

Algeria's Role in Confronting Asymmetric Security Threats: An Analytical Study of Strategies and Challenges

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the impact of asymmetric threats—characterized by the disparity between conflicting parties—on Maghreb security, as these threats pose a significant security concern for the countries in the region. Prominent among these threats are organized crime, terrorism, arms trafficking, and illegal immigration. In this context, Algeria, as a Maghreb country, has adopted strategies and mechanisms aimed at mitigating the impact of these threats on regional security. Among the key strategies employed in countering terrorism, Algeria seeks to disrupt the funding sources of terrorist groups, criminalize the use of digital technology for recruiting terrorist operatives, and continuously advocate for enhanced intelligence coordination among Maghreb countries to effectively address these threats.

Keywords: Asymmetric threats; Maghreb security; Algerian security strategy.

Introduction:

The Maghreb region faces a range of unconventional security threats, including organized crime, terrorism, and illegal immigration. These threats have prompted Maghreb countries to develop strategies to address new challenges that were previously unfamiliar. In this context, Algeria has adopted a security strategy based on the principles of its traditional security doctrine, while taking into account the unique nature of these unconventional threats. This strategy aims to enhance the capacity to effectively counter these threats and ensure the stability and security of the region.

In the context of regional security analysis, the primary issue is how Algeria contributes to addressing asymmetrical security threats in the Maghreb region. Based on this issue, the following sub-questions are posed for investigation:

1. What are asymmetrical security threats?
2. What are the manifestations of asymmetrical security threats in the Maghreb region?
3. How is Algerian security doctrine defined?
4. What are the security strategies adopted by Algeria to counter asymmetrical security threats in the Maghreb region?

The fundamental hypothesis we adopt to address the presented issue is:

Countries operate according to strategies and mechanisms that consider the specific circumstances of the issues they seek to address, aiming to mitigate their negative repercussions. Consequently, this approach is likely to contribute to achieving the desired outcomes for states and enhancing the effectiveness of the strategies that can be employed in dealing with various issues.

To address the main issue, we propose the following research plan:

1. **Analysis of the Concept of Asymmetric Security Threats:**
 - Study the definition of asymmetric security threats and clarify their nature and characteristics.
2. **Review of Asymmetric Security Threats in the Maghreb Region:**
 - Examine the security situation in the Maghreb region and highlight the asymmetric threats it faces.
3. **Study of the Nature of Algerian Security Doctrine:**
 - Analyze the foundations and principles that constitute the Algerian security doctrine and how it is influenced by asymmetric threats.
4. **Assessment of the Algerian Security Strategy in Addressing Asymmetric Threats in the Maghreb Region:**
 - Review the strategies and measures adopted by Algeria to counter asymmetric security threats and evaluate their effectiveness within the regional context.

Chapter One: The Concept of Asymmetric Security Threats

Contemporary security threats are in a state of constant evolution due to several key factors, including globalization. These threats are no longer confined to traditional military contexts arising from conflicts and wars but have evolved to impact individuals' fundamental rights.

First: Definition of Asymmetric Security Threats

Since the 1970s, security studies have prompted many researchers to rethink the concept of security. The focus of these studies has shifted from limiting security to the military domain or equating it with defense and war, as seen in the approaches of Joseph Nye and Richard Ullman, to expanding the concept to include political, economic, social, and environmental threats.

The nature of security threats has evolved from a traditional model to a more complex one, often referred to as "asymmetric threats" or more precisely "hybrid threats." These terms reflect the increased complexity and dynamism of security phenomena. While traditional threats were characterized by military confrontations between states, asymmetric threats are linked to issues such as organized crime, international terrorism, and internal conflicts, along with human rights violations and genocide, thriving in failed or irresponsible states.

These threats are characterized by an imbalance of power, where the weaker party employs various means to target the vulnerabilities of the stronger party. Examples include conflicts between organized states and terrorist organizations or criminal syndicates that use their networks to achieve political goals. As noted by Hoffman, terrorism involves "creating and exploiting fear through violence or the threat of violence to achieve political change."

The expansion of security theory from focusing solely on military threats to encompassing new global challenges like environmental change and globalization requires fundamental shifts in the mindset of policymakers and the academic community. These shifts have led to an expanded concept of security that includes economic, social, and environmental dimensions, as reflected in the defense and national strategic documents of many countries.

Second: Key Asymmetric Security Threats Identified by International Actors

The United States describes new asymmetric security threats to its national security as follows:

- Unexpected and unfamiliar threats.
- New operational methods and tactics used by groups to threaten American security.
- Ambiguity and difficulty in identifying the nature of the threat to American security.

Contemporary global security is characterized by rapid changes, no longer confined to protecting states from the military dominance of a particular country. These transformations have raised questions about the effectiveness of traditional security strategies in addressing

current threats. The enemy is no longer as clearly defined as before, and threats are increasingly non-military by nature.

Global politics faces patterns of threats that are no longer limited to traditional internal conflicts but include innovative and dangerous strategies from non-state actors, lacking a stable ground base (capability/threat/end of geography). Therefore, addressing these threats requires new approaches.

In this context, Robert Kaplan presented his theses on post-Cold War chaos, noting that scarcity, crime, overpopulation, and tribalism pose threats to global security that could "destroy the social fabric of our planet."

