

COVID-19 and the Scramble for Trans-Mediterranean Commercial Transportation Corridors: Challenges and Opportunities

Michaël Tanchum¹

Introduction

COVID-19 has reshuffled the deck in the strategic scramble to establish Europe-to-Africa commercial transportation corridors across the Mediterranean basin. Prior to the pandemic's outbreak, the European Union (EU) system already faced a pressing strategic challenge to form a coherent and effective policy in North Africa to respond to the increasingly significant roles played by China, Russia, Turkey, and the Arab Gulf states in the development of trans-Mediterranean connectivity. The severe economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could result in those actors exercising an outsized influence in reshaping the basic economic architecture and the geopolitics of trans-Mediterranean connectivity in the absence of European action.

China's apparent early economic recovery may provide Beijing a new first-mover advantage in each of the three emerging trans-Mediterranean commercial transport corridors: Morocco's West Africa-to-Western Europe corridor, an Algeria-anchored central Maghreb corridor, and the Egypt-based East Africa-to-Eastern and Central Europe corridor via the eastern Mediterranean. The existential rivalry between Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will ensure that Turkey, along with its strategic partner Qatar, and the UAE will remain highly engaged across North Africa. Egypt's positive economic growth outlook raises the possibility that progress in establishing the eastern corridor could sufficiently surpass the other corridors to reorient commercial flows from those corridors. The manner and extent to which the EU exercises leadership in the development of trans-Mediterranean connectivity will determine the parameters of its future geopolitical influence in North Africa and the effectiveness of the EU's efforts to develop a comprehensive partnership with Africa as a whole.

Keys Factors for trans-Mediterranean Connectivity in the Post-COVID-19 Period

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Morocco's West Africa-to-Western Europe corridor was the most advanced in its development while the Egypt-based East Africa-to-Eastern Mediterranean-to Eastern/Central Europe corridor was at a more preliminary stage of development, albeit with enormous

¹ Professor of International Relations, University of Navarra, Spain. Senior Fellow, Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES).

economic potential. The central corridor based in Algeria was still in a formative state, with its rudimentary condition characterized by a jockeying among international actors to establish a successful corridor.

Morocco's success has demonstrated that commercial corridors only emerge where the requisite large investments in port and rail infrastructure are coupled with an industrial base anchored in a manufacturing value chain. These requirements reflect the two fundamental needs in Africa's current growth phase more generally – increased commercial connectivity to consumer markets and a larger industrial manufacturing base.

The Moroccan example (as well as the Algerian example) also shows that if the European Union system does not work effectively to partner with North African nations to meet these requirements, then EU member states playing leading roles in trans-Mediterranean connectivity will partner with actors outside the EU system. The Egyptian example is a case wherein the already deeply entrenched positions of China, Russia, and several Arab Gulf states show the necessity of EU system involvement to ensure a European role in trans-Mediterranean connectivity.

China's apparent economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic would seem to place Beijing in pole position to deepen its influence over the development of trans-Mediterranean connectivity. According to Chinese statistics, China's monthly exports in November 2020 rose 21.1% year-on-year (Deccan Herald, 2020). Exceeding international analysts' forecasts, China's \$268 billion of November 2020 exports represented the sixth consecutive month of export growth. In contrast, seasonally adjusted GDP decreased by 12.1% in the Eurozone during the second quarter of 2020, with the economies of the major EU Mediterranean actors, France and Italy, having contracted by 19.0% and Italy by 17.3% respectively compared to the same quarter of the previous year (Eurostat, 2020).

Nonetheless, as this study shows, the EU retains a critical window of opportunity to impact the direction of trans-Mediterranean connectivity, as the future of Chinese investments remains far from certain in the post-COVID-19 period. China's two largest policy banks, the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China, slashed their combined lending in 2019 to only \$4 billion, compared to \$75 billion in the peak year of 2016 (Wheatly and Kynge, 2020). Ultimately, the configuration of Africa-to-Europe value chains that result from investment relationships between the Maghreb nations and their foreign partners will establish the geopolitical framework of these emerging trans-regional commercial architectures for the years to come.

