

India, Middle East and Europe Economic Corridor; Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the India, Middle East and Europe Economic Corridor (I-ME-EEC), a major infrastructure project unveiled during the G20 meeting in India. The project is an important attempt to improve connectivity between South Asia, the Middle East and Europe, with the aim of changing regional dynamics through increased energy production, trade and cooperation frameworks. The I-ME-EEC represents strategic economic and geopolitical goals by presenting itself as a possible alternative to China's grandiose Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The study examines in depth the economic, political, security, cultural and environmental aspects of the corridor using a qualitative research methodology. The study examines the project's broader implications for global geopolitics while highlighting its potential to alter international trade lines, promote regional integration and reduce security challenges. Furthermore, the analysis not only examines the project's broader implications for global geopolitics, but also emphasizes how it could alter international trade routes, promote regional integration and reduce security threats. It will also be discussed how the I-ME-EEC affects the participating countries and how their participation in supra-regional projects is linked. The conclusions of this study help us better understand how infrastructure projects impact the world, particularly when it comes to balancing the strategic goals of major powers. The opportunities and difficulties of the corridor are critically examined in this article, while also highlighting the potential of the corridor to influence future transcontinental political and economic realities and to act as a catalyst for regional cooperation.

Keywords- Economy, Security, Culture, Politics.

I. INTRODUCTION

The evolving landscape of global trade and geopolitics has brought with it the emergence of large-scale economic corridors that play a crucial role in shaping regional dynamics and international relations. The India, Middle East and Europe Economic Corridor (I-ME-EEC) is evidence of this trend and represents a significant undertaking in the area of international infrastructure and trade facilitation. This paper provides a detailed examination of the I-ME-EEC based on what was launched at the G20 summit in India and its diverse effects. (Sumit, 2024).

The I-ME-EEC project, which covers a vast geographical extent from India to the Middle East to Europe, is not just an economic initiative but a strategic undertaking with far-reaching implications. The aim is to build a robust network of rail and shipping routes that improves connectivity and trade relations between participating regions. In addition, it serves as a strategic counterweight to China's Belt and Road Initiative and introduces a new dimension to global economic competition and cooperation. (Roychoudhury, 2024).

This introductory section lays the foundation for a comprehensive analysis of the corridor, highlighting its economic objectives, security implications, cultural implications and political significance. It also sets the

stage for a discussion about the challenges and opportunities presented by this ambitious project. The corridor's role in economic development, political cooperation and security stabilization in a region characterized by complex geopolitical dynamics forms the core of this research.

By examining the I-ME-EEC through various analytical lenses, this article seeks to provide a holistic understanding of the project's potential to transform regional and global economic and political landscapes. The aim is to contribute to the discourse on the importance of economic corridors in contemporary international relations and to offer insights into their potential to transform trade, cultural exchange and political alliances. (United Nations Development Program, 2024).

II. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a mixed methods approach that includes descriptive, analytical and exploratory methods to examine the India, Middle East and Europe Economic Corridor (I-ME-EEC). The study provides a comprehensive explanation of the project structure, objectives and stakeholders involved. The study also analyzes their impact on the economy, politics, security and culture through reports, journals and analyzes from reliable sources. Furthermore, this paper examines possible future developments and challenges related to I-ME-EEC and identifies areas for further investigation.

The main objectives of this research are:

1. Assess the strategic importance and potential impact of the I-ME-EEC on regional and global trade, politics and security.
2. Analysis of the challenges and opportunities presented by the I-ME-EEC, particularly in the context of its role as a counterweight to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.
3. To examine the potential of the I-ME-EEC to promote economic development, cultural exchange and political cooperation among participating nations. The research is guided by the following questions:
 1. What are the strategic objectives, roles and potential threats of the I-ME-EEC?
 2. How does the I-ME-EEC compare to China's One Belt One Road initiative in terms of scope, objectives and geopolitical implications?
 3. What potential impact does the I-ME-EEC have on the regional and global economic and political landscape?

