

The Implications of the Sahel Security Crisis for the Development of Tourism Industry in Algeria

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Received on 17-07-2020, reviewed on 25-10-2020, accepted on 01-12-2020

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how Algeria's tourism industry has been hit by the political instability of the Sahel region countries in the 1999-2020 period, and how the Algerian decision-makers have responded to manage the subsequent adverse effects. The fundamental data used in this study were collected from a series of media reports, press releases and statistical sources in Algeria. Additionally, an important collection of secondary data from different sources was also used. The findings reveal that the Sahel security issues in Africa have had serious implications for the tourism industry in Algeria. The political instability of the neighbouring countries has made "security" the centrepiece of Algerian foreign policy. The study also shows that the Algerian security policy is based on a set of principles that are not changing over time, thus, it has not been flexible enough to respond to actual changes in the security situation. As a result, tourism has been locked in the country's foreign policy, which unintentionally forces Algeria to abandon what could be one of the most powerful engines of economic growth.

Keywords: *tourism, terrorism, foreign policy, security, the Sahel Region, Algeria*

Rezumat. Implicațiile crizei de securitate a Sahelului pentru industria turismului din Algeria

Scopul acestei lucrări este de a ilustra modul în care industria turistică a Algeriei a fost afectată de instabilitatea politică a țărilor din regiunea Sahel în perioada 1999-2020 și modul în care factorii de decizie algerieni au reacționat pentru a gestiona efectele adverse ulterioare. Datele fundamentale utilizate în acest studiu au fost colectate dintr-o serie de rapoarte, comunicate de presă și interviuri față în față cu un grup selectat de autorități publice și companii private din sectorul turistic din Algeria. În plus, a fost utilizată și o colecție importantă de date secundare din diferite surse. Rezultatele arată că problemele de securitate ale Sahelului au avut implicații serioase pentru industria turismului din Algeria. Instabilitatea politică a țărilor vecine a făcut din „securitate” piesa centrală a politicii externe algeriene. Studiul arată, de asemenea, că politica de securitate algeriană se bazează pe un set de principii care nu s-au schimbat niciodată în timp. Descoperirile arată în plus că politica de securitate din Algeria nu a fost suficient de flexibilă în ceea ce privește procesul de dezvoltare. Drept urmare, turismul a fost blocat în politica externă a țării, iar Algeria a fost forțată neintenționat să abandoneze unul dintre cele mai puternice motoare ale creșterii economice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *turism, terorism, politică externă, securitate, regiunea Sahel, Algeria*

Introduction

In the era of sustainable tourism, the success or failure of a tourism destination relies on the ability to provide a safe and secure environment for tourists. The mere threat of events such as terrorist attacks and political instability can easily cause a slump in the number of tourists. Therefore, the impact of security factor on the tourism sector is immediate and can last for a long time. That is in addition to the fact that in some cases, it can also have extensive implications for the neighbouring countries.

Algeria is one of the few destinations in the world that has a massive but almost undeveloped potential for tourism. Yet, especially over the past decade, the tourism industry has been seriously damaged by the growing lack of safety and security, mainly related to 9/11 tragedy in the U.S. Since then, Africa's Sahel region has constantly been considered a breeding ground for terror, posing a critical danger to the U.S. and its allies. That explains why many Algerian

tourism professionals claim that tourism has been locked up in their own country.

The Sahel region¹ in Africa (fig. 1) is the largest and one of the most important and complicated security areas in the world. The growing importance of the region, notably in the past fifty years, can be explained by the emergence of several factors of which the discovery of oil reservoirs can be considered as the most important of all. Oil gave the region a strategic importance, gaining the attention of the world major powers (the U.S, China) and France as a traditional power in the region. At the same time, the common cross-border threats such as terrorism made the region a part of the global counterterrorism strategy, specifically, the security strategy of the United States of America after the events of 11 September 2001. With respect to Algeria, the extension of the Sahel geographical area into the country's southern part has made Algeria vulnerable to the security threats originated in the south. That has led to increased Algerian diplomatic

activity in the region for fear that the Sahel region could become a safe haven for armed terrorist groups.

Tourism is a political issue, and it is profoundly affected by political instability (Scott, 1998; Hall, 1994; Clements and Georgiou, 1998). For this reason, the Sahel security issues in Africa have brought the region to the heart of the Algerian foreign policy concerns. Examining a country's foreign policy will help to determine its national interests and define its goals. That is what this study attempts to reach by examining Algeria's foreign and security policy toward the African Sahel between 1999 and 2020. So, the main question in this study concerns the impact(s) of Algerian foreign and security policy on tourism industry. While trying to answer the main question, several associated questions will also be addressed: 1. What kind of tourism Algeria wish to develop? 2. What are the threats expected from the African Sahel region that could hinder tourism industry? 3. What are the components of Algerian security policy toward the Sahel? 4. And how have the Algerian policymakers responded to manage the risks? Answering these questions, aside from satisfying the researcher's curiosity, can help provide management tools for parrying and/or at least reducing the issues harmful to the pace of tourism development in Algeria.