Morocco's West Africa-to-Western Europe Corridor in the Post-Covid-19 Era

Morocco's success in advancing its West Africa-to-Western Europe commercial corridor stems from the considerable investments made by Rabat and its foreign partners in the concurrent development of both Morocco's transportation infrastructure and its industrial base, anchoring Morocco's emerging trans-

Mediterranean commercial connectivity in manufacturing value chains. Morocco's construction of its *al-Boraq* high-speed rail line – Africa's first high-speed rail transportation – has established Morocco's unrivaled position as an Africa-to-Europe commercial corridor. The \$2.3 billion, 362 km-long first segment of landmark high-speed line was built as a Franco-Moroccan joint venture. The *Boraq* line is linked to Morocco's new state-of-the-art Tanger Med Port on the country's Mediterranean coast, 40 km east of Tangier. In late June 2019, Tanger Med became the Mediterranean's largest port, surpassing Spain's Algeciras and Valencia ports, with a total in container capacity of 9 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU). The \$1.5 billion capacity expansion was supported by considerable Chinese investment (CMG, 2017), but China has so far failed to capitalize on the investment as Beijing has been unsuccessful in establishing an independent manufacturing chain in Morocco (Tanchum, 2020c).

The importance of integrating infrastructure investment with industrial manufacturing chains is illustrated by Morocco's successful automotive industry, producing over 700,000 vehicles per year and serving as the centerpiece of the country's West Africa-to-Western Europe Corridor. In 2012, Groupe Renault established a second Moroccan manufacturing plant in Tangier to benefit from the expanded Tanger Med Port and the rail link to it, producing its millionth vehicle within five years. Europe's third largest automaker presently sends six trainloads of Renault vehicles daily from its Tangier factory to the Tanger Med port for shipment (Berrada, 2019). In June 2019, French automobile manufacturer Groupe PSA, Europe's second largest automaker, opened a manufacturing plant in Kénitra, north of Rabat, because of the *Boraq* high-speed rail link to the Tanger Med port (Ennaji, 2019). In early 2019, automotive sectors sales accounted for 27.6 percent of Morocco's exports (Groupe Société Générale, 2020).

Morocco's present vehicle production led by French manufacturers Groupe Renault and Groupe PSA, is supported by approximately 200 international suppliers operating their own manufacturing plants in the country, including major firms headquartered in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Belgium. Some Chinese manufacturers are using the opportunity of Groupe PSA's new car manufacturing plant in Kénitra to integrate into the French-led European value chain, such as CITIC Dicastal, which is establishing \$400 million plant in Kénitra, with a capacity to produce 6 million pieces annually to supply parts to PSA Groupe (Tanchum, 2020c).

Morocco continues to extend the *Boraq* line as part of its programme to create 1,500 km of additional high-speed rails links, which are already forming the overland transportation backbone of a France-led, Africa-to-Europe industrial chain. Rabat's highest strategic priority is to extend a high-speed rail link to Lagouira (La Güera) in the southernmost point of the Western Sahara region, which Morocco considers its Southern Provinces. Running from Morocco's Tanger Med Port across and down the length of the Atlantic coast to the Mauritanian border, the Tangier-Lagouira line will create a high-speed commercial transportation corridor from the shores of the western Mediterranean to the border of West Africa.

The *Boraq* high-speed rail line, as a French-Moroccan joint venture, is emblematic of France's role as Morocco's leading foreign investment partner as well as Paris' new push to be seen as a positive change-agent for African economic development. France provided 51% of the financing for the project with Morocco providing another 27%. The remaining 22% of the project was financed by development funds from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait (Moqana, 2018). Along with France, the GCC nations – in particular the UAE – have been mainstays of foreign investment in Morocco. The *Boraq* line reflects the fact that France's main partners in facilitating Morocco's transformative infrastructure development are the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and other GCC states. The EU27 collectively is Morocco's largest trade partner, accounting for 55% of Morocco's 2019 total bilateral trade volume. Nonetheless, France's principal partners for strategic economic engagement with Morocco are Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, not Madrid, Rome, or even Berlin.

