

Impact of major strategic projects in Algeria's border regions on economic and social development: Toward strengthening regional integration

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Abstract---Major strategic projects implemented in Algeria's border regions represent a key lever for promoting economic growth, reducing regional disparities, and strengthening national and regional integration. In recent years, Algerian public policies have increasingly focused on investing in these peripheral areas through large-scale infrastructure projects such as highways, ports, and industrial zones, alongside social projects in education and healthcare. These initiatives aim not only to stimulate economic activity and improve public services, but also to enhance connectivity between border regions and the country's interior, thereby facilitating the movement of goods and people. This paper examines the economic and social impacts of major strategic projects in Algeria's border regions, highlighting their role in fostering regional integration and addressing both local and global challenges. It analyzes how these projects contribute to narrowing development gaps between border and interior regions, improving living standards, and reinforcing territorial cohesion. The study also explores ways to maximize the effectiveness of these projects in achieving sustainable development and enhancing the resilience of border regions in the face of economic, social, and security challenges.

Keywords---Strategic Projects, Border Regions, Regional Integration, Economic Development, Social Development, Algeria.

INTRODUCTION:

Major strategic projects in Algeria's border regions are among the fundamental pillars for developing the national economy and strengthening regional integration.

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In recent years, Algeria has focused on investing in these regions, which constitute the state's peripheries, in order to achieve sustainable development and improve the quality of life of its citizens. These projects include large-scale infrastructure such as highways, ports, and industrial zones, as well as other projects of a social nature such as educational and health projects. These projects also contribute to connecting border regions with the rest of the country's interior regions, which helps facilitate the movement of goods and individuals.

This paper aims to analyze the impact of major strategic projects in Algeria's border regions on economic and social development. It will focus on the role of these projects in strengthening regional integration, how to confront local and global challenges, and exploring ways to maximize the benefit of these projects in improving the standard of living in these regions.

Through these projects, the problem of how they actually affect the development of these regions becomes evident—not only at the economic level but also at the social level. Accordingly, we can pose the following questions: **How do these projects contribute to reducing development gaps between border regions and interior regions? Do they strengthen regional integration among Algeria's different regions? And do these projects enable confronting the challenges faced by these border regions?**

1. Key Concepts

1.1 Definition of major strategic projects:

Major strategic projects are those projects that have significant economic and social importance for the state or the region, as they contribute directly to driving development and strengthening social and economic stability. In the Algerian context, these include infrastructure projects, ports, highways, and industrial zones in border regions. These projects are viewed as vital tools to strengthen regional integration and stimulate growth in less developed areas (Ben Aissa, 2015, p. 45).

Mega projects are defined as major projects that require high costs and attract a great deal of attention, whether at the popular level or among political elites, because of the direct and indirect impacts they generate on society, the environment, and state resources. Accumulating knowledge derived from the performance of these projects is of great importance in order to avoid the failure of their management, with the aim of improving their performance and effectiveness in the future.

The origin of the term “mega” goes back to the Greek word “Megas,” meaning big, broad, lofty, and fundamental. These projects are usually described as gigantic because of what they require in terms of knowledge, skills, and resources; the high level of their investment costs; the involvement of many parties; and the diversity of stakeholders, in addition to their need for modern technology and the breadth of their scope compared with ordinary projects. All these factors indicate that mega projects require a high level of attention. These projects are also closely linked to the logic of growth, development, and urbanization; wealth creation; enhancing competitiveness; and achieving prosperity.

The success of large projects depends on three basic elements known as the “iron triangle”: adherence to the timetable, not exceeding the pre-established budget for completing the project, and achieving the required quality. Nevertheless, evaluating these projects is not limited to those short-term criteria only; it also includes long-term factors such as the extent of stakeholder satisfaction, economic sustainability, and the benefit that accrues to society. Accordingly, many large projects fail to achieve their specified objectives, and this is mainly attributed to their significant complexity, which increases as the scope of work expands, the number of participating parties rises, and costs increase. Therefore, effectively managing these complexities from the earliest stages is a decisive factor to ensure project success. This requires an accurate understanding of these challenges and the development of clear strategies to address them, which helps achieve the desired objectives and avoid a failure scenario (Mayar, 2025).

