

Current Affairs

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PART-II

Q. 2

BRI vs. IMEC

Introduction:

World order is moving from unipolarity to multipolarity and economic corridors are quite important in this emerging world order. Political discourse of corridor is emerging as BRI project of China on one hand while US, India and Europe supported IMEC on the other hand. IMEC was introduced in the recent G-20 summit held in India while BRI has completed its decade in 2023. There is a view that IMEC is USA and India's

combined effort to counter BRI as USA is using India in South Asia to counter China's increasing influence. India Middle East Europe Economic corridor is a connectivity project that aims to connect India to Middle East and Europe. BRI is a multidimensional project including connectivity, infrastructure, energy and industrial projects. IMEC has just been announced while BRI has seen significant success. Only time can tell if this effort to counter China's influence will be successful or not as IMEC is much smaller in scope than BRI.

• Economic Corridors: A measure of Geoeconomic influence:

As the world became globalized, the connectivity among countries increased for trade purposes, but this connectivity is not just

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a measure of trade connectivity but also increasing influence. China and USA are in a trade war and USA wants to contain China's rising influence on the region and the world. China came up with Belt and Road Initiative that is biggest project of the history and includes the countries of Global South mostly which meant China's influence on Global South. China's BRI caused a sense of insecurity in USA which made alliances most prominently with India to counter China's influence and contain it. IMEC is another step in containing China according to Xi Jinping.

• Containment of China and Role of IMEC:

US has been trying to contain China by empowering India

In the region. IMEC is another effort to increase India's power in the region by providing it trade connectivity to Middle East and Europe.

IMEC vs. BRI - Magnitude:

IMEC has been announced during G20 Summit in India and 20 countries will be part of it. It is still on MoU stage and is not inclusive of countries of Global South. BRI on the other hand has been functional since 2013 and more than 150 countries are part of it. It is estimated that BRI has vision of total \$8 Trillion worth projects.

IMEC and BRI projects:

BRI is a multidimensional project including infrastructure, energy, connectivity via rail and roads

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and SEZs. BRI has 6 corridors connecting China with Asia, Europe, Africa and Americas through railroads, roads and ports. BRI is much larger in magnitude and much bigger in influence.

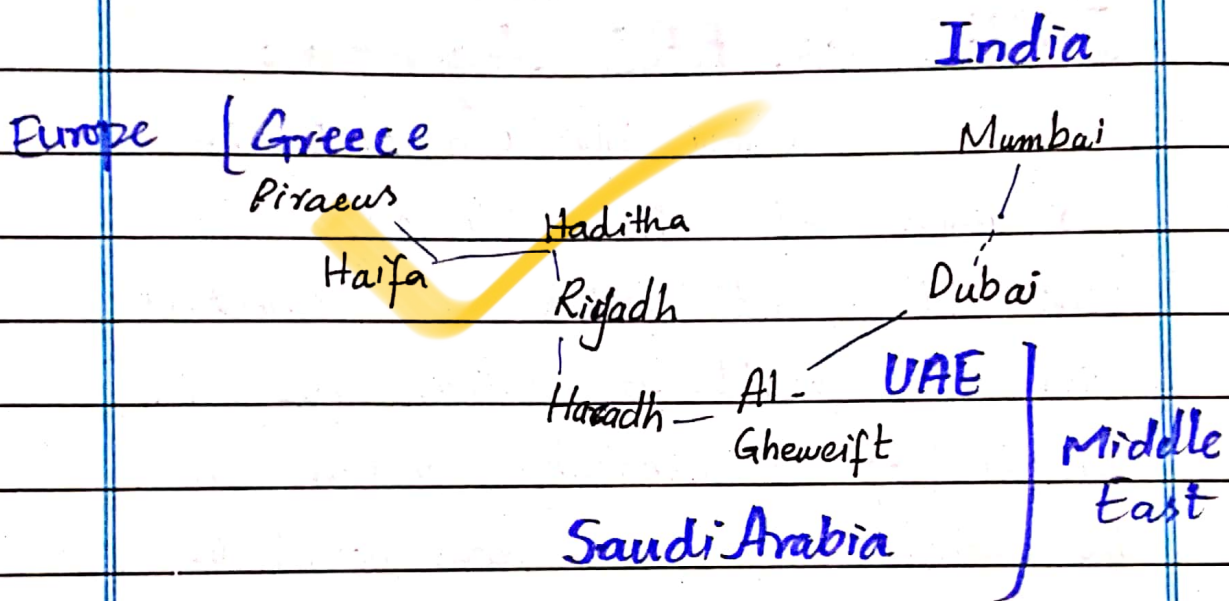
IMEC vs. BRI Agenda:

China introduced BRI in persuasion of its ideology of Silk Road and revive the connectivity with the world. So, China's BRI has agenda of connectivity derived from the concept of "harmonious world" in their foreign policy. China is working on BRI according to its idea of Chinese dragon while it believes on South-South Cooperation.