Morocco's economy is projected to undergo a 6.3% contraction (World Bank, 2020), but the contraction could be worse depending on the depth and duration of the contraction of the EU27 economy. The EU27 comprises 58% of Morocco's export market and 70% of its tourism industry, while also accounting for 59% of Morocco's foreign direct investment (FDI) (Chtatou, 2020). China's attempt to establish its own industrial chain in Morocco by setting up an electric vehicle manufacturing plant has so far remained stalled (Tanchum, 2020c). However, the successful creation of an electric vehicle manufacturing chain would significantly alter China's position in the West Africa-to-Western Europe corridor.

France remains bereft of European partners willing to play a strategic role in Morocco's infrastructure development. Morocco is well-suited for electric vehicle manufacturing and hydrogen production, both of which are EU priorities. In the absence of strategic coordination in Morocco between France and other EU members or with the EU system, Morocco's Africa-to-Europe corridor will increasingly depend on the strategic relationship between France and its Arab Gulf partners. Instead of the EU's "five partnerships" framework for African development, the confluence of strategic interests among Rabat, Paris, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh will set the terms for Morocco's West Africa-to-Western Europe commercial corridor.

Covid-19 and the Competition for a Central Maghreb Corridor

The efforts to develop a Europe-to-Africa corridor through the Central Maghreb presently revolve around Algeria's road connectivity within the Trans-African Highway system, starting in the country's capital Algiers. The recently formed Turkey-Italy-Tunisia transportation network that slices across the centre of the Mediterranean, creating an arc of commercial connectivity from the Maghreb to the wider Black Sea is currently the leading aspirant to form a Europe-to-Africa corridor via the central Maghreb that utilizes Algeria's connectivity. However, the main challenge emerging to Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network is being posed by China's effort to construct *El Hamdania*, a large-scale transshipment port in Cherchell.

The Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network's central hub is Italy's deep-sea port of Taranto located on the Italian peninsula's southern tip in the strategic heart of the Mediterranean Sea. Managed by Turkish port operator Yilport, the Taranto port began servicing the Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network in early July 2020. The Taranto-Tunisia segment of the network simultaneously forms the core link of a potential Europe-to-Africa commercial transportation corridor, by connecting North Africa's coast to the major markets and manufacturing centres of Italy, Germany, and northern Europe via Italy and Europe's high-speed rail systems. From Tunisia's Bizerte port, the corridor can also link by highway to Algiers, the Mediterranean coastal terminal for the Trans-Saharan Highway (Route 2 in the Trans-African Highway (TAH) system), potentially extending the Italy-to-Tunisia corridor southward into West Africa as far as Lagos, Nigeria.

The Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network is a multi-modal transportation route whose Europe-to-Africa segment extends from the network's central node at Taranto to Malta and then the port of Bizerte in Tunisia. The Taranto-Malta maritime link is also supported by the European Union as the southernmost link in the EU's own "Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor," one of the nine core network corridors of the European Commission's Trans-European Transportation Network, or TEN-T, programme. TEN-T's Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor is the EU's central north-south transportation artery, a route spanning the Scandinavian peninsula, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Malta. Because the Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network's Taranto-Malta segment was previously designated as TEN-T's Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor's southern terminal link, Turkey could become the operator of the hub of what may become the most prized Europe-to Africa corridor. By interconnecting the EU's Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor with Africa's Algeria-to-Nigeria Trans-Saharan Highway, the Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network's Italy-Tunisia segment potentially forms the vital link for the creation of a mega-corridor spanning Europe and Africa from 60° N. latitude to 6° N. latitude.