This research uses data from various sources. Government publications and official statements provided insight into the scope and objectives of the project. International relations journals and analyzes contributed significantly to understanding the geopolitical

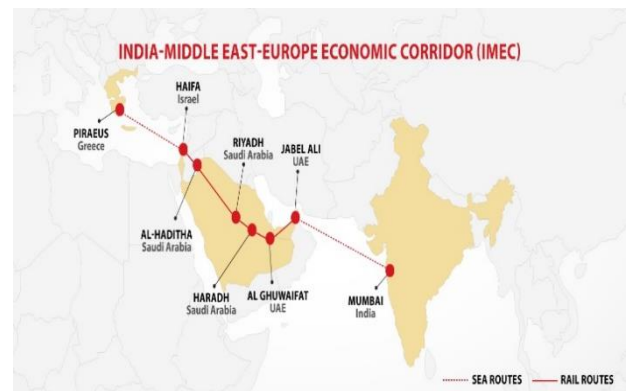
implications. News articles and reports from credible international news outlets provided timely and diverse perspectives on the I-ME-EEC. This multi-source approach ensured a balanced and comprehensive analysis of the corridor

III. INDIA, MIDDLE EAST, AND EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

The India, Middle East and Europe Economic Corridor (I-ME-EEC) is a major infrastructure project formalized on the sidelines of the G20 Summit on September 10 in India. This ambitious project, signed by Indian Prime Minister Narendramodi, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and US President Joe Biden, marks a significant collaboration aimed at global infrastructure investment. The United States has recognized the I-ME-EEC as a key component of its partnership strategy in global infrastructure development.

The aim of the I-ME-EEC is to strengthen economic, commercial, political, security, cultural and environmental cooperation throughout its period. By fostering relationships and creating trade and investment opportunities between participating nations - India, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, Italy, France and Germany - the corridor is expected to make a significant contribution to regional economic growth sustainable development, etc. provide political and security stability.

The corridor consists of two main sections: the Eastern Corridor, which connects India with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, and the Northern Corridor, which connects the Gulf states with Europe via Jordan and Israel. This project is crucial for connecting important trading centers in Asia and Europe. It facilitates the development and export of clean energy, improves cooperation in current trade and production sectors, strengthens food security and strengthens supply chains. In addition, the aim is to expand communication channels via an extensive energy transmission network.



Picture 1: Corridor map from India to the Middle East and Europe

IV. ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

4-1. Economic Development and Stability of the

Region: The India-Europe-Middle East Corridor is more than just a strategic transport route; It is an important channel for trade and transport between Asia and Europe. This corridor contributes significantly to promoting economic prosperity and development in these regions, leading to job creation, increased income and poverty reduction, thereby enhancing both regional and international security (Coordinates: Corridors India, Middle East and Europe; battle corridors ahead, 1402).

4-2. Creating Trade Facilities: This corridor facilitates trade between the Asian and European regions and promotes trade and economic exchanges. These facilities, including fast and low-cost goods, logistics services and customs facilities, are crucial in accelerating the flow of goods and services between countries and making European markets accessible to India, the Middle East and Africa and vice versa.

4-3. Development of Industries and Infrastructure: The corridor plays an important role in the development of industries and infrastructure such as ports, transport routes, railways and pipelines. These infrastructures are vital to the economic well-being of the areas it passes through, leading to increased trade, foreign investment and job creation (World Bank, 2024).

4-4. Tourism Development: With its route through regions such as Oman and Iran, the corridor has great tourism potential. The development of this corridor is expected to increase the number of tourists and generate foreign exchange, contributing to the economic well-being of the regions through which it passes (Asian Development Bank, 2024).

4-5. Development of Natural Resources: The corridor traverses regions rich in natural resources such as oil, natural gas, mines and water and enables better exploitation of these resources, which has a significant impact on oil trade and its prices in the international market (Economic Times of India, 1402).

