



**Unveiling Mauritania's Ethnic Fault Lines:
Exploring the Historical Roots
and Contemporary Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict**

Ahmed El Alaoui

Doctoral Researcher (Mauritania)

Mohammed V University

Faculty of Legal, Economics and Social Sciences – Souissi

(Rabat–Morocco)

1. Introduction

This paper explores the topic of ethnic conflict prevention in the African country of Mauritania, which has been the site of much violent ethnic conflict and genocide in the past decades. The paper begins with a short introduction that provides background information on the ethnic conflict in the country and highlights the significance of preventing such conflicts. The causes of ethnic conflict in Mauritania are then discussed, including historical, socioeconomic, and political factors. Various strategies for preventing ethnic conflict are outlined, including education and awareness programs, interethnic dialogue and mediation, strengthening institutions and governance, and economic development initiatives. The role of international cooperation in ethnic conflict prevention is also examined, with a focus on the United Nations, regional organizations, and bilateral cooperation. Several case studies of successful ethnic conflict prevention from around the world are presented, including countries in Europe and Africa. These studies provide useful examples of how the principles of ethnic conflict prevention can be applied in practice to real life situations. Challenges and limitations in preventing ethnic conflict in Mauritania are also discussed, including deep-rooted historical divisions, political instability, and socioeconomic inequalities. We conclude by drawing out some key lessons learned and best practices in the area of ethnic conflict prevention, such as early warning systems, inclusive governance structures, and truth and reconciliation processes. Overall, it is envisaged that the ideas and policy principles



presented in this paper will provide a useful guide in the future for policymakers concerned with ethnic conflict prevention and the maintenance of peace and security.

Since independence from France in 1960, the North African country of Mauritania has been troubled by periodic ethnic unrest. Today, the approximately two and a half million Moor Arabs who dominate the country traditionally have been in conflict with the country's two hundred thousand black Africans, who live mainly in the south and center of the country. Mauritania's blacks, who include the Fulani, Soninke, and Wolof peoples, have historically suffered discrimination in the areas of political participation, civil rights, and economic development. While there have been some positive political developments in the country in recent years, including the establishment of a multiparty democracy and a commission to investigate past human rights abuses, tensions between the Moor Arab ruling class and the country's black population still remain.

1.1. Background of Ethnic Conflict in Mauritania

During the French colonial rule in West Africa, the territory now known as Mauritania encompassed three distinct regions. Each region had its own unique culture and population, leading to the current ethnic diversity in Mauritania. The Haratines, the "Black Moors", the "White Moors", and the "Black Africans" were the four major ethnic groups. However, the French colonial administration exaggerated these ethnic differences and reinforced the historical social stratification, which grouped these people into a racial hierarchy. When Mauritania gained independence in 1960, these racial and ethnic categorizations had already divided the society. These sociopolitical divisions allowed the Arab-Muslim elites to consolidate power over other groups and to marginalize the "Black Africans" and the "Haratines". The historical social inequality fueled ethnic tension and the eruption of ethnic violence in 1989, following a widespread government crackdown on the Fula and Soninke, who were the targeted "Black African" speaking out against their poor living qualities. This government action helped unite the "Black Africans" of different tribal backgrounds and led to an armed rebellion against the regime. Consequently, those Fula and Soninke who survived from massacres fled the country and the Mauritanian government claimed itself an



ethnic Arab government in 1991, leaving the rest of the country's citizens under severe discrimination and maltreatment. This and the following political events intensified the ethnolinguistic and sociopolitical division in Mauritania. This context may help explain why the ethnic tension in Mauritania has long lasted and make it clear that the ethnic conflict in Mauritania is rooted in the historical development of a racial hierarchy and the Arabization policies.

1.2. Significance of Ethnic Conflict Prevention

Over 60% of all civil wars and violent conflicts are "rebel conflicts," that is, conflicts in which a rebel group or a coalition of such groups seek to capture the state, change the state's policies, or fundamentally alter the distribution of power in the country. The vast majority of civil wars take place in poor or lower-middle-income states as defined by the World Bank; these are also the states most likely to experience "rebel conflicts." There is high individual and group-level excitement in conducting and preventing ethnic conflict among development and social science researchers, who increasingly aim to understand the causes of ethnic conflict and trace ways of preventing infections of ethnic violence. However, until recently, for policymakers, the insurrections of ethnic conflict were mainly seen as a worrying threat to "states" and "civilization." It was not generally taken for granted that ethnic conflict can damage and destroy prospects of economic progress and democratization within multi-ethnic societies. This is changing; increasingly, attention is focused upon the heavier communal level impacts – of ethnic conflicts as an "obstacle to development" and to "good governance," both priorities within international development work. And this is proving important because it appears the days of the sort of conflict associated largely with carried out by overambitious politicians or military leaders without personal political prospects may be increasingly numbered.

