

# IMEC VS CPEC, NEW WAR FRONTS

## Outline :-

### I- Introduction :

The economic corridors are meant for regional stability and integration, but in the era of economic imperialism, these trade routes, instead of promoting stability and connectivity, has opened the tussle of gaining supremacy over each other as both the IMEC and CPEC try to contain each other's sway and hence opened a new war fronts in Euro-Asian region.

### II- Brief Overview of IMEC and CPEC

- A- Historical context and future perspectives.
- B- Strategic objectives and Economic benefits
- C- Geo-political implications.
- D- Security Alternative trade routes

### III- Comparison of China and US Vision through these corridors

- A- China : the upcoming hegemon.
- B- Country CAS influence in the Pacific ocean capturing Global market.
- C- Containment of China.
- D- Supporting India to Counterbalance Chinese
- E- Supremacy.

F- Enhancing influence on Indian Ocean

#### IV- Implications on region.

A- Enhancing Indo-Pak rivalry.

B- Rising influence of the two ideologies.

C- Increased militarization in Arabian Sea.

D- Rise of Sino-Indian rivalry: undermining regional stability.

#### V- Global implications

A- Intensification of US-China rivalry.

B- Technological race for attaining digital dominance.

C- Increased weaponization.

D- Environmental degradation through resource extractions and utilization.

E- New alliances and rise of block politics.

F- Potential for large scale conflict.

#### VI- Conclusion :-

The era in which we live is the age of economic imperialism where super powers are in quest of achieving supremacy over each other and ~~for the~~ as a result the projects ~~whose~~ which ought to be built for greater benefits also end up in making the world/region arena of superpowers.

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In the late nineteenth century analysts claimed that ~~whosoever~~ whosoever controls the Indian ocean will dominate Asia, the destiny of world will be decided on its waters. Now in twenty first century world has witnessed rise of china as global power. China's vision to control the warm waters has bothered the global north. The corridors are meant to be exhibiting regional stability and connectivity, but, in the era we live is age of economic dominance: where these corridors have exacerbated new tussle between the powers to gain ~~even~~ geo-political, geo-strategic as well as economic supremacy over one another like CPEC and IMEC both try to contain each other's way and hence opened new warfronts in Euro-Asian region.

CPEC being flagship project of china's Belt and Road initiatives is the china's vision of expanding its market west wards. The roots of BRI are linked with Silk road which was an ancient network of trade routes that connected china with Mediterranean Sea through central Asia and other parts of Asia and Europe. The BRI is also a project of enhancing trade and connectivity between Asia, Europe and Africa. CPEC is the baseline of china BRI vision, offering significant economic benefits through improved infrastructure and increased

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regional connectivity, particularly by providing access to Arabian Sea via Gwadar port.

Thus enhancing Chinese influence ~~both~~ ~~by~~ geo-economically and geo-strategically in the region.

CPEC serves as the shortest path to access the middle east, ~~because~~ ~~and~~ acts as catalyst for China's development. Gwadar port ~~is~~ is considered ~~as~~ strategically important for China, providing access to Arabian Sea and reduce reliance on Malacca Strait. China is seeking to diversify its trading routes to avoid over reliance on one particular region and which will help China to mitigate the probable conflicts with the particular regional states which have their own geo-political interests. CPEC will ~~help~~ not only help to secure its trade routes but it will also aid in China's continuous ~~economic~~ economic growth. As per IPRI report, the distance between Western China and Europe, middle would reduce to fifty percent which will ultimately reduce the cost of transportation by fifty percent.

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IMEC (Indian Middle East Economic Corridor) announced in September 2023 is a US-lead massive project aimed to counter BRI and Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean. The project was announced in 2023 during the G-20 Summit and it aims to connect India, middle east including countries KSA, UEA, ~~Jordan~~ Israel and, USA, Italy France and Germany. The proposed 4800 km trade route comprises of two routes, the east corridor, connecting India to Gulf; and northern corridor, connecting Gulf to Europe. The network is aimed to enhance the bilateral trade and connectivity between India, UEA, KSA, Jordan, Israel and Europe.

