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Development Challenges amid Contemporary Security Threats: The Case of Algeria

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***Abstract*—**The concept of security has been linked to human life since its beginnings. Throughout history, human beings have found stability and opportunities for development primarily in safer places where threats were limited. They sought to secure their basic needs for food and water and sometimes had to fight to obtain them. The concept of human security has since evolved to encompass several dimensions, including economic security and food security. In the contemporary world, both hard and soft threats have evident repercussions for the economic structures of states, particularly where adjoining borders are fragile. This is the case for Algeria: Tunisia and Libya, on its eastern borders, have been undergoing peacebuilding processes, while its southern borders have experienced fluctuating conditions as a result of the crisis in the Sahel and the activities of terrorist groups and Tuareg movements. The Tiguentourine incident is a recent reminder of these risks, which necessitate protecting major facilities that constitute important economic resources for the state. The economy and security are, in general, two inseparable sides of the same equation. As security threats increase, the social and economic structures of the state are adversely affected.

***Keywords*—**Security; development; economy; hard threats; soft threats.

INTRODUCTION

During the second round of the strategic dialogue with the United States in Algiers, with the participation of US Secretary of State John Kerry, former Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra affirmed: “The countries of the region must unite their efforts to help strengthen the Sahel states and devise effective economic plans capable of creating better conditions for security and development.”[1]

The concept of security has been linked to human life since its beginnings. Throughout history, human beings have known stability and development chiefly in safer places, where the sources of threat were fewer. Accordingly, they sought to secure basic necessities, including food and water, sometimes resorting to fighting to meet these needs. Over time, human security has developed into a concept comprising various other dimensions, including economic security and food security.

The repercussions of different hard and soft threats on the economic structures of states are clearly apparent today, particularly where neighbouring borders are fragile, as in Algeria. Since Algeria gained independence in 1962, its border and regional security had not faced threats of the kind described here. These threats intensified after northern Mali fell under the control of terrorist groups. The collapse of Ben Ali’s regime in Tunisia and Libya’s transformation into a fragile state following the fall of Gaddafi further turned the Sahel into a vulnerable area facilitating terrorist activities in Tunisia, Mali, Libya, Mauritania and southern Algeria. The attack on the Tiguentourine gas installation in January 2013 demonstrated that terrorism could threaten Algeria’s energy and other vital facilities.[2] These threats also raised concerns about the spread of ethnic fragmentation and attempts by terrorist groups to target vital interests. Protecting major installations, which represent important economic

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resources, is therefore necessary. Security and the economy are inseparable, prompting Algeria to adopt its own security approach to border protection while assisting neighbouring states in accordance with established principles of good neighbourliness.

Against this background, this paper examines how contemporary security threats affect the development process and economic recovery in Algeria and considers the mechanisms needed to protect borders and counter these threats in order to safeguard decent living conditions for citizens. The paper is organised into the following sections:

Section One: Security—Dimensions and Levels

Section Two: Economic Development and Economic Security

Section Three: Contemporary Security Threats in Algeria—An Inevitable Fate?

SECTION ONE: SECURITY—DIMENSIONS AND LEVELS

Since the end of the Cold War, the field of security studies has witnessed extensive debate over the nature, meanings and implications of security. This is largely because the approaches and analytical frameworks used to explain traditional security-related behaviour and phenomena during the Cold War have proved unable to offer convincing explanations of the complex security dynamics of the post-Cold War period. The debate therefore takes place between those who advocate preserving the traditional conception of security and those who call for broadening it.

First: Definition of Security

In Arabic, the terms for security and safety convey a sense of reassurance and the absence of fear. Ibn Manzur states in Lisan al-Arab:

"Al-amān and al-amānah have related meanings; one may be safe oneself and make another safe. Security and safety are the opposite of fear."[3]

Security is mentioned in the Qur'an in various forms, including the following verse:

"So let them worship the Lord of this House, who has fed them against hunger and made them safe from fear."[4] In the Prophetic tradition, the true believer is described as one from whose harm others are safe, allowing a community of believers to enjoy personal, financial, intellectual and social security. The Prophet is reported to have said: "A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe, and a believer is one whom people trust with their lives and property."[5]

In conceptual terms, security is understood in relation to threats and vulnerabilities (vulnérabilités). If it is regarded as a condition in which individuals or groups do not feel exposed to intrusion, security entails either the perceived absence of a threat or having the means to address and confront it. Such a condition can be established or reinforced through defence policies and military defence.[6] Former US Secretary of Defense McNamara defined security as follows: "Security means development. Security is not military force, although that is part of it; nor is it traditional military activity, although that too is part of it. Security is development and progress, and without development there can be no security."[7]

Security has several geopolitical, economic, social and political foundations.