As mentioned above, the study covers the period from 1999 to 2020, which is known for a range of local, regional and international variables forming the Algeria's policy in the African Sahel region. *Local variables*: acting and playing role during the period after 1999, when president Abdelaziz Bouteflika took office. During his presidency, Algeria's foreign policy has been increasingly active in all fronts compared to the years of the internal crisis (The Algerian Civil War²). *Regional variables*: increased security threats in the African Sahel following the emergence of new terrorist organizations, especially Al-Qaeda Organization in the Arab Maghreb, and their alliance with organized crime and illegal immigration networks. *International variables*: the most significant events of 11 September 2001 and subsequent international strategies to combat terrorism in the African Sahel which allowed foreign intervention in the region under the pretext of "Countering terrorism".

Terrorism and tourism: Theoretical background and literature review

Terrorism in general has been most succinctly defined as "the intentional use of, or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims" (Ganor, 1998:26). Enders and Sandler (2002) also defines terrorism as "the premeditated use or threat of use of extranormal violence or brutality by subnational groups to obtain

a political, religious or ideological objective through intimidation of a huge audience".

With regard to specific features in Muslim countries, Callaway and Harrelson-Stephens (2006) theorized that terrorism arises because of the denial of three types of human rights: political rights, personal security rights and basic human rights. Yet, the actions of terrorist groups are motivated by their belief that they are fighting polytheism and ideological deviation (Hudson, 1999) which, in their eyes, are the main results of the West's plans to suppress Muslims. Wahab (1995) guided a conceptual study examining terrorist attacks in Egypt against tourists as "groups trying to revive classic Islamic societal rules to resist corruption of modernity." He reveals that conservative locals may feel they need to take drastic action to prevent what they perceive as a threat to national culture, tradition, and religious beliefs—in extreme cases, resentment manifests itself in terrorism.

The literature also suggests that mass tourism itself can be a political issue. In some situations, tourism can "spawn divisive conflicts among proponents and opponents of tourism development" (Richter 1983:18-19) and in others, socioeconomic, cultural, and communication gaps separating locals from tourists can create resentment and incite violence (Aziz 1995; Lea 1996; Wahab 1995). This may result in political instability, mainly perceived as a condition under which political legitimacy, social order and governance are challenged (Hall and O'Sullivan, 1996). A political system needs to readjust to challenges to become stable again, which is a prerequisite for economic development as well, for the latter is associated with stable political conditions (Przeworski et al., 2000).

There is a substantial literature that has examined the impact of terrorism on tourism (Schneider, et al, 2010). It has been generally agreed that terrorism usually dashes tourists from visiting affected destinations (Liu & Pratt, 2017). Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn suggest in their book *The Theatre of Terror* that terrorist activities have a major impact on international tourism of a country and are also the largest economic factor in the equation between terror and foreign tourism.

One of the attempts to estimate the impact of terrorism on tourism and vice versa was made by Abdelaty and Esmail (2016). The study focused on Egypt and Tunisia for the period 2005–2015 period. Using multiple regression equation formulas, the authors found an inverse relationship between terrorism and tourism industry. Likewise, Neumayer and Plumper (2016) found that terrorist attacks on tourist destinations in one country do not reduce tourist flows to these tourist destinations only. Instead, such attacks have spatial spill over effects. The findings of the study provide further arguments

for regional cooperation in for anti-terrorism policies among Islamic destination countries since countries cannot shield themselves from the negative consequences of terrorism on tourism by preventing such attacks only in their own country.

The temporality of the impact of terrorism on tourism has also been investigated in a number of studies. One of the early works by Enders et al. (1992) estimated the impact of international terrorism on domestic tourism in European countries for 1968–1988. The study concludes that terrorist activities not only decreased tourism but also influenced the neighbouring countries negatively. A subsequent study was conducted by Yaya (2008) examining the impact of terrorism on the tourism industry in Turkey between 1985 and 2006. The author found that the effects of terrorism on tourism are harmful, but the magnitude of reducing foreign tourist inflow is minor, and the duration of the impact is observed approximately within one year. Another study on the Indian context by Bhattacharya and Basu (2010) established a one-way causality between incidences of terrorist attacks and foreign tourist arrivals. The one-way causality runs from terror incidents to foreign tourist arrivals and not the other way around; where the study shows Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India begin to decline in the second month after an attack up till the fifth month before tourism reverts back to its original level. Similarly, Greenbaum and Hultquist (2006) found that terrorism had a significant negative impact on tourism in Italy over the period 1995–1997 and the impact was more prominent in case of large cities when compared with small cities. Furthermore, the study proved that the impact of terrorism on economic and tourism activities is temporary in nature and is restrained mostly to a period of 3–9 months after an event. According to a study conducted by Liu and Pratt (2017), twenty-five of ninety-five countries faced a short-run impact of terrorism on international tourism and only nine countries out of ninety-five investigated faced extraordinary long-run effects. There is a broad consensus about the dramatic consequences of terrorism for the global tourism market after 9/11 events. Yet, Kalesar's (2010) study revealed a much more complex image. He scrutinized the impact of terrorism and political violence on the tourism industry in the Middle East region. The study shows a new tourism market referred to as 'Islamic Tourism' or 'Arab Tourism' in tourism literature today (Hamarnah, Steiner 2001). According to Kalesar, the tourism sector in the Middle East countries did not suffer as expected, considering the causes and scope of the crisis. In fact, the intra-regional tourism boomed in the post-2001 period like never before, as many people from countries of the Middle East changed their traditional travel management for fear

of backlashes and Islamophobia and preferred to stay within the region for vacations.