IMEC is a network of roads and sea routes starting from Mumbai and ending in Greece so, the network of land and sea routes

IMEC is based on agenda of connectivity of India with Europe and is being called "New Spice route."

IMEC route



Pakistan at Crossroads:

Pakistan is part of BRI's flagship project CPEC. Pakistan also has friendly relations with Middle East and can benefit from IMEC but the fact that IMEC is perceived by China as an effort to counter BRI, makes this

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situation tricky for Pakistan.

Future of IMEC and BRI:

BRI has been functional since a decade and has completed thousands of projects while starting many new alliances. Projects of worth \$600 Billion are underway in BRI while IMEC is in MoU stage.

BRI has indeed a good future and very good chances of achieving its goals in entirety as China's influence has significantly increased in Global South.

IMEC on the other hand has only 20 countries and much smaller number of connected partners. However the members of IMEC are rich countries of G20 and it has potential of increased projects and investments. Moreover 90% of the

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infrastructure required for IMEC is already there.

IMEC can be quite effective for the member states but it is not practical to say that it can counter the influence of BRI or China.

Conclusion:

IMEC project is an attempt to counter China's BRI and increase India's connectivity with Europe. Numerous attempts have been made by USA to contain China and alliance with India is most prominent one in this regard. Comparing IMEC and BRI, we get insights that IMEC is much smaller in scope, magnitude, investment and influence than BRI and hence not able to counter Chinese influence but it'll definitely increase trade and collaboration among member states.

Q-7

"Pakistan's increasing tensions with Neighbours and Foreign Policy"

Introduction:

The geostrategic location of Pakistan, although celebrated widely, is the biggest challenge for its security. Pakistan is surrounded by hostile neighbours in the form of India and Afghanistan while recent border skirmishes with Iran have opened a third front for Pakistan's security. India and Pakistan are arch-rivals since their inception. Afghanistan and Pakistan have also had tumultuous relations and recent episodes of rising terrorist activities have further worsened the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Iran violated the sovereignty

and territorial integrity of Pakistan recently in an attempt to target militants on Pakistan's side of border. The forever entente' relations with China are also on stake with hurdles in CPEC.

All of these tensions pose a great challenge to balancing foreign policy of Pakistan. Pakistan needs to readjust its foreign policy to improve situation with neighbours and ensure national interests.

Failures and Hurdles of Foreign Policy of Pakistan:

- Resurgence of TTP, Taliban Govt.'s support and Pak-Afghan Relations in Slump:

Since Taliban took over in Afghanistan, there has been a surge in terrorism in Pakistan. Pakistan

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accuses Afghanistan of supporting TTP and letting them operate from Afghanistan's soil against Pakistan. Although, Pak-Afghan relations have never been smooth but the recent resurgence of TTP and Taliban's inaction has ruptured the relations even more.

• Repatriation of Afghan Refugees and tarnished diplomatic relations:

Repatriation of illegal Afghans on the directive of Pakistan's government has impacted diplomatic relations with Afghanistan.

• Failures and hurdles of Foreign Policy with Afghanistan:

Pak-Afghan diplomatic relations have seen many turns and twists in the past and now dealing with Taliban government is a delicate matter. Pakistan is trying to deal with Afghanistan through hardliners and stick diplomacy owing to

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Security threats. The relations with Kabul have severed over terrorism and this space in relations can be easily filled by India which is already supporting non-state actors in Afghanistan.

Recommendations:

- Pakistan can collaborate with Afghanistan on multiple fronts ranging from trade to anti-terrorism campaign.
- Pakistan should involve Afghanistan in the smooth process of repatriation and the whole operation should be well executed without any persecutions.
- Pakistan should involve Afghanistan in bilateral trade and increase CPEC scope to include Afghanistan.
- Pakistan can diplomatically push Afghanistan in collaboration with China and Russia to help Pakistan counter terrorism.

• Perpetual Animosity with India:

The bone of contention b/w Pakistan and India has been Kashmir and both have fought 3 wars to resolve the dispute, however the dispute of Kashmir is far from being resolved. Moreover, both India and Pakistan accuse each other of supporting terrorism in other's territory. These accusations have not only destroyed diplomatic relations but also halted trade relations.

• Foreign Policy hurdles in Pak-India Relation:

Both countries have burden of history, grievances from wars and scepticism from terrorism and diplomacy has failed to resolve tensions b/w the two states. To add to misery, trade relations have been halted after Uri attack.

Recommendations:

- Restart Track-II diplomacy with India.
- Pakistan should reestablish bilateral trade with India.
- Efforts to resolve disputes through talks and negotiations.