1.2 Economic development:

Economic development refers to the process through which an economy's capacity to produce goods and services increases, leading to improved living standards and societal well-being. This includes improving productivity, creating job opportunities, and achieving financial stability in the state. In Algeria's border regions, major strategic projects contribute to improving infrastructure and

strengthening economic activities, which helps reduce unemployment rates and raise income levels (Amal, 2020, p. 61).

1.3 Social development:

Social development is the process of improving social conditions for a particular group of people, such as improving education, health care, access to basic services, and strengthening social justice. In border regions, major projects contribute to improving quality of life by providing educational opportunities, health care, and social services that these regions previously lacked (Ben Aissa, 2015, p. 47).

Social development is based on the principle that investing in individuals is necessary for the progress of society as a whole. Therefore, it aims to empower citizens and remove barriers in front of them, so that they can achieve their ambitious goals with ease. To reach this aim, social development has included several fields, including:

- Meeting the basic needs of community members.
- Paying attention to the social security system.
- Providing good job opportunities and strengthening employment.
- Supporting small and medium enterprises (National Development Fund, n.d.).

1.4 Regional integration:

Regional integration refers to cooperation among different regions within one state or among neighboring states, with the aim of improving economic, social, and political cooperation. In Algeria, the state seeks to strengthen regional integration between border regions and interior regions through implementing strategic projects aimed at facilitating the movement of goods and individuals and strengthening cultural and social exchange (Amal, 2020, p. 59). Economic integration, for its part, is the process through which different countries agree to remove trade barriers between them. These barriers include tariffs (taxes imposed on imports into a country), quotas (a maximum quantity of a product allowed to be imported), and border restrictions. (McCormick, 1999).

2. Impact of Strategic Projects on Economic Development

2.1 Investment in infrastructure:

Infrastructure is one of the fundamental pillars on which economic development in any country depends. In Algeria, major strategic projects contribute to improving infrastructure in border regions through developing highways, ports, and airports. These projects lead to facilitating transport movement and improving the access of goods and services to domestic and external markets. Improving roads and transportation also contributes to increasing economic activity by facilitating trade between border regions and neighboring countries (Ben Aissa, 2015, p. 53).

Investing in sustainable infrastructure helps connect people with opportunities, strengthen economic growth, and improve livelihoods. It also provides countries with a path to achieve their climate and development goals.

However, infrastructure in most parts of the developing world still suffers from severe shortcomings. One billion people live more than two kilometers from an all-season road, and 675 million people lack electricity in their homes. Nearly 4 billion people live without internet access. Disruptions caused by unreliable infrastructure services cost households and businesses hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Moreover, the poorest and most fragile countries pay more than others for broadband, electricity, and transport.

Closing this infrastructure gap is critically important to ensure that everyone has access to opportunities and to enable countries to compete globally. This is essential for economic growth and poverty reduction (The World Bank Group, 2025).

2.2 Job creation:

Major strategic projects contribute to providing many job opportunities in border regions, whether directly through the implementation of projects or indirectly through their impact on other economic activities. For example, construction and infrastructure projects provide employment in the construction sector, while industrial projects contribute to supporting employment in factories and industrial zones. These projects contribute significantly to reducing unemployment rates in border regions, which previously suffered (Ayachi, 2024, p. 177).

2.3 Stimulating local and international investment:

Major strategic projects are an attractor for local and international investment, as they contribute to improving the investment environment by providing the necessary infrastructure and facilitating administrative procedures. Increasing investments—whether from the public or private sector—contributes to increasing productivity and stimulating economic growth, which leads to improving the status of the local economy in border regions. This contributes to integrating these regions into the national and global economy and opens new doors for economic cooperation (Ben Aissa, 2015, p. 55).