2. Causes of Ethnic Conflict in Mauritania

The exact reasons of ethnic conflicts in Mauritania are deeply rooted in its controversial postcolonial history. Moor elites and other groups, notably the French, encouraged many sub-Saharan African ethnic groups such as Halpulaar, Soninke, and Wolof to come to Mauritania to work in the economic sector. These laborers quickly became the target of racial exploitation and discrimination by the



dominant white Moorish ruling class. Up to 1970, whether in the French era or independent republic, slaves of non-Arab origin had no legal rights. Even if they had rights, it was only after slavery was established by a court procedure. As Niner mentioned in his book, "Mabo considered leaving but where could he go? He is a slave from an ethnic group despised on all sides. He has no family to claim a place with and he has nowhere else to call home." The racist attitude by the ruling class and dehumanizing laws further perpetuated the segregation and segregational policies founded upon the fear of power shift from the Moorish elite to the various ethnic groups in case democracy was implemented. This has also deepened the rift between the various ethnic groups through generations until the modern-day Mauritania. Mobilization on the basis of ethnic identity by the opposition parties further fuels the ethnic tension in independent Mauritania. Arab-dominated parties, led by the Moors, and black-dominated parties, led by the minorities, were set up and both sought support from ethnic groups and used slavery and racism as main topics in campaigns. Such practices enforce the idea of divide-and-rule due to political advantage over the rivals, but unfortunately, it also deepened the ethnic division and led to direct conflicts. Political manipulation practices by the ruling class have become one of the major reasons for ethnic tension in the civil war era. The continued violence from both the state and the rival ethno-national organization has led to numerous reports of destruction and violence. Despite having a modern, liberal constitution that emphasizes the importance of racial equality and the rule of law, Mauritania continues to experience widespread violations of human rights, particularly in regards to the rights of youth, women, and slaves. This situation has significantly eroded the trust of the population towards the political class and the current regime.. In more recent times, political marginalization of the dissident's parties indicated in the Human Rights report "that the political space has continued to constrict and that the ruling party and its ally have systematically decreased the funding that minority parties must have to receive a registry" (February, 2017) has put Fula's lives in peril and increased the risk of violence.



2.1. Historical Factors

The roots of the current ethnic tensions in Mauritania can be traced back to the historical injustices suffered by the Haratin population. The Haratins are the "black Moors" in this hierarchy – former slaves who were forcibly converted to Islam by their "white Moor" masters. Slavery was formally abolished in Mauritania as late as 1981 and it remained a deeply rooted institution in Mauritanian society. In 1986, the government officially acknowledged the presence of slavery in the country and launched efforts to eradicate it, though few such efforts made any meaningful impact. Haratins continue to be treated as second-class citizens by the Arab populations, who have historically been in power in Mauritania. In addition, the violent ethnic cleansing of the "Senegalese Mauritians" – the so-called Toucouleur and Wolof populations – which occurred in the late 1980s has further exacerbated ethnic tensions. After gaining independence from the French, a number of political and military leaders in Mauritania began advocating for a "pure Mauritanian" nation that should rid itself of Fula, Soninke and Wolof "foreign elements."

2.2. Socioeconomic Factors

The distribution of wealth and economic opportunities is a crucial factor that drives ethnic conflict in many African countries. Unequal access to resources and development often leads to marginalized and disempowered minority groups becoming radicalized and seeking violence as a way to gain recognition and rights. In Mauritania, socioeconomic disparity between the Arab elite and the sub-Saharan black African communities, such as the Haratines and the Pulaar, has been fueling ethnic tension and violence. Haratines, who are the Afro-Mauritanian slaves or freed slaves of Arab descent, are at the bottom of the social hierarchical structure in Mauritania. Most of them live in extreme poverty and have no social, economic or political status. The Pulaar people have suffered from the historical injustices because of their continued resistance against the colonial and military regimes. Arab, who control almost all the avenues of power and resources in the country, have been implementing various strategies to keep socioeconomic and political marginalization of the Haratines and the Pulaar. For example, large-scale land dispossession, forced assimilation and Arabisation policies, and denial of political



