

# **Analyzing The Geopolitical Implications Of IMEC: A Comprehensive Research Study**

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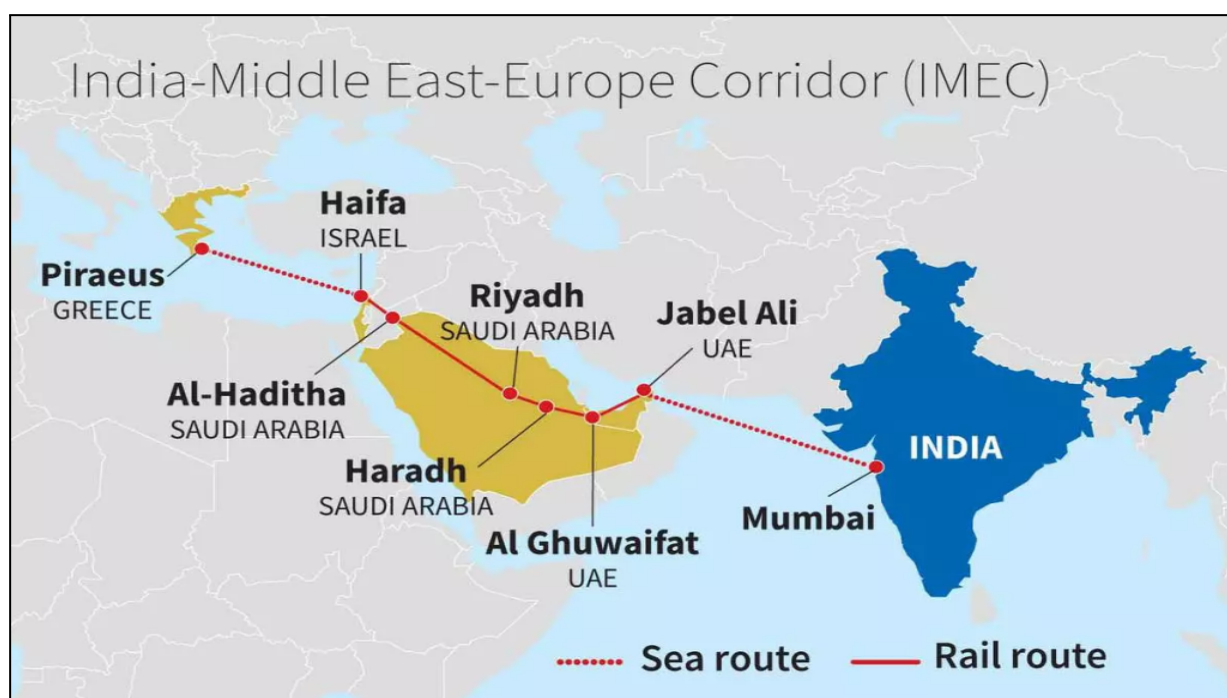
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## 1. Abstract

This paper intends to analyze the prospect of the “India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)”. It is an ambitious project aimed at creating a cost-effective trade and transport corridor including both railways and waterways. The paper discusses the scope and the geopolitical nitty-gritty that will hold significance in its implementation. As the paper unfolds, it addresses the roadblocks and pertinent questions that have arisen in global news. The paper also strives to view this mega project from India’s lens. Finally, the paper also suggests the way forward for IMEC.

## 2. Introduction

Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi and President of the USA Mr. Joe Biden co-chaired a special event on the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), on 9 September 2023 on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in New Delhi. The event aimed at unlocking greater investment for infrastructure development and strengthening connectivity in its various dimensions between India, the Middle East, and Europe. Leaders of the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Mauritius, UAE, and Saudi Arabia, as well as the World Bank, participated in the event.<sup>1</sup> The IMEC is expected to stimulate economic development through enhanced connectivity.