We can conclude that there is a consensus among the various scholars that the act of terrorism affects inflow of foreign tourists. Though the duration of the impact varies, the general agreement is that it is transitory in nature and wanes at the most within a span of two years. Is that true in the Algerian case? If not, what is the reason? And most importantly, how the Algerian policy makers respond to it?

The link between terrorism and tourism in Algeria

The events of 11 September 2001 are considered an essential variable in the 1999–2020 period covered in this study. These events led to increased international interest in the phenomenon of terrorism³, which witnessed an upward curve in the African Sahel region. Algeria has therefore sought to play a pivotal regional role in the fight against terrorism and terrorist groups and its alliances with organized crime networks, as this poses a direct threat to the national security of the country. It is therefore important to understand where tourism stand in Algeria, and more importantly what kind of tourism the stakeholders in Algeria wish to develop.

The heterogeneity of the Algerian landscapes and the country's historical heritage offer it the opportunity to develop several types of tourism. Certainly, one of Algeria's assets in terms of tourism is the vast Sahara and huge Saharan areas which are classified as world cultural heritage (Tassili, Hoggars, M'zab Valley). Algerian tourism experts consider desert tourism one of the most important types of tourism that can be invested in. Rachid Makhloufi, the General Director of the National Agency for Tourism Development, claims that "The desert tourism is the real locomotive for taking off the tourism sector in Algeria" (Algeria press service, 2018). Jeremy Keenan confirms that Algeria is a country without a rival in term of tourism assets (Keenan. 2005).

This raises the question to what extent tourism industry could possibly contribute to diversifying the economy in Algeria, currently dominated by hydrocarbon industries. In 2000, World Tourism grew by 7.4%, its highest growth rate in the previous decade and almost the double of 1999. In 2019 total international arrivals reached a record of 1.5 billion. In the same year, revenues from international tourism reached to 1.48 trillion U.S. dollars. Although Algeria has been a member of the WTO since 1976, tourism is still limited. Statistics indicate that Algeria receives no more than 1% of world tourist flows, the country ranked 92nd out of 140 countries in the world (World Economic Forum, 2018). The tourism sector in Algeria represents 9.3% of the volume of exports, 5.9% of

the rate of productive investments and only 1.8% of the GDP in 2018. In comparison, the hydrocarbon sector represents 45% of the GDP and 85% of total exports in the same year (The Report Algeria, 2018)

The goal of my research is particularly adjusted to this problem. Since, on the one hand, tourism in Algeria has the resources to become a significant destination on a regional or even global scale, what are the obstacles? Remarkably, in an interview published by the Algerian national newspaper "Al-Mujahid" in May 2018, Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia acknowledged that the government was still prohibiting the opening of tourist routes in the Algerian desert, due to fear of kidnappings of European tourists. He stressed that "the presence of

foreign tourists in southern Algeria could harm the national policy to combat terrorism." Ouyahia also indicated in a press conference that Algeria still fears terrorist threats from the south and the Sahel region, and said: "We won the battle of terrorism at home, but we live in a circle filled with terrorist activity. Also, the situation in Libya, Mali, and other neighbouring countries is still dangerous, and these conditions do not allow the revitalization of tourism." He added: "Tourism workers in the south must understand, as we cannot allow this at present." He, however, admits that Algeria's promotion of tourism, notably in the south, is primarily a political move than an economic initiative (Lahyani, 2018).