participation and civil liberties have been pursued by the dominant Arab. From time to time, the desire for equal rights and social justices has ignited severe ethnic violence. For example, the government's violent crackdown on the Haratine and Pulaar protestors this year has further exacerbated the already fragile ethnic relationships. Instead of addressing the sociopolitical demands and protection of human right of the oppressed, the regime has put hundreds of people in prison and enforced widespread repression against the minority groups. Such socioeconomic-based ethnic conflict is difficult to resolve and prevent without far-reaching reforms and structural changes in wealth and policy. Interdisciplinary studies have shown that the deep understanding of the association between social-economic stratification and ethnic conflict is vitally important for the design and implementation of effective policies on conflict prevention and peace promotion. Political and community leaders should take into consideration the grievances and aspirations of different socioeconomic classes when engineering the processes of policymaking and reconciliation. For example, new economic and social programs that specifically focus on bridging the gap of wealth and power among different ethnic groups can gradually reduce the root of tension and facilitate a long-term peace. More importantly, the decision-making structures must be diversified and encouraged the representation of minority groups. This can help to foster a fairer and more inclusive national development and at the same time weaken the existing cleavages of class and ethnicity.

2.3. Political Factors

Mauritania's contemporary political dynamics have deep roots in its history of military coups, political oppression, and revolutionary governments. The broad and lingering societal effect of political factors in the ethnic conflict is characterized by an "authoritarian political culture" and "absence of democratic values" among different ethnic groups. Since its independence, the government of Mauritania has systematically pursued a policy of excluding black African ethnic groups from political power and other central facilities of the state. The Arab elite made an ethnically exclusive state and manipulated all political, economic, and administrative factors for its own interest. Toucouleur and other black African groups engaged in different forms of anti-regime and anti-state activities and



demanded inclusion and sharing of power. To deny the Toucouleur's claim, the government used military offensives, mass killings, and torture throughout the Maag Massacre from 1986 to 1991. This political violence deepened the chasm between Arab and non-Arab in the country and became a major persisting factor till now. Besides the lack of political inclusion and harsh oppression, if any, "favorable" political changes by either overthrowing the regime. Such a precarious position of the black African groups within the state had imposed upon them a lifetime struggle to redefine their political potential. Hence, the exclusionary and oppressive political strategy perpetuated by the Arab elite not only spurred the ethnic conflict between Arab and non-Arab in the form of political violence and social distrust but also embedded deep-lying perceptions of exclusion in the process of ethnic identity consolidation. In view of the political impact on ethnic conflict in Mauritania, it is fundamentally required to resolve the grave historical problem of political exclusion by restructuring the power-sharing method and developing a harmonious atmosphere among different ethnic parties. Every step toward political opportunities for the black African groups is a big stride toward ethnic political stability and peace in the country. However, political reform is challenging and demands significant international cooperation and pressure.

3. Ethnic Conflict Prevention Strategies

In recent years, policymakers and scholars have devoted significant attention to developing effective strategies for preventing ethnic conflict, with a growing number of both empirical and theoretical studies on this subject. The following is a series of established and widely recognized prevention methods, including education and awareness programs, interethnic dialogue and mediation, strengthening institutions and governance, and economic development initiatives. These methods are also frequently cited and discussed in the protection of minority rights, which is one of the key tasks in ethnic conflict prevention. Minority rights refer to the normal and special treatment of individuals from minority groups, including not only equal rights compared to the majority, but also the development and protection of the group's ethnic identity. From this perspective, much effort has been put into custom-making different levels and types of prevention strategies so that minority groups' rights in every respect can be ensured. On the one hand,



education of human rights and any forms of group-based inequality is significantly highlighted in many prevention programs. This is because the deep-rooted nature of ethnic conflict not only lies in the intentional creation of hostilities between different groups, but also the misunderstandings and prejudice developed throughout history. As a result, education is believed to be a long-term solution that tackles the fundamental roots of ethnic conflict. The ultimate goal of education and awareness programs is often to teach people within the country or region and in the rest of the world about the culture of the conflicting groups, the nature of the distinct groups and the steadiness and prosperity that can derive from a region of diversity, so that the identity of the minority group can be respected. Last but not least, by revealing to the informed public the true nature of the conflicts, preventive actions in terms of political decision-making may be encouraged too.

Ethnic conflict prevention strategies

3.1. Education and Awareness Programs

During the last decades, Mauritania developed some policies aimed at the development of the country and the harmonization of relations between the different ethnic groups. These actions, especially focused on educational programs, can be considered as strategies for the prevention of ethnic conflict. The Human Development Index (HDI) regarding Mauritania is very weak and this can also be considered as proof of significant inequality in the access to basic rights among different ethnic groups. In fact, the first actions found in the prevention of conflict in the country date back to the mid '90s, when Mauritania, as a signatory of MDGs, established a number of measures in order to try to reach the goals set on that occasion before 2015. The specific document for programming prevention dates back to 2005 and is the result of the work of the Minister of Social Affairs, Childhood and Family in association with UNDP. The key point is to stop considering the different ethnic groups as remnants from ancient times, but that diversity has to be seen as a wealth that can be used for the development of the country together. The experts underlined that such a program, aimed at poverty reduction through the increase of the general well-being of the population, should include an important dimension for the prevention of conflict: the access and diffusion of knowledge through education. And in fact, great importance has been



