



Election Watch TEIM  
ELECTORAL PROFILE:  
**MAURITANIA/Presidential**  
March 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
**OPEX Memorandum-Electoral Watch Series No. 1**

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(*In situ* Monitoring)<sup>1</sup>

**Background of the elections:**

The Presidential Elections took place on 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March 2007, having as precedence those conducted on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2003. This one was the most questioned since Ould Taya, who has been in power since 1984, tried to make a U-turn on the political order and thus win international support through the periodical call for elections, the Presidential ones included. Nevertheless, the election of 2003 worsened those critics of president Ould Taya given that one of the candidates, Ould Haidallah, was arrested before election day under the accusation of organising a coup together with his son and others, to be soon released and not preventing the voting. A tribunal confirmed those accusations and Ould Haidallah was sentenced a five year term. The results manifested a complete victory of the candidate Ould Taya with 67% of the scrutinised votes, while Ould Haidallah got 18% and Ahmed Ould Daddah, 6.9%.

That year was also characterised by few coup attempts, until finally, the military seized power on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2005 not finding any violent reaction neither from the rest of the military, nor from the government party or from the population. Thus, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy was constituted, inaugurating a transition period with a close watch on the side of the United Nations and the European Union (under the Cotonou agreement). The 24 compromises the military junta was forced to agree upon have been respected and specially, those referring to the electoral processes, holding general, municipal and presidential elections; a reform of the Constitution of 1991 through a referendum; the creation of a National Electoral Commission; the revision of the electoral rolls; the demand for the holding of an electoral letter and the national identity card to cast the vote; and the compromise that none of the members of the military Council for Justice and Development would be present as a candidate to any of the elections.

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<sup>1</sup> Made under the framework of the Research & Development Project of the "Political Watch of the Maghreb" directed by M. Angustias Parejo, University of Granada.

**Democracy quantitative indices:**

Measurement	Name and year of the report or data base	Institution	Index	Ranking and Classification
Political rights and freedom	Freedom House Report 2006	Freedom House	PR: Political Rights; CL: Civil Liberties	PR: 5; CL: 4 (Scale 1 free-7 not free) Status: partially free
Consolidation of the democratic and authoritarian institutions	Polity IV 2004	Center for International Development and Conflict Management	Democracy: consolidation of democratic institutions; Autocracy: authoritarian consolidation; Polity: synthesis of both	Executive recruitment: 2 Executive constrains: 3 Political participation: 2 Clasif: factional/ restricted competition
Corruption perception	Corruption Perception Index 2006	Transparency International	TICPI: Corruption Perception	TICPI: 3.1/10 (Scale: 1 very corrupt to 10 not corrupted) Country rank: 84 / 158
Democracy, including freedom and corruption	World Democracy Audit 2006	World Audit	World Democracy Rank: political freedom (FH) + press and corruption (TI)	WDA rank: 78/150 4 <sup>th</sup> Division of 4

Measurement of democracy of these elections according to Polyarchy 2.0 index	Synthesis : 11.53 Participation: 24.46 Competition: 47.15	Classification: <b>Democratic</b>
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**Definition of the political system:**

From a formal point of view, the political system is semi-presidentialist, based on the French Constitution 5<sup>th</sup> Republic model of 1958. As a matter of fact, it is a strongly presidentialist system with the clear intervention of the army. This transition phase (from the coup in August 2005 till the proclamation of the newly elected president in 27<sup>th</sup> November 2007), the Military Council for Justice and Development has remained aside of the electoral game in both institutional and formal ways.

**Definition of the Electoral System and Parties:**

Majority Two-Round system (TRS) for the Presidential elections. In the legislative ones, for choosing a third of the National Assembly (31 seats), a proportional system was followed, where 17 are chosen through the regional circumscriptions, and 14 through national lists. The 64 resting members will be chosen through a majority two-round system. Independent candidatures are allowed. The members of the Senate are indirectly chosen among the municipal representatives. In the municipal elections, the system is a proportional one-round system.

There is a false multiple party system, with a strong prevalence of the Democratic and Social Republican Party (DSRP) which is in government since the 2005 coup, paving the way for an open and competitive system. In this new scenario, many new parties have emerged together with the traditional ones to form an opposition to Ould Taya and those in his government. All of them have been allowed participation in the electoral process, although not all of them had the same material and financial instruments. The Islamist parties (such as the Centrist Reformists, CR) are the exception to the opening of the electoral process given they were illegalised, but could actually take part in it through independent candidatures.

### **Impact of the electoral procedure and size of circumscriptions on elections:**

There have been 2,378 electoral schools among the 13 *wilayas* or circumscriptions. A big effort has been made especially at the second round of the presidential election, so that every voter (1,134,774 registered) could easily obtain its electoral card and elude electoral frauds.

Although the counting of votes is carried out in each *wilaya*, the truth is that each circumscription is unique given that what matters is the total number of direct votes at national level instead of the *wilayas* won. In fact, Ould Daddah won in 7 out of 13 *wilayas*, but they had a lesser number of voters and the number of votes obtained was not higher than those of the other candidates. Meanwhile, Ould Sheikh Abdallahi won in 6 *wilayas* with a higher percentage of votes.

