

## **The Significance of Trade Corridors through the triangle of Hellenism Saudi Arabia and India**

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Amid war and uncertainty, Hellenism's interests in the near Middle East in the Mediterranean Sea are evolving. Athens cannot isolate itself from ongoing tensions in the Mediterranean, because no trade-off or alternation between strategic initiatives will benefit its ambitions. The Hamas-Israel war and the changing geopolitical dynamics in West Asia could potentially cast a significant shadow over the much-discussed **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**. The regional infrastructure initiative that had promoted the IMEC Economic Corridor that would connect *India with the Middle East and Europe, via Haifa and Piraeus*, at the G20 summit in New Delhi, seemed to point towards the value of the Aegean-Mediterranean axis.

Also the efforts to strengthen the navies of the coastal countries of the Mediterranean, the worsening disputes over maritime jurisdiction and the maritime axis of Hellenism from the Aegean to the Mediterranean region, remind us that the sea is always at the center of human development as a source of resources and as a means of transportation, information exchange and strategic sovereignty. It provides the basis

for the well-being and security of humanity, and this is even more true today, with the emergence of an increasingly globalized trading system.

The Exclusive Economic Zone of the Aegean-Mediterranean maritime axis plays an effective role at the heart of two strategic routes. The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the India-Middle East-EU Corridor (IMEC) ensuring a permanent strategic partnership between Hellenism (Greece-Cyprus) and the other participating parties, to strengthen the concept of the role of economic corridors and ports in development for the benefit of all parties. This brings us to a fundamental action of controlling the seas, which is the importance of integration between ports and mainland areas, as the most important model and as a model of partnerships that is the most distinguished in modern times, in order to advance the wheel of development for all members and open endless horizons in front of various investments.

We find out that the Aegean-Mediterranean axis is an important gateway for Asian products to enter the markets of Africa and Europe, due to its strategic location. As such, it serves both China's Belt and Road Initiative and the IMEC corridor and this will be largely reflected after coastal states complete the setting out of maritime zones and the competing problems that presented.

While the IMEC has been proposed to counter the Belt and Road initiative proposed by China, the Chinese presence cannot be removed along the IMEC route. This is due to the fact that China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), which is a Chinese state-owned company, operates in the port of Piraeus. On the other hand, all trade between India and Europe takes place via the sea route, which passes through the Suez Canal, controlled by Egypt. Moreover, it is estimated that Egypt, which could lose revenue if the Suez Canal is bypassed, could also raise objections to the IMEC project.

However, the Suez Canal is also considered the main station and sea corridor for the maritime route of the Belt and Road Initiative, which focuses on connecting the continents of Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. In any case, the value of the Aegean-Mediterranean axis is added, increasing the geostrategic role of Hellenism.

However, the painful events in Gaza have radically changed regional dynamics. At the core of this redistribution, first and foremost is the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Israel. As a means of normalizing relations between the two countries, the success of IMEC depends entirely on the cooperation of both countries at least on regional development. Thought, Saudi Arabia's engagement with Iran after the crisis and its silence on Hamas at least show that there is no rush in Riyadh to resume normalization talks.

In this case, for Hellenism, it means that the future momentum of the program, if not stopped, will be delayed in the near future. With much of the project's core infrastructure exposed on the battlefields, the worst-case scenario of disruption is beginning to become visible, where physical instability threatens future progress.

It does not appear that Hellenism has taken specific measures to prevent any outcome. Athens will not necessarily be neutral in the conflict. The condemnation of Hamas marks the culmination of a long-running diplomatic shift in Greece's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Motivated by strong defensive ties with Tel Aviv, Hellenism today sees itself cultivating its status as an impartial arbiter in the conflict. Moreover, in the confrontation between a vague infrastructure initiative and the tangible benefits Athens already enjoys from Israel, the latter has clearly won.

Meanwhile, Israel should not take for granted Greece's alignment on all issues, especially regarding the continuation of the war with the excessive use of force against civilians in Gaza. Basically, Greece wants to achieve regional order, and talking to one does not preclude talking to the other. Besides, the desire for the establishment of the State of Palestine is expressed.

According the coalition that makes up IMEC, the division over the Gaza conflict finds Iran in a position to capitalize on its relationship with India, where the IMEC economic corridor begins. If the conflict escalates, then India's only alternative infrastructure is the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), leaving

Hellenism out of trade corridors. In doing so, Tehran increases the likelihood that India will not cancel or otherwise delay its INSTC investments to Iran due to the Gaza conflict. That is, the conflict of Iran's proxies ( Hamas-Hezbollah and Houthis) has weakened the cohesion of the IMEC coalition on important regional issues and has significantly strengthened Iran's leverage. All of this points towards India's recommitment to the INSTC.

Although the latest developments in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians indicate that luck tends to be unstable and seem to favor India's shift towards the INSTC, the circumstances that brought about this shift could change. Crucially, if Saudi Arabia continues down the path toward some form of Israeli normalization, or at least economic integration with Israel, then the INSTC will no longer be the only solution. For this reason, in light of the globalization system and the new global economic order that it seeks to strengthen to serve the interests of countries, these initiatives/partnerships are pursued, which allow us to cooperate with strategic partners. In this context, Hellenism is a center of gravity due to geography and Merchant Marine.

*The Aegean-Mediterranean axis plays an important role in increasing cooperation in the fields of trade, industry localization with technology and energy transfer in Greece and subsequently in Europe.* Since the main objective is to support the economy and infra-state trade between countries, facilitate trade and expand communication lines, stressing that this cooperation includes the expansion of submarine cables, communications, Internet and maritime digitization lines, explaining that Greece the country "Springboard and gate of Europe". Greece also represents a very significant number of merchant ships and has its geostrategic weight, taking into account the Aegean-Mediterranean axis, and the importance of its geographical position, as it connects east to west and north to south.

In order to strengthen these partnerships, both China and India are seeking to expand the basis of cooperation with Greece so that it becomes a starting point for strengthening countries' economic growth and political stability, especially in light of

the material globalization system. Consequently, we find that all the elements of success are available, as it started from an integrated development concept aimed at economies and aims to strengthen cooperation with many international organizations.

Despite changes in India's strategy in the Middle East in recent times, India still faces the same fundamental challenges it had at the beginning of this year. If New Delhi cannot isolate itself from ongoing Israeli-Iranian tensions, then no hedge, or talks with both sides or alternation between strategic initiatives will bring its ambitions into reality. Its involvement with both even exposes its investments to the risk of armed conflict.

This does not mean that India cannot talk to Iran or Israel, or that it must remain strictly neutral in a conflict between them. This is a value judgment that New Delhi must make for itself. Rather, all this is to point out that India's regional initiatives must make a great effort to avoid relying on calm between Israel and Iran. Otherwise, the chaos and stagnation that characterizes India's infrastructure initiatives in the region so far will become more commonplace.