The IMEC is anticipated as to embark potential impact on global economic landscaped as it involves an increased throughput via trade routes, and reduce transportation time and cost. The project can help India and

Key players of middle east like OPEC and UAE to diversify the market and help EU to reduce reliance on Suez Canal and strengthen its presence in Gulf region. IMEC is seen as a way to counter growing influence of China in the region.

The Indian Ocean Region holds a significant importance in geo-political scenario. It includes 38 coastal states and 13 land locked states from which transit trades are originated and oriented towards this region. Another aspect of enhancing its geo-political role is abundance of energy resources in the middle east and around 80% of world's sea borne oil trade passes through the choke points of Indian Ocean as the facts report that 40% ~~of~~ trade volume passes through Strait of Hormuz, 35% of trade volume passes through Strait of Malacca and around 8% passes through Bab-ul-Mandeb Strait. Thus whosoever it may be China or US backed alliances controls to dominate the region can dominate the world order.

Both the CPEC and IMEC are projecting to secure alternative trade route that cuts the transportation time and cost. In case of current trade route of China ~~the~~ it is approximately 12000 Kilometers and through CPEC it is reduced to 2000 Kilometers only. Another aspect is



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Economic growth which is visioned & realized materialized through BRI and if it happens it would reshape the global economic landscape, making China a central player.

While US being a key player in the Asia Pacific region as it holds a geographic position through historical relations with Pacific nations. USA hold key military bases such as Hawaii (Pearl Harbor), Japan and South Korea, and Guam (strategic hub). US with help of its key allies has been a dominant force in the Asia Pacific region and to counter it China is looking forward for an alternate route where China can exhibit and enhance economic growth with least interventions and lower risk factor.

China being largest energy consumer over the entire globe needs access to middle east at every cost. China has always focused on geo economics, so for that China has collaborated with middle east and African region for enhancing its trade and ultimate rise in its export volumes. China's estimated exports to middle east in 2023 were around \$200 billion dollars with KSA, UAE and Iran being key partners. Meanwhile continent Africa total accounted for total export budget of around \$165 billion dollars, thus making it largest trading partner over a decade. If BRI becomes fully operational



It will not only cut the transportation cost and time but increase its trade volume to over 500 billions dollars annually only between china and BRI countries. According to World Bank reports by 2040 china's trade volume ~~will~~ will be enhanced to over 1 trillion dollars with significant benefits for Asia, African and the middle east.

USA considers china, its peer competitor after the Soviet union and has always strategized to contain china by every means. USA policy makers render china as great land power that has now taken up the seas. For that USA assumed its military presence and strong allies like QUAD and Taiwan, IPEF (Indo Pacific Economic Framework) to counter chinese trade dominance and a key supporter of IMEC to rival china's BRI. IMEC is a key to maintain us dominance while limiting the chinese geopolitical and economic expansion.

The US has been backing India in its strategic rivalry against ~~against~~ China due to shared democratic values economic ties and growing concerns over rising influence of china in the region. Both the USA and India are part of QUAD alliance to ensure free and open trade and counter ~~the~~ china dominance in the Pacific region. Both countries have signed multiple defence

agreements and various series of military and Naval Joint exercises are clear indicators of USA backing India to counter Chinese dominance and growth.

US presence in Pacific Ocean in the form of ~~naval~~ bases and stronger regional alliances gives an upper hand in holding influence on Pacific region. But now due to rise of regional powers Indian ocean accounts for eighty percent ~~of~~ global trade by volume and 70 percent by value. Thus for controlling Indian ocean USA is working on numerous aspects factors and for that purpose USA backs infrastructure development and trade partnerships in the Indian ocean to provide alternative to China's vision of CPEC/BRI.

CPEC being a game changer for Pakistan ~~is~~ can foster the Indo Pak rivalry. The CPEC serves as backbone of Pakistan infrastructural and economic development and India never wanted ~~Indian~~ Pakistan to prosper and always have hindered Pakistan's development. The role of Indian promises are prevalent in the Balochistan and conspiring CPEC as a threat to the Baloch identity. The presence of Kalbushan and his revelations

These prove of India's motive of undermining CPEC development. The role of proxies and border skirmishes may intensify, the already hostile relations, and ~~also~~ flare up the rivalry.