The electoral formula varies at the legislative elections according to the size of the circumscriptions and the number of members of parliament. Thus, if the circumscription is made up of 1 or 2 seats, the two-round majority system is followed. If the circumscription is made up of more than two seats, a system will follow a list of proportional representation and people will vote for a list (as for those circumscriptions with two seats).

### **Election results:**

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[www.uam.es/otroscentros/TEIM/election\\_watch/Election\\_Watch\\_presentation.htm](http://www.uam.es/otroscentros/TEIM/election_watch/Election_Watch_presentation.htm)

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1<sup>st</sup> Round 11<sup>th</sup> March 2007

Name of the candidate	Party	% votes
Zeine Ould Zeidane	Independent candidate	15.27
Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi	Independent candidate	24.79
Moulaye El Hacem Ould Jied	Mauritanian Party for Renewal and Concord (Parti Mauritanien pour le Renouveau et la Concorde, PMRC)	0.34
Mohamed Ould Maouloud	Union of Forces of Progress (L'Union des Forces du Progrès, UFP)	4.08
Dahane Ould Ahmed Mahmoud	Independent candidate	2.07
Ahmed Ould Daddah	Rally of Democratic Forces (Rassemblement des Forces Démocratique, RFD)	20.68
Mohamed Ahmed Ould Baba Ahmed Ould Salihi	Independent candidate	0.38
Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla	Independent candidate	1.73
Isselmou Ould El Moustapha	Party for the Democratic Cooperation (PDC)	0.24
Mohamed Ould Cheikhna	Independent candidate	1.92
Messaoud Ould Boulkheir	People's Progressive Alliance (L'Alliance Populaire Progressiste, APP)	9.80
Saleh Ould Mohamedou Ould Hanana	Mauritanian Party for Union and Change (Parti Mauritanien pour l'Unité et le Changement, HATEM)	7.65
Mohamed Ould Mohamed El Moctar Ould Tomi	Independent candidate.	0.20
Ba Mamadou Alassane	Party for Freedom, Equality and Justice (Parti pour la Liberté, l'Égalité et la Justice, PLEJ)	0.55
Rajel dit Rachid Moustaph	Mauritanian Party of Liberal Democrats (Parti Mauritanien des Libéraux Démocrates, PLMD)	0.27
Mohamedou Ould Ghoulam Ould Sidaty	Independent candidate. He tried to create this party, the Union for the Construction of Mauritania (L'Union pour la Construction de la Mauritanie, UCM), but he did not succeed.	0.09
Sidi Ould Isselmou Ould Mohamed Ahid	Independent candidate	0.24
Ethmane Ould Cheikh Ahmed Ebi El Maali	Independent candidate	1.47
Ibrahima Moctar Sarr	Independent candidate and President of the Movement for National Reconciliation (Mouvement pour Réconciliation Nationale, MRN)	7.94
Chbih Ould Cheikh Malainine	Population Front (PF)	0.29

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Post and Telecommunications (Ministère de l'Intérieur, des Postes et Télécommunications. <http://www.mipt.mr> (as consulted on 20th March 2007) and MISSION D'OBSERVATION ELECTORALE. UNION EUROPÉENNE (2007), *Rapport Final. Elections Municipales, législatives 2006 et présidentielles 2007.* [http://www.eueommauritania.org/mauritania/MOE%20UE%20Mauritanie\\_07\\_rapport%20final.pdf](http://www.eueommauritania.org/mauritania/MOE%20UE%20Mauritanie_07_rapport%20final.pdf)

2nd Round 25<sup>th</sup> March 2007

Name of candidate	Party	% de votes
Sidi Mohamed Ould Sheikh Abdallahi	Independent candidate	52.85%
Ahmed Ould Daddah	Rally of Democratic Forces (Rassemblement des Forces Démocratiques, RFD)	47.15%

Source: Ministère de l'Intérieur, des Postes et Télécommunications. <http://www.mipt.mr> (Consulted on 20th March 2007) Postes et Télécommunications. <http://www.mipt.mr> (Consulted on 20th March 2007)

### Evaluation analysis of the elections:<sup>2</sup>

**Participatory:** participation, according to the data given by the Ministry of Home Affairs, rose to 70.7% in the first round and 67.48% the second one. Regardless the wide territory (like France and Spain altogether) 80% of it being desert and the bad infrastructures, there were no mobile electoral units, given they are very difficult to control and it makes it harder to guarantee transparency.

**Competitive:** as a filter for candidatures' registration, fee payments were considered, but at the end what was really needed was the signature or patronage of 50 municipal councillors. This has been an easy requisite and it helped for many candidatures to flourish. Although there were 20 names at the beginning, at least 19 names appeared on the ballot papers. The 20<sup>th</sup> one was Chbih Ould Sheikh Malainine (without photograph or symbol of his party) who retired his candidature once the ballot papers had already been printed. It is curious that anyhow, he obtained some votes. In the legislative and municipal elections, it is imposed on each candidate a payment of 20,000 ouguiya, amount that can be returned if they get a minimum of 5% on the scrutinised votes.

