

CIVIL-MILITARY ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN ALGERIA: AN ANALYSIS OF MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN SUPPORTING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

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Abstract

In many countries including Algeria, the army is not just a beating heart but also a vein. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the contribution of the military institution in supporting the Algerian economy by highlighting shapes of its involvement, and assessing its impact on economic stability and development. Furthermore, it demonstrates the mechanisms of the Algerian military's economic engagement through direct productive and industrial activities, the provision of security, border protection, and safeguarding citizens and properties, thereby creating an environment for investment.

The significance of the study lies in understanding the relationship between the military establishment and the economy in Algeria, alongside its subsequent implications for governance and institutional balance. Given the limited public disclosure and the inherently sensitive nature of certain security-related information, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology and a case-study approach.

The study concludes that the Algerian army's contribution to supporting the national economy is not confined to direct productive dimensions; rather, it extends to indirect roles with substantial economic impact, particularly through sustaining stability and securing both national territory and vital infrastructure. Conversely, this contribution raises a series of challenges concerning governance, transparency, competition, and the overlap between civil and military entities. All in all, dealing with a vein is challenging but its role should be highlighted and elevated.

Keywords: Military Institution, Algerian Economy, Development, Governance, Civil-Military Relations.

Introduction

The intersection of the military establishment and macroeconomic structures is an inquiry within contemporary political economy. It exposes the convoluted nature of state-institutional relationships and the mechanisms of wealth generation and distribution. Globally, the paradigm of the military institution has evolved; it is no longer strictly confined to its classical mandates of territorial defense and external security, but has instead integrated into macroeconomic frameworks as a critical determinant of state stability, industrial output, and systemic development.

In this context, Algeria presents an analytically rich case study, given the structurally foundational role the military has occupied in the state-building since achieving independence in 1962. Beyond its constitutional defense mandates, the Algerian military's institutional footprint extends into the economic sphere through both direct productive participation and indirect systemic stabilization. This includes leading industrial and infrastructural projects, enforcing border security, and safeguarding critical national assets to cultivate a suitable environment for investment.

The importance of this inquiry is reinforced by vulnerabilities in Algeria's rentier economy. Characterized by an acute systemic reliance on hydrocarbon revenues, the state's economic continuity is dependent on absolute political and operational security. Consequently, the military's role transitions from a peripheral defense mechanism to a core economic guarantor via the continuous protection of enterprises, transit corridors, and hydrocarbon export infrastructure.

Understanding this dynamic requires a deconstruction of boundaries between the civil and military spheres. It also calls for seeing how sovereign security yields macroeconomic externalities both as catalysts for development and as drivers of institutional distortion.

Accordingly, the central research problem is:

Through which specific institutional channels does the military establishment contribute to the Algerian national economy, and what structural challenges does this involvement pose to governance, market competition, and institutional equilibrium within the framework of civil-military relations?

This study argues that while the Algerian military functions as an indispensable macroeconomic anchor safeguarding the rentier infrastructure and driving state-led industrial initiatives its expanding economic footprint paradoxically introduces institutional frictions. Specifically, this multi-channel intervention creates tensions in governance and market transparency.

To substantiate this argument, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology paired with an empirical case-study approach. This framework is suited to dissecting the specificities of an oil-dependent rentier state wherein the military has historically acted as a primary vanguard of state formation. The empirical baseline of this paper is constructed through a critical triangulation of peer-reviewed academic literature, official state documents, and available macroeconomic data.

To address the research problem, the paper is organized into three thematic sections:

- **Section I** delineates the historical genealogy of the Algerian army's genesis, contextualizing the structural factors that necessitated its initial intervention in the national economy.
- **Section II** provides a granular analysis of the contemporary direct (industrial/productive) and indirect (stabilization/infrastructure protection) channels of military economic contribution.
- **Section III** evaluates the challenges this multi-dimensional role imposes on governance, fiscal transparency, market competition, and the institutional boundaries of civil-military relations.

