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The role of border economic areas in promoting Algerian exports: A case study of the Algerian border strip

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Abstract---This study aimed to clarify the level of influence of border regions and their role in promoting exports, as well as the importance and benefits of establishing these areas that can be used for integrated regional economic development. It highlights the economic role that can influence the prosperity of the state from various aspects (security, economy, politics, etc.). The study concludes that exports do not meet the required level of competitiveness. In this context, the authorities need to take the necessary measures to strengthen the export sector with the aim of improving product quality in order to enter the competitive arena.

Keywords---Border regions, Algerian border strip, exports.

Introduction

The issue of border regions is of great political, economic and security importance to the state, as it ensures the stability of neighbouring countries. Many border issues that arise with neighbouring nations can sometimes lead to military intervention. To avoid these problems and achieve international security, the state has encouraged trade and investment to realise mutual interests and benefits among nations. As a result, the state has been compelled to implement joint exchange policies with neighbouring countries to ensure the stability and security of its borders in the service of its interests. Instead of spending money on border

security, it would be more beneficial to invest in encouraging investment and promoting exports.

Algeria is a crucial point, acting as a crossroads between different geographical regions. Its coastline is vital in international relations and is itself a region threatened by instability. This underlines the importance of its close relationship with international security. Cross-border trade is one of the most important ways of developing regions and, in order to achieve competitiveness, there is a drive to encourage investment and exports, thus transforming these areas from sources of threat into sources of economic prosperity. Algeria is one of the countries facing this challenge because its neighbours lack security stability, which is a burden on Algeria as it seeks to secure its adjacent border strip. With this in mind, we propose the following problem statement:

How do economic border regions contribute to the promotion of Algerian exports?

To answer this question, we will examine three main axes:

1. The conceptual framework of economic border regions
2. The implications of the creation of economic border regions
3. Algeria's strategy for developing its economic border regions to promote exports

Research objectives

- To understand the nature of border regions and to illustrate their importance.
- To identify the types and classifications of economic border regions in Algeria.
- To recognise the important role that borders play in promoting exports.
- To understand Algeria's strategy for the development of its border regions.

Significance of the research

The importance of this research lies in the fact that economic border regions are essential tools for the promotion of foreign trade and investment between countries, as well as for the promotion of exports. Therefore, it is essential to focus on and utilise these areas in order to achieve sustainable economic development and diversify sources of income.

Previous studies

1. Imane Sahrawi, Sihem Harfouche, "The Importance of Special Economic Border Regions in Promoting Investments and Trade Between Neighbouring Countries", *Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol. 09, No. 05, University of Setif 1, 2020.

The aim of this study was to highlight the benefits of the establishment of special economic border regions for the development of border areas in neighbouring countries, using the Algerian border strip as a case study. It concluded that special economic zones have a significant role to play in promoting investment and trade between neighbouring countries.

2. Sihem Zaqan, Aicha Fatima (2023), "The Role of Small Projects in Developing Border Rural Areas", **Rimah Journal of Research and Studies*.No. 78, University of Boumerdes, Algeria.

The aim of this study was to assess the contribution of small projects to achieving social and economic development in Algeria, and to identify the main obstacles

faced by these projects. The study concludes that small projects play an important role in the development of rural and border areas.

Cross-Border Trades and Commerce between Thailand and Neighboring Countries: Policy Implications for Establishing Special Border Economic Zones
Choen Krainara & Jayant K. Routray Pages 345-363 | Published online: 14 Aug 2015

This study aims to identify potential locations for joint economic border regions between Thailand and its neighbouring countries. It also seeks to propose enabling policies to facilitate the establishment of these regions. In addition, the study aims to contribute to the strengthening of regional economic integration in the Greater Mekong Region through the development of economic border regions. Economic and Spatial Restructuring in the Aras Economic Zone: The Impact of Cross-Border Cooperation by Hamid Jafarzadeh and Yangdong Feng Department of Urban and Rural Planning, School of Architecture and Fine Arts, Dalian University of Technology, Dalian 116024, China

Sustainability 2023, 15(13), 10289; <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151310289>

This study aims to explore China-Iran border cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative and assess its impact on regional development.