**Cleanness:** these elections have been technically clean, given that the claims of fraud could not be proved. Few measures were taken in order to guarantee cleanness and transparency such as having the ballot papers numbered and signed by the president with an indelible ink; a thermal point in each ballot paper aimed at avoiding its falsification; voters were given a letter and the creation of a National Electoral Commission. The EU spent 6 million euros together with Japan and the US to finance the different electoral processes that have been conducted during this period of transition. The Mission of the Electoral Watch of the European Union had a fundamental role for the development and control of the elections. The same can be said about the African Union.

**Representation and Debate:** the fact that 19 candidates could contest elections and that the filter had been the signature of 50 municipal councillors, proves that all currents have been allowed to participate without limitations. We can only mention the exception made with the recognition and legalisation of Islamist parties. The possibility of registering independent candidatures was considered to be an open gate for the Islamists, but it also served for those candidates who

<sup>2</sup> In this sector the six criteria defined by TEIM are being used. These are: Participation, Competition, Cleanness, Representation and Debate, Openness and Relevance. See main page for an explanation of each.

had been on the side of Ould Taya to participate without having to explicitly identify their political past. The creation of a High Press and Audiovisual Authority (HAPA) did not mean a decisive step in the development of an electoral campaign, although at least, it guaranteed the introduction of free time slots for the candidate's electioneering. Anyhow, it could not answer the demands and denunciations of some parties about the differences between the timeframes assigned to each of them either on television or radio. There has not been a real debate or exchange of ideas. It was only limited to the publicity of the different campaigns. The fortnight dedicated to the electioneering campaign before the first round may be too short given the country's conditions and infrastructures. For the second round, no campaigning is allowed, what makes it difficult classifying some of the activities carried out by the candidates during that period.

Openness: respect for the 24 compromises acquired by the Military Council for Justice and Democracy in the accord of Cotonou with the EU (specially those related to all electoral processes, either legislative, municipal, senatorial or presidential, as well as the constitutional referendum) have been thoroughly respected. Thus it can be said that the transition process has been exemplary followed, such as the respect for the planned calendar and the institutional and normative development, the organisation and development of the elections, particularly, the presidential ones.

Relevance: these elections have been the climax of the transition period organised by the Military Council for Justice and Democracy, something unusual in Mauritania. Since 1978 (when the first President of the independence Mokhtar Ould Daddah was dismissed) the presidency has only been held by members of the Army after a coup. What is more, since 1976 until 1992, no presidential elections had previously been held. Those celebrated in 1992, 1997 and 2003 under President Ould Taya were neither transparent, nor competitive or clean. Something else to consider is that the population has backed this process with a high percentage of participation of 70.7% in the first round and 67.48% the second one. This data shows the acceptance and hopes created among people during the process of transition and the celebration of presidential elections.

### **International political reactions and implications:**

These elections have been backed by the Electoral Watch Mission of the EU, the African Union, the UN, China and other countries, all present like observers in the process. Regardless some malfunctioning, arising more from lack of experience and technical difficulties than of a political will to rigging or manipulating the elections, these international institutions have recognised the importance of the process and their cleanness and transparency. In any case, we must mention the small impact and scarce coverage given by the international press. Only the second round was covered by the media, but without paying any attention to the legislative elections or the first round of the presidential ones.

### **Conclusions:**

In these conclusions, we can stress on a discovery and make at least two questions. The discovery is that the presidential elections have been fair and clean and that the Military Council for Justice and Democracy respected its compromises and opened a new period of transition after a coup that dismissed Ould Taya, who was in power since 1984. The first question we can make is whether if a new period is opened for the military to go back to its headquarters or if they have actually supported Ould Abdallahi in expectance of a reward. The second question evolves around whether if the transition eased by the development of the different electoral processes has only been an institutional and normative reform. Whether if it will not affect the distribution of power and social organisation based on tribal and ethnic parameters, with a serious violation of human rights (as a legacy of slavery) and the incapacity of integrating the forces of the opposition.

### **References of two different internet based analysis of the elections.**

Mauritania folds the page of the past and elects a president for the country

<http://www.intekhabat.org/look/en-article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=1&NrArticle=2251&NrIssue=2&NrSection=3>

<http://africanelections.tripod.com/mr.html> (página oficial)

<http://www.eueommauritania.org/mauritania/xxdefault.asp?id=1&show=68&m=0> (página oficial)

**Photographic testimony:**

Electoral campaigning 8th March 2007. Nasser Avenue. Nouakchott.



Closure of electoral campaign. Headquarters of RFD party. 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Nouakchott.



Electoral schools (École du Marché, Tévrak Zeina and École no. 8). 11th March 2007.



Researcher at the exit of one of the electoral schools. 11th March 2007.



Account of votes at the electoral schools at the Olympic stadium. 11<sup>th</sup> March 2007, Nouakchott.