The Turkish port operator Yilport Holding has been assembling the transformative connectivity of the Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network (Tanchum, 2020b). On July 30, 2019, Yilport committed to an investment of a total of €400 million for Taranto's renovation and expansion to 4 million TEU by 2028 (Louppova, 2018). CMA CGM, the world's fourth largest container transportation company, in which Yilport's chairman is a 24% stakeholder, began service to the Taranto port on July 10, 2020. CMA CGM's TURMED service now links Taranto and Tunisia via Malta's Freeport Terminal at the Marsaxlokk port operated by Yilport, which is majority-owned and operated by Yilport Holding. Roughly equidistant between Taranto and Tunis, Yilport's Malta terminal forms an important logistics centre for the Africa-to-Europe segment of the Turkey-Italy-Tunisia corridor.

With its general focus on Italo-Tunisian-Algerian energy interconnectivity, Italy has literally laid the groundwork for the expansion of the Turkey-Italy-Tunisia corridor's extension to Algeria through the involvement of Italy's leading construction firms, such as ITALCONSULT and Anas International, Algeria's mega-project East-West highway traversing the entire length of Algeria parallel to the country's

coast. Without having coupled Algeria's transportation infrastructure development with investments in local industrial production linked to a manufacturing value chain, Italy's role in Algeria's commercial connectivity remains far from certain as Turkey's military presence in Libya is increasing Ankara's political and economic clout in neighboring Tunis and Algiers.

Turkey has made a strong inroads in Algeria through \$3.5 billion dollars of investments, ranking Turkey as one of the country's top foreign investors (Tanchum, 2020b). One month into Turkey's game-changing Libya intervention, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Algeria on January 26, 2020, where he announced the goal of raising Turkey-Algeria bilateral trade to \$5 billion. Declaring Algeria as "one of our strategic partners in North Africa," during his January 2020 visit, Erdoğan explained, "Algeria is one of Turkey's most important gateways to the Maghreb and Africa" (Hürriyet Daily News, 2020). Italy's position in Tunisia is being undermined by the sizable investments of Turkey's strategic partner, Qatar, whose approximately \$3 billion of investments (Gulf Times, 2020) ranks it as Tunisia's second largest investor, behind France but leapfrogging ahead of both Italy and Germany (Tanchum, 2020b).

While the Turkey-Qatar partnership has gained economic and political influence in the central Maghreb, it has not secured a dominant position in the development of central Africa-to Europe corridor either. Bizerte and Tunisia's five other medium-sized ports, do not provide an economy of scale to sustain an economic corridor. With an expected 20% contraction of the Tunisian economy in 2020 (Asala, 2020), it remains unclear when construction will begin on Tunisia's proposed deep-sea port at Enfidha. In the absence of a modern deep-sea port, the Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network could become a sub-system in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) architecture.

The incorporation of the Turkey-Italy-Tunisia network into a BRI-oriented central corridor may be accomplished with China's construction of El Hamdania port in the Algerian municipality of Cherchell. Following China's CITIC Construction's success in building most of Algeria's East-West highway, Algiers inked a deal in 2016 with the China State Construction Engineering Corporation and the China Harbor Engineering Company to construct El Hamdania as a massive transshipment port located about 60 km west of Algiers (Bonface, 2016). With a container capacity of 6.5 million TEU, El Hamdania could function as the hub of an Africa-to-Europe corridor linked to the Taranto port.

In July 2019, the Algerian government ratified and confirmed by presidential decree its September 2018 Memorandum of Understanding with China in which Algeria agreed to participate in Beijing's BRI programme (Xinhua, 2019b). Slowed but not deterred by the COVID-19 pandemic, nor Algeria's changing political environment, Beijing's China International Development Cooperation Agency signed, on 11 October 2020, an economic and technical cooperation agreement with Algiers to deepen Algeria's BRI participation (APS, 2020). Nonetheless, requiring seven years of construction at a current estimated cost of \$6 billion (Agenzia Nova 2020), whether and when El Hamdania will actually be completed remains

uncertain, as Algeria's economy has been forecasted to contract by 5.5% in 2020 (IMF, 2020) forcing a reduction of the planned investments of its state-owned energy company Sonatrach by 50% (Reuters, 2020b).