<sup>1</sup> [Ministry of External Affairs](#)

[Source](#)

### **3. Objective of the project**

As conceived by the participating countries, it aims to create two corridors, linking India to the Middle East in the Arabian Gulf and further connecting the Gulf to Europe. The aim is to develop a railway network to facilitate the seamless transmission of goods and services across India, Israel, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and finally Europe. This brainchild of America is increasingly using multilateral bodies such as the QUAD ( a grouping of India, Japan, the US, and Australia) and I2U2 ( India, Israel, UAE, and the US) to maintain its influence on the shifting sands of geopolitics. It is worth mentioning that all four I2U2 nations are participants in the IMEC. These four nations are meeting at regular intervals to cooperate on key areas of secure supply chains, countering terrorism, and solutions to climate change. The white house fact sheet released post the launch of IMEC read “The United States and our partners intend to link both continents to commercial hubs and facilitate the development and export of clean energy; lay undersea cables and link energy grids and telecommunication lines to expand reliable access to electricity; enable innovation of advanced clean energy technology; and connect communities to secure and stable Internet. Across the corridor, we envision driving existing trade and manufacturing and strengthening food security and supply chains.”<sup>2</sup> The white house also committed to increasing investments in regional investment initiatives such as the IMEC.

It aims to connect India, the Middle East, and Europe through an extensive transportation network that includes rail, road, and maritime routes. It seeks to increase economic cohesion, cut expenses, improve transportation efficiency, create jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. By promoting trade and connectivity, it has the potential to revolutionize the integration of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

### **4. History**

The Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII), was formed as an alternative to the BRI in 2022. It seeks to finance infrastructure projects in developing nations through public and private capital, including this programme. In response to worries about China's BRI, which involves giving loans and infrastructure development in numerous nations, PGII was created. According to critics,

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<sup>2</sup> [The white House](#)

these ventures frequently resulted in unmanageable debts and geopolitical influence. Through a combination of public and private investments, the PGII, which consists of the G7 countries and the EU, seeks to finance infrastructure projects in developing countries. It places a strong emphasis on openness, the creation of climate-resilient infrastructure, gender equality, and health infrastructure. The PGII, in contrast to the BRI, emphasizes cooperation between democracies and strives to give loans rather than charity.

## **5. A new epoch of connectivity?**

The new corridor is being popularized by many as the “New Silk Road”. “The Silk Road was a network of Eurasian trade routes active from the second century BCE until the mid-15th century. Spanning over 6,400 kilometers (4,000 miles), it was central in facilitating economic, cultural, political, and religious interactions between the East and West. The name “Silk Road”, first coined in the late 19th century, has fallen into disuse among some modern historians in favor of Silk Routes, because it more accurately describes the intricate web of land and sea routes connecting Central, East, South, Southeast, and West Asia, East Africa, and Southern Europe.”<sup>3</sup>

## **6. Significance**

Participants believe that the initiative will have significant effects, particularly for India. Additionally, they see it as a rival to China's BRI amid the rising great power rivalry between the United States and China. It is widely being lauded as a “game-changing regional investment” that may usher in “a new era of connectivity.”

Navdeep Suri, a former Indian diplomat, said that the project having a connectivity corridor for data and green hydrogen pipelines besides a transport corridor makes it “highly consequential”. “From an Indian perspective, [the Gulf Cooperation Council] is our largest trading partner and the EU is the second largest,” Suri highlighted. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [Silk Road](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The scroll](#)

## 6.1 Geopolitical

**The USA** has lost its once dearly held control over West Asia. It made numerous blunders in West Asia over the previous years, which resulted in a decrease in its overall influence and an accompanying policy recalibration by its allies. Consider the situations in Iran, Syria, and Iraq. The U.S. invaded, overthrew the government, and occupied the second nation in which without launching a full-scale invasion, it wanted to replace the regime; and third a country that it aimed to engage and contain. Barack Obama reached out to Iran after realizing that the country's protracted involvement in the region was hindering its efforts to confront new conventional threats. He reached a global agreement about its nuclear program. Obama's proposal aimed to convince America's Arab allies and reach a détente with Iran to "share" the area with Tehran. However, reaching an agreement with Tehran at a time when the United States' own policies had strengthened Iran enraged Israel as well as its Gulf allies. Donald Trump did not have a backup plan to stop Iran's immediate conventional threat to military strength. The United States is cognizant of its limitations today. Greater conventional challenges are also present elsewhere. Therefore, the IMEC can be seen as the USA's strategy to counter the space filled by the China-Russia-Iran axis.