Axis One: The conceptual framework of economic border regions

The topic of border regions is an important strategic issue in our contemporary era, and its significance is evident in several aspects. On the one hand, they contribute to international economic integration, either bilaterally or collectively. On the other hand, these areas play a crucial role in resolving border disputes related to natural resources found along the border strip. This section will address these issues:

Definition of border regions

There are many definitions of border regions, of which the following are worth mentioning:

- International borders: Defined as “the dividing line between the territory of one State and the territories of neighbouring States, where the State exercises full sovereignty over its border area. This sovereignty does not extend beyond this territory, except in exceptional cases”¹.
- Border area: Defined as “the area extending from the border line between two neighbouring States to a certain depth within the territory of both States”².
- According to the Kyoto Convention, border areas are “that part of the territory of a State where goods produced or supplied are outside the customs zone and are not subject to customs duties and regulations”. There are two types: free commercial border zones, where goods are mainly stored without being classified or processed prior to export, and free industrial border zones, where goods are produced for export purposes”³.

¹- Lobna Jassas, “The role of developing border areas in achieving border security among Arab countries”, Strategic Studies, No. 27, 2018, p. 47.

²- Mahmoud Imran Salim Abdu, “Challenges of Development in Border Areas (Xinjiang as a Model)”, Al-Qalam Scientific Journal, No. 25, p. 88.

³- Qahatan Abdullah Harith, “The Importance of Border Economic Areas in Reducing Constraints and Issues Between Neighbouring Countries”, Generation of Political Studies and International Relations Journal, No. 06, p. 101.

- Border regions are also defined as “local communities, whether urban, rural or desert, located within the boundaries of the State and adjoining all or part of the borders of another State. Their ownership and sovereignty belong to the State in which they are located, in the same way as other areas of the State”⁴.

We conclude that border regions are geographical areas delimited between two or more States, encompassing the border strip separating them and extending a certain distance into the territory of each State. These regions are characterised by specific geographical, economic and cultural features.

Characteristics of border regions

Border regions have a number of characteristics that distinguish them from other regions:

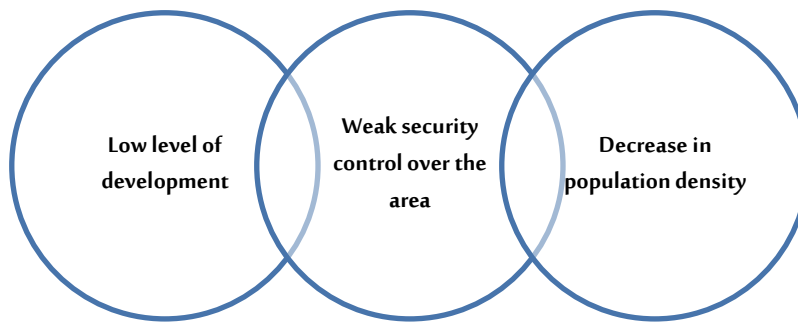


Figure 01: Characteristics of border regions

Source: (Hirfouch, 2020, p. 238)

Objectives for the development of border regions

The objectives for the development of industrial border regions are varied and can be summarised as follows:⁵

1. Political objectives: Political objectives are among the most important objectives pursued by states through the development of border regions. These objectives are aimed at improving political relations with neighbouring countries, encouraging them to create serious opportunities for cooperation, and fostering the desire and willingness to achieve integration.

2. Security objectives: In the face of emerging security threats on their borders, states can no longer face these challenges alone. Therefore, through the development of these regions, states aim to eliminate the environments that give rise to such threats, including issues such as migration, drug trafficking and smuggling. In addition, there is potential for security coordination among these countries to address these threats, which could develop into other areas of cooperation in the future.

⁴- Hussein Abdul Karim, Karima Ahmed, “Contributions of NGOs to Achieving Sustainable Development for Residents of Border Areas: A Study Applied to the ‘Shalatin-Abu Ramad-Halaib’ Area”, *Future of Social Sciences Journal*, Vol. 01, No. 02, 2020, p. 18.