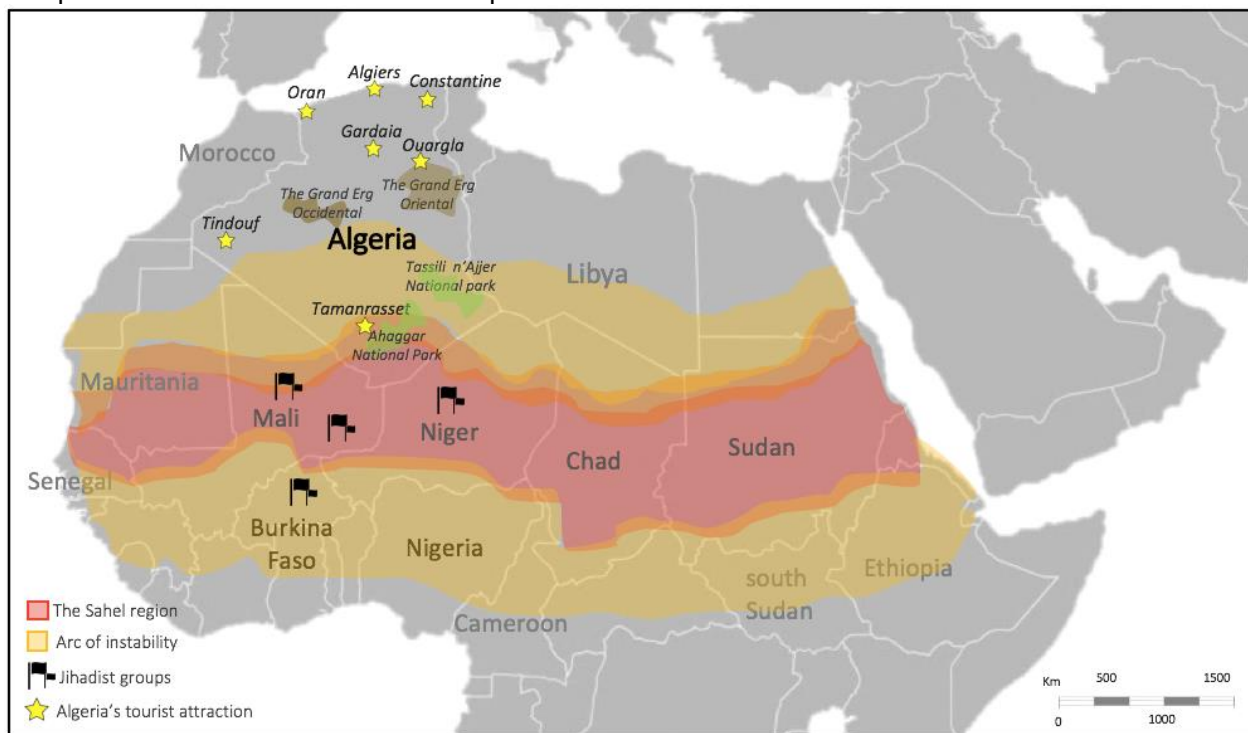


Fig. 1 Figure 1: The Sahel Region of Africa. Source: own design based on [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52614579>, <https://tunisiastategicreport.wordpress.com/2018/10/09/fierce-competition-and-boots-on-the-ground-in-sub-saharan-africa-sahel-between-frances-defense-of-its-historical-influence-and-algerias-determination-to-defend-its-natural-expansion-in-the-region/>]

Since gaining its independence in 1962 and during the period of 1970 to 1986 Algeria didn't really perceive tourism simply because the new-born state was focusing on solving socio-economic issues that has thrive after the independence. From 1990 up until 2000 Algeria fought against the social strife and escaped the civil war. Today, the remnants of the black decade are still fatal to tourism in Algeria, as the number of foreign tourists has not exceeded 3,5 million tourists annually for 20 years, and the number of arrivals to Algeria through travel agencies has not surpassed 2 million tourists. In comparison, Tunisia

reached out to 9,4 million and Morocco recorded 13 million visitors for 2019 (Trading economic, 2020).

The security issue is indeed a crucial one for Algeria. Terrorist groups have carried out numerous armed operations in the Sahel region against Algeria, Niger, Mali and Mauritania. These include the 2003 Sahara hostage crisis concerning the abduction of 32 foreign tourists (16 Germans, 10 Austrians, 4 Swiss, Dutch and Swedish) by the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The incident took place in the Tassili region World Heritage List of UNESCO in southeast of Algeria and the hostage-takers demanded a ransom of 5 million euros

(Callimachi, 2014). The case made Algerian government look weak, especially when tourism minister Lakhdar Dorbani indirectly confirmed, for the first time, that the tourists had been kidnapped, rather than repeating the government's former line that they might have got lost in the desert.

Many commentators remained bewildered as to how preparations for such a large-scale kidnapping could pass unnoticed in an area! In addition to the mentioned hostage crisis, there have been also multiple attacks against Algerian customs teams, most notably the killing of six customs officers in al-Maniya, middle south of Algeria, in 2006 (Bourouina, 2006); the armed attacks against the border guards in Tin-Zeitoune in Tamanrasset in July 2010 (CNN Arabic, 2010); the kidnappings of an Italian tourist in February 2011 in Djanet, southwest of Algeria, and 2 Spaniards in October 2011 in Tindouf, southeast of Algeria, plus the kidnapping of the Algerian consul and six diplomats in Mali in April 2012 (France 24, 2012). The kidnapping of diplomats in Mali, according to Al Jazeera correspondents Hicham Mowaffaq, was orchestrated by the Moroccan-French intelligence services in order to drag Algeria into the Sahel dump after Algeria had announced its commitment to a peaceful solution in Mali (Hicham, 2014). Here, we can also mention the kidnapping of the governor of Illizi province in January 2012 before he was freed from the Libyan territory by local forces of Zintan city in north western Libya (Hamid Ould Ahmed, 2012). Obviously, Algeria is harshly affected by the terrorist attacks in the Sahel of Africa, which indicates the danger of the terrorist groups located in northern Mali to Algerian security and stability. For this reason, Algerian foreign policy attaches great importance to the security factor in the Sahel region.