Pak-Iran Relations:

Pakistan and Iran relations have seen a great shock when Iran attacked Pakistan on 16th Feb, 2024. This caused mistrust and anger in Pakistan so Pakistan retaliated to establish its sovereignty. This adventure halted bilateral diplomatic relations temporarily but later, they were renewed by the mediation of Turkey.

- Pakistan needs to negotiate with Iran and reduce ~~under~~

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tensions while focusing on reducing underlying factors for such extreme step.

- Iran and Pakistan can collaborate on anti-terrorism agenda and can mutually address the issue of terrorism in their respective territories.

- **CPEC : the driver of Pak - China relations:**

CPEC has recently seen a slowed growth and it is impacting Pak - China relations.

There are multiple reasons for the slowed growth of CPEC ranging from institutional hurdles to terrorism.

- **Recommendations:**

Pakistan needs to readjust its foreign policy to prioritize CPEC. The institutional and bureaucratic hurdles should be eliminated and

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Smooth running of project should be facilitated.

- Pakistan needs to increase its speed in countering measures of terrorism. It can revive the NAP and crackdown the terrorism in sensitive areas to ensure security of CPEC projects.

Q-3 China's Role as Mediator

Introduction:

China is playing by the same book as the US did to expand its geo-economic and political influence. China is not only increasing economic alliances but also acting as a major power of the world by performing roles of mediation.

in settlement of disputes among many rivals. China can play this role of mediator much better than the USA can. Recently China has mediated a peace deal leading to KSA-Iran rapprochement, and it has proved that China is the new power of the world. China has established its influence in the Middle East in the historic deal b/w KSA and Iran. China is a better mediator than USA because it doesn't hold any grudges with countries as USA does and also because it has emerged as a major economic power having trade relations with almost all the countries.

China is a better Mediator than USA: Case of Saudi-Iran Rapprochement:

China successfully

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mediated Saudi-Iran Reapproach
on 10th March 2023. Both the
countries have been involved in
conflicts on multiple fronts including
proxy wars in Syria, Yemen
and Lebanon. Despite having good
relations with KSA for many decades,
USA never resolved the conflict
blw Iran and KSA.

• China's Mediation indicates Chinese influence in Middle East:

This mediation has indicated
Chinese increasing influence in
Middle East - which has been
America's playing field for
many decades. This mediation
also indicates America's
decreasing influence in the
middle East.

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• China is a better Mediator: Economic ties through BRI:

China has a vast sphere of influence due to its trade diplomacy and enhanced economic ties with many countries. Trade and economic ties allow China to influence countries into peaceful resolution of disputes.

• Chinese narrative of Peaceful resolution of disputes:

China claims that it believes in peaceful resolution of disputes and China openly announced that China will pursue this diplomacy on international level while resolving conflicts of states.

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- Chinese model of Shared prosperity and South-South Cooperation:

A peaceful world suits China's interests and Chinese foreign policy manifests China's efforts to maintain peace among countries. China can be a better mediator than USA because it believes in shared prosperity and economic development.

- China's increasing influence on World through Multilateral alliances makes it a better mediator:

China is an economic giant. It is second biggest economy and is set to mark its influence on the world through multilateral economic and political alliances. BRICS, SAARC, SCO are important ones. China has major influence on

members of these states.

Conclusion:

China is a better mediator than USA due to its rising influence in the world, its economic diplomacy and agenda of peaceful resolution of disputes. Moreover, China has no biases towards weak countries and believes in shared prosperity so China seems more trustworthy to states around the world.

Q-5

Bright Future of BRICS

Introduction:

Certain factors are needed for an organization to become a success story including

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vision and leadership, economic structure and its stability, governance structure and equal opportunity, resolution of disputes of members, and competitiveness. BRICS has a very bright future as it has all the prerequisites to become a success story. With the recent expansion of BRICS, the chances are even brighter. BRICS is emerging as one of the strongest organizations and as a voice of Global South.

BRICS : Structure and

Members:

BRICS stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It was started as BRIC when Jim O' Neill coined the term in 2001, projecting an alliance of countries with fastest growing economies.

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South Africa joined in 2010 and it became BRICS. It was started as an informal club but now the organization has seen an expansion.

• Expansion of BRICS:

In the recent BRICS summit 5 new members joined it including RSA, UAE, Ethiopia, Egypt and Iran. Now BRICS represent 46% of global population and 27% of global GDP.

• Vision and Leadership in BRICS making it a success story:

BRICS has visionary leadership and has agenda of representation of South globally. It is inclusive for the countries of Global South and cater for the issues faced

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by countries of global South specially through economic collaboration.

• A strong Economic System:

BRICS has a strong economic system with Chinese economic might and ADB. There is a system of financing projects in member states like AfCFTA in South Africa. Some analysts say that China is introducing an economic system parallel to Bretton Woods system.

• Trade in Local Economy:

BRICS members have been doing trade in local economy partially and there is a debate of introducing a collaborative new currency which will boost the economic strength of organization.