⁵- Am Al-Khayr Aichoun, “Development of Border Areas as an Entry Point for Activating the Moroccan Integration Project”, *Algerian Journal of Security and Development*, Vol. 10, No. 03, 2021, p. 272.

3. Economic objectives: The development of border regions brings economic benefits to neighbouring countries through investment in various economic sectors. Optimal use of the resources available in these areas will encourage these countries to coordinate at a regional level to improve their economic sectors.

4. Social objectives: Due to difficult social conditions, inhabitants of border areas often feel the urge to move to more desirable internal areas in search of better opportunities. Sometimes these circumstances lead to external migration and to leaving their countries. States therefore seek to develop these areas in order to retain their populations and improve their living conditions.

Types of economic border regions

The nature and objectives of economic border regions vary from one country to another. In general, they can be divided into the following types:⁶

1. Industrial zones:

Industrial zones (also known as industrial parks) are areas primarily focused on the development of industrial activities. They are created to provide advanced and affordable industrial space for companies. These zones offer a wide range of incentives and benefits such as transport, energy and other utilities to facilitate industrial growth. Some industrial zones are multifunctional and resemble comprehensive SEZs, but they typically operate on a smaller scale.

The basic principle of industrial zones is to cluster public or private enterprises to stimulate industrial growth, provide effective infrastructure and services, and enhance the competitiveness of enterprises, regions and countries.

2. Technology Zones

Technology zones are areas managed by specialised professionals that facilitate the establishment and growth of innovation-based enterprises. They provide value-added services and high quality facilities to stimulate and manage the flow of knowledge and technology. The primary aim of these zones is to increase the wealth of the community by fostering a culture of creativity and innovation, and to enhance the competitiveness of knowledge-based businesses.

3. Innovation Zones

Innovation Zones are urban creative systems based on four innovation models: urban, production, collaborative and creative planning. All these models are coordinated under strong leadership to enhance innovation and competitiveness of the locations. In this way, innovation zones aim to develop cities and attract innovative companies to become centres of knowledge and innovation.

4. Comprehensive Special Economic Zones

Comprehensive SEZs, also known as multifunctional SEZs, are large areas that encompass a wide range of industrial and service activities. They operate under specific organisational frameworks and institutional incentives that are distinct from the general economy. In some cases, these zones may cover an entire city or state. The objective of establishing comprehensive SEZs is to overcome institutional deficiencies in the general economy and to facilitate the flow of export-oriented trade and investment activities, in particular to attract foreign direct investment.

⁶- Al-Hays Abdul Wahab Joudah et al, "Special Economic Zones: Concept and Experiences", Journal of Human and Social Sciences, Vol. 11, No. 02, 2022, p. 43.

Classification of economic border regions

Economic frontier regions can be classified as follows:⁷

A. Extensive free zones

These are large areas with resident populations, similar to Special Economic Zones in China or what are often referred to as New Cities. These zones are populated and designed to effectively utilise extensive land and population density.

B. Small border-free zones

These are areas of less than 1,000 hectares, usually surrounded by a fence. Investors must adhere to specific sections allocated to them within the fenced area and there is no resident population. Such zones may include accommodation for workers.

C. Free Industrial Border Zones

These are small border areas designed to support the needs of specific industries such as banking, jewellery, handicrafts, etc. They focus on facilitating industrial activities within a defined scope.

D. Designated Border Zones

These zones only enter into contracts with investors who meet certain criteria, such as achieving a certain level of exports or complying with a certain technological standard. An example of this is factories geared towards exports to Mexico and China.

Economic border regions are a powerful tool for improving the economies of states and strengthening relations between them. However, it is crucial that these areas are carefully designed and developed to meet local and regional needs and to ensure that they deliver maximum benefits.

Axis Two: Implications of the establishment of border regions

Exports are the main face of a country's interaction outside its geographical borders. They are of great importance as they are the main driver for achieving development.

1. Nature of exports

Exporting is the sale of products from one country to another under recognised systems, laws and regulations that support imports from consuming countries and exports from producing countries⁸.