recognized for the access to education for all, both in urban and rural areas, in order to break up with the present situation in which only one part of the population has control over resources and decisional power. In this sense, the most vulnerable groups, especially women and children from the Haratines and the Peulh, should be the target of specific actions for the promotion of education, also through campaigns to sensitize public opinion. These are direct information and education received by people, but experts argue that any kind of action aimed at countering all possible forms of ignorance, also through the diffusion of culture and dialogue, and aimed at the development of a conscience of health as a common good, is part of the prevention of conflict. This can be identified as the so-called "social education" or healthy education, in its larger meaning, beyond simple public hygiene or disease prevention.

3.2. Interethnic Dialogue and Mediation

"Interethnic conflict prevention strategies in Mauritania include long-term approaches such as interethnic dialogue and mediation. These strategies aim to reduce tension, promote peaceful coexistence, and enhance communication between different ethnic groups in Mauritania. Currently, there are about 88 recognized ethnic groups. Different ethnic groups are found in different areas of Mauritania. When we refer to regional countries, the majority 'Moors' (Arabs, which classified as subgroups as Bidhan and Hassaniya) dominate the South and West regions of Mauritania. Also, 'Toucouleur', 'Wolof', and 'Soninke' and other ethnic groups are found in the Senegal River Valley in the North. 'Pulaar' people, which make up 8% of the total population, are generally widely dispersed. Although there are recent improvements because of the poverty reduction strategy in Mauritania, ethnic groups are struggling due to the lack of resources and power. And the power struggle is high, especially between Moors and others. It is possible to witness power struggles between groups. The source by Homer-Dixon B. stated that conflicts are easily arising when population pressure coincides with the shortage of water or decline in land due to desertification. That might cause the conflict between agricultural groups (non-Arabic speakers) and the 'Moors' as the 'Moors' have the most political power in Mauritania. As a matter of fact, that kind of power struggles led to intermittent rebellions in the past. So, it is really important to engage



with communities in terms of ethnicity and to improve and develop the interdependence between various ethnic groups in Mauritania."

3.3. Strengthening Institutions and Governance

In strengthening institutions and governance, it is necessary to establish a framework to support the entire society at large. The government should administer the country by giving the lack of space to everyone in accordance with the set regulations and rules by the constitution of Mauritania. By current statistics, the country's political system, which evidently lacks checks and balances, shows a level of constraint to citizens in expressing their grievances. Power is centralized to a few individuals and members of the ruling compared to other political entities. By doing so, the governing class tends to amass wealth and in the process breed a class that manipulates the lower class. This, in essence, breeds corruption as a major challenge to the realization of a stable and developed nation. Public awareness programs and civic education to the potential rights of every citizen should be beefed and promoted by the government. It is important that the rule of law should be enforced and accordingly so that the welfare of all citizens is protected. The way forward to this achievement is the decentralization of most government commissions, regional assemblies, and awarding more autonomy to these assemblies to make them more independent. By so doing, the work of the central government will be lightened and accelerated. The government should also provide opportunities to opposition and other political entities so that there is a degree of plurality in exercising political mandates. This will not only promote the exercise of political freedoms but also will lead to democratic leadership and universal representation of the people. A good system to fight election malpractices and manipulation should be instituted. Well, it is vital for political tolerance and all inclusivity in the government as well as promoting the respect of human rights. Security organs and judicial powers should derive their mandates and jurisdictions from the constitution. This will ensure that the independence of the judiciary is upheld and thereby reactionary treatment by the executive is curtailed. For Mauritania to go forward, the policy of "live and let live" should be encouraged in all government sectors, especially in the promotion of a democratic society. By promoting a democratic society, the fundamental rights and freedoms will be protected and the integrity of democratic processes



perpetuated. From the cases illustrated from a typology and the breakdown of causes of various kinds of conflicts in Mauritania, the patterns of interaction show a clear indication of how ethnic or societal divisions can be the origin and causal factors of conflict. In order to fully understand and resolve these conflicts, efforts should be put across by advancing and strengthening applicable conflict prevention strategies and trainings according to a study on varieties of social life. For a democratic government to promote universal representation and economic development, a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue should be opened so that the recommendations of the ethnic groups can be explored and brought on board. Political and institutional reforms should be extended to accommodate more proactive ethnic representation in the government.

