

# FROM CONCEPTION TO STALEMATE: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)

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## Abstract

The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is a cross-regional connectivity initiative proposed in 2023 by the United States in cooperation with India, the European Union, and several Middle Eastern partners. It has been framed as an alternative infrastructure network intended to counter China’s Belt and Road Initiative, facilitate geopolitical realignment in the Middle East, and reinforce U.S. leadership under conditions of intensifying great-power competition. Shortly after its announcement, however, the initiative entered a state of de facto stagnation, exposing a significant gap between strategic ambition and practical implementation. This article argues that IMEC’s difficulties stem from a set of structural constraints. The escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict undermined the political premise of Saudi-Israeli normalization on which the project implicitly relied, while fluctuations in the U.S. domestic political cycle weakened sustained strategic commitment and resource allocation. At the same time, participating actors diverge in their positions toward China and in their underlying interest structures, and the project faces unresolved challenges related to economic feasibility, financing mechanisms, and implementation capacity. Taken together, these factors suggest that IMEC is more likely to remain dormant or undergo limited functional adjustment rather than achieve a comprehensive revival, highlighting the vulnerability of highly politicized transnational infrastructure initiatives in an era of strategic competition.

**Keywords:** *India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC); Geoeconomics; Strategic Competition; Transnational Infrastructure; Structural Constraints*

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## Introduction

In September 2023, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit, the United States, India, Saudi Arabia, the European Union, along with several other partners, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). The initiative was designed to construct a composite infrastructure network linking South Asia, the Gulf region, and Europe. Far exceeding the scope of a conventional infrastructure project, IMEC has been widely interpreted as a strategic instrument through which the United States seeks to consolidate its alliance system and reshape the Eurasian geoeconomic landscape in response to China’s Belt and Road Initiative [15]. However, less than two years after its announcement, this much-vaunted “transformative” project entered a state of *de facto* stagnation and was even characterized in public discourse as a “PowerPoint initiative” [10]. This rapid retreat from political prominence exposes the profound vulnerability confronting highly politicized transnational initiatives amid intensifying great-power geoeconomic competition.

The stagnation of IMEC is rooted in deep-seated tensions between its strategic vision and complex political realities. Although the initiative initially aimed to promote regional integration in the Middle East and facilitate normalization between Arab states and Israel through economic connectivity, the escalation of the Israel–Palestine conflict in October 2023 fundamentally undermined the political premise of Saudi–Israeli rapprochement on which IMEC implicitly relied. Heightened regional polarization has rendered multilateral cooperation involving Israel politically unviable in the short term. Meanwhile, fluctuations in the U.S. domestic political cycle constitute another critical constraint. Changes in administration tend to reorder foreign policy priorities, and as a signature initiative associated with a previous government, IMEC has faced growing uncertainty regarding the continuity of strategic attention and resource commitment. Together, external geopolitical shocks and inward-looking domestic political dynamics have exerted a form of “dual pressure,” accelerating IMEC’s slide from strategic conception to effective suspension.

The core objective of this research is to examine IMEC as a concrete case in order to systematically analyze the key factors and their interactive mechanisms that drove its rapid transition from a high-profile launch to *de facto* suspension. On this basis, the article further assesses whether IMEC possesses the conditions for a potential revival and explores the possible pathways through which such a restart might occur.

This inquiry carries clear practical significance. A careful examination of the causes behind IMEC's suspension contributes to a more objective assessment of the limits and risks inherent in contemporary geo-economic competition among major powers, particularly in the domain of large-scale infrastructure initiatives. From China's perspective, the IMEC case highlights several practical constraints confronting competing connectivity projects, including the disruptive impact of regional security crises, divergences of interests and priorities within alliance frameworks, and the limited sustainability of domestic political support in the leading state. As such, it offers concrete lessons and insights drawn from a competing initiative for advancing the Belt and Road Initiative while strengthening risk prevention and resilience under complex external conditions. By empirically reconstructing the process through which IMEC moved toward suspension, this study seeks to provide policymakers and researchers with evidence-based analytical reference points.