2. Importance of exporting

Exporting is one of the most important resources for market expansion⁹. Countries use it as a method of engaging with external markets in order to develop their economies and pay off debts that hinder development. Therefore, economic institutions need to extend beyond the national framework as they will compete in international markets through the export process. Exporting aims not only to provide resources for capital investment, but also to strengthen local industries and reduce production costs. In addition, it contributes to the prosperity of exporting countries by:

- Increasing foreign exchange reserves

⁷- Iman Sahrawi, Sihem Hirfouch, "The Importance of Special Economic Border Areas in Encouraging Investments", *Al-Ijtihad Journal for Legal and Economic Studies*, Vol. 09, No. 05, University of Setif 1, 2020, pp. 244-245.

⁸- Lahcen Aqqouma, Mourad Jenaidi, "Measuring the Competitiveness Indicators of Non-Hydrocarbon Exports in Algeria", *Algerian Journal of Social and Human Sciences*, Vol. 08, No. 02, University of Algiers 3, 2020, p. 528.

⁹- Moulay Abdelkader, "Exporting as a strategy for achieving economic development", Master's thesis, Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Youcef Ben Khedda, Algeria, 2006-2007, p. 5.

- Expanding the local market
- Rebalancing the balance of payments of developing countries

3. Structure of Algerian exports (2018-2023)

The structure of Algerian exports is an important element of the Algerian economy. However, it faces significant challenges that require drastic measures to diversify and improve its competitiveness. The following table illustrates the evolution of Algerian exports over the period 2018-2022, based on reports from the Bank of Algeria.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	20023
Hydrocarbon Exports	31.7	30.1	17.3	27.6	38.7	42.5
Percentage %	94.33	93.81	92.90	84.60	90.7	91.2
Non-Hydrocarbon Exports	13.9	3.4	2.4	2/8	3.1	3.5
Percentage %	5.67	6.18	7.10	15.40	9.30	8.80
Total Exports	35.6	33.5	19.7	30.40	41.8	46.0
Percentage	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Annual Export Report based on the official website of the Algerian Customs (2018-2023)

From the table, we can see that there was a notable decline in Algeria's exports in 2019, which fell by 2.1% compared to 2018, reaching \$33.5 billion. This decline was mainly due to the fall in oil and gas prices, which account for around 95% of Algerian exports.

In addition, lower agricultural production due to drought conditions contributed to the decline in agricultural exports. In 2020, Algeria's exports continued to decline, falling by 13.8% to \$19.7 billion. The reasons for this decline remained the same as in 2019: falling oil and gas prices and lower agricultural production. However, certain factors, such as increased exports of mineral products and services, helped to mitigate the severity of the downturn.

In 2021, there was a slight increase in Algerian exports, which rose by 10.7% to \$30.40 billion. The upward trend in Algerian exports continued in 2022, with an increase of 1.4% to \$41.8 billion. This recovery was driven by rising oil and gas prices, supported by a global economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, increased exports of mineral products and services supported this recovery.

The recovery in Algeria's exports continued into 2023, with a further increase of 5.2% to reach \$46 billion. This continued growth was attributed to sustained high oil and gas prices, as well as increased production in other sectors such as mining and agriculture. The continued rise in oil and gas prices is expected to play a critical role in this growth, along with improvements in other sectors such as mining and agriculture.

The third axis: Algeria's strategy for the development of its border regions

1. Overview of Algeria's border regions

Algeria's geographical location makes it a geostrategic crossroads, at the crossroads of three major geographical areas: Africa, the Arab region and the Mediterranean. This strategic position lies between two important entities: the northern entity represented by the European Union and the African depth.

Algeria is located in the north-west of Africa, between the 12th parallel east and the 9th parallel west, and between the 37th parallel north and the 19th parallel south. This location gives Algeria several important characteristics:

- It is the Maghreb country that shares borders with all its neighbours.
- It accounts for 40% of the Maghreb's total area and 47% of its gross income.
- Algeria ranks fifth in the world in terms of natural gas reserves and fourteenth in terms of oil reserves.
- It is the world's twelfth largest producer and ninth largest exporter, the third largest gas exporter and the second largest gas supplier to Europe.

