



## Chinese-Arab Cooperation in the Time of COVID-19

**OE Watch Commentary:** There is consensus in Arabic-language media that the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath will change the structure of international relations and alliances. In the Middle East and North Africa, China's early response to the pandemic's spread has been interpreted as a harbinger of deeper Sino-Arab cooperation to come.

China's reach was on display in the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic, perhaps most notably in the North African Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia). As those countries' historical allies across the Mediterranean were forced to deal with the domestic consequences of the epidemic, China provided early and well publicized assistance to all three. A former Tunisian foreign minister, cited in the excerpt from *al-Araby al-Jadid*, argues that the pandemic may help bring about greater North African integration, a longtime political aspiration that has never been realized. The one thing that is clear amidst all the moving pieces, he adds, is that "China's position will become stronger after the coronavirus."

Chinese aid to Algeria, meanwhile, invited controversy after a commentator on French state-owned media (*France24*) questioned whether it was genuinely intended or mere "diplomatic propaganda." The accompanying passage from the website of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCf), a quasi-official Chinese entity that promotes cooperation with members of the Arab League, highlights the ensuing Franco-Algerian diplomatic spat and explains: "Because the facts cannot be discredited, local media in Algeria have reported widely about Chinese help at these critical moments. Furthermore, China's aid has continued flowing."

In Algeria and other countries, Chinese aid has been presented as an exercise in solidarity to repay Arab support in the early stages of the epidemic. In the excerpt from *Baghdad Today*, for instance, China's ambassador to Iraq emphasizes that "the aid that Iraq sent to China when the coronavirus appeared was substantial, and the Iraqi government and people were supportive of us, so now is our turn to help Iraq in order to overcome and contain this virus." Similar sentiments are expressed by the diplomat in charge of CASCf affairs at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, in an op-ed published by the Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, where he explains how Chinese assistance will "contribute to a Chinese-Arab victory in this battle." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



China-Arab States Cooperation Forum Logo.  
Source: CASCf website, [http://www.chinaarabcf.org/ara/images/bg\\_A\\_1.png](http://www.chinaarabcf.org/ara/images/bg_A_1.png), no copyright (logo)

***“China’s speed and capabilities will contribute to a Chinese-Arab victory in this battle...”***

**Source:**

“Will Tunisia Restructure its Foreign Relations Post-Coronavirus?” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 10 April 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/ty7mptd>

هل تعيد تونس ترتيب علاقاتها الدولية بعد كورونا؟

*Most diplomats agree that international relations will change after the Coronavirus crisis. New alliance will be built, while other relationships lose their luster. In the midst of these developments, Tunisia, like other countries, may be forced to restructure its international relations and review its foreign policies, as the crisis has demonstrated the degree of solidarity from some countries and the absence of it from others. China is among the countries that have supported Tunisia in the face of the Coronavirus. China announced medical assistance and a donation of medical equipment and equipment, which recently arrived in Tunisia. More assistance is planned... Former Foreign Minister Ahmed Wanis said in a statement to Al-Araby Al-Jadeed: “After the Corona crisis, a new distribution of relations and responsibilities will emerge at the global level... There will be an opportunity to restore the unity of the greater Maghreb, as this crisis may force countries to reach a settlement, especially in Morocco’s relationship with Algeria... North African integration may be the solution... International relations will change according to the new arrangement of countries and the extent to which they can revitalize their economies and develop their relations. It is clear that China’s position will become stronger after the Coronavirus.”*



## Continued: Chinese-Arab Cooperation in the Time of COVID-19

### Source:

“Algeria Accuses French Media of Misrepresenting Chinese Aid,” *China-Arab States Cooperation Forum*, 7 April 2020. <http://www.chinaarabcf.org/ara/zagx/rwjl/t1766751.htm>

During the critical period of epidemic prevention and control in China, Algeria continued to provide assistance to China. When Algeria needs it, China has also emerged at the right time, and this is a vivid example of international cooperation in fighting the epidemic. But France24 has deliberately tarnished China... This expert criticized Tunisia and Algeria for not being effective in combating the epidemic, and then began attacking Chinese aid. He said that the medical supplies were not Chinese aid to Algeria but rather special assistance to a local military hospital by a local Chinese company that made a lot of money. He claimed that this aid is only part of China's diplomatic propaganda... The Chinese embassy in Algeria issued a statement the same day, noting that the French analyst not only ignored the efforts of Chinese assistance to combat the novel coronavirus epidemic in Algeria, but also made false, obnoxious and defamatory comments on the subject. China expressed its condemnation and opposition. Because the facts cannot be discredited, local media in Algeria have reported widely about Chinese help at these critical moments. Furthermore, China's aid has continued flowing.

### Source:

“Chinese Ambassador: Iraq Sent Substantial Assistance When Corona First Appeared... It Is Time for Repayment,” *Baghdad Today*, 6 April 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/sdllsc3>

Chinese ambassador, Zhang Tao, said on Monday that the government of Iraq has fully supported his country since the beginning of the coronavirus, indicating that the time has come to repay that help and help Iraq be rid of the coronavirus... “the aid that Iraq sent to China when the coronavirus appeared was substantial, and the Iraqi government and people were supportive of us, so now is our turn to help Iraq in order to overcome and contain this virus.”

### Source:

Li Chengwen, “Fighting the Epidemic and Building a Shared Future for Humanity,” *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 14 March 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/usrgh26>

China is closely tied to Arab countries in the midst of this battle against the epidemic... The Chinese people will not forget... the assistance of Arab countries and the solidarity of Arab friends in social media... China's speed and capabilities will contribute to a Chinese-Arab victory in this battle... You know your true friends in times of trouble. We are confident that this ordeal will add strength to the China-Arab friendship, and the ties of China-Arab cooperation will be further strengthened... The cooperation between China and the Arab countries in combating the epidemic will show the world once again the strength of developing countries in solidarity, and foresee broader prospects for cooperation in building a common future society.



China's cyber policy appears to have three vectors—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—that dominate China's cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>