**China** in the last few decades has assumed the role of a major changemaker in the region. Beijing's influence may be seen in such global forums, as evidenced by the recent addition of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, and Egypt as permanent members of the BRICS consortium. Given that the BRICS have not made much progress since South Africa joined the group in 2010, this second expansion was made possible in large part by the peace agreement between Riyadh and Tehran that was mediated by Beijing earlier this year. Another location for Indo-Sino rivalries dressed up as cooperation is the BRICS. When it comes to securing future technology, a larger West Asian region that stretches from Iran to Israel and everywhere in between is seeing quick progress. Middle Eastern nations increased their collaboration with China in 2022, accounting for almost 23% of Chinese participation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an increase from 16.5 percent the year before. China has invested in the Red Sea Gateway Terminal, a joint venture between Saudi Arabia's Public

Investment Fund and China's COSCO Shipping Ports. With over \$10.5 billion in building contracts, Iraq was the largest beneficiary of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) funding for infrastructure projects in 2021. China additionally announced plans to spend \$10 billion on infrastructure improvements in northern Iraq's Autonomous Kurdistan Region. The anticipated \$400 billion "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" deal between China and Iran is 10% of China's overall BRI expenditure. It calls for the cooperative development of a new oil terminal close to the Jask port, south of the Strait of Hormuz, and the port of Chabahar. This is an exciting event, as the port was previously bound by a long-term agreement with India. While India's political and diplomatic engagement with West Asia over the past ten years has been a success story, the geopolitics of technology could provide a problem. West Asia's courting of China is essentially the introduction of the concepts of strategic autonomy, risk-spreading, and hedging, all of which India also uses to advance its own national interests.



[Source](#)

The corridor is thus of integral importance in the **Arabian peninsula**. Other nations, like Saudi Arabia, Israel, the UAE, and India, have brought their own goals to IMEC, while

Washington has sought to reassure its longtime Arab allies about its ability to endure as they warm up to Beijing. In terms of international and economic policy, leaders in the capitals of the Gulf have been forging their own course. While establishing connections with Beijing, Gulf states are also doing so with Beijing's Asian rival. India recently passed China as the world's most populous nation and is the second-largest customer of their oil. I2U2, a programme to collaborate on sustainable energy and food security that is supported by the US and includes Israel, already includes the UAE and India. In a deal designed to bring India into the Middle East and Europe and advance Israel's integration into the Middle East and the Far East, the Indian giant Adani Group earlier this year purchased 70% of the Haifa Port. If IMEC is successful, it may strengthen Haifa's position as a commercial center in the eastern Mediterranean, a crucial area where New Delhi has been courting nations. By fostering intra-regional connections, IMEC has the potential to ease political strife in the Arabian Peninsula.

India and **Israel** are now working together on military, agricultural, and technological projects as "strategic partners" as of 2017. Israeli officials believe that they just need 200 more kilometers of track to connect a train departing from Saudi Arabia to its final endpoint in Israel via Jordan. The memorandum also gains significance since Saudi Arabia, which does not recognize Israel, is a signatory. In order to normalize relations with Israel, the UAE and Bahrain inked the Abraham Accords in Trump's presence in September 2020. Israel has earlier formalized diplomatic relations with Egypt and Jordan.

## **6.2 Economic**

IMEC offers India a game-changing chance to accelerate economic growth by improving its commercial connectivity with important regions. By reducing passage times drastically, the route might speed up trade with Europe by 40% when compared to the Suez Canal sea route. The corridor will build an effective transportation system for the smooth transportation of products. This will make it easier for businesses to transfer raw materials and completed goods, which will promote industrial expansion overall and in regions along the corridor in particular.