This unique geostrategic feature has given Algeria a vast and varied landscape, stretching from east to west and from north to south. As a result, a definitional framework has been established for Algeria's border areas, as outlined in the national spatial planning scheme, which identifies nine primary regions:

1. Eastern coast
2. Eastern Tell
3. Western Tell
4. Upper Plateau (East)
5. Upper Plateau (West)
6. Southeast Region
7. Southwestern Region
8. Greater Southern (East) Region
9. Greater Southern Region (West)

These regions comprise twelve provinces (wilayas): Tarf, Souk Ahras, Tlemcen, Tebessa, Naama, El Oued, Ouargla, Illizi, Timimoun, Adrar, Tindouf and Béchar), three delegated provinces and fifty-seven municipalities. They share borders with seven neighbouring countries, with a total length of 6,343 km (Western Sahara, Morocco, Mali, Libya, Tunisia, Niger, Mauritania).

The total area of the border provinces is about 928,720 square kilometres, or about 39% of the country's total area. This significant percentage reflects the vast geographical extent of the border regions. With an estimated population of more than 869,280, or about 20% of the total population, population density varies from region to region. The western border areas have a higher population density, while the eastern areas have a lower density and the remote desert border areas have a very low population¹⁰.

¹⁰- Jamila Alaq, Rabab Boulemashour, "Algerian Border Areas Between Local Development Requirements and Enhancing National Tourism Capacities", Humanitarian Journal for Human Security, Vol. 04, No. 02, Salah Boubnider University, Constantine, 2019, pp. 208-210.

2. Development policy in the Algerian border regions

Administrative characteristics of the Algerian border areas

Algeria shares its borders with seven countries and administers twelve border provinces covering a total area of 1,929,756 square kilometres, i.e. approximately 81.02% of the total area of Algeria. These provinces are home to fifty-seven communes directly adjacent to the international border.

The border provinces differ considerably in terms of their natural, demographic and economic characteristics. As a result, Algeria faces a number of challenges due to the increasing prevalence of various social and economic phenomena, including

- smuggling
- Money laundering
- Arms and drugs trafficking
- Financing of terrorism

These problems are particularly acute in the eastern regions bordering Tunisia and Libya and in the southern regions bordering Mali¹¹.

3. Characteristics of development in the Algerian border regions

Development programmes implemented in Algeria

Those who follow the situation in Algeria will note that, since 2001, the country has embarked on an unprecedentedly expansive economic policy, particularly in terms of the importance of the financial resources allocated to it (given the abundance of external revenues resulting from the relatively continuous improvement in oil prices, through the public investment programmes implemented or currently being implemented during the period 2001-2014). The country relied on the financial surplus resulting from the rise in oil prices at the beginning of the millennium to implement development strategies in the form of multi-annual development programmes accompanied by reform policies. The rise in oil prices provided a degree of financial comfort that was used to revive economic activity through a developmental fiscal policy by establishing programmes and five-year plans to achieve development.

This was exemplified by the economic recovery programme from 2001 to 2004, for which the Algerian government allocated substantial financial resources totalling USD 7 billion and mobilised considerable material and human resources. This was followed by a complementary programme to support growth over the next five years (2005-2009), with a budget of \$150 billion, as well as the five-year programme (2010-2014), with a budget of \$286 billion, and the programme for 2015-2019¹².

4. Economic base in the Algerian border regions

Despite the enormous financial allocations and national development programmes undertaken by the Algerian state to achieve comprehensive national development,

¹¹- Miftah Ghazal, "Development of Border Areas and Its Impact on Algerian National Security," Doctoral Thesis, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Conflict Management and Peacebuilding Department, 2019-2020, p. 108.

¹²- Miftah Ghazal, "Development of Areas and Its Impact on Algerian National Security", reference cited above, p. 113.

as well as the legislation enacted to ensure sustainable local development, these efforts, allocated funds and adopted policies have not achieved the desired development or triggered economic growth that can be felt by the citizens of Algeria in general and the inhabitants of the border regions in particular.