### **The Strategic Intent of IMEC**

The IMEC involves a broad range of participants, each driven by distinct strategic considerations. Against the backdrop of intensifying Sino-U.S. strategic competition, the United States has promoted IMEC primarily as a means to coordinate allies and partners in order to counter the expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative and to constrain China's growing influence in the Middle East, thereby reinforcing its own geopolitical advantage. India and the European Union likewise view IMEC as part of their efforts to diversify connectivity frameworks and compete with the Belt and Road Initiative, while also embedding the project within India's "Looking West" policy and the broader Indo-Pacific strategic agenda. For Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern participants, IMEC is approached through a strategy of great-power balancing, with the aim of leveraging the corridor to occupy pivotal geopolitical positions. Beyond these geopolitical considerations, the European Union, India, and Middle Eastern states also attach significant economic expectations to IMEC, particularly the prospect of advancing India-Europe economic integration and generating additional trade and investment benefits.

First, IMEC can be understood as an alternative mechanism proposed by the United States, in coordination with its Western allies, to counter the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Competition among major powers has increasingly taken on a geo-economic character. Through the BRI, China has continued to expand its economic and political influence across developing countries, thereby generating strategic anxiety among the United States and its allies. Within U.S. policy circles, there is a

growing belief that military instruments alone are insufficient to balance China [3]; instead, the United States must also advance attractive frameworks for economic cooperation. Against this backdrop, Washington has criticized and questioned the BRI by invoking allegations such as “debt traps” and a lack of transparency, while simultaneously coordinating with its allies to launch a series of infrastructure initiatives, including the Build Back Better World (B3W), the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), and the Blue Dot Network. In parallel, the European Union has introduced the Global Gateway strategy, which aims to offer developing countries what it describes as “high-standard” and “sustainable” infrastructure alternatives [11; 9].

Second, IMEC functions as a key geostrategic instrument through which the United States seeks to reassert its influence in the Middle East and advance the normalization of Arab–Israeli relations. As China has markedly expanded its regional influence in recent years—through diplomatic initiatives such as facilitating Saudi–Iranian reconciliation and supporting Syria’s return to the Arab League—the United States has increasingly been perceived by regional allies as “unreliable” amid strategic retrenchment, resulting in a relative erosion of its influence. Against this backdrop, Washington aims to demonstrate through connectivity projects such as IMEC that it will not “leave a vacuum,” restore allies’ confidence, and consolidate its regional leadership [14]. The United States seeks to politicize and securitize infrastructure development, using IMEC to rally allies and constrain China’s growing influence. Promoting Arab–Israeli normalization—particularly between Saudi Arabia and Israel—thus lies at the core of U.S. Middle East strategy, as integrating the interests of the Gulf states and Israel is viewed in Washington as essential to regional stability aligned with U.S. strategic interests. Building on earlier efforts such as the Abraham Accords and the establishment of the I2U2 grouping [16; 1], Saudi Arabia’s inclusion in IMEC is widely regarded as an economic incentive and cooperative framework designed to accelerate Saudi–Israeli normalization, a move that has elicited positive responses from key regional actors, including strong public endorsements from Israeli and Saudi leaders [2]. Third, IMEC operates as a strategic conduit through which participating states advance their respective geostrategic objectives via overseas infrastructure, with the broader aim of reshaping regional power configurations. By deepening economic interdependence, the corridor is expected to generate spillover effects in security cooperation, counterterrorism, and regional stability, thereby providing a platform for diplomatic alignment and geopolitical recalibration [10]. For India, IMEC represents a major extension of its “Look West” strategy, enabling New Delhi to position itself as a

connectivity hub linking Europe and Southeast Asia by bypassing less efficient trade routes; initiatives such as acquiring a stake in Israel's Port of Haifa and pursuing partnerships with Greece reflect this ambition, and analysts suggest that the project could recalibrate India's role within the Eurasian economic order.<sup>1</sup>

From a U.S. perspective, IMEC forms part of a broader effort to anchor India more firmly within Western-led supply chains, reduce dependence on China, and, amid strategic retrenchment, sustain American influence across the Middle East and along the corridor. For the Gulf states and Israel, the project directly serves core national strategies: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates view IMEC as a means to consolidate their status as global logistics and trade hubs while advancing economic diversification, while Israel has explicitly positioned itself as the corridor's "central hub" and "key node," framing IMEC as a historic opportunity to reshape both national and regional landscapes. For the European Union and member states such as Italy, IMEC is likewise an instrument for strengthening ties with the Indo-Pacific and operationalizing Europe's Indo-Pacific strategy, with Rome in particular viewing the corridor as a strategic opportunity to connect the Mediterranean with the Indo-Pacific via the Middle East and to enhance its maritime influence [6].