Job prospects across industries will increase as economic activity grows as a result of better connectivity. Trade, infrastructure, and related businesses will expand, requiring both skilled and unskilled labor, which will increase employment. Particularly concerning the Middle East, the corridor can facilitate safe energy and resource supplies. India's energy industry will be stabilized and its expanding economy supported by consistent access to these resources.

The corridor would open up new channels for investment and trade, particularly with nations like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel, where Indian economic interests are growing. The UAE receives \$15 billion in investments and \$84 billion in trade. India imports \$42 billion from Saudi Arabia and sells \$11 billion; its trade with Jordan is \$3 billion. Gujarat in India has been chosen as the location for the second overseas office of the \$850 billion Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Investment now wants a branch in India as well.

### 6.3 Strategic

By increasing the alliance between India, the Gulf states, and Israel, the USA intends to isolate **Iran**. The corridor aims to prevent any Indian investment in the Iranian port of Chah Bahar on the Arabian Sea and to thwart any Iranian rapprochement with India by forging an economic alliance between these nations.

Following the signature of the "Abraham Accords" by **Israel**, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, Washington will put more effort into mending Saudi Arabia's relations with Israel in 2023. Israelis applaud the economic corridor as a significant step in this approach. Netanyahu referred to it as the 'biggest collaboration effort' that will "change the face of the Middle East, Israel, and will affect the entire world at this time in our history". Mohammed bin Salman is excited about the initiative and its potential. It is seen to protect shared interests and promote economic interdependence, resulting in benefits for the participating nations and the overall state of the world economy.

The corridor is a plan to make India more competitive against **China**. This enormous transport network will significantly increase India's competitiveness on the world stage. The project's investment will significantly improve India's economy and open up employment



prospects. Most importantly, the proposed corridor will increase the competitiveness and resilience of the global supply chain for Indian commodities and merchandise. **Pakistan's** veto on India's overland access to the West has been broken by IMEC, removing a long-standing barrier.

The International North-South Corridor (**INSTC**) goods commencement began in July 2022 but the route has its own limitations. The absence of uniform cross-border trade regulations, and the weakness of container, tariff, and non-tariff barriers such as technical standards and varying railway gauges are among the problems. Apart from these, common regional concerns like terrorism, transnational crimes like drug trafficking (originating, for example, in Afghanistan), arms smuggling, and interstate conflicts like the Kyrgyz-Tajik border disputes in Central Asia remain pertinent. The IMEC thus can turn out to be a much-needed respite.

## **7. Challenges**

The IMEC just like other transnational projects of its kind, is not free of roadblocks. It will face many limitations in the journey to fruition. Some of the major hindrances can be understood as discussed below-

### **7.1 Infrastructural limitations**

#### **a. Logistical and connectivity issues-**

There will be issues with logistics and connectivity, building a multimodal transportation corridor that includes rail, road, and marine links that cross several nations necessitates intricate logistical planning and cooperation amongst stakeholders. There are significant gaps in the railway system in the Saudi peninsula — some 1,100 km between the Fujairah port in the UAE, closest to India, and Haifa in Israel, and hundreds of kilometers between other ports of UAE such as Jebel Ali and Khalifa.

#### **b. Determination of practical routes-**

Key problems include determining the most practical and economical routes, evaluating the viability of rail and road connections, and guaranteeing the best possible connectivity. There are major construction needs and missing rail links, particularly in the Middle East, significant

rail link gaps necessitate significant investment and building work to complete the train network.

**c. International coordination-**

Coordination among several nations will pose a challenge. Realizing this cross-continental corridor presents a significant challenge because it requires coordinating efforts, laws, and regulations among numerous nations with various interests, legal frameworks, and administrative processes.

**d. Funding-**

It is highly challenging to estimate and get appropriate funding for the corridor's development, operation, and upkeep. There are likely to be significant development expenditures, so funding sources must be found. According to preliminary estimates, the cost to develop each of these IMEC lines might range from USD 3 billion to USD 8 billion.