Nevertheless, Algeria is not the only victim; the whole Sahel region has known massive attacks across the territory, mainly against Western existence. In June 2005, 150 members of GSPC attacked a military base in Mauritania, killing 15 Mauritanian soldiers. In a statement from the group, GSPC announced that the attack was "A support for oppressed Muslims in the country and an act of revenge for their 'brothers' who were arrested by the Mauritanian regime" (Boucek, 2008). In 2008, the UN envoy to Niger, Robert Fuller, was abducted along with his assistant and private driver (Polgreen, 2008). Also, the killing of an American school director in the capital Nouakchott, in Mauritania in June 2009 (BBC news, 2011) as well as the attack on the French nuclear power company "Areva" in Niger in 2010 (BBC news, 2010) and a series of executions, assassinations and kidnappings can be added to the list. In the meantime, the announcement of the independence of northern Mali in April 2012 was one of the most prominent operations carried out by armed groups, followed by several terrorist attacks,

including the destruction of shrines classified as World Heritage site in the city of Timbuktu in northern Mali. This incident prompted the worldwide condemnation of most international parties such as UNESCO and the International Criminal Court, describing it as a war crime. Eventually, it was the big military operation of Malian and French forces, aided by West African forces (Akwes) and Algeria. As a consequence, Al-Qaeda, on 16 January 2013, attacked the oil plant of Tekenturen in town of Ain Amenas in south-eastern Algeria, with 790 employees, including 134 foreigners of 26 different nationalities. Al-Qaeda declared that the operation came as an act of revenge from Algeria that had opened its air space for French Air Force to bomb in Mali (Tomlinson et al., 2013).

It is noteworthy that the Global Terrorism Report of 2019 that covered 163 country acknowledged the decrease in the total number of deaths due to terrorism for the fourth consecutive year in 2018, as statistics noted a decrease of 15.2 percent to 15,952 deaths, which represents a 53 percent decrease since its peak in 2014 when 33,555 people had been killed in terrorist attacks (Global terrorism index, 2019). Yet, this does not indicate the elimination of terrorist groups! The danger of these groups is still real, and their timing is not predictable, nor can their intentions be trusted, which frankly speaking, increases the volume of security challenges faced by all countries in general and the African Sahel states in particular in confronting potential attacks in the future.

However, it is difficult to speak about tourism and terrorism without referring to the financial resources of terrorism. The public conviction has concluded that terrorist activities will last as long as funds continue to reach terrorist organisations. "War is not about arms as much as it is about money" (Crawley, 1874). Therefore, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism on 9 December 1999. But, the issue of terrorist financing became more important after the events of 11 September 2001, after which the Security Council issued resolution No. 1373 at the 4385th meeting held on 28 September 2001. The latter laid down a set of obligations of a legislative nature aimed at criminalising and pursuing all forms of support and financing for terrorists. However, despite all attempts to cut off supply lines to terrorists, those supplies are still being accessed through multiple sources, internal, external, legal and illegal. A variety of publicly available sources and national governments have claimed that certain terrorist groups have been, and continue to be, financially supported by some governments. Some expert alleges that the U.S., since 1979, funded and armed Afghan "jihadists" in the course of Operation Cyclone as part of the "Reagan Doctrine" (Pear, 1988), which arguably contributed to the creation of "Taliban" and "Al-

Qaeda" (Dixon, 2001). If true, it means that terrorist groups were created and/or supported to achieve political goals and then, somehow, they got out of control with catastrophic consequences known to everybody now. Social anthropologist Jeremy Keenan calls the "global war on terror" a deception in his book *The Dark Sahara*, and claims that it is causing immense damage to the peoples of the Sahara, namely the Tuareg. As he underscores, the United States and Algeria have conspired to fabricate evidence and exaggerate the threat of al-Qaeda terrorism in Northern Africa. Keenan has long argued that Islamist terror groups in North Africa are masterminded by Algeria, with the knowledge of the CIA and other intelligence services, which stage "false flag" attacks to expand Algerian and US political influence over the region and its economic resources. Many Algerian commentators believe that counterterrorism is a pretext to apply double standards and interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. Algeria is a subject of foreign intervention, in press conference Abdelaziz Jarad, Prime Minister of Algeria, admitted that Algeria is being targeted by "foreign movements" that seek to undermine the country's stability along its borders (Abdul Razzaq bin Abdullah. 2020). Similarly, The Secretary of the Russian National Security Council Nikolai Patrushev emphasized that the fight against terrorism is abused by the US and its allies to promote their own interests and priorities." Patrushev continued, underlining that "the US and a number of other countries are ramping up their military presence in various regions across the world under the guise of countering spread of terrorist activity." So the question comes up, what Algeria has already done to mitigate the danger coming from the Sahel region?

Principles of Algerian security policy in the Sahel

The Algerian security policy is derived from the general principles of Algerian foreign policy. The persistence on non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, explains its adherence to fixed principles in its security policy in the African Sahel. These principles are as follows: 1. Refusal of foreign intervention in the region; 2. Criminalization of ransom payment; 3. "No" negotiation with terrorist groups.