2.4 Examples of successful economic projects:

Among the most prominent examples of strategic projects that contributed to economic development in Algeria are the project to develop the Port of Algiers and the Illizi industrial zone project. These projects led to an increase in trade movement in the area, increased foreign investment, and the opening of new markets. They also improved the local economy by developing processing industries that rely on locally available raw materials (Amal, 2020, p. 62).

3. Impact of Strategic Projects on Social Development

3.1 Improving quality of life:

Major strategic projects contribute to improving quality of life in border regions by providing basic services such as education, health care, and public facilities. These projects help develop social infrastructure, which enables residents in these regions to access better services. For example, projects to build hospitals, schools, and health centers contribute significantly to improving levels of health care and education. Improving roads and transportation facilitates the movement of individuals, which enhances opportunities to reach markets and other services, thereby positively affecting residents' lives (Ben Aissa, 2015, p. 58).

3.2 Strengthening social ties and cooperation:

Major projects are not limited to economic impacts; they also play a role in strengthening social ties among residents. When strategic projects are implemented in border regions, an environment of cooperation among community members is created, which strengthens social interaction and the sense of belonging to the state as a whole. These projects also contribute to creating a culture of cooperation among different population groups, whether at the level of relatives or at the level of the local community as a whole. For example, establishing cultural and sports projects can contribute to improving relations between local communities (Amal, 2020, p. 67).

3.3 Achieving social justice:

Major strategic projects contribute to reducing social disparities between border regions and the country's interior regions. By focusing on regions that suffer from weak development, the state works to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources and services, which strengthens social justice. These projects also provide individuals in border regions with access to the same opportunities enjoyed by residents of major cities, which helps reduce the development gap between these regions (Ben Aissa, 2015, p. 60).

3.4 Examples of social improvements:

Tangible examples of social improvements resulting from major projects in Algeria include the industrial zone project in Tindouf, which did not only improve the economic situation but also contributed to improving social services such as education and health. Schools and health centers were built near these projects to meet the needs of local residents, which contributed to improving their quality of life (Amal, 2020, p. 65).

4. Challenges and Opportunities in Border Areas

4.1 Challenges:

4.1.1 Security challenges:

Algeria's border regions are considered strategic spaces that receive special security attention from the state, given their geographical proximity to certain areas of tension or transnational criminal activities. Despite the nature of these challenges, the integrated security approach adopted by Algeria has contributed to strengthening stability and protecting these regions, thereby supporting the sustainability of strategic projects. This effective security control has also helped reduce investment-related concerns, create a safer environment for attracting both domestic and foreign investments, and

ensure the smooth implementation of major projects. Furthermore, the adopted security measures have provided effective protection for workers and investors, which has positively reflected on the overall work environment and comprehensive development in these regions. (Hamdi, 2017, p. 112).

4.1.2 Weak infrastructure:

Despite major projects implemented in some border regions, many of these regions still suffer from weak infrastructure, whether in roads, water, electricity, or communications. This shortage of infrastructure hinders the effectiveness of projects and reduces their long-term economic and social impacts. Consequently, border regions remain in need of significant investments in basic infrastructure to support strategic projects and strengthen their ability to achieve sustainable development (Ali, 2019, p. 45).

4.1.3 Social challenges:

Border regions may face social resistance to some projects, especially if these projects require radical changes in lifestyle or lead to marginalizing certain social groups. Such resistance may relate to deep cultural or social concepts in local communities, and it may take a long time to accept change. In addition, there may be difficulty integrating local communities into the development process, which hinders the success of strategic projects (Hamdi, 2017, p. 118).

4.2 Opportunities:

4.2.1 Strategic geographic location:

Border regions represent some of the most promising spaces for development, given their strategic geographical location, which enables them to play a central role in linking the national economic sphere and enhancing its dynamism. This location can be leveraged to stimulate trade, support economic integration, and promote cultural interaction through the development of well-structured strategic projects. Moreover, improving infrastructure, particularly road networks and ports, and facilitating the movement of goods and services, enhances Algeria's position as a regional economic hub, thereby contributing to sustainable development and increasing the economic effectiveness of these regions. (Youssef, 2020, p. 88).