4-6. Diversification of Financial Transactions: This corridor contributes to the diversification of financial transactions in the regions it connects. Establishing financial and banking links between countries is crucial to facilitating trade, investment and international money transfers.

4-7. Impact on Maritime Trade: The corridor has significant importance for maritime trade and has direct connections to the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Caspian Sea. It serves as a crucial route for the sea transport of goods between South Asia, the Middle East and Europe, impacting international shipping.

4-8. Cooperation and Technology Exchange: It opens up opportunities for collaboration and technology exchange between countries, resulting in technology

transfer, knowledge sharing and the development of joint projects and ventures.

4-9. Creating Global Supply Chains and Connecting Global Markets: As an important transport route, the corridor contributes significantly to strengthening the global supply chain, connecting important markets in India and Europe and facilitating global trade (NEWS, 2023).

4-10. Impact on Commodity Prices: The corridor has a significant influence on global raw material prices. For example, the supply of oil from the Middle East to Europe through this corridor can have a direct impact on oil prices in the international market.

4-11. Increasing Regional Cooperation: It promotes regional cooperation, strengthens relationships between commercial, economic, technical, cultural and political sectors, thereby contributing to the development of the region.

4-12. Reducing Dependence on Other Modes: The corridor reduces the dependence of transit areas on other modes of transport by providing more direct and shorter routes, thereby strengthening the independence of these transit areas (Asian Development Bank, 2024).

V. SECURITY PURPOSES

5-1. Security Stability of the Region: The India-Middle East and Europe corridor is crucial for regional and global stability. It promotes security cooperation by facilitating relations and interactions between countries, helping to combat threats such as terrorism, illicit trafficking and drug trafficking. The project also improves defense and military capabilities through increased military interactions and technology exchanges, thereby contributing significantly to regional and international stability (Geopolitics Aura Asia, 2023).

5-2. Energy Security: The corridor traverses oil and gas-rich regions, helping to diversify energy sources and reduce dependence on a single source. This increases energy security for the countries involved and consumers in Europe.

5-3. Economic Security: The expansion of the corridor promises economic prosperity and job creation in the regions it connects. By promoting trade and investment, it contributes to economic development and poverty reduction, thereby reducing violence and security threats at regional and international levels.

5-4. Geographical Security: The expansion of the corridor, which passes through areas with existing tensions and security threats, is crucial to building comprehensive trade and economic ties. This promotes regional cooperation, helps resolve conflicts, reduces violence and improves diplomatic relations between countries.

5-5. Transport Security: As an important international transport route, the corridor has a significant impact on

traffic safety. Modern and safe transport facilities along the corridor reduce the risks and threats associated with international transport. In addition, cooperation on transport security and combating threats such as terrorism and drug trafficking strengthens regional and international security.

5-6. Environmental Security: The corridor plays a crucial role in solving environmental problems at regional and global levels. By establishing cooperation in environmental protection, the project contributes to the sustainable development and conservation of natural resources. It enables the exchange of expertise and technical knowledge in environmental protection and natural resource management, thereby improving the protection of water resources, forests, deserts and other environmental elements. In addition, the corridor contributes to the development of green industries and the promotion of renewable resources, thereby reducing fossil fuel consumption and improving air quality both regionally and globally (Roychoudhury, 2024). Given these factors, India, the Middle East and The European Corridor is emerging as a key player in environmental issues and contributing effectively to the protection of natural resources and sustainable development.

VI. CULTURE PURPOSES

The Indian Cultural Corridor from the Middle East to Europe is central to promoting cultural exchanges, developing tourism, improving cultural integration, creating educational and research opportunities and promoting peace and cultural understanding. This corridor serves as a bridge for cooperation between different regions and strengthens cultural and social ties.