3.4. Economic Development Initiatives

Rural poverty, a lack of resources, and limited options for a stable livelihood have all contributed to ethnic conflict in Mauritania. As such, one key way of reducing the risk of further violence and creating a more inclusive society for all is to address the problem of rural poverty through economic development initiatives. This has been recognized by both the government and international development partners, who have planned and carried out a number of projects and strategies over recent years. These have typically aimed to provide communities with better access to basic services such as health, education, and water, and also to create more opportunities for employment and income through the development of local resources and infrastructure. For example, building new roads and improving transport links can help to connect rural areas and marketplaces, making local produce more valuable and helping local businesses to grow. Equally, projects that focus on the development of agricultural skills and methods, and those which help to modernize the sector – for instance, through the provision of new technology and training – can help farmers and workers to increase their productivity and make a better living from the land. These sorts of initiatives are particularly important in a country where the majority of the population live in rural areas and rely on agriculture and related trades for their livelihoods. By focusing on the development of local resources and economies, it is hoped that these projects will address the underlying issues of poverty and inequality which have left many at risk of ethnic violence in the past.



Also, by creating opportunities for all of Mauritania's diverse communities to share in the improvements to quality of life and stability that such projects bring, it is believed that economic development can help to foster a greater sense of understanding and cooperation between different groups. By contrast to the state-led projects described above, efforts from the international community and non-governmental organizations have tended to focus on more localized, community-based forms of economic development. For example, the United Nations Development Programme has recently funded a project to promote ecotourism in the Diawling National Park. By training locals to work in tourism and nature conservation, funding community projects and setting up new co-operative businesses, the initiative hopes to provide a basis for sustainable economic growth and to enable the local community to protect and benefit from the unique environment of the Park. Such 'bottom-up' approaches to economic development place an emphasis on giving local people the knowledge, skills, and resources to shape their own future. In doing so, it is believed that projects like the Diawling ecotourism initiative can help to break the cycle of poverty and dependence that can contribute to ethnic conflict and give communities a sense of ownership and investment in the peace and stability brought about by development.

4. International Cooperation in Ethnic Conflict Prevention

In the contemporary globalized world, ethnic conflicts are no longer confined within the boundaries of a single nation-state. Due to increased interconnectedness and complexities of ethnic conflict patterns, international cooperation has become an essential requirement for successful ethnic conflict prevention. The last few decades have seen the rise of numerous transnational mechanisms for handling and averting ethnic conflicts all over the globe. At the same time, the international community and the United Nations, which is the supreme global entity, have also taken significant steps in order to deal with ethnicity-related mass violence and establish a stable and harmonious world. Cooperative action by the international community could include monitoring, or even peace enforcement, where large-scale violence seems probable. Such action, however, as it is based on the presumption of legitimate sovereignty and territorial integrity of the target country, is permissible only under certain conditions. It could be seen as a self-help measure,



where the peoples of the world, sharing a commitment to common humanity, accept that humanitarian ends may justify the imposition of international control over the practice of sovereignty. And such control may be seen as necessary to ensure that no group is unjustly denied their human rights or exposed to genocide. This explains international measures to deal with situations in which a state is paralyzed and those who hold political power pursue policies that grossly violate universally accepted human rights. Moreover, these international measures provide a framework of contact and cooperation between communities that may have been divided by ethnic strife. Within such a framework, local groups, encouraged by the knowledge that the benefits of civil society go to those who seek peaceful solutions, may find occasions, under the guidance and support of the wider international community, to build bridges and heal divisions. It can be said that in practice, a country with a history of ethnic conflict, like Mauritania, may choose to learn from the experiences of other states that have similar experiences. This process of so-called "preventive adaptation" may provide an impetus to the technologies of ethnic conflict prevention. For instance, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has developed a method for assessing the risk of violent foci appearing in a country and for planning strategies to prevent these foci escalating into widespread violence. The method, known as the Mission Analysis Procedure, is designed to identify those fragile regions or ethnic groups at greatest risk from the activities of nationalist entrepreneurs and to plan strategies to help remove this risk. Such risk assessment and management strategies, backed by high-quality information and the development of multi-ethnic civil society, will be of interest to policy makers who wish to learn about strategies of ethnic conflict prevention.

