

The Algerian perception of security and development in the African Sahel

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Abstract:

The paper discusses Algeria's strategy in the face of security challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. Its aim is to attempt to highlight, through analysis and criticism, a regional strategy that is intended as an alternative to the international strategies of the major powers. The focus is on Algeria's approach to this strategy. The article will attempt to address a number of issues and questions relating to the subject: What is the content of the field states' strategy? What are its objectives and path? What are the mechanisms for its application? What difficulties are you encountering? What is Algeria's approach to this strategy?

Keywords: Algeria ; Africa, security ; development ; security perception

INTRODUCTION

Sub-Saharan Africa is facing complex security threats that are extremely dangerous for the security of the countries in the region, including the Maghreb. Indeed, the security of these countries is interconnected. In addition to these threats, this geopolitical area is one of the world's richest in natural resources (oil, uranium, gas, etc.), which has made it a target for the ambitions of the major powers, each of which has proposed/imposed its own strategy to deal with the threats in the Sahel and benefit from these resources. And to position themselves in this sensitive area. Aware of the seriousness of the situation, Algeria has worked to formulate an alternative regional strategy, known as the strategy of the countries on the ground, which, in addition to Algeria, the lead country/sponsor of this strategy, includes Mali, Niger and Mauritania. The main objective of this strategy is to develop a single, unified approach between these four countries to respond more effectively to the security challenges they face, particularly terrorism and organised crime, while linking these threats to poverty, which is considered to be their main source. The countries' strategy on the ground is a broad vision of security that links security and development. And all this is to prevent foreign intervention, which increases chaos in the region and turns it into a hotbed of tension instead of a zone of stability.

Despite the apparent harmony between these countries through their official speeches, which suggest the existence of common perceptions of security in the region, their vision of the threats and the methods for dealing with them; however, the reality of the situation confirms the opposite, as there are realistic difficulties, specific to the calculation of the interests of each country, and its seriousness in the fight against these threats. With this in mind, this talk will attempt to analyse and criticise many of the problems posed by the subject. What is the content of the field strategy? What are its objectives and path? What are the mechanisms for implementing this strategy? What difficulties are you facing in the field? What is Algeria's approach to this strategy?

2.Introducing the Algerian approach to security and development in Sahel-Saharan Africa

The countries in the field are made up of four countries in Africa, the Maghreb and the Sahel: Algeria, Mauritania and Mali And Niger. This strategy aims to tackle the common security challenges in the Sahel and represents a broad approach. These include terrorism, organised crime and poverty. It is based on the logic of linking security and development. It is also a multidimensional strategy; it depends not only on military tools, but also on development resources. This strategy crystallised in 2010 in a series of meetings between the heads of diplomacy of the four countries and their chiefs of staff. Its aim is to form an integrated and harmonious regional vision that responds jointly to these challenges.

If we analyse the official discourse of these countries, whether political or military, it seems that the decision-makers in these countries have common perceptions of the security challenges they face in the region. However, the reality of the situation indicates otherwise, as there are real difficulties and obstacles hindering the effectiveness of this strategy, which we will examine below in this article. Algeria played a central role in the formulation of this strategy. Abdelkader Messahel, then Minister Delegate to the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of Maghreb and African Affairs, said: "The countries in the area have drawn up a single, unified strategy to deal with the phenomena of terrorism, organised crime and poverty."¹ This strategy also cooperates with approaches that share this objective with us and that are members of the Council of Ministers for Security and the European Union, as well as friendly countries and even international and regional organisations. For his part, Mali's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Integration, Somailo Boubaye Maiga, said: "States on the ground need to respond in a comprehensive and multidimensional way to the challenges they face, such as terrorism,

organized crime and poverty. This multilateral response takes place in the context of a complex regional relationship, with the need to adapt traditional means of prevention, management "And crisis resolution, which must be based on integration and coordination. "And harmony. Our aim is not to transform the coast into a war zone, but rather into a zone of security and stability, from which all countries in the region will benefit"².

3. Reasons and Dimensions of the Algerian approach in Sahel and Saharan Africa

The fundamental reasons for this strategy: It's about warding off foreign interference - as we've pointed out - but to say that we're warding off foreign interference doesn't mean a total absence of coordination with other proposed international strategies, notably American and European. On the contrary, it does not leave a vacuum in the region for these forces to fill. The reason for the efforts of the countries on the ground - and Algeria in particular - to spare the region from any foreign intervention lies in two fundamental reasons: firstly, foreign intervention under any name whatsoever, particularly military, will only further aggravate the situation and turn the region into a hotbed of tension, so Algeria fears a repeat of the Libyan scenario. NATO's military intervention in Libya; It achieved its strategic and interest-based objectives, without taking into account the post-intervention repercussions suffered by the whole region.³