4.2.2 Integration with neighbors:

Algeria's border regions offer a significant opportunity to strengthen regional integration with neighboring areas and to capitalize on their economic potential. Through the development of strategic projects in these regions, commercial and economic partnerships can be reinforced to support trade and joint production, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the local economy and the promotion of sustainable development. Furthermore, these projects enable Algeria to enhance its role as a key actor in supporting stability and achieving comprehensive development at both the national and regional levels. (Ali, 2019, p. 54).

4.2.3 Developing local resources:

Major strategic projects in border regions provide an opportunity to benefit from local natural resources such as minerals, oil, gas, and agriculture. By developing these resources, projects can support economic and social development in these regions and contribute to reducing the development gap between border regions and interior regions. These resources can also be used in local processing industries, which strengthens the ability of border regions to produce and export local products (Youssef, 2020, p. 92).

5. Role of Projects in Enhancing Regional Integration

5.1 Economic integration:

Major strategic projects in border regions play a pivotal role in strengthening regional economic connectivity by improving infrastructure and facilitating the movement of goods and people. These projects contribute to building an integrated economic network that enhances regional trade and facilitates commercial exchange, thereby supporting economic cooperation and increasing the efficiency of goods and services circulation. For example, projects aimed at developing highways and ports can reduce logistical costs, which in turn enhances trade efficiency and promotes economic development in border areas. (Boumediene, 2018, p. 102).

5.2 Social and cultural integration:

Major strategic projects contribute to strengthening social and cultural integration between local communities in border regions and interior regions through developing educational, health, and sports projects. These projects can contribute to strengthening communication among individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds. For example, establishing cultural and sports centers in border regions can contribute to disseminating Algerian culture and strengthening national belonging among residents of these regions. (Ali, 2019, p. 68).

5.3 Institutional integration:

Major strategic projects are not limited to cooperation between individuals or regions; they also encompass institutional collaboration between government authorities and economic and social institutions. For example, Algeria can strengthen institutional cooperation by developing policies, laws, and regulations that support the implementation of joint strategic projects. This type of institutional integration contributes to facilitating the execution of major projects in border regions and enhances coordination among various governmental bodies and economic institutions at the local and regional levels, thereby supporting comprehensive development and economic sustainability in these areas. (Boumediene, 2018, p. 110).

5.4 Examples of integrative projects:

One of the most prominent projects contributing to the enhancement of integration is the commercial port project in Jijel, which helps strengthen trade between Algeria and the Sahel countries. These strategic projects are not only a driver of economic development in border regions but also contribute to reinforcing regional relations. (Youssef, 2020, p. 99).

5.5 Recommendations:

- Achieving environmental balance: Algerian authorities should take the necessary measures to mitigate negative environmental impacts by adopting environmentally friendly techniques and practices in various developmental and industrial operations.
- Increasing community participation: It is necessary to involve local communities in developing projects and encourage them to participate in vocational training and employment.
- Diversifying local industries: The government must work to develop other industries based on minerals, such as manufacturing metal products, to further improve the local economy.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, major strategic projects in Algeria's border regions are an effective tool for strengthening economic and social development in these remote regions. Through developing infrastructure, providing job opportunities, and stimulating investment, these projects contribute significantly to reducing development gaps between border regions and Algeria's interior regions. These projects also contribute to improving quality of life through developing basic services such as education and health care.

Despite the significant economic and social benefits, these projects face many challenges, such as environmental impacts, inadequate infrastructure, and community resistance. Nevertheless, these projects remain vital opportunities to achieve regional integration.

By strengthening institutional integration among the government, the private sector, and local communities, the effectiveness of these projects can be improved and their sustainability ensured over the long term. In this context, there remains an urgent need to develop environmental and social strategies to ensure a balance between economic development and protecting the environment and society.

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