While a sufficiently strong recovery in energy prices could push Algeria's positive economic growth in 2021, Algiers would require an oil price of \$157.2 to balance its budget. Despite depleting its foreign reserves, Algeria has so far been reluctant to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund (M'vida, 2020), leaving it more vulnerable to increasing its dependence on China, Russia, and Turkey.

Post-COVID-19 Advance of the Eastern Corridor: Egypt and the East Africa-to-Eastern Mediterranean Corridor-to-Eastern/Central Europe

With approximately 103 million inhabitants, Egypt has the largest population of any Mediterranean nation and the third largest in Africa. Egypt is progressing toward becoming a hub for an East Africa-to-Eastern Mediterranean commercial transportation corridor that connects to the European mainland at the massive Chinese-run transshipment port in Piraeus, Greece. Piraeus' port operator China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) provides freight rail service through the Balkans and Central Europe to reach Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Poland, extending the East Africa-to-Eastern Mediterranean corridor to the major markets and manufacturing centres of Eastern and Central Europe.

Egypt has been engaged in a programme to increase its total container capacity of its Mediterranean ports to partner with Piraeus as the dominant transshipment hubs in the Mediterranean basin. China occupies a preeminent position in Egypt's both the operation of Egypt's Mediterranean ports and their capacity expansion. The majority of Egypt's foreign trade is handled by the Alexandria port and its auxiliary El Dekheila port with a combined container capacity of 1.5 TEU. The port is run by the Hong Kong-based Hutchison Port Holdings, as a joint venture between Hutchison, the Alexandria Port Authority, and Saudi Al Blagha Holdings (Mooney, 2016). Hutchison is also developing a 2 million TEU port at the nearby Abu Qir peninsula that will start operations in 2022 (Egypt Today, 2019). The 5.4 million TEU Suez Canal Container Terminal (SCCT) at East Port Said is owned by APM (55%) and COSCO (20%) with the remaining 25% stake split among the Suez Canal Authority, the National Bank of Egypt, and Egyptian private sector participants. The SCCT services the entire Suez Canal Economic Zone mega-project in which China is the largest investor (Xinhua, 2019b).

The emerging East Africa-to-Eastern Eastern Mediterranean commercial corridor centered in Egypt is a multi-modal corridor whose African segment will be primarily based on rail connectivity as Cairo has prioritised shifting its commercial transportation from road to rail (Dornier, 2019). Egypt is creating rail connectivity with Sudan that could forge a new north-south rail corridor with the White Nile countries with

whom Egypt is more closely aligned, extending southward to Egypt's partner Tanzania and the other East African countries of the wider Lake Victoria basin. This development has been facilitated by Egypt's warming relation with the new Sudanese government after the April 2019 ouster of Sudan's former strongman Omar al-Bashir and the multibillion-dollar support provided to Sudan's new government by Egypt's close strategic partners the UAE and Saudi Arabia (Abdelaziz, 2019).

On 25 October 2020, Egypt and Sudan signed a new transportation connectivity agreement that will create modern rail connections between Egypt and Sudan (Egypt Today, 2020). The first rail link of the project will be constructed with funding from the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development and will run from Egypt's southern city of Aswan to the Sudanese border town of Wadi Halfa, which presently is the northern terminus of Sudan's rail line from the country's capital Khartoum. Combined with the eventual upgrade and completion of South Sudan's rail links between its borders with Sudan and Uganda, Egypt will preside over a rail corridor that links the booming economies of East Africa to Eastern Mediterranean coast. With maritime connectivity from Egypt's ports to Piraeus, Egypt will become the multi-modal hub for a commercial corridor extending from East Africa to Eastern and Central Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean.

China's construction of a high-speed rail line from Egypt's Red Sea port of Sokhna to its Mediterranean port at Alexandria will accelerate the development of rail transportation as the major land component of an East Africa-Eastern Mediterranean corridor. The \$9 billion tender was awarded in September 2020 to a Sino-Egyptian consortium led by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (Egypt Independent, 2020). Although European firms such as Thales and Siemens have been involved with upgrading Egypt's rail system, China is playing the most strategic role in Egypt's transportation connectivity.

