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NORTH AFRICA · GROWTH · CORRIDORS

North Africa’s Ascent

Egypt and Morocco are turning geography into advantage. Why the Maghreb is one of the most under-priced opportunities in the UK’s trade map.

Foreword

The Gulf commands the headlines; North Africa quietly compounds. For organisations willing to look past the obvious, the Maghreb offers proximity to Europe, a young workforce, and governments actively courting the kind of partnership the UK is well placed to provide.

At UK-MENA we have long argued that the UK underweights North Africa relative to its potential. This paper makes the case for a closer look, and sets out where the early movers are already positioning.

The growth story

A region consolidating its position

A February 2026 IMF report, "North Africa: Connecting Continents, Creating Opportunities", argues that the region — led by Egypt and Morocco — is consolidating its role as a trade, manufacturing and investment corridor linking Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Combined growth across the North African economies reached roughly 4% in 2025, ahead of the Middle East and the wider continent.

~4%	£4bn	4.5–5.5%
Combined North African GDP growth in 2025	UK Export Finance facility for Moroccan importers	Egypt's GDP growth range in 2025

Egypt sustained GDP growth between 4.5% and 5.5% in 2025 on the back of public infrastructure spending, energy development and export expansion. Morocco, which markets itself as the "gateway to Africa", is investing heavily ahead of co-hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup with Spain and Portugal, expanding ports including Nador West Med and the new Dakhla Atlantic as part of its Atlantic Initiative.

The UK angle

Britain is already leaning in

The UK's development and export-finance machinery has been quietly active across the region. UK Export Finance has made up to £4 billion in trade finance available to Moroccan importers buying UK goods and services, appointing an export-finance executive based in Casablanca. In Egypt, UKEF provided a £1.7 billion guarantee for the Cairo Monorail — among the largest single overseas infrastructure commitments in its history — with further capacity available for additional projects. UK and Egyptian officials have continued to discuss deepening investment ties through 2026.

> *The Gulf commands the headlines; North Africa quietly compounds. Proximity to Europe, a young workforce, and governments that want to build — the ingredients are in place.*

Reading the risk honestly

Opportunity with eyes open

North Africa is not a single market, and candour matters. Fiscal and currency conditions vary widely, civil-law systems in the Francophone Maghreb differ from the UK’s common-law tradition, and execution on the ground can be demanding. The corridor is real and the momentum is genuine, but returns accrue to those who price the risk accurately and partner with people who know the terrain — not to those who extrapolate a single good year.

How UK-MENA helps

Turning proximity into partnership

UK-MENA helps UK organisations approach North Africa with the same rigour they would bring to any major market — and with relationships across embassies, ministries and the regional business community that turn cold prospecting into warm introductions. We help clients identify the right entry point, structure credible local partnerships, and navigate the documentation and regulatory steps that decide whether a venture moves.

— **Market prioritisation** — where in the Maghreb your proposition fits, and why.

— **Partner and counterparty vetting** — independent assessment before commitments are made.

— **Trade facilitation** — guidance on documentation, procurement and the practicalities of cross-border execution.

Sources

1. IMF report "North Africa: Connecting Continents, Creating Opportunities" (Feb 2026): Fast Company Middle East summary.
2. Regional growth figures: Global Finance, "North Africa on the Rise" (Nov 2025).
3. Morocco infrastructure and World Cup: US State Department 2025 Investment Climate Statement, Morocco.
4. UK Export Finance facilities (Morocco, Egypt/Cairo Monorail): AGBI; Zawya, "Egypt, UK discuss expanding investment ties" (Feb 2026).