By establishing this analytical architecture, the study seeks to provide a balanced, theoretically grounded framework that reconciles the military's role.

Section I: The Historical Genealogy of the Military and its Contribution to the Algerian Economy

The historical framework governing the Algerian military serves as an entry point for understanding the nature of its contributions to the national economy. This multi-channeled involvement cannot be decoupled from the broader political and historical milieu within which the military establishment was forged.

The Algerian military did not emerge as a conventional defense apparatus within a pre-existing, sovereign state framework; rather, its institutional lineage was inextricably bound to the national liberation trajectory and the subsequent phases of state-building. This historical path endowed the military with institutional mandates extending far beyond pure, classical security functions.

Furthermore, comparative literature demonstrates that military engagement within the economic sphere is by no means an isolated anomaly. Instead, it aligns with a broader global phenomenon wherein the military establishment occupies direct or indirect positions within macroeconomic structures (Brömmelhörster & Paes, 2003, pp. 1, 4).

1. The Military within the National Liberation Revolution

The origins of the modern Algerian military are rooted in the revolutionary liberation fight. Its foundational nucleus was forged through the armed struggle against French colonialism since 1954. An origin that gave it a strong nationalistic presence even among Algerian citizens.

During this nascent phase, the emerging military establishment functioned as far more than a mere combat manager; it was an organic component of a comprehensive political liberation project tied to the concepts of post-colonial state-building and the reclamation of national sovereignty (Mehri, 2002, pp. 64-66). Consequently, in the post-independence era, this legitimacy facilitated an institutional presence accelerated by the fragility of the newly established civilian state (Bishara, 2016, pp. 9-10)

2. The Post-Independence Era and State-Building Trajectory

Following independence in 1962, the People's National Army (PNA) operated within a national context characterized by severe administrative deficits, an acute shortage of technical expertise, and the structural fragility of socioeconomic frameworks. This institutional vacuum necessitated a military mandate for state-building.

The military's intervention in the economic domain was conceptualized as a direct extension to protect and stabilize state. The military's early economic role was executing infrastructure and public service projects, maintaining macro-level stability, and the reorganization of the country's socio-economic sphere (Algerian Ministry of Defense, 2025).

3. The Legitimacy of the Military Institution

This institutional trajectory was consolidated during the construction phase of the nation-state. During this period, the military establishment integrated development-oriented and public-service mandates. This integration was achieved through the implementation of National Service and direct contributions to public-utility projects.

This expansion is understood through the post-independence Algerian state. In this specific historical milieu, considerations of national sovereignty, mass political mobilization, and post-war reconstruction converged at a time when civilian institutions were still in a nascent, formative stage. The military's presence within specific economic domains did not fundamentally represent a conceptual redefinition of its primary defense mandate. Rather, it functioned as an institutional response to the urgent structural requirements of both the state and society during the state-founding era (Government of Algeria, 2016).

4. Transformations and Recalibration

During the sweeping political and economic transformations experienced by Algeria since the late 1980s most notably the transition toward political pluralism and market-oriented liberalization there emerged a shift toward recalibrating the functional scope of the military institution. This was characterized by a reinforced constitutional emphasis on its core mandate: safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

However, this institutional evolution did not neutralize the military's macroeconomic impact; rather, it reshaped it into novel configurations. The military's role became less tied to direct developmental mobilization and increasingly focused on the production of security and stability. This stabilization guarantees the continuity of economic activity within domestic and regional geopolitical environments.

The theoretical literature confirms that the nexus between the military establishment and the economy cannot be measured solely by the volume of direct productive or commercial activities under its management. Instead, it must be evaluated by the military's capacity to

provide security and institutional environment necessary for macroeconomic functionality and long-term sustainability (Castillo, Lowell, Tellis, Munoz, & Zycher, 2001, pp. xi–xiii).