Still, China has not developed a production base in Egypt anchored in manufacturing value chains to dominate the commercial landscape in Egypt despite its participation in the special economic zone created under Cairo's Sustainable Development Strategy: Vision 2030. There remains a great opportunity for Europe to assume a strategic leadership role in the development of the East Africa-to-Eastern Mediterranean corridor through EU incentivization of European businesses to opening of manufacturing plants in key sectors in Egypt. Already with a surplus electricity generation capacity of over 10 GW, Egypt is one of the Mediterranean best suited nations for hydrogen production. Cairo's plans for an ambitious 61 GW of installed capacity from renewable energy resources – 32 GW from photovoltaic solar power, 12 GW from concentrated solar power, and 18 GW from wind power (Tanchum, 2020a), could make Egypt one of the world's leading green hydrogen producers.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Egypt's Ministry of Finance forecasts that the Egyptian economy will grow 3.3% in fiscal year 2020-21 (Reuters, 2020a). The June 2020 staff-level agreement between Egypt

and the IMF on a \$5.2 billion stand-by arrangement to offset COVID-19's adverse economic impact will help ensure that the Egyptian energy juggernaut maintains momentum. Additionally, the Egypt-IMF agreement was bolstered by a subsequent \$2 billion loan coordinated by UAE-based lenders Emirates NBD Capital and First Abu Dhabi Bank (CGTN Africa, 2020). Egypt's large labor supply and consumer market, along with its ample energy resources, may make the eastern corridor the most attractive investment among the three trans-Mediterranean corridors in the immediate post-COVID-19 period.

Conclusions

North Africa's leading foreign partners in trans-Mediterranean commercial connectivity will be the countries that invest in infrastructure that is directly tied to Africa-to-Europe manufacturing value chains. On 9 March 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union issued a joint proposal for "a new comprehensive EU strategy with Africa," based on a program of 'five partnerships' for 1) green transition and energy access; 2) digital transformation; 3) sustainable growth and jobs; 4) peace and governance; and 5) migration and mobility. For the European Union to realise its ambition to partner with Africa based on the five partnerships framework, the EU system must materialize its values-based approach through European investments in trans-Mediterranean connectivity that create local manufacturing that participates in European value chains. In the absence of coherent European Union system policy to incentivize EU member states and European firms to cooperate in effectively partnering with North African nations, leading EU member states will partner with actors outside the union to create Africa-to-Europe corridors. Any space left by the European Union in the development of trans-Mediterranean connectivity will be filled by China, Russia, Turkey and the GCC States.

The EU system should incentivize closer coordination among member states and European firms to make investments on a strategically significant scale in transportation connectivity and in manufacturing facilities that will utilize that commercial connectivity in European manufacturing value chains. While EU values, often manifested through regulatory systems, are viewed by the Union as one of its primary contributions, these will be more readily accepted when adopted by European firms operating manufacturing production facilities in North Africa.

Automotive manufacturing is one of the key growth sectors for North Africa and trans-Mediterranean connectivity. The EU should promote green transition through incentivizing European electric vehicle manufacturers to open production facilities in Morocco, Algeria, or Egypt to employ North Africans. North African countries are expanding their power production capacity from renewable resources as well as their infrastructure for the storage and transport of liquified natural gas. The EU should take the lead in developing the potential of newly emerging trans-Mediterranean hydrogen geographies through incentivizing European-African joint ventures in hydrogen production from renewable energy resources and the infrastructure for hydrogen storage and transport.

The absence of EU partnerships with North African nations on a strategically significant scale will likely result in trans-Mediterranean connectivity that neither represents European values nor serves Europe's interests. The European Union's window of opportunity is now in the immediate post-COVID-19 period. The implementation of a robust partnership between the European Union and North Africa that produces Africa-to-Europe value chains will result in trans-regional architectures of commercial connectivity based on the values of the five partnerships framework that will operate for generations beyond the pandemic.