Second: Dimensions of Security

Because security is a comprehensive concept encompassing numerous aspects of life affecting individuals and collectivities (including the state), several related dimensions can be identified:

1. Political dimension: This primarily concerns safeguarding the integrity and continuity of the state through internal social cohesion and solidarity. Domestic stability is essential to development and the preservation of state strength. Externally, it entails securing the state's environment against ambitions and interests targeting its resources and wealth and assessing whether those external interests align or conflict with its political, economic and social interests.[8]

2. Economic dimension: The economy has a clear impact on security. In many states, defence systems and armament policies depend on economic capacity. The economic dimension of security is therefore linked to pressures arising from disparities in wealth and aspirations among states.[9] Moreover, certain levels of stability cannot be achieved without corresponding levels of economic development. The relationship is thus one of direct interdependence between the two functions: security necessarily entails development.[10]

3. Military dimension: Defence, security and prestige are achieved through building military capabilities that meet the requirements of strategic military balance and regional deterrence, thereby protecting the state against external aggression. Such forces must maintain permanent combat readiness and high operational effectiveness to defend the state's borders and strategic depth. Military power is also a principal instrument for supporting foreign policy and shaping the state's leading role.[11]

4. Social dimension: This seeks to provide citizens with security and strengthen their sense of belonging and loyalty. Without social justice, efforts to narrow disparities between social classes, and improvements in services, national security is exposed to danger.[12]

5. Cultural dimension: National security is manifested in international interactions. Discrimination between cultures or the dominance of one culture over others creates cultural conflict (acculturation), which may take various forms, notably ethnic wars. Such conflict may threaten even the minimum requirement of national security—the survival of the state—by leading to partition, secession or collapse.[13]

6. Environmental dimension: According to Barry Buzan, environmental issues are linked to economic considerations through the calculation of pollution-related costs. However, preventing pollution of all kinds requires international cooperation and sound policies.[14]

Third: Levels of Security

The preceding discussion allows several levels of security to be distinguished:

1. NATIONAL SECURITY

National security refers to a state's ability to protect its territory, population, interests, beliefs, culture and economy against external enemies, while addressing domestic problems. It also involves pursuing balanced policies that prevent polarisation, foster unity and deepen loyalty and belonging to the nation and its leadership. This requires continual domestic and external activity informed by strategic studies that examine the past, assess the present and anticipate the future.[15]

2. REGIONAL SECURITY

Regional security involves an arrangement whereby a group of states agree to observe common standards governing relations of cooperation and conflict among them. Such an arrangement does not eliminate all disagreements between political units; rather, it develops an environment in which those disagreements remain under control, even when relations take a competitive, zero-sum form.[16]

3. INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The idea of international security emerged in international relations after the First World War with the establishment of the League of Nations. Its underlying premise is that aggression should face superior forces when it does not comply with reason or international ethical principles, and that aggression should be deterred regardless of its funding sources or the states supporting it.[17] International security must be distinguished from collective security. The former results from individual states maintaining their security and from organised cooperation, including alliances. The latter refers to joint collective action by states within legally organised structures pursuing global objectives, foremost among them security for all member states.

4. HUMAN SECURITY

The individual is at the centre of human security. It seeks to eliminate threats to people's political, economic and social security by focusing on institutional reform, including reforming existing security institutions and establishing new ones at local, regional and global levels. It also entails finding ways to implement existing international commitments intended to protect individuals, an objective that cannot be achieved independently of state security.[18]

SECTION TWO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

To connect the concept of security with economic development and the economy, it is first necessary to define these terms and clarify their close relationship.

First: Definition of Economic Development

Economic development is described as an economic measure based on technology involving a transition from one economic condition to another, more advanced condition—for example, from an agricultural to an industrial

economy or from conventional commerce to technology-based commerce.[19] It is also defined as a process aimed at promoting national economic growth through development plans and successful economic strategies that lead to greater progress and positive social effects.[20] It involves a cumulative, rapid and sustained increase in real income over time, exceeding population growth, alongside the provision of productive and social services, protecting renewable resources from pollution and conserving non-renewable resources against depletion.

During the twentieth century, the study and application of economic development relied on sets of criteria and indicators for assessing countries, particularly developing countries. Because no fixed definition of "developing countries" had been established, measurement became important for understanding their economic development. Per capita income was therefore used as a key indicator: higher individual income was associated with economic growth. The value of goods and services was another criterion. When populations possess sufficient purchasing power, this is regarded as evidence of economic development, described as economic welfare.[21]

Economic development pursues multiple objectives. It helps improve living standards and strengthens the structures of trade and industry, thereby addressing problems caused by a weak domestic economy. It also provides appropriate support for production and sufficient support for public capital affected by weakness and shortages arising from low savings linked to financial reserves at the central bank. All these objectives depend fundamentally on an important factor: the country's political and security stability.

Second: Definition of Economic Security

Economic security is defined in United Nations instruments as the possession of the material means necessary to lead a stable and fulfilling life, including sufficient money to meet basic needs for food, adequate shelter, essential healthcare and education.[22]

It means protecting the state's economic interests, providing citizens with opportunities for progress and welfare, and enabling them to obtain the material resources needed for a stable life.