After NATO had finished eliminating Gaddafi's regime, it withdrew and left the region to suffer under the weight of real threats (arms leaks, waves of refugees, etc.) which have further inflamed the situation in the Sahel. This will legitimise the actions of terrorist groups and increase their ability to recruit young people in the region. The media report that Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Ansar Dine movement have attracted hundreds of

new members and have, they claim, transformed themselves into jihadist movements against the "crusaders and neo-colonialists" following the French intervention in Mali.⁴

The strategy of the countries on the ground rests on three fundamental pillars: 1) political-diplomatic 2) military 3) Operational and financial. These three dimensions have been institutionalised. The four countries have agreed to meet every six months at a colloquium bringing together the heads of diplomacy of these countries in one of their capitals, to coordinate among themselves and evaluate their efforts, in addition to coordinating their efforts with the strategies of their European and American partners, whom I have met on several occasions, with the aim of creating a dynamic between the international strategies and the regional strategy in the field.

From a military and operational point of view, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Command Committee (CEMOC) was created in April 2010 and is based in the town of Tamanrasset, clearly bringing together the heads of the staffs of the four countries. With the help of an information centre based in the Algerian capital, its aim is to better coordinate military operations to combat threats in the Sahel. It has also worked on the creation of the Integration and Communication Unit (ULF), made up of seven countries. In addition to the four states on the ground, this unit includes Burkina Faso, Libya and Chad. Its mission (ULF) is to provide the initial military resources. (CEMOC) with the security, tactical and operational information needed to conduct joint operations and combat terrorism and organised crime. 1 The countries on the ground have also agreed to form a joint military force to intervene within 18 days.⁵ For the strategy of the countries on the ground in the Sahel, there is a financial mechanism: they have agreed to create a fund containing

A financial envelope to make this strategy more concrete and practical. This cover is used; In coordinating surveys between partners. Providing economic and development aid to the people of the region. Although the amount of this financial fund is kept secret, some sources indicate that it is estimated at several million dollars, to which the four countries contribute equally. What can be understood from this is that each country contributes according to its capacity and potential, and Algeria is expected to be the largest contributor to this fund.⁶ But what can we say at the end of our presentation of the strategy of the countries on the ground in the Sahel to meet the security challenges facing the region? Despite what appears at first sight to be complete agreement on their vision of this strategy and on the meetings they are organising, both political and military, the practical application of this strategy is coming up against major difficulties. In the end, it's the real politics that prevail, and it's the language of interests that resurfaces. What difficulties has the strategy encountered?⁷

4. Difficulties facing the Algerian approach to security and development in Sahel-Saharan Africa

The lack of trust between these countries, such as Mali, Niger and Mauritania, casts doubt on the real objectives and intentions. It is up to Algeria to adopt and support this strategy. For these countries, Algeria has two objectives: 1) influence and hegemony in the region 2) to isolate Morocco and Libya from the Sahel-Saharan area. It has pulled the rug out from under Libyan initiatives and Moroccan aspirations to gain a foothold in the region. In questioning Algeria's role, we know that this role is proportional to the position occupied by the State. Algeria is the greatest military and economic power in the region and has always sought to be recognised as a regional state, but its role in the region has remained modest, particularly as regards the fight against terrorism. Algeria, as the

largest military power, has a great deal of experience in the fight against terrorism, but it does not make the most of it. In the fight against terrorist groups in the Sahel, some accuse Algeria of not wanting to tighten the noose around these groups so that they do not spread inside Algeria, especially as they are of Algerian origin - at least - at leadership level.⁸

There is also a lack of confidence in the level of collusion of the state (Mali in particular) with organised crime networks. The ruling elite, led by former president Amadou Toumano Touré, had links with organised crime networks. There is a study published by the Carnegie Center by researcher Wolfram Lacher, in which he explains the extent of the state's involvement in organised crime in Mali. How can we talk about fighting organised crime sponsored by an entire state? 1 Let's stop here at the trust factor, because of its centrality in cooperation between countries and because it is the backbone of the exchange of intelligence information.⁹ The problem with the countries of the South is that they do not cooperate with each other, and when they do, they do not take it seriously, due to a number of factors, including a lack of trust; For example, in the summer of 2012, the chiefs of staff of the armies of the countries present on the ground agreed to authorise the pursuit of terrorist groups on both sides of the border, after prior notification to the State concerned to pursue the pursuit on its territory.¹⁰

This mechanism was supposed to be useful in the fight against cross-border terrorism, but it seems not to have been activated at all. Especially since neither Mali, Niger nor Mauritania have the capacity or capability to pursue terrorists within their borders, let alone outside them. As for Algeria, which does have significant capabilities, it is primarily concerned with its borders and does not seem to have any intention of pursuing terrorists beyond its borders. The control of terrorist groups over northern Mali and

their advance southwards are not only a sign of the failure of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the fight against terrorism, the mission for which they were created.¹¹

But the failure of the "Cellule d'intégration et de communication" (integration and communication unit), which brings together the intelligence services of the countries concerned and whose mission is to cooperate on intelligence on terrorist movements, also falls victim to mistrust. authorisation; The problem with the exchange of information within this unit is that the partners are not equal. Algeria has far more information on terrorists than the rest of the partner countries in the strategy, and so the exchange of information is not always easy -Here - it's in one direction only.¹²

here are politico-strategic difficulties and purely operational-military difficulties, which have different aspects

Whereas it is in Algeria's interest to coordinate with the American strategy, whereas it prefers to coordinate with France.