References

Abdelaziz, K. (2019, 21 April). Saudi Arabia, UAE to send \$3 billion in aid to Sudan. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-protests/saudi-arabia-uae-to-send-3-billion-in-aid-to-sudan-idUSKCN1RX0DG>

Agenzia Nova (2020, 10 October). Infrastrutture: Tanchum (Aies) a “Nova”, porto di Hamdania progetto win-win per Algeria e Cina. *Agenzia Nova*. Retrieved from <https://www.agenzianova.com/a/5f7d82ada87644.05066204/3131170/2020-10-07/infrastrutture-tanchum-aies-a-nova-porto-di-hamdania-progetto-win-win-per-algeria-e-cina/linked>

APS (2020). Algeria, China ink economic and technical cooperation agreement. *APS*. Retrieved from <http://www.aps.dz/en/economy/36083-algeria-china-inks-economic-and-technical-cooperation-agreement>

Asala, K. (2020). Tunisia's economic crisis amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. *Africa News*. Retrieved from <https://www.africanews.com/2020/10/10/tunisia-s-economic-crisis-amidst-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Berrada, E. (2019, 7 August). Morocco now has the largest capacity for shipping containers in the Mediterranean. *The Africa Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.theafricareport.com/16021/tanger-meds-rachid-houari-says-morocco-offers-the-largest-capacity-for-shipping-containers-in-the-mediterranean/>

Bonface (2016, 5 April). China to construct mega sea port in Algeria. *Construction Review*. Retrieved from <https://constructionreviewonline.com/2016/01/china-construct-mega-sea-port-algeria/#:~:text=Algeria's%20Transport%20Ministry%2C%20China%20State,center%20transshipment%20port%20of%20Cherchell.>

CGTN Africa (2020, 31 August). Egypt signs \$2 billion loan with regional international banks. *CGTN Africa*. Retrieved from <https://africa.cgtn.com/2020/08/31/egypt-signs-2-billion-loan-with-regional-international-banks/>

Chtatou, M. (2020, 23 April). Coronavirus in Morocco: economic and social implications. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/Coronavirus-Morocco-Economic-Social-impact-COVID19>

CMG (2017, 5 May). Chairman Li Jianhong Visits TANGER. *China Merchants Group*. Retrieved from https://www.cmhk.com/home/a/2017/h07/a34075_34173.shtml?1

Deccan Herald. (2020, 7 December). China exports surge by forecast-beating 21.1% in November. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/business/business-news/china-exports-surge-by-forecast-beating-211-in-november-924440.html>

Dornier (2019). Business Line Mobility advising Egyptian National Railways. *Dornier Consulting*. Retrieved from <https://www.dornier-consulting.com/en/business-line-mobility-advising-egyptian-national-railways/>

Ennaji, K. (2019, 20 June). PSA Kenitra Plant Officially Opens. *Morocco World News*. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/06/276284/psa-kenitra-plant-officially/>

Egypt Independent (2020, 5 September). Egyptian-Chinese consortium wins bid to construct Egypt's first electric high-speed rail. *Egypt Independent*, Retrieved from <https://egyptindependent.com/egyptian-chinese-consortium-wins-bid-to-construct-egypts-first-electric-high-speed-rail/>

Egypt Today (2020, 25 October). Egypt, Sudan sign railway cooperation document. *Egypt Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/93495/Egypt-Sudan-sign-railway-cooperation-document>

Egypt Today (2019, 7 August). Sisi witnesses signing of MoU in Abu Qir Port. *Egypt Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/73665/Sisi-witnesses-signing-of-MoU-in-Abu-Qir-Port>

Eurostat (2020, 14 August). GDP down by 12.1% in the euro area and by 11.9% in the EU. *Eurostat*. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10545332/2-14082020-AP-EN.pdf/7f30c3cf-b2c9-98ad-3451-17fed0230b57#:~:text=In%20the%20second%20quarter%20of,office%20of%20the%20European%20Union.>