5. Traversing Rentier Vulnerabilities and Geopolitical Volatility

In the millennium to the present day, the army's role has magnified. This is dictated by the rentier architecture of the Algerian economy and its reliance on the hydrocarbon sector. Such an economic establishes the prioritization of border security, the fortification of assets, and the safeguarding of energy transit and export networks. Under these conditions, security functions as a baseline macroeconomic prerequisite.

Furthermore, the proliferation of regional asymmetric threats across the Sahel and Libyan borders manifested through the intensification of terrorism, transnational smuggling, and organized crime has increased the indirect economic weight of military functions (Lahouazi, 2024).

Section II: The Military's Contribution to the Algerian Economy

The pathways through which the military contributes to the Algerian economy are multi-dimensional. Alongside its direct engagement in specialized defense industries, vocational training, and logistical support, the military institution executes a pivotal role in the production of security, territorial stabilization, and the safeguarding of infrastructure. This operational model aligns with theoretical frameworks in defense economics, which conceptualize militaries either as direct economic actors or as indirect institutional actors that generate security (Brömmelhörster & Paes, 2003, pp. 1–4).

1. Direct Contribution via Military Industries

The direct contribution of the military institution to the Algerian economy manifests through the development of specialized defense industries and the expansion of their associated manufacturing baselines. This expansion serves a dual purpose: fulfilling tactical military requirements, supporting civilian market demands, reducing systemic import dependency, and bolstering national industrial output.

In this context, defense industry in Algeria is integrated into a broader macroeconomic strategy aimed at achieving industrial self-sufficiency, mitigating the state's import bill, strengthening national production, and alleviating structural external dependency (Bouabdallah, 2023, p. 644).

Furthermore, the economic literature on military procurement and technological innovation indicates that defense expenditures and state-driven military demand can function as catalysts for domestic technical and industrial development. This structural spillover is particularly potent when procurement strategies are linked to national supply chains or institutionalized joint ventures (Ruttan, 2006, pp. 3–5).

- **The Military-Industrial Architecture:**

The direct contribution of the military establishment to the Algerian economy has been bolstered through the institutionalization of defense-industrial base. This base comprises an array of specialized production enterprises operating across manufacturing, civil engineering, construction, and specialized equipment outfitting. It is oriented toward stimulating domestic industrial output and curbing import dependency.

Historically, this network includes the Khenchela Light Weapons Factory, established in 1986; the Seriana Factory in Batna, founded in 1983; and the Central Logistics Base (BCM) in Blida, which was developed between 1975 and 1982. This was expanded by the Aeronautical Manufacturing Enterprise in Oran in 1988, the Naval Construction and Repair Enterprise

(ECRN) in 1974, and the Mechanical Building Enterprise (ERBM) in 1983. The early establishment of these entities reflects a long-standing orientation toward productive manufacturing capabilities within the defense sector (Boudiaf, 2024, p. 101).

- **Alliances and Macroeconomic Impact:**

Empirical indicators demonstrate that the Algerian defense-industrial sector has experienced a growth in capital investment, strategic joint ventures, and total production volume. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) channeled into military-civilian co-production ventures has reached approximately \$1 billion USD, executed through mixed-ownership enterprises structured under Algeria's regulatory 49/51 investment framework.

Prominent initiatives within this portfolio include the Mercedes-Benz passenger and tactical vehicle manufacturing joint venture, which produces Class-G models with a targeted capacity of 2,000 units and a mandatory local integration rate of no less than 30% within its initial five-year phase. The heavy-duty Mercedes commercial vehicle corporation, launched in February 2012, targets an annual output of 15,000 trucks and 15,000 buses under the same 30% local integration baseline.

This is supplemented by regional special-purpose vehicle corporations supplying an institutional baseline of 120 units annually, alongside an armored fighting vehicle manufacturing enterprise built for a capacity of 25,000 vehicles with a local content integration rate reaching up to 50% within the initial five years.