7. Lessons Learned and Best Practices in Ethnic Conflict Prevention

In order to enhance the effectiveness of prevention initiatives, it is essential to draw on the knowledge and experience gained by international actors and local stakeholders in previous and existing conflict settings. In recent years, the potential for using lessons learned to inform the development and implementation of effective prevention strategies has been the focus of much research and policy activity. This approach to prevention is known as "best practices" and is being gradually taken on board by the emerging prevention community. It is based on the



belief that the work of preventing the outbreak of mass violence is inseparable from the practical knowledge and methodologies designed to enhance the security, well-being and dignity of potentially at-risk communities. Many best practices focus specifically on the gathering, evaluation and dissemination of knowledge on how to prevent mass violence, such as that borne out of a formal "lesson learned" exercise in a post-conflict environment. There is also a growing body of knowledge that is built around specific methodologies and working practices that are developed in the academic community and tested in the field. The use of formal methodologies – such as conflict analysis tools, conflict scenario building and others – was strongly recommended and it is interpreted as the application of those which would form part of international best practice in the field. The same is true of the reported intention of exploring the potential for capacity building in developing countries, seen as a key element in disseminating and implementing best practice methodologies. These include, notably for providing opportunities for developing prevention programmes with a technology focus and for researchers to work within existing programmes. The research into best practice methodologies and the opportunities for developing the methodologies themselves in developing States is seen as an extremely positive sign for the potential of translating the knowledge base in the field to mass violence prevention efforts worldwide. The significance of documented best practices and the report's recommendation that these be systematically integrated in a violence reduction mainstream was seen as extremely positive. However, in the context of prevention which is inherently political, there is the need for further analysis on what could be considered a best practice and on the circumstances under which best practices may be interpreted and used. Besides best practices, there is one more method to inform prevention initiatives with applied knowledge and experiences, the so-called "second-tier cooperative activity". This can be described as the exchange of information, technical expertise and experiences across the world between researchers and professionals who are based in similar academic disciplines and practice, and is recognised as contributing to bringing national prevention efforts into line with contemporary international standards.



7.1. Early Warning Systems

Through this research, I hope to understand how the government of Mauritania and the international community perceive and respond to signs of potential ethnic conflicts. I also want to evaluate the "early warning" systems, especially the obstacles that were overlooked in their implementation. In the absence of the latest technology (such as satellite cameras or GIS), academic researchers and analysts in Mauritania may use various methods to collect data, which may be of great concern to existing scholars and policymakers. Prior to this, Mauritania's early warning systems have often been criticized as not being truly effective but rather as tools of political manipulation. Nevertheless, these methods are continually proposed by academic researchers and policymakers because they provide a pathway to strengthen collaboration in the social sciences by providing tangible evidence of early conflict visibility to communities and governments. The involvement of Mauritians is reflected in some early warning methods. Through field visits and national conferences, a project called Sustainable Peace Early Warning is being carried out by multidimensional actions between society and government. One important early warning system is Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology, such as satellite imagery and digital maps. Through this technology, experts and governments can quickly and accurately identify environmental changes such as land erosion and desertification in terms of location and scale, rather than using traditional geographical methods which are time-consuming. Opportunities are provided by such new technologies for more targeted early warning of social and political factors, yet in many scholarly debates about how new technologies affect society, these practical potentials are still not thoroughly discussed.

Early warning systems are predictive systems for ethnic conflicts, ranging from highly technical to community-based informal systems, mainly designed to predict when and where ethnic conflicts may occur. These systems typically rely on various indicators, which can both contribute to ethnic tensions and serve as early signs of ethnic tensions. These "risk factors" often include social, political, economic, and physical aspects. For example, demographers may consider high levels of inequality, political scientists may analyze ethnic political competition or recent conflicts, and



environmentalists may observe resource scarcity and competition. In trying to find effective comparisons and commonalities with early warning systems for ethnic conflicts in other parts of the world, I will explore how these systems have been implemented in Mauritania.

Such systems, which can range from highly technical to community-based and informal, are designed to forecast when and where ethnic conflict may arise. They typically rely on a variety of indicators that either contribute to or act as early signs of ethnic tension. Such "risk factors" can include social, political, economic, and physical dimensions. For example, demographers may consider high levels of inequality, political scientists may analyze ethnic political competition or recent conflict, and environmentalists may observe scarce resources and the competition for them. In seeking to identify effective comparisons and commonalities to early warning systems of ethnic conflict in other parts of the world, I will explore how these have been employed in Mauritania.