## **7.2 China's Game in the Middle East**

**a. Technology exchange-**

Saudi Arabia is becoming a desirable location for Chinese engineers and AI specialists who are currently unable to access the US labor market. Chinese technology firms, such as Huawei, are now significant contributors to the construction of numerous projects that are directly related to the future Gulf region's vital technological infrastructure.

**b. Expanding commerce-**

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are not the only countries exhibiting these trends; even smaller regional states like Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar have become more amenable to cooperation and commerce with Beijing. China has adopted a more assertive stance towards the area. This isn't just because of Xi Jinping's strategic plans; it's also because regional leaders like the UAE's President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and others are observing how the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's conflict with Ukraine, and the possibility of a new Cold War-style US-China rivalry are shattering the post-WWII order. China announced a \$10 billion agreement to build a new industrial city in

the UAE in 2019, as noted in an Atlantic Council article, and has also been involved in significant infrastructure projects in Saudi Arabia, such as the \$10 billion Yanbu refinery.

### c. **Economic makeover**

From the perspective of these Arab states, many have unveiled plans for a significant makeover of their economies to reduce their glaring dependence on hydrocarbons and develop their own services, manufacturing, and tech sectors while positioning themselves as new hubs of international finance. While oil will continue to be a key factor in this shift, foreign investment and corporate attraction depend on long-term political stability, which has historically been difficult to accomplish in the region.

## **7.3 Geopolitical constraints**

**Turkiye** opposes the corridor because it goes around his country. Erdogan stated that they maintain that there is no corridor without Turkey. Turkey serves as a significant production and trading hub. Turkey must be crossed using the most practical route for vehicles traveling from east to west. With some of the corridor's participants, like Saudi Arabia and Israel, Turkey has complex relations.

Other countries along the proposed corridor include **Cyprus** and **Greece**, two longtime adversaries of Turkey. Additionally, **Ankara** is already a part of the planned Iraq Development Road Project, a different rail and road route connecting the Gulf to Europe via Iraq and Turkey.

Another gap in the current IMEC is the lack of official ties between **Saudi Arabia and Israel**. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Arabian President Joe Biden are attempting to reach an infrastructure development agreement. The work on IMEC will probably begin even before they collaborate.

**Egypt** will be opposed to the idea since it stands to lose out from the change in trade routes if IMEC materializes and becomes an alternate route. The Suez Canal is currently the fastest maritime route for shipping commodities between Asia and Europe. The 118-mile river carries roughly 12 percent of world trade or about one-third of all container traffic. According to

some, if IMEC takes off, it may reduce cargo throughput through the Suez Canal, depriving Egypt's cash-strapped government of a significant source of foreign income.

#### **7.4 Israel - Palestine Conflict**

The Middle East attains an interesting position in geopolitics as a link between Europe and Asia. The region has historically witnessed British and French dominance followed by a cold war trend of arms races. The downfall of the Soviet Union marked the dominance of the USA. Its consequent downfall has now given rise to a Russia-China-Turkiye axis. The resource-rich region continues to be the hotbed for conflicts in the contemporary era.

Tensions in the Israel-Arabian peninsula are presently the worst in decades. Israel officially declared “War on Palestine” on 8th October 2023, following the worst attack on Israel since 1967. Hamas, an Islamist political and military organization has claimed responsibility for launching more than 5000 rockets on Israel. Retaliatory attacks have cost thousands of lives on both sides.

This development will certainly have the worst possible effects on the planned economic corridor which needs Israel as an integral partner. Saudi Arabia has been hostile to Israel, but it still doesn't officially recognize it. This war will scratch old wounds since Saudi will stand firm as a Palestine ally. The USA on the other hand has openly supported Israel and called the attack, “an act of sheer evil.” The corridor is proposed to go through Jordan which too is a disturbed area. The 60-day implementation clause demanded by Saudi Arabia seems far from materialization at this point. With this ongoing conflict, the corridor proposal now comes under question.