Refusal of foreign intervention in the region

The principle of respecting national sovereignty and refusal to interfere in the internal affairs of another country is a constant pillar of Algerian foreign policy. Algeria has emphasised on many occasions the rejection of any foreign interference in the internal affairs of the region including the African Sahel.

Arguing that it is a new form of colonialism, the Algerian policymakers believe that foreign intervention fuels crises and does not find a solution for them, as exemplified in the Libyan crisis (Mezran and Varvelli, 2017). Some experts admit that foreign interference in Libya has strengthened Al-Qaeda through arms trafficking (Lounnas, 2018). In any case, the side effects of foreign intervention are quite clear in Libya, where violence has wrecked the country. Besides that, Algerian experts claim that the refusal of foreign interference derives from the deep structure of regional human communities, as most of the population in those communities are religious Muslims and will not tolerate any Western presence that reminds them of colonisation or the harsh realities of Afghanistan and Iraq. Therefore, any direct foreign military intervention in the region will meet the firm resistance of local communities and that, soon or late, will result in the emergence of Islamic extremists who seize the opportunity to wage a holy war ("Jihad") against the so-called "Infidels" and their military presence in the region (Piazza and Choi, 2018; Aslam, 2010).

The Algerian position on military intervention also has a legal and constitutional reference that defines the primary duties of the Algerian security system: to protect and preserve the sovereignty of the state within the borders, and to refuse the use of military capacities outside the national borders, or participating in any international war (Al-Jazeera Studies Centre, 2012). As a result, Algeria has adopted a straightforward security approach to confront the security threats coming from the African Sahel region, which can be formulated as: refusing to participate in any war, including the war in northern Mali, where Algeria has called for the need to prioritize a political solution that preserves the territorial integrity and national safety of Mali. In a joint statement issued by the Algerian government on 2 July 2012, the Algerian minister of foreign affairs, Mourad Medelci, and his Malian counterpart, Sadio Lamine, agreed on sticking to the political solution for the Malian war, emphasising that "the consequences of any war in the Sahel region of Africa will be hard to bear" (Boukhars, 2012). Therefore, Algeria refused to participate in the Mali war in January 2013, regardless of the external pressures of the international powers like the United States, whose secretary of state visited Algeria on 29 October 2012 (Gordon, 2012). The EU, of which the chief of foreign affairs, Catherine Ashton, paid a visit to Algeria on 6 November 2012 (Dempsey, 2012); and France, whose president Francois Hollande came to Algeria on 20 December 2012 in an attempt to persuade Algeria to participate in military planning for the war in Mali (Lantier, 2012). As a matter of fact, Algeria criticized the French government's approach for using power,

arguing that it would lead to a complicated situation in Mali and neighbouring countries.

On 11 January 2013, the French military began operations against the Islamists in Mali. Algeria refused to allow long-range French-U.S. drones to fly over the southern area of the country near the borders with Libya, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Though surprisingly enough, the Algeria's move to open its airspace for French fighter jets operating in Mali, which occurred later, was received in surprise by many observers. The general understanding was if, under the then-prevailing circumstances, Algeria had not cooperated, it could have been accused of hindering international efforts in the fight against terrorism, especially since the French military intervention in Mali had been conducted under a UN resolution through Security Regulation No. 2085, which included the preparation of military action and the dispatch of an African force (Crisis Group Africa Report, 2012). However, Algerian Military proclaim that the methods of fighting adopted by the French troops brought the conflict to the southern border of Algeria, claiming the raid on the oil plant in Ain Amenas, Tekenturen, in south east of Algeria, was the first terrorist attack in retaliation for the war against rebel groups in Mali.

Criminalization of ransom payment

The official refusal of Algeria on the payment of a ransom to terrorist groups in exchange for the release of the kidnapped hostages is unequivocal. Despite that, the ransoms paid by the others allow these groups to provide financial resources for purchasing weapons and carrying out their terrorist operations. Algeria has also sought to persuade the international community to suppress sources of financing terrorist groups and to criminalise the payment of ransom. In this endeavour, its efforts culminated in the Security Council's approval of Regulation No. 1904 about the criminalisation of ransom payment in December 2009 reinforcing the two international lists, Regulation No. 1267 for combat the finance of terrorist activities and Regulation No. 1373 concern the fund and remuneration of terrorism (Goïta, 2011). Lyes Boukraa, the Director-General of the National Institute for Global Strategy Studies (INESG), who contributed to the preparation of the resolution paper, stressed "Money is a critical element for terrorism, and we are working to eradicate terrorism". Later on, Algeria demonstrated its decisiveness in this matter by refusing to pay ransom for the release of seven Algerian diplomats kidnapped, on 5 April 2012, in the northern Malian city of Gao by the Tawhid and Jihad group in West Africa.