Fourth, IMEC seeks to foster a tightly integrated economic bloc across India, the Middle East, and Europe by promoting supply-chain integration and economic interdependence in response to growing global fragmentation and supply-chain insecurity. The project envisages the construction of a cross-border railway network, complemented by power transmission lines, digital cables, and clean hydrogen pipelines, with the aim of creating a reliable and efficient connectivity corridor that could outperform existing maritime routes [15]. By substantially reducing trade costs and transit times, IMEC is expected to unlock significant economic potential, deepen regional connectivity, and ultimately underpin a more secure and resilient supply-chain alliance [8].

Participating actors are driven by distinct yet converging economic and security priorities: for Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, IMEC serves as a central vehicle for economic diversification and their ambition to evolve into global logistics hubs, while also facilitating expanded energy exports to Europe and the development of integrated value chains encompassing food, hydrocarbons, and green energy; for the European Union, the corridor aligns with its

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<sup>1</sup> Indian Prime Minister Modi visited Greece on the eve of the G20 Summit. After this trip, India was invited to establish partnerships with Greece, Cyprus and Israel, aiming to build closer energy ties.

dual objectives of “de-risking” energy supplies—particularly by reducing dependence on Russia—and diversifying supply chains under a “China + 1” strategy, with the aim of cultivating India and the Middle East as reliable markets and partners [7] for India, IMEC directly supports core goals of export expansion and job creation, with estimates suggesting that the corridor could reduce freight times to Europe by around 40 percent, thereby enhancing the global competitiveness of Indian goods and reinforcing India’s role as an economic bridge between West Asia and Europe. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized, IMEC is envisioned as a “beacon of cooperation, innovation, and shared progress,” reflecting participating states’ commitment to stimulating growth and safeguarding industrial security through deeper economic integration.

### **The Realist Dilemma of IMEC**

Since its inception, IMEC has generated considerable anticipation. The initial commitment to “formulate an action plan within 60 days,” as stipulated in the memorandum of understanding, underscored the participants’ eagerness to demonstrate tangible political achievements. Yet, the initiative’s progress quickly encountered multiple structural constraints, resulting in its transition from a “landmark commitment” to a state of “de facto suspension” in less than a year. These constraints are neither isolated nor independent; rather, they are interrelated and layered, collectively constituting a formidable barrier that impedes the translation of strategic conception into practical implementation.

The progress of IMEC is fundamentally constrained by the complex and dynamically evolving geopolitical environment of the Middle East. Cross-border infrastructure initiatives in this region have historically faced persistent challenges arising from limited political trust and elevated security risks. IMEC, spanning a broader geographic area, further contends with entrenched historical grievances, ethno-religious conflicts, and territorial disputes, which collectively constitute fundamental obstacles to its implementation.

A primary challenge lies in the political tensions among key participants and the fragility of normalization processes. The continuity of Arab-Israeli reconciliation, particularly the historic rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Israel, constitutes a core political prerequisite for IMEC’s success. Yet this foundation remains extremely fragile. Negotiations over Saudi-Israeli normalization, regarded as the project’s geopolitical “trophy,” have progressed slowly, with Saudi Arabia conditioning its engagement on a just settlement of the Palestinian issue. The outbreak of large-scale conflict between Palestine and Israel in October 2023

effectively disrupted this delicate process. The conflict not only halted the normalization talks but also triggered widespread public opposition and intensified political pressures across the Arab world, rendering open multilateral economic cooperation with Israel politically unfeasible in the near term. Consequently, the corridor's underlying logic of "promoting peace through economic integration" has been severely undermined, and its narrative as a "corridor of peace and prosperity" has effectively collapsed.

