقات والأضرار المادية التي تعرض لها الموريتانيون من شريحة "البيطان" في السنغال خلال الصراع السنغالي-الموريتاني، حيث تم حرق بعضهم حيًا في الأفران.	
Q5	عدم الاستقرار هذا كان نتيجة انقلاب ذي دوافع عرقية كان هدفه الأسمى القضاء على المجتمعات غير السوداء الموريتانية	
Q6	تم تنظيم هذا الانقلاب والتخطيط له من قبل منظمة فلام "قوة التحرير الأفريقية لموريتانيا FLAM" وهي مجموعة ذات دوافع عرقية كان هدفها الوصول للسلطة بأي وسيلة وثمان	
Q7	القلم استخدموا الذي المسالمين السود الموريتانيين من مجموعة هي فلام FLAM عسكري عمل أو انقلاب بأي يرتبطوا ولم مجتمعهم منه يعاني الذي والتميز بالظلم للتنديد	
Q8	في 1987 تم القبض على جميع الشخصيات الرئيسية المتورطة بشكل مباشر أو غير مباشر في الانقلاب في نفس اليوم الذي كانوا يعتزمون فيه تنفيذ الانقلاب، وهو 22 أكتوبر 1987. حكم عليهم بأحكام تتراوح بين عقوبة الإعدام والسجن المؤبد والأشغال الشاقة والغرامات، وتمت تبرئة بعضهم لذلك محاولة الانقلاب لا تبرز ما حدث في السنوات الموالية	لا أدري، صحيحة، صحيحة جزئيا، خاطئة جزئيا، خاطئة
Q9	بعد عامين، أي في عام 1989، بدأ ما عُرف ب"لحادث أو التسفير" إثر خلاف بين موريتانيين وبنغاليين، سيؤدي هذا الحادث في النهاية إلى مقتل المئات على جانبي النهر والترحيل الجماعي لمواطني البلدين إلى أراضي كل منهما	
Q10	وبينما يُزعم أن السنغاليين فقط هم الذين طردوا إلى بلادهم، فقد تم أيضًا طرد آلاف الموريتانيين السود، ومعظمهم من مجموعة البولار، دون مراعاة جنسيتهم الموريتانية. أدى ذلك إلى طرد الآلاف من الموريتانيين الزنوج، معظمهم من الفولاني، الذين انتهى بهم الأمر لاجئين في البلدان المجاورة (مالي والسنغال).	
Q11	تم تسجيل مئات الوفيات على ضفتي النهر، ترافقت مع سرقات واسعة للممتلكات على الجانب الموريتاني من النهر. وهكذا فقد العديد من الموريتانيين السود أراضيهم ومزارعهم وممتلكات أخرى	
Q12	في عام 1990 حدثت مرة أخرى اعتقالات جماعية واسعة للمدنيين والجنود من مجموعة البولار على وجه الخصوص، وتعرض هؤلاء المعتقلون للتعذيب والقتل والإذلال في أماكن مختلفة، لا سيما في بلدي إينال واجريدة	
Q13	في ليلة 28 نوفمبر 1990 وبمناسبة الاحتفال بالذكرى الثلاثين لاستقلال موريتانيا، تم ترفيق 28 جنديا من البولار من 1 إلى 28 وإعدامهم شنقا.	

RESEARCH SURVEY IN ARABIC (نص الإستبيان باللغة العربية) (continued)

#	Question	Options
Q14	كان الجنود الذين تم شنقهم يعترمون المشاركة في انقلاب، وهو يمثل تهديدا كبيرا للأمن القومي. لذلك عوقبوا وفقا للقانون، مثل الانقلابيين الآخرين من قبلهم (انقلاب 16 مارس 1981 من قبل كادير وأحمد سالم).	
Q15	إن الانقلابات ليست ظاهرة غريبة عن تاريخ البلاد، لذا فهي لا يمكن بأي حال من الأحوال أن تبرر ما حدث لانقلابي 1987 وغيرهم ممن لا علاقة لهم بالأمر	
Q16	قانون العفو لعام 1993 هو قانون يمنح العفو لأي فرد أو عسكري متورط بشكل مباشر أو غير مباشر في أعمال التعذيب أو العنف أو الظلم ضد المدنيين أو الجنود خلال سنوات الجمر (1986-1991). ما هو احتمال وجود مثل هذا القانون؟	مُحْتَمَل من غير المحتمل جدا غَيْر مَعْقُولٍ من المحتمل للغاية
Q17	هل تحتفلون بعيد الاستقلال الموريتاني 28 نوفمبر؟	لا نعم ممكن
Q18	هل يمكنكم التوسع في إجاباتكم السابقة؟	-
Q19	هل سمعت من قبل عن بيان الزنوج الموريتاني المضطهد le manifeste du negro-Mauritanien opprimes ؟	لا نعم ممكن
Q20	هل يمكنكم التفصيل في إجاباتكم؟	-
Q21	كيف تقيم معرفتك بالأحداث التي وقعت خلال سنوات الجمر؟	ضعيفة متوسطة ممتازة معدومة جيدة
Q22	يجب أن يكون الموريتانيون قادرين على معرفة تاريخ سنوات الجمر وجميع سلسلة الأحداث التي وقعت آنذاك	
Q23	لتعزيز المصالحة الوطنية، ينبغي إجراء تحقيق مستقل للتركيز على الأحداث التي جرت وذلك من أجل حل هذه المعضلة. وهذا سيمكن من محاسبة المسؤولين وتعويض الضحايا والمساهمة في المصالحة الوطنية	اتفق اتفق تماما لا اتفق على الإطلاق اختلفت محايد
Q24	سنوات الجمر شكلت فصلا مظلمًا في تاريخ موريتانيا. ومع ذلك، فإن إعادة فتح هذا الفصل سوف يضر أكثر مما ينفع. ولهذا السبب، يجب على كل موريتاني أن يعطي الأولوية للسلام ويمتنع عن التنقيب في الماضي.	
Q25	تعتبر الفترة 1986-1991 فترة مهمة في التاريخ الموريتاني، وغالبا ما يتم سردها بشكل مبالغ فيه. لقد تصرفت الحكومة في ذلك الوقت بعقلانية، كما كان من المفترض أن تفعل، لحماية الموريتانيين من التهديدات الخارجية.	

RESEARCH SURVEY IN ARABIC (نص الإستبيان بلغة العربية) (continued)

#	Question	Options
Q26	هل توافق أو لا توافق على العبارة التالية: "أحد الأشياء الأساسية للقيام بحل هذا الصراع هو منع عودة جميع اللاجئين الزوج الموريتانيون الى بلدهم الأصلي"	
Q27	كيف تصنف نظام معاوية ولد سيداحمد الطابع؟	ممتاز جيد جدا لا بأس سيء كارثي
Q28	هل يمكنكم التفصيل باختصار في إجاباتكم السابقة؟	-
Q29	كم عمرك؟	24-64, 18-24, 65+
Q30	ما هو جنسك؟	أنثى ذكر أفضل عدم القول
Q31	ما هو مستوى تعليمك؟	لم ألتحق بالمدرسة قط المدرسة الابتدائية المدرسة المتوسطة/ الإعدادية شهادة الثانوية العامة / الثانوية العامة درجة البكالوريوس درجة الماجستير دكتوراه أو أعلى
Q32	إلى أي مجتمع تنتمي	بامبرا بيظاني فلاني حرطاني سننكي الولوف لا شيء مما بالأعلى

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