Furthermore, the Ministry of National Defense (MDN) holds a dominant 60% equity stake in the National Textile and Clothing Enterprise (EATIT). Current macroeconomic projections indicate that the aggregate turnover of military-industrial enterprises is poised to exceed 100 billion Algerian Dinars (DZD). This expanding industrial operation has generated approximately 30,000 specialized jobs, consolidating an institutional network composed of 10 state-owned national enterprises, 12 joint-stock corporations (SPA), and 40 operational manufacturing plants (Boudiaf, 2024, p. 101).

2. Indirect Channel of Macroeconomic Support

Due to its entrenched rentier architecture and acute systemic reliance on hydrocarbon revenues, the Algerian economy exhibits an exceptionally high degree of sensitivity to shifts in political and security stability. Consequently, any disruption to domestic security, territorial borders, or energy assets creates an immediate negative externality on production output, export capacities, and the state's broader economic credibility within global markets (Castillo, Lowell, Tellis, Munoz, & Zycher, 2001, pp. xi–xiv).

3. Geographic Vastness and Frontier Porosity

This indirect economic channel is amplified by Algeria's geographic attributes and its vast territorial perimeter. These physical realities impose continuous security challenges like the mitigation of transnational smuggling and asymmetric cross-border threats.

Furthermore, Algerian national security, in its broader regional dimension, remains linked to the stability of neighboring states. Consequently, the geopolitical equilibrium of the frontier perimeter functions as a determinant that influences domestic institutional stability and macroeconomic continuity (Tria, 2022, p. 1090).

4. Gas Pipelines and Energy Infrastructure

The macroeconomic salience of the military establishment's security mandate is crystallized most within the energy sector. Given Algeria's structural reliance on hydrocarbon exports, the physical protection of upstream extraction fields, downstream processing facilities, and

midstream transport and export networks operates as a variable with immediate macroeconomic consequences.

The Algerian natural gas grid extends through infrastructure oriented toward European energy markets. This infrastructure includes:

- The Enrico Mattei Gas Pipeline (GEM), which connects Algeria to Italy via Tunisian territory.
- The MEDGAZ Pipeline, which directly links Algeria to Spain originating from Beni Saf.

Together, these two active international gas corridors maintain an aggregate transport capacity of 43 billion cubic meters (bcm) per annum (Sonatrach, 2025, p. 17; Brömmelhörster & Paes, 2003). The surveillance and physical securing of these energy networks transcends technical or defensive operation; rather, it sits at the absolute core of preserving national resources and guaranteeing the state's primary foreign currency inflows.

5. The Tiguentourine Crisis

The Tiguentourine gas facility crisis at In Amenas in January 2013 serves as an illustration of the interdependence linking national security and economic stability. The terrorist assault targeted a midstream gas installation in the country's southeastern quadrant. Executed by militants, the operation resulted in a mass hostage situation at an energy complex that forms a primary pillar of the macroeconomic framework (Haridi, 2017, p. 109).

The weight of this event is compounded by the facility's transnational dimensions. Operated through joint ventures with multinational energy corporations, the assault instantly elevated the crisis from a localized security breach into a highly sensitive international incident (Ferhi, 2016, p. 45).

In response, the operational intervention by the Algerian military functioned as a mechanism for infrastructure protection (CIP). It prevented the tactical terrorist threat from cascading into a wider economic crisis. Furthermore, Algeria's management of the siege aligned with its institutionalized doctrine of non-negotiation and refusal to grant concessions to armed groups. This approach manifested the centrality of security in protecting state resources and preserving external investor confidence in Algeria's sovereign energy ecosystem and therefore economics (Haridi, 2017, p. 109).

6. The Military Establishment and the Facilitation of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Among the prominent indirect channels through which the military establishment supports the national economy is its systemic role in projecting institutional and structural stability. This baseline security environment influences the risk-assessment models of international investors, particularly within capital-intensive and sensitive sectors such as energy, transport logistics, and heavy manufacturing.

Foreign investors do not merely evaluate statutory incentives or fiscal and tax frameworks; they assess sovereign risk profiles, the host state's capacity for infrastructure protection, operational continuity, and the physical security of personnel and foundational assets.