Secondly, IMEC faces significant resistance from key regional actors. Iran perceives the corridor as a U.S.-driven geopolitical instrument and potentially threatens its strategic position by leveraging control over the Strait of Hormuz. Egypt, meanwhile, adopts a cautious or even oppositional stance, concerned that the project could divert Suez Canal revenues, thereby undermining its national finances and regional influence [13]. Turkey's response is particularly complex. President Erdoan has publicly opposed a trade corridor that bypasses Turkish territory while simultaneously promoting alternative initiatives. In practice, Turkey's underlying objective is to gain inclusion in IMEC to secure benefits and avoid strategic marginalization. This "opposition to gain inclusion" approach has compounded the complexity and cost of project coordination [12]. Collectively, Iran's confrontation, Egypt's conflicting interests, and Turkey's competitive maneuvering constitute an external pressure network that poses substantial challenges to the corridor's implementation.

The sustainability of IMEC, as a cross-border infrastructure initiative heavily reliant on the strategic will of the leading state, fundamentally depends on the continuous and stable political commitment of the United States. However, cyclical shifts in U.S. domestic politics, most notably the ascent of the "Trump 2.0 Administration" after 2025, have precipitated a significant reorientation of U.S. foreign policy, undermining the political foundation on which IMEC rests and resulting in a prolonged operational standstill. This case underscores that, within geoeconomic competition, the volatility of domestic politics in the dominant state constitutes a core risk for transnational strategic initiatives.

The Trump administration's adherence to the "America First" doctrine was reflected in a diplomatic approach characterized by transactionalism and bilateralism, which runs counter to the multilateralism, long-term investment, and strategic patience required for the successful implementation of IMEC. Research indicates that the administration's diplomatic priorities shifted from constructing a long-term strategic framework aimed at counterbalancing China to pursuing immediate economic gains through bilateral arrangements. Despite early verbal endorsements,

the U.S. government did not allocate substantial diplomatic or financial resources to advance IMEC, and its commitment was effectively withdrawn. This erosion of the leading state's political will directly contributed to IMEC's rapid decline from a highly anticipated "flagship project" to a largely symbolic "paper initiative."

IMEC exhibits profound inherent divisions in its geostrategic objectives. Divergent policy orientations and participation motives among key actors regarding China have hindered the formation of a unified strategic consensus, thereby impeding coordinated action. The United States and India explicitly view IMEC as a strategic instrument to constrain China's influence and advance geopolitical competition, aiming to establish an exclusive economic and security alliance. By contrast, although the European Union regards China as a "systemic rival," it simultaneously emphasizes China's role as a partner, openly rejecting outright decoupling or confrontation and advocating a nuanced approach that balances competition with cooperation [5]. This position constrains the EU from fully endorsing a purely confrontational framework. Meanwhile, core Middle Eastern participants, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, pursue highly pragmatic objectives focused primarily on economic diversification and the development of regional hub infrastructure. These states have explicitly resisted framing IMEC as a "substitute" for China's Belt and Road Initiative, instead emphasizing complementarity and cautioning that a confrontational posture could undermine the corridor's potential [4]. This "three-tiered differentiation" of strategic intentions, which encompasses containment, competitive coexistence, and complementarity, complicates coordination on project priorities, resource allocation, and public narratives, thereby undermining the foundation of IMEC as a cohesive strategic initiative and constituting an intrinsic constraint on its advancement.

The vision of IMEC faces not only external geopolitical challenges but also fundamental limitations in its economic logic, financing mechanisms, and implementation capacity. First, the project exhibits inherent economic feasibility constraints. Its complex multimodal transport model, combining maritime and overland routes, is capital-intensive, while the volume of India–Europe trade on which the corridor relies remains limited, undermining the underlying business case. Project financing is also heavily dependent on unstable private capital and politically contingent public funds from the United States, rendering it difficult to secure under conditions of heightened geopolitical risk.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the deliberate exclusion of

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<sup>2</sup> The US, as the main source of funds, is particularly crucial. It once proposed that this project was part of the US \$600 billion "Global Infrastructure and Investment Partnership" initiative (PGII), but the specific implementation of the funds still faces numerous difficulties.

China, which possesses extensive infrastructure experience and technological capabilities in the relevant regions that could have facilitated implementation, further increases construction costs and operational challenges, thereby reducing the corridor's overall competitiveness. As a result, IMEC lacks a robust foundation in both economic returns and feasible implementation pathways and cannot be sustained through tenuous political commitment alone.