However, regardless of the Algerian hard-line policy regarding ransom payment, the Malian government, under France's pressure, accepted to

swap a French hostage with a financial ransom and the release of four terrorists imprisoned in Mali. One of those prisoners was an Algerian citizen wanted by the Algerian judiciary, awaiting extradition to the Algerian authorities (Bouzid et al., 2010). That caused Algeria to criticise the French policy of paying ransoms to terrorists in exchange for the release of its nationals abducted in the Sahel region, as, in Algeria's viewpoint, this policy did not succeed in gaining release of all the abductees, causing increased tension in the area. In this relation, Algeria has had regular coordination meetings with the countries of the Sahel region to implement its policy on no ransom payment. It is estimated that only in 2011 the ransom payments delivered more than 5,4 million euros in cash to the terrorists (CSS Analysis, 2013). In this connection, Algeria got into a diplomatic crisis with the Malian government, getting it accused of undermining Algeria's efforts to fail terrorist groups in obtaining ransoms. This could be true, because there were also reports claiming that some countries were and still cooperating with Al-Qaeda in exchange for money and other personal privileges (Wilner, 2011).

"No" negotiation with terrorist groups

"No negotiation with terrorists" is the essence of Algeria's security policy, especially after the deadline laid down in the aftermath of the announcement of the Peace charter and the ensuing project of national reconciliation⁴. Since then, the Algerian authorities have always tried to stick to this policy when- and wherever the circumstances required, as in the case of seven Algerian diplomats who had been kidnapped by Islamist militants in northern Mali 2012. In that case, the Algerian authorities refused to negotiate with terrorists even when they killed one of those diplomats, the Algerian vice-consul in Gao, Tahar Touati, in order to put pressure on the Algerian government to negotiate and meet their demands. Another example to be mentioned was the case of terrorist raid by Al-Qaeda on the oil plant in Ain Amenas, Tekenturen, southeast of Algeria, that resulted at least 23 hostages and 32 hostage-takers died in the four-day stand-off.

Al-Qaeda asked the Algerian authorities to meet their demands, namely, 20 four-wheel-drive vehicles and a safe passage to the borders of Mali (Novosti, 2013), in addition to the release of elements from their group who were in prison. But Algeria preferred the military option to preserve its sovereignty. The rescue operation that followed, left, unfortunately, some human losses among hostages. However, the military response of the Algerian government was supported by some heads and other authorities of the states whose citizens were among those human losses. For instance, the U.S. President Barack

Obama, in a statement released by the White House regarding the incident, said: "The responsibility of this tragedy rests with the terrorists who carried it out. We will continue to work closely with all of our partners to combat the scourge of terrorism in the region" said Obama (BBC news, 2013). At the same time, the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said: "Nobody knows better than Algeria, the ferocity of the terrorists, mainly since Algeria has led an intense war against the terrorists for several years, which has resulted in great human and material losses" (Lagatta et. al., 2003).

Apparently, the position of the United States was consistent with that of Algeria, despite the loss of U.S. citizens in the process. In the meantime, the French President Francois Hollande concluded that Algeria took proper solution to the attack on the gas plant in Ain Amenas. Also, the French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius announced: "The Algerian authorities were forced to attack in order to release the hostages at the Tekenturen gas complex", adding: "Surprisingly, Algeria was accused of having been using power to interfere, which is not valid" (Nossiter, 2013). Likewise, the British Prime Minister David Cameron, during his visit to Algeria on 30-31 January 2013, extended his country's condolences to the victims of the terrorist attack of Tekenturen (Robinson, 2013). Remarkably, despite the fact that each of those countries had lost some of its citizens during the Algerian army's operation, their officials showed sympathy and support for Algeria's handling of the terrorist attack.

Conclusion

The present study investigates how foreign and security policy can be related to the tourism industry with particular reference to Algeria, a tourism destination that has been suffering from terrorism for many years. Overall, the findings reveal that Algerian policy makers have prioritized the security file at the cost of tourism. The African Sahel has been the top priority for Algerian foreign policy in the 1999-2020 period, leading all national debates, particularly those related to tourism and tourists.

From a political point of view, Algerian leaders fear that the practice of western intervention under counter-terrorism pretext constitutes a slippery slope of more foreign interference. The findings further reveal that Algeria's security policy is based on a set of principles, the most important of which is the refusal of any foreign intervention, in order to preserve the country's national security and territorial integrity. However, it remains unclear how the Algerian political elites formulate general principles in practice. The reason is that obtaining necessary information regarding each course of action in

different situations is difficult in a country like Algeria, which is generally perceived as having a closed administrative system.

From a tourism policy point of view, the findings reveal that there is a shortcoming of political willingness to implement tourism as an economic development tool, despite the fact that public authorities consider desert tourism a "real locomotive" to move the tourism sector in Algeria. The political environment has significant influences on tourism-related businesses.

From the brief review of the literature concerning the international level, it can be said that among the various scholars there is an agreement that the act of terrorism affects inflow of foreign tourists. Though the duration of the impact varies, the general agreement is that it is transitory in nature and subsides at the most within a span of two years. The ability of a system to bounce back after a crisis is essential for economic development. Since 2013, Algeria has not known any attack in the Sahara and southern regions. Yet, tourism still could not bounce back, which confirm the existence of a long term terrorism effect.