Third: Elements of Security Threat Analysis

Studying security threats requires identifying the elements of their analysis that influence their determination across different security levels. These include:

- **Nature of the Threat:** Its type and political, economic, military, or geographical dimensions.
- **Timing of the Threat:** Its current or future impact, and its persistence and stability.
- **Location of the Threat:** Its directions and demographic or geographical proximity, as well as its spread and impact on multiple states or a single state.
- **Degree of the Threat:** Its strength and severity, with significant threats necessitating comprehensive regional mobilization to mitigate their impact.
- **Mobilization of the Threat:** Related to the severity and intensity of the threat, leading to appropriate mobilization measures to rally resources and efforts.

Fourth: Types of Threats

New security threats are gaining increasing importance in research centers and global institutes. Researchers have varied approaches to classifying types of security threats, which may include:

- **Military Attack Threats.**
- **Criminal Activity Threats.**
- **Threats to Human Survival and Welfare,** such as famine, deadly diseases, and environmental degradation.

Terrorist activity can be classified either as a type of criminal activity or as a distinct category.

Chapter Two: Asymmetric Security Threats in the Maghreb Region

Maghreb countries face significant challenges from asymmetric security threats, requiring the development of effective strategies and measures to address them. These threats are highly interrelated, creating a vicious cycle, necessitating local decision-makers to comprehensively understand threat sources and move beyond merely addressing immediate issues to focus on other security, social, and cultural concerns.

First: Major Factors and Pillars of Algerian Security Doctrine

Key factors shaping the Algerian security doctrine include:

- **Historical Factor:** The role of French colonialism in shaping Algerian identities and resistance.
- **Geopolitical Factor:** Algeria's strategic location and its impact on security doctrine, from supporting liberation movements to combating terrorism.
- **Ideological Factor:** The influence of socialist ideology and national charters in shaping the security doctrine.

Second: Algerian Security Doctrine from the 1980s to the Present

The Algerian security doctrine has undergone notable changes since the late 1980s, adapting to global political transformations after the Cold War. These adjustments have emphasized the multifaceted nature of security and moved beyond a purely military focus, reflecting a more comprehensive approach to dealing with new threats with greater flexibility and speed.

Section Two: Algeria's Security Strategy in Addressing Asymmetric Security Threats in the Maghreb Region

First: Challenges Facing Algeria's Security Strategy

Algeria's strategic geographic position makes it a central player in regional interactions within the Maghreb. This position impacts its security strategy, which faces several key challenges:

Challenges from Changes in the International System: Algeria has a fundamental view of international relations, but this view is influenced by changes in the global political system. Despite the difficulties faced by Algeria, especially during the 1990s, its core policies have remained unchanged. On the other hand, the Maghreb region has become a strategic focal point and a competitive arena among international and regional powers, posing a significant challenge for Algeria.

Challenges from Interactions Among Maghreb Political Systems: Algeria and Morocco play central roles in the Maghreb region, while Tunisia focuses on internal development issues. Post-Gaddafi Libya faces state collapse and external interventions, and Mauritania

grapples with developmental and economic challenges. This diversity in policies and conditions leads to continuous tensions and affects regional interactions in general.

Challenges from Regional Crises: The Maghreb region suffers from complex structural crises affecting regional stability, as seen in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. These crises impact the region's stability due to the geostrategic interconnections among Maghreb countries. Additionally, countries like Morocco adopt policies linked to Gulf axes, while Mauritania aligns with Gulf agendas, creating criticisms regarding whether these positions are opportunistic in exchange for financial aid.

Second: Principles Underpinning Algeria's Strategy in Combating Terrorism

Criminalizing Ransom Payments: Algeria rejects paying ransoms to terrorist groups, considering it a primary source of their funding, which enhances their capability to conduct terrorist operations in the region. This policy was reflected in a draft resolution presented by Algeria to the United Nations in 2007 to criminalize ransom payments, which received international and UN endorsement and was approved by the Security Council.

Refusal to Negotiate with Terrorist Groups: Algeria firmly rejects any form of negotiation with terrorist groups and opposes the involvement of certain states as mediators in such negotiations. This stance was evident during the hostage crisis at the Tiguentourine gas facility in In Amenas.

Coordination and Security Cooperation: Algeria relies on a security approach based on coordination and joint cooperation. It has organized multiple security meetings among regional countries to develop a shared strategy for combating terrorism and enhancing regional and international cooperation mechanisms in maintaining international peace and security.

Conclusion:

Based on the analysis presented in this discussion, several key findings highlight the security situation in Algeria and the Maghreb region:

Firstly, the Algerian security doctrine is based on a set of established and steadfast principles, reflected in its internal and external strategies and practices. This is attributed to its adherence to a framework that aligns with the country's security conditions and the various challenges it faces.

Secondly, there is a noticeable shift in the nature of security threats, moving from traditional threats to asymmetric ones. This transformation reflects the impact of globalization and technological advancement, which has complicated the security landscape. The new threat is characterized by an imbalance between conflicting parties, making prediction and response more challenging.

Thirdly, the Maghreb region suffers from asymmetric threats marked by significant complexity and interconnections, particularly concerning the threats posed by terrorist groups. These threats exacerbate the security crisis in the region, necessitating advanced strategies to address them effectively.

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