In this context, assessments by the World Bank emphasize that diversifying state revenues away from hydrocarbons and mobilizing foreign direct investment are paramount to fortifying the Algerian economy's resilience against volatile oil and gas price fluctuations. Furthermore, sustaining structural reforms designed to catalyze private sector investment remains imperative for macroeconomic performance and long-term elasticity (World Bank, 2023, p. 12).

While the provision of a secure and stable macro-environment may not be a sufficient condition on its own to attract capital, it constitutes an indispensable institutional cornerstone without which sustainable economic mobilization cannot occur.

7. Military Capabilities and Foreign Policy

The capabilities of the military establishment build indirect externalities on a state's international position. A state that commands a robust defense system, asserts absolute territorial control, and successfully secures its borders and infrastructure is better positioned to project itself as a credible international partner. This enables the state to strengthen its regional and international foreign relations. Security is a backbone that reinforces diplomatic abilities, economic interests, particularly in transnational cooperation.

Within this paradigm, the regional weight of the Algerian military is sensed in stabilizing externalities, attracting external partners and generating the equilibrium necessary to sustain international trade flows and foreign investment.

8. Crisis and Disaster Management

The societal and institutional contributions of the People's National Army (PNA) extend into civil-military crisis and disaster management (CDM). This operational dimension carries substantial macroeconomic and socio-structural weight, as rapid military intervention during public catastrophes and natural disasters mitigates human capital depletion, limits physical asset degradation, and accelerates the restoration of baseline economic activity and essential public utilities.

The statutory architecture governing the operational deployment of the PNA authorizes the mobilization of its specialized units and logistical task forces during instances of public emergencies, natural catastrophes, and crises of exceptional severity. This is a part from broader national risk-mitigation system. It encompasses preparation, readiness, and active response mechanisms designed to neutralize the economic shocks caused by major hazards such as seismic events and flooding. The flood of Beb Eloued, 2003 Boumerdes earthquake, and the 2021 Algerian wildfires illustrate crisis containment. The army reinforces the state's aggregate resilience and institutional responsiveness under crisis conditions (Tria, 2022, pp. 1084–1085).

To conclude this main section, it is important to repeat that the military supports the Algerian economy through both direct and indirect methods. Direct support includes defense-related industrial production, some business and manufacturing partnerships, and technical and professional training programs.

Indirect support, which may have a larger effect on the national economy, includes providing public security, monitoring borders, protecting energy facilities, and maintaining national stability that is necessary for attracting foreign investment and supporting the country's international policy goals.

Section III: Institutional Governance Challenges

Notwithstanding the positive direct and indirect externalities that the military establishment's multi-dimensional influence on the national economy, this expanding role introduces structural challenges concerning economic governance and the maintenance of an optimal institutional equilibrium. As the operational scope of the military broadens even when restricted to preserving stability or reinforcing infrastructure protection, it amplifies the necessity of anchoring this presence within explicit, transparent institutional frameworks. Such regulatory definition is paramount to ensuring harmony between the sovereign defense of the armed forces and the contemporary requirements of fiscal transparency, public accountability, and clear jurisdictional boundaries within the state.

1. Challenges and Economic Jurisdictions

The foundational dilemma within this matrix resides in the difficulty of maintaining a demarcation between sovereign hard-security and macro-commercial activities. This issue is visible within the Algerian paradigm, where the physical securing of vast territorial frontiers, the surveillance of critical upstream energy assets, the protection of sensitive transit and export corridors, and the preservation of domestic stability directly converge with the state's economic survival.

This often frames the military establishment's economic interventions as a logical, path-dependent continuity of its primary constitutional defense posture. However, it inevitably prompts rigorous academic and institutional inquiries regarding the optimal limits of the military's sphere of influence, and the nature of its administrative authority when juxtaposed with civilian technocratic institutions.