Rising influence of two ideologies may have far reaching geo-political and economic impacts on region. The two rival ideologies can create a polarization in politics and result in divisions between ethnicities and economic policies influenced by either of ideology may disrupt trade relation with in the region. The rivalry between opposing ideologies will create new alliances and thus there might be rise of proxy wars to attain regional dominance over one another and hurting regional stability and integration.

Both the India and china have history of bleakly relationship, because India want to hold the ~~the~~ subcontinent and Pakistan being ally of china is a sole hurdle in ~~the~~ India's way. The china and India are among top economies of world and both pursue to ~~become~~ dominate region unilaterally. Thus in the pursuit of dominance both powers adopted infrastructural development and regional connectivity model through construction of economic corridors.

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Due to which both rivalries ~~can~~ might indulge in conflict and thus undermining regional stability.

USA and China both have history of cold relation towards each other. Both powers pursue to gain dominance in the IOR as both have strategic interest in Indian Ocean. China wants to extend its economic outreach by capturing middle eastern, European and African markets. USA in response sees Chinese expansion as a threat to its own unipolarity. Containment of China is one of focal concern in USA foreign policy. USA always tends to have harsh ~~other~~ China centric policy and in shape of sanctions and increased trade of tariffs. Thus a ~~harsh~~ cold line is always persistent in both countries relation and both are pursuing ~~corridor~~ these corridors as a competition between each other thus further intensification of the global rivalry.

The era of 21st century is era of technological advancement. Countries in order to gain technological dominance over one another, ~~are~~ have not left any single industry; ~~in which they are~~ where they counter each other. Whether it is weapon industry or space industry, countries are thriving hard to beat.

each other in this technological race. Now with the rise of artificial intelligence the developed world is trying to sabotage the pace of development of developing world in order to maintain their digital status quo. Taiwan issue is the best example of gaining digital dominance over each other. Conventional wars have been now replaced with the technological development by using cyber activities, automated drones and robotics. Methods of wars have been revolutionized in digital era.

China wants to expand its economic growth by cutting transportation cost and hold deterrence in the Indian ocean. For that purpose china has <sup>planned to</sup> setup its Naval bases in Gwadar and for maintaining deterrence fifth generation air crafts have been manufactured. Both the US and china have been engaged in arms race. India on the other side has also ~~done~~ <sup>signed</sup> trade agreements with USA and Russia regarding weapon & defence deals. In response, Pakistan has also raised its defence capabilities thus each party involved in the project ~~has~~ <sup>has</sup> also been trying to maximize its deterrence through by showing military and weaponry might.

As china and India are competing in the economics, and both are interested

in middle east for ~~that~~ having been rich in oil reserves. The economy of these countries is based on industrialization and production which have contributed to large scale carbon emissions. The global trade of oil and products is mainly through seas which have also been a contributing factor to water pollution as well as environ. atmospheric pollution. The large scale infrastructural development required by both these corridors will also contribute to environmental degradation at a large scale.

Both EU and middle welcome both the projects: IMEC and CPE, as these are equilaterally beneficial for the European states and middle eastern states. Middle East have western interest in both these corridors as china and India are major consumer of the oil resources. Europe ~~has~~ need to reduce its reliance on Suez canal. So, both corridors can amplify the trade route and volume. But China and USA will try to push countries towards each thus rising alliances and bloc politics where countries are forced to join one or other block.

The rise of block politics may lead to further complexities like both blocks have rival ideologies and thus alliances will again lead the world to

bi-polarity. Both blocks may likely to be indulge into cold war scenario as every one knows large scale conflicts could ~~also~~ <sup>only</sup> lead to total destruction. So, countries avoid full scale conventional wars. yet cold wars are also likely to happen where proxies and non state actors ~~are~~ are major beneficiaries, hampering the regional stability and economic growth.

The corridors are meant for regional integration and development but in the complex structure of modern societies nations instead of promoting harmony and integration, indulge in competition where rival ideologies and vested interests lead to tussles and conflicts. So the corridors which ought to be point of common interests have opened arena of great powers. The geopolitical land seizes where infrastructural development intersect with regional influence, these corridors become battle ground for political and strategic dominance.