### **Assessing the Prospects of IMEC**

From a broader global economic perspective, the large-scale cross-regional infrastructure cooperation envisaged by IMEC is not inherently devoid of practical rationale. Against the backdrop of the waning momentum of globalization and sluggish global economic growth, India, Middle Eastern states, and European countries are promoting the development of railways, ports, and shipping channels. Objectively, these initiatives help to address long-standing gaps in infrastructure investment and generate positive spillover effects at both regional and global levels. Existing research indicates that improvements in infrastructure can substantially reduce the costs of cross-regional movement of goods and personnel, enhance supply-chain efficiency, and thereby produce broad economic benefits. At this level, the connectivity blueprint outlined by IMEC aligns with the universal imperatives of sustainable global economic development and, to some extent, responds to the practical priorities of Middle Eastern countries seeking economic diversification and European states aiming to secure resilient and reliable transport and supply channels. However, the evaluation of IMEC's prospects should not be limited to its potential economic benefits. Unlike many development-oriented infrastructure initiatives, IMEC is deeply embedded in the structures of contemporary geoeconomic competition among major powers, and its strategic character outweighs its purely developmental function. The project exhibits pronounced exclusivity in its design concept, participant selection, and narrative construction. A central objective is to establish a competitive alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative by creating a "non-China-led" cross-regional connectivity network, thereby partially constraining China's influence in Asia–Eurasia interconnection patterns. This strategic, offset-oriented design inevitably places IMEC beyond the scope of conventional infrastructure cooperation, amplifying the political and security risks associated with its implementation.

For this reason, the short-term suspension of IMEC does not imply that the initiative itself has lost strategic significance; rather, it reflects the inherent tension between its highly politicized character and the complex geopolitical environment. In assessing its medium- and long-term trajectory, it is important to distinguish

between the “symbolic” and “functional” dimensions of the project. On one hand, given persistent political uncertainties within the United States and the unlikelihood of rapid stabilization in the Middle East, a comprehensive plan promoted under the IMEC banner, carrying strong strategic symbolism, remains difficult to advance. On the other hand, certain functional objectives—such as enhancing port connectivity and fostering cooperation in energy and digital infrastructure—may still be pursued or reconfigured within a more understated, decentralized framework. Such an approach of “de-identification” and “modularization” may better align with the practical logic of cross-regional cooperation projects under the prevailing international conditions.

Based on the strategic preferences of the United States and its Allies, even if IMEC were to be revived in some form in the future, it is likely to represent an adaptation of the original plan rather than a straightforward reinstatement. Compared with highly centralized initiatives with strong political symbolism, a project-based, issue-specific, and phased approach not only mitigates political risks but also facilitates the formation of a minimal consensus among multiple stakeholders. This shift does not signal a weakening of geoeconomic competition; rather, it reflects a transformation in its manifestation: competition is no longer expressed through grand, centralized narratives, but is dispersed and embedded within specific channels, regulatory frameworks, and technical standards.

For China, the potential revival of IMEC and its developmental trajectory warrant close attention. On one hand, the initiative objectively advances infrastructure development and regional connectivity, generating economic spillovers that are not entirely negative, from which China could indirectly benefit through improvements in global infrastructure. On the other hand, IMEC’s explicitly competitive orientation and exclusive design mean that, once implemented in a relatively complete form, it could adversely affect the external environment of China’s Belt and Road Initiative and potentially diminish China’s institutional and structural influence in certain regions. Accordingly, in assessing IMEC’s prospects, China must avoid reducing the initiative to a short-term setback and neglecting its long-term implications; rather, it should consider the project’s significance for the evolution of Eurasian connectivity within a broader international context.

Overall, the future of IMEC should not be framed simply in terms of “success” or “failure”; rather, it is likely to evolve as a dynamic process oscillating between dormancy, transformation, and partial revival. Its trajectory depends not only on shifts in the international political and regional security environment but also on the enduring logic of geoeconomic competition among major powers. In this

regard, continuous observation of IMEC provides valuable insights not only into the initiative's own developmental path but also into the structural constraints that contemporary cross-regional infrastructure cooperation encounters within the broader context of strategic competition.

### **Conclusion**

The rapid suspension of the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) initiative underscores the structural challenges faced by cross-regional infrastructure projects in highly politicized contexts. This case illustrates that when an economic cooperation plan is overly enmeshed in narratives of geostrategic confrontation, its underlying economic rationale and feasibility can be easily subordinated to fragile political premises, rendering the initiative extremely sensitive to shifts in domestic political cycles and regional security conditions.