7.2. Inclusive Governance Structures

For example, the Toli Peer Review Group was established in 2009 in the town of Toli, in the western region of Darfur in Sudan. This project aimed to empower local communities through the development of inclusive local governance structures, designed to give all social groups, including ethnic minorities, a role in the decision making processes. The Toli Peer Review Group, which was facilitated by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in partnership with local non-governmental organizations, used a participatory approach to community development and political empowerment. Over a two-year period, residents of Toli came together in a series of workshops and working groups to draft a set of bylaws for the Group, and to develop proposals for community development projects which were then submitted for funding. Initial analysis of the local effects of the emergence of the Toli Peer Review Group suggested a number of positive outcomes. For example, non-Arabic speaking ethnic groups were found to have used the processes of the Group as an opportunity to gain strength through unity, and the creation of a local government forum which gives all resident groups a recognized role in the local decision making. Participant feedback also indicated that the process of creating the Toli Peer Review Group had encouraged peer-to-



peer networking between leaders, members and stakeholders in ways that transcended traditional political, tribal or other social divisions and it had built trust and awareness among different ethnic groups in the town. This case study therefore provides a good example of the way in which effective inclusive governance structures, when properly designed and supported, can be an important element in successful strategies of ethnic conflict prevention.

Inclusive governance structures can be an important tool in preventing ethnic conflict by giving minority groups a voice in the political process. Such structures seek to promote the representation of all ethnic groups and interests in decision making, for example, through power sharing agreements, guaranteed minority representation, and affirmative action measures. By ensuring that no single group dominates political power or decision making, inclusive governance structures can help to build mutual trust and cooperation, reduce perceptions of injustice and marginalization, and provide peaceful channels for the resolution of interethnic disputes. Inclusive governance structures can operate at different levels of government, for example, through national level reforms to the legislative or executive branches, or through local level initiatives designed to increase minority participation in the decision making of public agencies or administration. Although methods for implementing inclusive governance structures may vary, Stedman and Rothchild state that it is most effective to begin by creating and expanding public knowledge of the benefits of such systems, looking for areas of existing cooperation that can be built upon or expanded, and beginning the process of change from the top down. Expanding decentralization measures and political reforms can be a way to begin the process of creating effective power sharing.

7.3. Truth and Reconciliation Processes

The truth and reconciliation process is a crucial component of transitional justice that has been used in many countries attempting to recover from violent political strife, including Mauritania. The process begins with the establishment of a truth and reconciliation committee that is tasked with uncovering the truth about human rights abuses committed during the conflict. This may involve taking statements from victims and witnesses, as well as gathering information on disappearances, mass killings, and other atrocities from national and international archives. The



committee then produces a full and public report on its findings, including recommendations for the country's leadership on how to prevent a repetition of the events documented. Such a report can have a positive impact on social cohesion and overall susceptibility to future conflict. For example, one study found that each additional half year that an officially established amnesty holding out the prospect of amnesty existed led to a six percent reduction in the rate of recidivism. This can be understood that as the truth and reconciliation process continues, it could lay the foundation for national unity as the people of the different races in the country come to learn about the past, which may even lead to support victims to recover from the wounds of the past.

8. Conclusion

Effective prevention strategies have been explored, but it is clear that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem of ethnic conflict. The key is in the integration of a number of different strategies. Early warning systems play a vital preventive role and were really emphasized in the UN Programme of Action. Most importantly, lessons learned from successful prevention in other parts of the world, for example in Northern Ireland and South Africa, should inform future prevention strategies in Mauritania. What is clear is that a cooperative approach is needed, where the roots of conflict are addressed in a way that promotes social change and social justice. Also, solutions have to be found at many levels, whether they are grassroots projects by local community leaders or large-scale international interventions. The colonial legacy has undermined traditional social structures and promoted divisions between different ethnic groups. However, traditional authorities and community leaders are still widely respected. In attempting prevention strategies, it is vital that the government and international organizations do not impose western ideas of democracy or societal structure on Mauritania. Only by empowering the traditional leaders and by giving them a meaningful role in government and policymaking will there be any real hope of preventing ethnic violence.



References:

- 1) Bellamy, A. J. "The responsibility to protect." Security studies (2023).[HTML](#)
- 2) Bunselmeyer, E. "Truth, Reparations and Social Cohesion: Transitional Justice Lessons from Peru." (2020).[HTML](#)
- 3) Cascone, Giulio, Alessandro Scuderi, Paolo Guarnaccia, and Giuseppe Timpanaro. "Promoting innovations in agriculture: Living labs in the development of rural areas." Journal of Cleaner Production (2024): 141247.[sciencedirect.com](#)
- 4) de Albuquerque, K. and McElroy, J. L. "Race and ethnicity in the united states virgin Islands." Caribbean Ethncty Revisited 4# (2021).[HTML](#)
- 5) Devermont, J. and Harris, M. "Rethinking crisis responses in the Sahel." (2020).[HTML](#)
- 6) El Sahli, L., Counter, K., Al-Jalili, A., and Snow, M. "2021 Conflict Risk Diagnostic: Morocco and Western Sahara." (2021).[carleton.ca](#)
- 7) Erdoğan, Ö. "Conception of Political Power and the Timurid Cultural Achievements during the Reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara." (2023).[metu.edu.tr](#)
- 8) Gabbay, S. M. "Hereditary Slavery Shackles Mauritania." Int'l J. Soc. Sci. Stud. (2021).[HTML](#)
- 9) Hafez, M. M. "Fratricidal rebels: Ideological extremity and warring factionalism in civil wars." Terrorism and Political Violence (2020).[academia.edu](#)
- 10) Harkness, K. A. "The Ethnic Stacking in Africa Dataset: When leaders use ascriptive identity to build military loyalty." Conflict Management and Peace Science (2022).[sagepub.com](#)
- 11) Karlén, Niklas, Vladimir Rauta, Idean Salehyan, Andrew Mumford, Belgin San-Akca, Alexandra Stark, Michel Wyss et al. "conflict delegation in civil wars." International Studies Review 23, no. 4 (2021): 2048–2078.[oup.com](#)