Groupe Société Générale (2020). Country risk of Morocco: International Trade. *Société Générale*. Retrieved from <https://import-export.societegenerale.fr/en/country/morocco/trade-country-risk>

Gulf Times (2020, 25 February). Amir's visit confirms Tunisia's distinguished ties with Qatar. *Gulf Times*. Retrieved from <https://m.gulf-times.com/story/656843/Amir-s-visit-confirms-Tunisia-s-distinguished-ties-with-Qatar>

Hürriyet Daily News (2020, 27 January). Turkey, Algeria aim for \$5 billion trade. *Hürriyet Daily News*. Retrieved from <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-algeria-aim-for-5-billion-trade-151454>

IMF (2020). Algeria. *International Monetary Fund*. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/DZA>

Louppova, J. (2018, 6 August). Yilport on the way to Italy. *Port Today*. Retrieved from <https://port.today/yilport-develop-taranto-container-terminal/>

M'vida, A. (2020, 22 October). Algeria: Abdelmadjid Tebboune son forced to call on IMF? *The Africa Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.theafricareport.com/47078/algeria-abdelmadjid-tebboune-soon-forced-to-call-on-imf/>

Mooney, T. (2016, 9 March). Hutchison buys stake in Egypt terminal operator. *JOC*. Retrieved from https://www.joc.com/port-news/terminal-operators/hutchison-port-holdings/hph-buys-stake-egypt-terminal-operator_20160309.html

Moqana, L. (2018, 16 November). Moroccan King, French President Inaugurate Al Boraq High Speed Train. *Asharq Al-Awsat*. Retrieved from <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/1465551/moroccan-king-french-president-inaugurate-al-boraq-high-speed-train>

Porter, J. (2019). The Interview: Robert Yildirim. *Lloyd's List*. Retrieved from <https://lloydslist.maritimeintelligence.informa.com/LL1127615/The-Interview-Robert-Yildirim>

Reuters (2020a, 9 November). UPDATE 2-Egypt expects 3.3% economic growth in 2020/21 fiscal year. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://uk.reuters.com/article/egypt-economy/update-2-egypt-expects-3-3-economic-growth-in-2020-21-fiscal-year-idUKL8N2HV7I0>

Reuters (2020b, 22 March). Algeria to cut spending and energy investment, delay projects. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-algeria-economy-idUSKBN21911C>

Tanchum (2020a). Egypt's Prospects as an Energy Export Hub across Three Continents. *Istituto Per Gli Studi Di Politica Internazionale* (ISPI). <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/egypts-prospects-energy-export-hub-across-three-continents-27408>

Tanchum (2020b). Italy and Turkey's Europe-to-Africa Commercial Corridor: Rome and Ankara's Geopolitical Symbiosis Is Creating a New Mediterranean Strategic Paradigm. *Austria Institut für Europa- und Sicherheitspolitik* (AIES). <https://www.aies.at/publikationen/2020/fokus-20-08.php>

Tanchum (2020c). Morocco's Africa-to-Europe Commercial Corridor: Gatekeeper of an emerging trans-regional strategic architecture. *Austria Institut für Europa- und Sicherheitspolitik* (AIES). <https://www.aies.at/publikationen/2020/fokus-20-08.php>

Wheatley, J. and Kynge, J. (2020). China curtails overseas lending in face of geopolitical backlash. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/1cb3e33b-e2c2-4743-ae41-d3fffa4259>

World Bank (2020, 1 October). The World Bank in Morocco – Overview. *World Bank*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/overview#1>

Xinhua (2019a, 18 November). Spotlight: China, Egypt join hands to write new chapter of Suez Canal development. *Xinhua*. Retrieved from http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/18/c_138563688.htm

Xinhua (2019b, 10 July). Algeria ratifies BRI agreement with China. *Xinhua*. Retrieved from http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/10/c_138212879.htm