The economic reality of Algeria's border regions is characterised by different levels of development in the different border areas, due to the steep slopes of the Tell and the plateau. The issues of industrial development, tourism, traditional crafts and the valorisation of local resources are linked to the low attractiveness of the border regions, especially the southern ones, due to the lack of supply sources, high transport costs and a shortage of skilled labour. In addition, these areas are confronted with natural and human obstacles, despite their economic potential:

- Mining, tourism, livestock, pastures and groundwater resources.
- A young labour force.
- Long-standing exchanges between border regions.
- Social and cultural similarities with neighbouring countries¹³.

5. National strategy for the development of the border area in Algeria

In this border area, negative phenomena arise from multiple sources, such as the lack of a clear and targeted development policy, the spread of poverty, deprivation and marginalisation, and limited political and social horizons. In the face of the inability of the military apparatus and political solutions to address these challenges, Algeria is seeking to develop a development approach aimed at raising the aspirations of the people and inhabitants of these areas by creating suitable conditions for a decent life and preventing them from becoming easy targets for trafficking and transnational criminal networks.

Algeria's national policy for the planning and development of border areas has been strengthened in the new institutional context:

- Approval by the authorities of the National Spatial Plan for the horizons of 2030: Law No. 10-02 of 29 June 2010.
- Law No. 10-01 of 2 March 2016, which includes constitutional amendments¹⁴.
- In addition, the government action plan of September 2017 aims to intensify development efforts in border areas.

President Tebboun has prioritised the development and promotion of Algeria's 'shadow regions' in his presidential programme. In addition, the Trans-Saharan Highway project is considered one of the most important regional integration projects. This highway will serve as a conduit for a fibre-optic cable between Algeria and South Africa, as well as a pipeline that will transport Nigerian oil through Algeria to Europe. The Trans-Saharan Highway is the first African project of its kind and is part of the African Infrastructure Programme for Roads on the Continent, which includes nine major routes designed to link all African capitals and promote economic and social development and integration across the continent.

This motorway will link six countries: Algeria, Tunisia, Mali, Niger, Chad and Nigeria, over a distance of 9,000 kilometres, with the main aim of facilitating

¹³- Miftah Ghazal, "Development and the Problem of Achieving Border Security", Previously Cited Reference, p. 133.

¹⁴- Driadi Hamida, "Strategy for the Development of Border Areas in Algeria: Between Challenges and Resources", *Global Politics Journal*, Vol. 05, No. 01, Ahmed Bouguera University, Boumerdes, 2021, pp. 338-339.

exchanges between the countries through which it passes, reducing the isolation of desert areas and promoting economic and commercial exchanges. In addition to this motorway, there is the 1,020-kilometre High Plateau motorway from Tebessa to Tlemcen and the 1,216-kilometre East-West motorway between Annaba and Tlemcen. All of these projects are designed to link different regions of Algeria and facilitate traffic between provinces and between the Maghreb and African countries.

In order to strengthen cooperation in the Maghreb, Algeria and Mauritania have decided, for the first time, to open a border crossing point between them in order to increase trade and develop transport flows between the two countries. This decision was announced during the 18th session of the Algerian-Mauritanian Joint High Committee, held at the end of December 2017¹⁵. It was also announced that preparations were well advanced for the opening of a reciprocal air link between the international airport in the capital, Nouakchott, and the airport in Tindouf, Algeria.

Conclusion

The border regions of Algeria are characterised by economic and human resources that enable them to become active regions in the world. These resources vary between tourism, agriculture, mining and industry, enabling them to achieve comprehensive sustainable development in all sectors. This will ensure the establishment of cooperative relations in border areas for the benefit of all neighbouring countries.

The application of the special border economic zone model in Algeria's border regions should have a positive impact on the region, given the success of this experience in many border regions of developing countries, which guarantees development in all respects.

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¹⁵- Mohamed Cissé, "The Algeria-Mauritania Border: A Frontier of Contrasts and Cooperation," *Africa Spectrum* 48, no. 3 (2013): 413-432.

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27. This page should begin with the introduction of your article and follow the rest of your paper. Wilson (1990), stated that the Introduction explains the scope and objective of the study in the light of current knowledge on the subject. State the objectives of the work and provide an adequate background, avoiding a detailed literature survey or a summary of the results.