The other countries, Mauritania, Mali and Niger, coordinate with France. The reason for preferring the last three countries cooperation with France, for financial and political reasons, as France provides financial aid to these countries, as well as These countries lack internal legitimacy (some of them came to power through a coup d'état).¹³

Algeria's desire to coordinate with Washington can be explained by a number of considerations: Firstly: Algeria depends on Washington for the exchange of the most confidential security information. Algeria has provided a list of the names of hundreds of its wanted persons who are refugees in the United States and Europe. Second: the lifting of US

restrictions imposed on Algeria since 1992, particularly military restrictions. The United States agreed to supply Algeria with special weapons to fight terrorism, such as night vision equipment. America was also behind the acceleration of the Atlantic-Algerian dialogue within the framework of the Atlantic-Mediterranean dialogue. Thirdly, Algeria is seeking massive and decisive support from the United States on certain international issues, notably the Western Sahara question.¹⁴

Other difficulties facing the strategy of the Maïdan countries in the Sahel are the vastness of their borders and the difficulty of monitoring them completely. Particularly in view of the weak material and technical capacities of these countries. On the other hand, securing the borders is particularly true for Algeria. This can be a sensitive issue for the region's Tuareg population, who are nomadic Bedouins who live off pastoralism and trade across the Sahara. They don't know borders, so securing borders in this particular circumstance (the Azawad Touareg rebellion in Mali) may be understood by the people of the region. It has broken relations between the Tuareg of Mali and Niger and the Tuareg of Algeria.¹⁵

Weakness - or absence - of security coordination between the Maghreb and Sahel countries. Although the United States succeeded in bringing these countries (the Maghreb and the Sahel) together and encouraging them to coordinate with each other in Stuttgart, Germany, in March 2004, this integration has not taken place.² Although recent events, notably the Libyan crisis and civil war, have shown that the security of the Maghreb is linked to the security of the Sahel, the Sahel is not. Enormous quantities of arms have crossed the Libyan borders into certain Sahel countries and could currently be in the possession of terrorists.³ The main reason for the lack of Maghreb-Sahel coordination is the absence of an integrated Maghreb

regional entity, for a number of reasons, the most important of which is the persistent tension in Algerian-Moroccan relations.¹⁶

There are other military-operational and logistical difficulties that can limit the effectiveness of a country's strategy on the ground. With the exception of Algeria, their armed forces are very weak in terms of numbers and equipment. Mali's military budget, for example, did not exceed 180 million dollars in 2009. Added to this is the small number of armies in these countries, estimated at 15,870 in Mauritania, 7,750 in Mali and just 5,300 in Niger. What's more, the armies of these countries do not receive the minimum military training, since soldiers are only trained to handle machine guns, and do not have paramilitary forces, which are an essential force for pursuing terrorist fortifications in the Sahara desert.

Conclusion:

From what has been said, we can say: The success of the field countries' strategy on the African coast depends on the effectiveness of Algeria's role. Algeria must play a more important role, commensurate with the position it occupies and the capabilities it possesses.

Algeria has the edge over other countries in the region. All the more so because Algeria has always sought recognition as a regional power and state, and having achieved such recognition, we find it adopting a foreign policy of small countries whose only concern is survival and which do not play an effective regional role as intended. Moreover, its foreign policy is always tinged with caution, reserve and suspicion.

For this emerging strategy to succeed, it needs to gain greater trust between its countries, as this is the fundamental element on which cooperative relations between countries are based. In addition, these

countries must work to coordinate more closely with the rest of their neighbours, in particular the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Libya and Tunisia...) to interconnect, as we mentioned earlier, the security of these countries and share the same threats.

Algeria needs to review its concept of national security. This means reconsidering the principle of non-interference. Given the uncertain environment that characterises Algeria's geopolitics on all fronts in the South and East, and given also the nature of the threats to which Algeria is exposed that cross borders and nationalities (terrorism, organised crime, irregular migration, etc.), which require multilateralism in the face of them, Algeria must intervene by certain means to secure its borders, especially in the light of the extreme weakness suffered by our neighbouring countries in the Sahel.

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