2. Governance Imperatives and Informational Asymmetry

This multi-sectoral economic footprint introduces profound structural challenges regarding public-sector governance and fiscal transparency, particularly where state-backed economic activities intersect with the defense or industrial sectors. By its very design, the military generates an environment of informational asymmetry. This restricts the public availability of data regarding its exact corporate and manufacturing outputs for security purposes.

Comparative institutional literature confirms that whenever military-led economic enterprise is linked to national resource allocations, discrete financing mechanisms, or supply networks that operate outside the purview of traditional civilian legislative oversight, it routinely triggers systemic friction concerning institutional accountability and regulatory clarity which again according to the rules, solidifies security purposes (Brömmelhörster & Paes, 2003, pp. 15–16).

3. Civil-Military Institutional Equilibrium

Simultaneously, a challenge emerges regarding the preservation of the state's internal institutional equilibrium. The expansion of the military's macroeconomic and industrial role can induce a realignment of operational roles among various public sectors.

As the armed forces assume an increasingly tangible role in fields that directly intersect with macroeconomic policy, foreign direct investment, and infrastructure protection, it becomes vital to sustain a clear, explicit delineation of duties. This demarcation must be maintained between the defense on one side, and civilian economic and administrative ministries on the other. The clarity of functions defines or regulates the precise institutional authority.

4. Market Competition and the Domestic Business

Another important issue is how the military's role affects the local business environment and market competition, especially when military-related industries, factories, or logistics companies work alongside private businesses. In general, when the military focuses only on national defense, it does not interfere with the economy.

However, when the military becomes directly involved in business and production activities, concerns may arise about fair competition between different economic actors. It is important to keep regulations neutral so that no group gains an unfair advantage or changes normal market competition and pricing.

Economic studies from different countries show that military-owned or military-managed companies involved in regular business activities often receive special advantages, such as easier regulations, better logistical support, or stronger public influence. These advantages can place them in a stronger position compared to normal private or public companies (Brömmelhörster & Paes, 2003, pp. 14–15).

5. Asymmetric Frictions in Contemporary Civil-Military Relations (CMR)

Within the study of Civil-Military Relations (CMR), this issue is highly sensitive at the institutional level. The main concern is not only measuring the military's contribution to the economy, but also understanding how this economic role fits within a system that protects institutional boundaries and keeps a healthy balance between civilian leadership and military responsibilities.

Therefore, the real challenge is not the existence of military economic activities themselves, but how much these activities are controlled by clear legal, institutional, and regulatory oversight. In addition, these activities must remain compatible with the needs of a modern state, especially in terms of clear accountability and proper cooperation between state institutions.

General Conclusion

This study shows that the role of the military in supporting the Algerian economy is not limited to factories, industrial production, or manufacturing activities alone. Its influence also extends through important indirect roles that strongly affect the national economy. These roles include protecting the country's large borders, securing major energy facilities, and preserving the national stability needed for economic activity, foreign investment, and international cooperation.

The analysis also highlights that understanding the military's economic role requires looking at Algeria's historical experience. The Algerian military was connected to the country's independence struggle and the building of the modern state after colonialism. For this reason, its current economic involvement can be seen as a continuation of its national security mission rather than a complete change in the nature of the armed forces.

At the same time, the study reveals that the military's growing presence in different sectors creates important challenges related to economic management, financial transparency, and the balance between military and civilian institutions. One of the main difficulties is maintaining clear limits between defense responsibilities and commercial activities, while also ensuring proper coordination between military authorities and civilian state institutions.

Therefore, the main issue is not to deny or exaggerate the military's economic role, but to understand it objectively and define its limits through clear legal and institutional frameworks. Such balance is necessary to protect both national defense and the principles of a modern state based on law, accountability, and institutional harmony. Since information about the defense sector remains limited and sensitive, this topic will continue to be an important field for future research and academic discussion.

In the end, the Algerian army can be compared to a vital vein running through the body of the nation: carrying security, stability, and continuity across the state, while reminding us that the strength of the nation depends on keeping every institution working in balance and harmony.

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