6-1. Cultural Exchanges: This corridor, stretching from India across the Middle East to Europe, is important for its role in cultural exchange. It acts as a cultural pathway and promotes connections and mutual understanding between different tribes and communities. The corridor enables increased cultural exchange and deepens the understanding of different cultures. This contributes to the development of international relations. By building international relationships and collaborations, the project enables cultural exchange across different countries and regions. Given the cultural diversity of these regions, the project contributes significantly to deepening cultural ties and exchanges, thereby contributing to the development of international relations. Such exchanges promote collaboration in art, music, literature, popular culture and other cultural areas and strengthen relationships between people and communities. These exchanges contribute significantly to strengthening cultural identity, strengthening hope and promoting mutual understanding between ethnic groups and communities. By getting to know different cultures, traditions and languages, understanding and attention to each other's needs and

problems increases, thereby strengthening social relationships, reducing cultural conflicts and laying the foundation for mutual cooperation in various areas, including other areas Education, science and technology, sports, among others (Qiu and Pillai, 2024).

6-2. Creation of Educational and Research Opportunities: The corridor also opens up opportunities for knowledge exchange, education and cultural research. By promoting collaboration between universities, cultural institutions and research institutions, it expands educational and research opportunities in various disciplines. This contributes significantly to the scientific and cultural development of the affiliated regions, increases the level of knowledge and technology, and promotes the development of effective human resources.

VII. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

Understanding the India-Middle East and Europe corridor requires more than just an economic perspective. There are strategic policy objectives underlying this project including:

Reducing Regional Violence: The corridor makes an important contribution to curbing regional violence and resolving conflicts. Through economic and trade cooperation, participating countries can strengthen their economic ties, improve political relations and thus ease regional tensions.

7-1. Development of Regional Political Exchanges and Relations: This corridor plays a crucial role in promoting political exchanges and relations between countries. It establishes international relationships and cooperation and thus facilitates political exchange between different countries and regions. Recognizing the political diversity of the countries involved, this project contributes to deepening political relations and developing international interactions, improving cooperation in political, economic and security areas (National University of Singapore, 2024).

7-2. Strengthening American Influence: This project aims to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative and reduce China's growing influence among Arab countries in the Persian Gulf. It represents an economic alternative provided by the US to strengthen its influence in the region and address its concerns about China's growing trade ties (Singh and Balakrishnan, 2024).

7-3. Affirming US Commitment in the Region: The Joe Biden administration's support for the economic corridor underscores the US's commitment to remaining a key player in the region and countering the influences of China, Russia and Iran. The project highlights the strategic importance of the Middle East in terms of global trade waterways, supply chains and energy resources (Sengupta, 2024).

7-4. Israel's Integration in the Region: Following the Abraham Accords (a joint declaration by Israel, the

United Arab Emirates and the United States that ended on August 13, 2020), the US is focused on normalizing relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia in 2023. The Economy The corridor project is a significant step in this direction and is being hailed as a transformative cooperation project in the middle (The Diplomat, 2024).

7-5. Isolation of Iran: The US wants to strengthen the partnership between India, the Arab Gulf states and Israel, thereby isolating Iran and preventing its closer ties with India. This includes discouraging Indian investments in the Iranian port of Chabahar in favor of the Arabian Sea (KAPSARC, 2024).

7-6. Enhancing India's Global Position: Investment in this project is expected to boost the Indian economy, create employment opportunities and open international market access. This is expected to reduce transportation costs between India and Europe by 40% and position India as a major global economic power (Menon, 2024).

7-7. Reaffirming America's International Leadership: This project is a testament to America's international leadership, as President Biden emphasized. It represents a commitment to addressing global challenges and demonstrates a transparent approach, in contrast to China's criticized "One Belt, One Road" project (The ambitious rail-sea project to connect India with the Middle East and Europe is being developed at the Group of announced 20th meeting in 2023). (Meloni et al., 2024).

VIII. COMPETITION BETWEEN I-ME-EEC AND CHINA (BRI)

The India-Europe-Middle East Corridor (I-ME-EEC) and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are in competition for several reasons:

8-1. Geographical Focus: The I-ME-EEC focuses primarily on Central Asia and the Middle East, while the BRI is more focused on East Asia and Eastern Europe. This difference in geographical focus is a fundamental aspect of their competitive nature (Sengupta, 2024).