[Source](#)

## 8. Can it be an alternative to BRI?

The BRI was introduced in 2013. The plan has two axes: the overland Silk Road Economic Belt and the maritime Silk Road. Initially called the “One Belt, One Road programme”, the Belt and Road programme is now made up of these two components. A massive network of roadways, energy pipelines, railways, and efficient border crossings will be built as part of this project. 52 nations in Africa and 17 in the Middle East have joined the BRI, a significant infrastructure initiative that aims to link China with the rest of the world through a network of land, sea, and digital networks. Since it was initially introduced, the BRI has supported a boom in infrastructure development in Africa, enabling

credit-starved nations to construct hydropower projects, airports, highways, and trains. However, the effort has also come under fire for being overly dependent on Chinese labour and for entangling developing nations in exorbitant debt levels. Some claim that Beijing was able to seize the strategic assets of underdeveloped governments as a result. Joe Biden slammed this project as a 'debt and noose trap'.

China has inked more than 200 agreements on the Belts and Roads with 152 nations and 32 international organizations in the previous ten years. One of the most important elements of BRI to date is the China-Pakistan economic corridor. This network of projects connects western China to Gwadar, a previously underdeveloped deep-water port on Pakistan's Arabian coast, and combined they make up the single-largest BRI programme with funding and infrastructure valued at more than USD 60 billion. It has started large-scale initiatives in Asian nations including Thailand. From 2013 to 2022, trade through the BRI increased from \$1.04 to \$2.007.

Even though it is a bitter pill to swallow for India, China has increased its global impact multifold in the last few decades. The BRI has furthered its national interests in the majority of the world's states. Saudi Arabia and UAE which are signatories of the IMEC, are also a part of BRI. The corridor thus might not be an answer to BRI, but it can be viewed as an ambitious attempt to counter China's dominance.

## **9. Is India being used as a proxy?**

The corridor is questioned by some as a vehicle to propagate the USA's interests in the Middle East. Washington shows concern over China's relations with the Arab Gulf nations, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Due in part to the complexity of US legal and administrative procedures in this area, the collaboration between the two parties has expanded beyond economic relations and into cooperation in security and defense, highlighting Washington's dedication to strategic alliances with its friends and its initiatives to restore the region's diminished faith in its US ally. Some regional allies view the US's lack of responsiveness to attacks on Gulf oil ships and facilities during the war in Yemen as proof that the US is unreliable. In 2011, the US abandoned its ally Egyptian President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak. The USA no longer possesses its once-held influence over the region.

India is America's most trusted ally in the Indo-Pacific. The proposed IMEC project thus provides the USA an opportunity to have its presence felt in the region while also contesting China's influence. But India stands at a juncture to advance its own interests too. China's ability to influence Iran and perhaps even Russia in the future may force India to reconsider its ties on how to best engage with Tehran economically despite its difficult geopolitical realities. India has focused primarily on the Arab world due to economic opportunities. There are still many unsolved problems, thus China's ability to act as a peacemaker in West Asia must be tested. China has made its intentions known, whether it is successful or not, and India will need to change some of its regional views as a result.

## 10. The viability debate

It is logical to wonder what value will be added by this new network given that there is already a corridor that passes through the **Suez Canal**. The IMEC's goal is to connect Indian ports like Mumbai with UAE ports like Jebel Ali. From there, containers will be transshipped by rail or road across Saudi Arabia to the Israeli port of Haifa, where they will be sent by sea to other ports in Europe.

