

Mauritania electricity policy

The electricity sector in Mauritania is characterised by a fragmented electricity network, low electricity access rates, and an imbalance between supply and demand. Due to low population density and dispersion over a vast territory, the transmission network comprises the interconnected grid and standalone networks (several isolated sub-networks ...

EU-Mauritania Partnership to boost green energy . The European Union (EU) has been closely supporting the Mauritanian government to develop their electricity sector. This support has included: Outlining new energy policy; Drafting of a new electricity code to promote a transition to renewable energy

On July 28, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with his Mauritanian counterpart, President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ghazouani, in the Chinese city of Chengdu. Xi's meeting with Ghazouani was his second in the space of eight months, as the two leaders met at the China-Arab States Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Dec. 9, 2022. After their meeting, China signed a cooperation agreement, which spanned the agriculture, fisheries, and green energy sectors, and granted \$21 million in debt relief to Mauritania.

These meetings underscore Mauritania's status as the sole bastion of relative political stability in the Sahel region, which consists of junta-led regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger. It also encapsulates the often-overlooked intensification of geostrategic competition in Mauritania. This competition revolves around Mauritania's natural gas reserves and the green energy potential presented by its vast desert terrain--not to mention its strategically valuable position on the Atlantic coast.

China's courtship of Mauritania mirrors parallel overtures by other great powers and regional powers in the Middle East. These outreaches span from counterterrorism initiatives to green hydrogen development and will likely intensify if the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decides to intervene militarily in Niger.

After securing independence from France in November 1960, Mauritania's political trajectory was firmly enmeshed in the Sahel's vicious cycle of instability and human rights abuses. Mauritania aligned with Morocco in the 1975-1991 Western Sahara War against the Sahrawi separatist Polisario Front. This intervention, which coincided with Morocco's Green March annexation of the Western Sahara, resulted in a disastrous defeat for Mauritanian forces.

As Mauritania prepared to end its involvement in the conflict, Col. Mustafa Ould Salek staged a coup d'état against Mauritania's first postcolonial president, Moktar Ould Daddah, in July 1978. Less than a year later, Salek was ousted in a second coup for accepting a unilateral cease-fire with the Polisario Front and inflaming racial tensions between the southern region's Black Mauritians and the northern region's Arab Moors.

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Salek's swift rise and fall set the tone for Mauritania's political course over the next three decades. It experienced coups in 1980, 1984, 2005, and 2008, and weathered serious coup attempts in 1981 and 2003. Communal violence between the dominant Mauri Arab-Berber population and Black African minority persisted and resulted in the exodus of tens of thousands of Black Mauritians to Senegal in April 1989.

Mauritania also gained global notoriety for the continued enslavement of its Black population by Arab masters. This practice persisted after Mauritania's abolition of slavery in 1981 and its subsequent banning in 2007. A May 2016 U.N. Human Rights Council report warned that Mauritania's state anti-poverty agency, Tadamoun, had assumed a "very low profile" in addressing slavery's consequences. The International Labor Organization went further, stating in June 2017 that slavery continues "on a widespread basis, despite numerous discussions."

Despite its history of coups and the endurance of slavery, Mauritania's counterterrorism campaign and democratic transition have been among the Sahel's few success stories. Since al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb militants abducted police officer Ely Ould Mokhtar in the Mauritania-Mali border town of Adel Bagrou in December 2011, Mauritania has not experienced terrorist attacks.

Its July 2010 anti-terrorism law, which allowed mobile combat-trained desert units called special intervention groups to attack terrorists, weakened militants on the country's northern borders. State-approved outreach by imams to Salafist communities, which extolled Islam's "tradition of tolerance," encouraged would-be extremists to integrate with Mauritanian society. The U.N. has hailed the efforts of female Islamic scholars, such as Zeinabou Maata, in convincing the wives, sisters, and mothers of Salafist detainees to abandon their extremist views.

In September 2018, Mauritania's political system took an unexpected turn toward liberalization. Legislative elections featured the opposition National Forum for Democracy and Unity party, which had boycotted previous voting cycles. The African Union endorsed the credibility of the ruling Union for the Republic (UPR) victory. Even more strikingly, anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid won a seat in the legislature. Abeid ran for office from prison but his campaign triumph facilitated his eventual release.

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