8-2. Political and Economic Interests: The two projects also differ in their political and economic objectives. The aim of the I-ME-EEC is to develop the Middle East and India regions and thus contribute to economic development and peace. In contrast, the BRI aims to expand and strengthen China's influence in Asian and European regions, thereby contributing to their economic and regional development (Bhatt and Roychoudhury, 2024).

Competition between these initiatives emerges from divergences in geographical focus, operational approaches, and underlying political and economic interests. Despite these differences, both projects share overarching objectives, including the promotion of economic and regional development, the enhancement of

international cooperation, and the facilitation of trade and transportation between Asia and Europe.

Notably, the I-ME-EEC serves as a strategic initiative by the United States to counterbalance China's growing influence in regions of significant importance to American interests. Through this project, the United States seeks to sustain its geopolitical influence while offering an alternative partnership model to developing countries, particularly within the framework of the G20.



Picture 2: Map of the One Road and One Belt project

IX. OBSTACLES AND REACTIONS TO THE PROJECT

The strategic importance of trade routes in the international system cannot be overstated. They serve not only for commercial purposes but also for political and economic influence. Historically, strategic trade routes have been at the center of global empires' wars. Consequently, the India-Middle East-Europe corridor (I-ME-EEC), being a significant transit project, attracts both supporters and opponents due to its potential impact on existing trade routes.

- Security and Stability Challenges: Ensuring the security and stability of countries involved in the corridor is paramount. The regions it spans are plagued with security threats such as terrorism, tension, and political instability, necessitating robust regional cooperation in defense, security, and information sharing to ensure the corridor's successful operation.
- Complex Geopolitical Dynamics: The corridor traverses geopolitically sensitive areas, presenting a challenge to its execution. This complexity can lead to security and political issues, impacting the feasibility and sustainability of the project.
- Geopolitical Tensions and Diversity in Political Systems: Conflicts such as the India-Pakistan dispute, Saudi-Iranian rivalry, and interventions in Syria and Yemen, coupled with the diversity in political ideologies and systems of member countries, can impede the effective implementation of the project and create divisions among stakeholders (Khan, 2024).

9-1. The Gaza War's Impact

The conflict in Gaza, particularly the operation of Al-Aqsa storm (Against Israel and for the crimes of the Zionist regime and for the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the military operation of the Hamas forces, which took place on October 15, 2023, in the border area between Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, started) and the Israel-Palestine conflict, casts a significant shadow over the future of the I-ME-EEC. The corridor's success is closely tied to the normalization of relations in the region, which is currently met with skepticism and opposition from the public and the media. Legal harmonization among member countries is crucial for the corridor's functionality.

9-2. Iran's Response

Iran's strategic location, especially its proximity to the Strait of Hormuz, poses a potential threat to the corridor. Actions such as sabotage or support for terrorist groups by Iran could jeopardize the security of the corridor.

9-3. Turkey's Stance

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has emphasized Turkey's crucial role in any such corridor, highlighting the country's strategic position and interests in maintaining its influence and economic benefits. (Karimi, 2024).

9-4. Iraq's Concerns

Iraq's response aligns with its economic and political interests. The corridor's role as an alternative to Iraqi ports could elicit a negative reaction from Iraq due to its significant investments in its ports.



Picture 3: Map of Port Faw

9-5. Russia and Iran's Opposition

The corridor could face opposition from Russia and Iran, as it might challenge the effectiveness of their North-South Corridor (This route is the most important trade link between Asia and Europe; it replaces the 16,000 km of goods transported through the Suez Canal with a 7,000 km route and is 40 percent less in terms of distance than traditional routes. In terms of time and cost, it is up to 30% cheaper. The North-South Corridor is one of the most important transit routes in Central Asia, and the countries along this corridor form an alliance) projects,

which have been a focus of their long-term political and economic strategies.