It should be kept in mind that although the Adani Group controls the Israeli port of Haifa, **China** continues to have operational control over it. The state-run Shanghai International Port Group in China was given control of Haifa's operations in 2021 for a 25-year tenure. Similarly, considering that the Chinese shipping behemoth Cosco owns 51% of the Piraeus Port Authority, the logistical capabilities of the Greek port of Piraeus must be properly assessed. China partnered with UAE to build the Emirates Railway Project in 2022 which connects Abu Dhabi to Dubai. This partnership by China Railway Construction and China Civil Engineering Group Co can be viewed as another Chinese involvement in this proposed corridor. It continues to be the leading trading partner for Gulf and European nations. The US is not fully at ease with certain regional countercurrents. One of these is the reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which was promoted by China. Additionally, relations between Turkiye and Saudi Arabia are strengthening, and they even recently agreed to a significant defense cooperation agreement. In terms of India, not only is New Delhi's trade with China enormous, but the IMEC should be viewed as an alternate route to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) rather than a replacement for it.

The statistics can be daunting when it comes to **feasibility**. Currently, a ship travels via the Suez Canal from Mumbai to Piraeus in about 17 days. Mumbai to Fujairah (UAE) would require five days, while Haifa to Piraeus would require an additional three to four days. Add to this the time required to load and unload the containers in four ports, as well as the trans-shipment through a future railway system that would pass through several nations including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel. If the time needed to pass through the IMEC matches the time needed to travel via the tried-and-true Suez Canal route, it will prove highly beneficial.

Massive infrastructure projects are frequently announced in the Middle East, but many of them usually fail when they run afoul of **economic and geopolitical realities**. Many draw attention to the fact that some of these plans circulate in the area for years without ever materializing. A project to build 2,117 kilometers of rail track connecting the Gulf Cooperation Council member states has been discussed for decades but has never fully materialized. Even though a transit corridor may have seemed like a pipe dream a decade ago, the Abraham Accords' conclusion, along with the Middle East's shifting political and economic structures where new players like China and India have quickly gained new levels of influence, have raised the stakes for the success of such a project.

The Build Back Better initiative, introduced with much excitement at the 2021 G7 Summit, has since been deemed "officially dead." The US has proposed other stillborn plans to challenge BRI, aiming to close the funding gap between the infrastructure requirements of the Global South and responsible lending. Before it even took flight, it died. One year after its announcement in December 2021, the "Global Gateway" has little to show in terms of concrete projects, if anything, to back up its lofty claims. A similar fate befell the European Union's infrastructure drive, "Global Gateway," which was touted to be the "true alternative" to China's BRI. These past occurrences have planted doubt in the minds of many if IMEC will actually be able to achieve its actual goals.

## **11. The way forward**

### **1. Role of private players**

The corridor needs to bring in private players to make this plan successful. Massive investment, financing, and expertise are needed to materialize IMEC. In the long run, public-private partnership is crucial in risk sharing, it makes projects more feasible for states without an



absolute burden of potential losses. Business giants like Costco and Adani are already stakeholders as they have control over major ports. Public-private partnership is vital for the success of this project.

## **2. India's interests need to be diversified**

India in the meanwhile should not lose vision of its other major projects such as the INSTC. It should keep engaging with multiple corridors, countries, and regions. Diversifying its own trading partners should be India's priority to enhance economic resilience and reduce vulnerability. This is even more crucial at this juncture when the proposed corridor's implementation is on a certain hold with the Israel-Palestine conflict.

## **3. Pragmatic approach**

For the success of IMEC, all the players need to imbibe a pragmatic approach. A multipolar view is crucial for all the related countries to coordinate and cooperate. They must bifurcate conflict from development. It is crucial to prioritize the economic development aspect while addressing political or territorial disputes by peaceful means.

## **12. Conclusion**

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is an ambitious project with great potential. The geopolitical, strategic, and economic significance of the planned corridor is enormous. The support of the USA to the project gives out the message that it will continue to be engaged in the Middle East. The collaboration of India, Middle Eastern, and European nations in this endeavour will serve as a more than sufficient counterbalance to China's growing influence. India, the eastern end of the agreement, is in a sweet position because of its ties to the US, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. It is unlikely to be asked to make a significant contribution to the IMEC, but it might gain from the need to upgrade the digital and railway infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. However, it will take some time before the IMEC alternative is a feasible option for the reasons mentioned above.

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