The elements of economic security include:

1. Food and water security: The state's ability to provide food and water for its population.

2. Employment opportunities: Work is the primary source of income and of satisfying basic human needs. It helps move individuals from poverty, hunger and fear towards social and economic stability.

3. Use of natural resources: The optimal use of natural resources within the state's territory, contributing to the improvement of societal living conditions and welfare.

Economic security, as outlined above, is at the heart of national security in every state. Military security alone is insufficient to attain national security today: even a large, powerful army that can defend external borders cannot necessarily secure a country internally. Its internal frontiers are social security and political stability, neither of which can be maintained without economic security. Just as a state loses its sovereignty and independent decision-making when its army is defeated, its territory occupied and its waters and airspace violated, it may likewise lose independence and sovereignty through economic insecurity and become vulnerable to foreign dictates. Contemporary history shows that major powers with formidable strategic military capabilities and extensive political influence can decline when they lose economic and food security. The former Soviet Union remains vivid in the memories of those who witnessed its collapse in the late 1980s and early 1990s and remains an especially telling example of the importance of economic security to state cohesion, survival, decline and collapse. It became unable to halt financial deterioration, including the depreciation of the rouble, or provide adequate food for its citizens because of the arms race.

SECTION THREE: CONTEMPORARY SECURITY THREATS TO ALGERIA—AN INEVITABLE FATE?

Algeria occupies an important geopolitical position in North Africa, on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. It lies between its Maghreb neighbours: Libya and Tunisia to the east, described here as undergoing the reconstruction of state security and political order respectively, and Morocco to the west. Relations between Algeria and Morocco have been strained since the Sand War and the Western Sahara dispute. To the south, the Sahel has become a major concern for Algerian security and stability. Terrorist groups have exploited limited economic development, the fragility of the Malian state and the vast, insufficiently monitored desert to establish bases for their operations. There have also been continuing calls for a Tuareg federation, envisaged through the separation of territory from Niger, Algeria, Libya and Chad.[23]

From the geographical perspective adopted here, the Sahel region includes Libya, Chad, Tunisia, Algeria, Mali, Niger, Morocco, Western Sahara and Mauritania. This delineation reflects geographical factors, notably the continuity and extent of the Sahara. The Sahel is consequently treated as a boundary between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. The combination of diverse identities, colonial legacies and foreign intervention poses serious risks for the region's states.[24]

1. Historical factors and the role of colonialism: Colonialism played a major role in drawing borders and mobilising ethnic groups and minorities. In this context, the Tuareg question is presented as a colonial legacy following the independence of Libya in 1951, Niger in 1960, Mali in 1960, Burkina Faso in 1960 and Algeria in 1962.[25] The proposed Tuareg federation is regarded as a threat to sovereign borders because the aspiration to create a state protecting Tuareg national identity would affect the countries of the region, which demand respect for the borders inherited from colonialism.

2. Weak economic development: Governments in the region have increased military expenditure at the expense of economic development and improvements in healthcare and education. Substantial resources are devoted to arms deals, leaving vulnerable segments of the population susceptible to recruitment by terrorist groups. This presents a social and political problem that may prompt additional spending to maintain social peace.[26]

Drug trafficking is another concern. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was reported to have stated that 15% of the global cocaine trade passed through the Sahel–Sahara region, threatening the economies of countries described as among the poorest in the world.[27]

3. Increasing Activity by Terrorist Movements

Terrorist groups have exploited the fragile conditions in northern Mali and limited economic development, together with the collapse of the regime in Libya, its transformation into a failed state and the continuing flow of weapons. Terrorist activity is concentrated along the Mali–Mauritania border, in northern Mali, along the Mali–Niger border, in northern Chad and near the southern Libya–Algeria border, as illustrated in the following map:

Map 1. Terrorist Presence in the Sahel Region

Source: http://concernedafricascholars.org/bulletin/issue85/mundy

Terrorist groups establish rear bases from which to launch attacks against states in the region. In Algeria's case, the article cites the kidnapping of Algerian diplomatic personnel at its consulate in northern Mali, the attack on the Tiguentourine gas complex and the siege of the Algerian embassy in Libya, following which Algeria dispatched a military aircraft to evacuate diplomatic staff and their families.

4. Natural disasters: The drought affecting the Sahel region prompted thousands of displaced people to move towards northern countries and, where possible, across the Mediterranean to its northern shore.

CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis shows a close relationship between a state's economic development prospects and the effects of different security threats, whether hard or soft. For instance, the spread of drugs has a deeper and more destructive effect than terrorist groups. Irregular migration also threatens the sociological structure of society and its economic structure. Accordingly, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthen border security and counter anticipated threats.

Enforce customs controls on imports from all sources.

Establish adequate controls over drug trafficking and seek to contain it.

Combat administrative corruption and strengthen enforcement of the relevant laws.

Raise public awareness of the repercussions of these threats and encourage citizens to help combat them.

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