Furthermore, the study shows a spatial spill over effect caused by terror as the country still fears terrorist threats coming out from the south and the Sahel region in particular. The findings suggest that Algeria won the battle of terrorism at home, but it is still living amidst a blazing circle of terrorist activities. The evidence is that the security situation in Libya, Mali and other neighbouring countries is still unstable. Hypothetically, if terrorism only happens in a given country, and it is crushed there, its impact will not last long. But (1) if it is only crushed in the country and still goes on in neighbouring countries, then its impact can be a very long-lasting one, as in the case of Algeria. (2) if it is crushed but the international media still sustains the image of insecurity (with geopolitical motivations, to justify the intervention of a foreign country), it also can have a long-lasting impact.

It also turns out from the analysis that there is no clear Algerian security doctrine. Such a doctrine ought to lay down a set of ethical and constitutional frameworks to achieve the national security goals, providing actors with a coordinated theoretical framework in directing foreign policy. Algeria rather seems to possess a set of principles that have not yet developed to reach the level of a security doctrine. Therefore, tourism in Algeria has been locked in the national foreign and security policies. Policymakers must have known how to balance the scale between maintaining internal security and securing tourism development. Up till now, Algerian decision-makers have not succeeded in combining "tourism development" and "security". Thus, Algeria keeps relying on the hydrocarbon sector as the basis of the economy. In fact, the country has been forced

unintentionally to abandon a sensitive industry like tourism just because the security policy has not been flexible enough to respond to actual changes in the security situation.

These mean Algeria has to learn how to be open and sharp in dealing with peer-to-peer competition and taking consequences bravely without fears of any rebel groups, powers or institutions. In the meantime, Algeria needs to ponder a policy that ensures the country's internal and external security. It also needs to develop a real security doctrine and adopt a comprehensive and right approach to the crises in the African Sahel region. It has to adapt the security solutions to the economic, social and political conditions in the area. Besides, it has to adopt and integrate the local Saharan people in the sustainable tourism development process as part of their financial future, while suppressing Islamic rebel groups in order to prevent them from mobilising the region's youth into crime and terrorist activities. And it has to end the ambiguity and stand for real cooperation with other countries under conditions that uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of Algeria. In addition to sticking to the rule of not paying hostage ransoms, the other countries are also expected to execute their policy of "No cooperation with terrorists" in order to reinforce the existing coalitions and eradicate the business of kidnapping. Finally, if Algeria does not find its path, the only question that remains is how long it will take for the Sahel region to become safe? Or, in other words: How long will we have to wait to see tourism flourishing in Algeria?

Endnotes

The name "Sahel" originally derived from the Arabic word for "coast, shore". Used in a figurative sense, in reference to the southern edge of the vast Sahara, the Sahel stretches across the south-central areas of Northern Africa between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea. This vast region includes northern part of Senegal, southern Mauritania, central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, the extreme south of Algeria, Niger, the extreme north of Nigeria, parts of Cameroon and Central African Republic, central Chad, central and southern Sudan, the extreme north of South Sudan, Eritrea, and the extreme north of Ethiopia. However, this study focuses mainly on the Sahel-Saharan African countries that have common borders with Algeria, or are geographically close to it, namely: Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Libya.

² The Algerian Civil War was an armed conflict between the Algerian Government and The Islamic Salvation Front which began in 1991 when the new and enormously popular Islamic Salvation Front party appeared poised to defeat the ruling National

Liberation Front party in the national parliamentary elections. The elections were cancelled after the first round and the military effectively took control of the government, forcing pro-reform president Chadli Bendjedid out from office. After the Islamic Salvation Front was banned and thousands of its members arrested, Islamist guerrillas rapidly emerged and started an armed campaign against the government and its supporters. The war lasted for ten years and saw extreme violence and brutality used against civilians. In 1999, a new president "Abdelaziz Bouteflika" was elected, in his first term as new president, he proposed and implemented his "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation". Subsequently, a large number of fighters withdrew, and armed groups began to disintegrate until they partially disappeared by 2002, except for a small group called "Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat" which later joined Al Qaeda in 2003. Today, that war is referred to as "the dirty war".

³ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights considers terrorism as acts of violence that target civilians in the pursuit of political or ideological aims. However, there is no international agreement on the concept of terrorism. What count terrorism for some parties, could be "resistance" to the others. Owing to the fact that Terrorism has been mixed up with other forms of political violence, such as political crimes and wars of all kinds. In addition to transnational organized crime, civil disobedience and coups d'état. Regrettably, today some terrorist acts have become justified as anti-terrorism acts. Therefore, terrorism is considered a fickle concept which it may be used to justify specific conducts.

⁴ "The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation" is a charter proposed by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, in an attempt to bring closure to the Algerian Civil War by offering a general amnesty to the perpetrators of most violence committed in it. His proposed charter was approved by 97% of voters in a national referendum held on 9 September 2005 and, subsequently, became the Law on 28 February 2006.

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