Picture 4: Map of North and South Corridor

9-6. Egypt's Response

Egypt's strategic location, particularly the Suez Canal, is crucial for international trade. The I-ME-EEC, serving as an alternative route, might threaten Egypt's economic interests and its role in the region. Therefore, it is essential to address Egypt's concerns in the planning and implementation stages of the project (Suri et al., 2024).

Egypt is apprehensive about the project's potential to diminish the Suez Canal's value (The Suez Canal is an artificial waterway in Egypt, 192 kilometers long, that connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea) and reduce its economic and transportation reliance on the canal.



Picture 5: Map of the Suez Canal

X. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The research on the India, Middle East, and Europe Economic Corridor (I-ME-EEC) reveals several key findings:

1. **Economic Impact:** The I-ME-EEC is set to significantly improve economic growth by promoting trade and investment, leading to job market expansion and overall economic development in the participating regions.

2. Security Enhancements: The project contributes to regional security and stability by encouraging cooperation among nations, addressing threats like terrorism and regional conflicts.
3. Cultural Exchange: The corridor promotes cultural integration and exchange, enhancing understanding and relationships among diverse communities along its route.
4. Political Cooperation: The I-ME-EEC enhances political cooperation between South Asia and the Middle East, further deepening their bilateral relations and fostering regional stability.
5. Infrastructure Development: The project supports the development of vital infrastructures such as ports, transportation routes, and industrial zones, which are essential for regional growth.
6. Tourism and Natural Resources: It opens up opportunities in tourism and the effective utilization of natural resources, contributing to diversified economic activities.
7. Regional Cooperation: The project strengthens regional ties, the corridor facilitates cooperation in various fields, including security, economy, culture, and politics.
8. These findings highlight the diverse and transformative impact of the I-ME-EEC in the regions it covers.

XI. CONCLUSION

The India, Middle East, and Europe corridor, encompassing nations such as India, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, Italy, France, and Germany, emerges as a landmark project with multifaceted implications. Its impact extends beyond economic development, fostering crucial political cooperation between South Asia and the Middle East, and enhancing regional connectivity. This project is instrumental in forging closer relationships among these countries, catalyzing trade and transportation opportunities, stimulating investments, and generating employment.

Reflecting on its geographical and strategic significance, the corridor stands as a pivotal development for both the regional and global landscape. It deepens bilateral relations, augments peace and stability, and fortifies environmental security across these regions. The corridor's role in promoting economic development, facilitating international trade through the creation of commercial facilities, advancing industrial and infrastructural development, bolstering tourism, harnessing natural resources, diversifying financial transactions, and fostering cultural exchanges cannot be overstated.

Strategically, the India-Europe-Middle East Corridor holds immense significance. It not only

contributes to regional and economic development but also plays a critical role in the broader geopolitical chessboard. It acts as a counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative, underscoring the United States' efforts to strengthen its influence in the region and provide an economic alternative to the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. This project symbolizes Washington's renewed commitment to strategic cooperation with its allies and its initiative to bridge gaps of mistrust in the region. It aims to integrate Israel within the regional framework, strengthen the partnership between Arab countries and Israel, isolate Iran, and boost India's capacity to stand as a counterforce against China.

Despite its substantial economic and strategic advantages, the corridor's implementation faces numerous challenges. These include the varied responses from countries like Turkey, Russia, Iraq, and Egypt, geopolitical tensions, the ongoing Gaza crisis, and the security threats posed by Iran's presence in the region. Each of these factors contributes to the complex tapestry of regional politics and security issues that the project must navigate.

In conclusion, the India, Middle East, and Europe corridor is a project of great strategic importance with the potential to reshape the economic and political landscape of the involved regions. While it promises significant advancements and cooperation, it also confronts a myriad of geopolitical challenges that necessitate careful and strategic handling to realize its full potential.

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