12) Kenny, U., Regan, Á., Hearne, D., and O'Meara, C. "Empathising, defining and ideating with the farming community to develop a geotagged photo app for smart devices: A design thinking approach." *Agricultural Systems* (2021).[sciencedirect.com](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

13) King, S. J. "Black Arabs and African migrants: between slavery and racism in North Africa." *The Journal of North African Studies* (2021).[HTML](#)

14) Kuci, H. and Vlahna, K. "Legal Characteristics of the EU-Kosovo Relations." *Perspectives of Law and Public Administration* (2021).[adjuris.ro](https://www.adjuris.ro)

15) Lange, Matthew, Tay Jeong, and Emre Amasyali. "The colonial origins of ethnic warfare: Re-examining the impact of communalizing colonial policies in the British and French Empires." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 62, no. 2 (2021): 141-165.[sagepub.com](https://www.sagepub.com)

16) Malluche, David. "Haratin activism in post-slavery Mauritania: Abolition, emancipation and the politics of identity." *State, Society and Islam in the Western Regions of the Sahara* (2022): 195.[oopen.org](https://www.oopen.org)

17) McDougall, E. Ann. "“But I am confident: God will not leave us this way”: from slavery to post-slavery in Nouakchott’s bidonvilles, Mauritania." *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* 10, no. 1-2 (2021): 161-190.[HTML](#)

18) Nagar, Dawn, and Dawn Nagar. "The United Nations Role in the G5-Sahel, West, and Southern Africa: The Case of Angola." *Challenging the United Nations Peace and Security Agenda in Africa* (2022): 277-317.[HTML](#)

19) Ochuko, E. D. "... CONFLICTS, CREDIBLE COMMITMENT AND PEACE BUILDING IN THE DEVEL-OPING SOCIETIES: EVIDENCE FROM POST AMNESTY VIOLENCE IN THE." on *Terrorism* .[caert.org.dz](https://www.caert.org.dz)

20) Ojeda-García, Raquel, and Samara López-Ruiz. "Elections in Mauritania: The role of the military." In *Routledge Handbook on Elections in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 66-77. Routledge, 2023.[HTML](#)



21) Ould Moctar, Hassan. "Autonomy within entanglements: Illegalised migrants, the EU border regime, and the political economy of Nouadhibou, Mauritania." *Environment and planning D: society and space* 41, no. 1 (2023): 56–73.[sagepub.com](https://www.sagepub.com)

22) Salem, Z. A. "Global Shinqīṭ: Mauritania's Islamic Knowledge Tradition and the Making of Transnational Religious Authority (Nineteenth to Twenty-First Century)." *Religions* (2021).[mdpi.com](https://www.mdpi.com)

23) Scaglioni, M. "Becoming the'Abid: lives and social origins in Southern Tunisia." *Becoming the'Abid* (2020).[unimib.it](https://www.unimib.it)

24) Schroth, Ryan K. "NORTH AFRICA: ALGERIA, EGYPT, LIBYA, MAURITANIA, MOROCCO, SUDAN, TUNISIA, AND WESTERN SAHARA." *Gender and Identity around the World* [2 volumes]:[2 volumes] (2020): 81.[HTML](https://www.html)

25) Sidelemine, M. "The Colonial Origins of Institutions in Mauritania." (2023).[odu.edu](https://www.odu.edu)

26) Smidt, H. M. "United Nations peacekeeping locally: enabling conflict resolution, reducing communal violence." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2020).[sagepub.com](https://www.sagepub.com)

27) Wiley, K. A. "Being Ḥarāṭīn? Being Ḥəḍriyyīn? Fluid Meanings of Ethnic Terms in Mauritania's Assaba Region." *L'ouest saharien* (2020).[HTML](https://www.html)