The deeper paradox of the IMEC concept lies in the fact that, faced with substantial global infrastructure demand, some U.S.-led countries have opted for a strategy of “competitive substitution” rather than “cooperative complementarity,” prioritizing geopolitical and normative considerations over economic efficiency. This approach not only fails to address practical development challenges but also heightens the risk of global economic fragmentation. The setbacks experienced by IMEC further underscore the fundamental limitations of a “small courtyard, high wall” strategy that seeks primarily to contain rivals, revealing its inadequacy in resolving broader development needs.

Looking ahead, global demand for connectivity and supply chain resilience remains robust, yet the experience of IMEC offers a critical lesson for all participants: sustainable cooperation must be grounded in pragmatic economic logic and built on open, inclusive partnerships. For China, this dynamic underscores that competition in the infrastructure domain has extended to the realms of rules and narratives. China’s strategic response lies in steadfastly deepening its own economic development and high-level engagement with the global economy, while simultaneously showcasing the inclusiveness and vitality of initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative through more effective, practice-oriented cooperation in addressing shared challenges.

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## Մտահղացումից փակուղի Հնդկաստան-Միջին Արևելք-Եվրոպա տնտեսական միջանցքի գնահատում

Չին Լիանգ

**Հիմնաբառեր .** Հնդկաստան - Միջին Արևելք - Եվրոպա տնտեսական միջանցք (IMEC), աշխարհատնտեսություն, ռազմավարական մրցակցություն, միջազգային ենթակառուցվածք, կառուցվածքային սահմանափակումներ

### Ամփոփում

Հնդկաստան-Միջին Արևելք-Եվրոպա տնտեսական միջանցքը (IMEC) միջտարածաշրջանային կապակցվածության նախաձեռնություն է, որը ներկայացվել է 2023 թվականին Միացյալ Նահանգների կողմից՝ Հնդկաստանի, Եվրոպական միության և Մերձավոր Արևելքի մի շարք գործընկերների հետ համագործակցությամբ: Այն ձևակերպվել է որպես այլընտրանքային ենթակառուցվածքային ցանց՝ նախատեսված Չինաստանի «Գոտի և Ճանապարհ» նախաձեռնությանը հակագրելու, Մերձավոր Արևելքում աշխարհաքաղաքական վերադասավորումը խթանելու և մեծ տերությունների մրցակցության սաստկացման պայմաններում ԱՄՆ-ի առաջնորդությունը ամրապնդելու համար: Սակայն նախաձեռնության ազդարարումից կարճ ժամանակ անց այն լճացման գնաց՝ բացահայտելով ռազմավարական հավակնությունների և գործնական իրազորման միջև էական խզումը: Այս հոդվածի փաստարկն այն է, որ IMEC-ի դժվարությունները բխում են մի շարք կառուցվածքային սահմանափակումներից: Իսրայելա-պաղեստինյան հակամարտության սրացումը խաթարեց Սաուդյան Արաբիա-Իսրայել հարաբերությունների կարգավորման քաղաքական նախադրյալը, որի վրա նախաձեռնությունը անուղղակիորեն հիմնված էր, մինչդեռ ԱՄՆ-ի ներքաղաքական շրջափուլերի տատանումները խաթարեցին ռազմավարական հանձնառության ու ռեսուրսների հատկացման շարունակականությունը: Միևնույն ժամանակ, նախաձեռնության մասնակիցները տարբեր դիրքորոշումներ և տարբեր շահեր ունեն Չինաստանի հետ հարաբերություններում, իսկ նախագիծը բախվում է նաև տնտեսական

կենսունակության, ֆինանսավորման մեխանիզմների և իրազործման կարողությունների հետ կապված չլուծված խնդիրների: Ընդհանուր առմամբ, այս գործոնները վկայում են, որ IMEC-ը, ամենայն հավանականությամբ, կմնա պասիվ կամ սահմանափակ գործառնական փոփոխությունների կենթարկվի, այլ ոչ թե կապրի համապարփակ վերածնունդ՝ ընդգծելով խիստ քաղաքականացված միջազգային ենթակառուցվածքային նախաձեռնությունների խոցելիությունը ուազմավարական մրցակցության ժամանակաշրջանում: