

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor in strategic connection with the Abraham Accords and the Three Seas Initiative

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Abstract. Adopted by India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, the EU, and the US in September 2023, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is becoming strategic for international trade. The research focuses on Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Central and East Europe (CEE) through IMEC and the Three Seas Initiative (3SI). In September 2023, the 3SI expanded towards Greece, which maintains strategic trade relations with Israel and the UAE. Through the Abraham Accords and IMEC, the Three Seas Initiative is linked with India, enabling a new North-South route. The research aims to answer the following question: What is the geopolitical connection between the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and the Three Seas Initiative, and what is their impact on the role and position of the critical states for those initiatives? For this purpose, the theory of adaptation and international roles has been applied. The study is based on qualitative and quantitative methods and empirical research from 13 years of analysis, direct observation, and the author's participation in many initiatives. The proposed project is the first research on the Middle East, India, and CEE, which will impact new strategic trade routes. It should inspire other researchers to further in-depth analyses.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Considering the objective criteria, the presented article analyses the geopolitical and economic connections of the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, the Three Seas Initiative, and, consequently, the political and economic roles of key countries implementing these initiatives, which are active and creative adaptation to the changing international environment. However, in

the spatial aspect, the research examines the strategic area from India through the countries of the Middle East, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel to the states of Central and Eastern Europe. So, the area encompasses the eastern part of the Euro-Atlantic community and the western Indo-Pacific. Within the European Union, on Poland and Croatia's initiative, 12 CEE countries between the Adriatic, the Baltic, and the Black Sea 2016 launched the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) as a specific trade infrastructure and energy cooperation. In February 2019, in Warsaw, on the initiative of Poland and the U.S., a ministerial conference on peace and security in the Middle East was held with the participation of Arab countries, including the United Arab Emirates and Israel. The discussions between the two countries were essential for establishing official relations. In September 2020, Israel and the United Arab Emirates signed the Abraham Accords, an agreement to normalise relations (Singer, 2021). On December 11, 2022, both countries ratified the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (PwC, 2023). In 2022, the European Union announced a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in energy and trade as priorities. In September 2023, the Three Seas Initiative enlargement towards Greece, which maintains strategic trade and energy relations with Israel, and UAE could contribute to expanding these areas' relations with other 3SI countries. The Three Seas Initiative, which implements the Via Carpathia project connecting the Baltic Sea with Greece and India through the Gulf countries and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), will enable a new North-South route. Houthi attacks in the Red Sea have reduced global trade using the Suez Canal and increased the cost of transporting goods from Asia to Europe. In this situation, IMEC, signed by India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, and the U.S. in September 2023, leading through the UAE to the port of Haifa in Israel, becomes particularly strategic importance for global trade and the Abraham Accords. Despite this project's political suspension due to the Gaza Strip situation and the war that began on October 7, 2023, crucial infrastructure projects serving the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor are under construction.

In August 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Poland. It was the first visit of the head of the Indian government in 45 years. Its main effect has been to raise the relationship to the "strategic partnership" and to adopt a five-year cooperation plan. In addition, it was decided, among other things, to resume the operation of the Joint Economic Commission and to undertake intensive, regular consultations on crucial international issues, such as the war in Ukraine or the situation in the Indo-Pacific in the context of the U.S.-China rivalry. This visit exploits Poland's role in the European Union and the Three Seas Initiative. In the first half of 2025, Poland will hold the presidency of the EU Council, which increases Poland's role in shaping EU-India relations and accelerating negotiations of free trade zone and investment protection agreements. At this time, Poland may also contribute to organising the postponed European Union-India summit. Moreover, in 2025, the Three Seas Initiative summit will be held in Poland, which will be another impulse to develop cooperation in the field of connections between Central and Eastern Europe, the EU, India, and the Indo-Pacific (Kugiel, 2024).

The research pays special attention to Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Central and East Europe in a broad international context through the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and the Three Seas Initiative (3SI). The research's main aim is to find an answer to the research question: What is the geopolitical connection between the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and the Three Seas Initiative, and what is their impact on the role and position of the critical states for those initiatives?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature analysis on the subject was also crucial in the study. It is worth noting the previous publications of this article's author. One of them analyses the United Arab Emirates from their relations with three 3SI countries, i.e., Austria, Croatia, and Slovenia (Krzymowski, 2021a). Another examines the UAE's relations with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, members of the Three Seas Initiative (Krzymowski, 2021b). In the following paper, the author presents the cooperation of the United Arab Emirates with Bulgaria and Romania, 3SI countries (Krzymowski, 2020). Another article focuses on the members of the Three Seas Initiative - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania - in their relations with the UAE (Krzymowski, 2022). The following article illustrates all 3SI countries in the light of institutional economic cooperation with the United Arab Emirates (Krzymowski, 2023). In comparison, Ożarowski (2022) analyses the broader meaning of Poland's foreign policy in the Middle East. In the context of the Abraham Accords, Berger (2020) highlights the Trump administration's roles in the Middle East. Moreover, Afterman and Urhová (2024) focused on the new dynamics of co-shaping the Middle East by the Gulf states and Israel. At the same time, Singer (2021), Munin (2023), and Vakil and Quilliam (2023) present the roles and importance of the Abraham Accords. In this context, Uppal, and Barrington (2023) show the United Arab Emirates's long-term plans with Israel, and Huwaidin (2022) analyses the UAE's strategic partnership with China. However, Forough (2023) presents the war in the Gaza Strip, while Sullivan (2024) analyses the impact of the war on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and Cafiero (2023) and Khan (2023) draw attention to its geopolitical significance. Yagyavalk and Jitendra (2023) and Das (2024) expand on the economic role of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and its limitations. Agarwal (2022) and Cornwell and Kamdar (2024) present IMEC from the perspective of India's strategic partnership with the United Arab Emirates. However, Siddiqi (2024) highlights the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor from the perspective of U.S.-China competition, while Simpson (2023) analyses the challenges and benefits of this economic corridor for the U.S. Whereas, Vohra (2023) tries to show the future challenges facing the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. Despite the expanding research analyses, there is a lack of scientific studies on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and the Abraham Accords in conjunction with the Three Seas Initiative. Therefore, this publication fills the gap.

3. METHODOLOGY

At the ontology level, the area of research is the international system. Due to the choice of the systemic level of analysis, within the framework of epistemology, the theory of adaptation and international roles was primarily used. The methodology was adopted to link ontology and epistemology to select research empirical methods. The author applied interpretive, qualitative, and inductive methods and case studies. Additionally, this study has been supported by statistics as a quantitative method. Rationalist and reflective methodologies were also reconciled. This was a pragmatic solution because the choice of methods depends on the research question. Moreover, the author focused on empirical verification of the theory. The research findings derived from 13 years of analysis, participant observation, and the participation of the author in many initiatives related to Central Eastern Europe, the United Arab Emirates, and the Middle East, among others as Counsellor to the Prime Minister, an Ambassador of Poland to the United Arab Emirates, Senior Advisor to the UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation responsible for Expo 2020 Dubai. In addition to collecting and investigating data based on observations and document analysis, the author uses studies of other authors.

According to the article's author, the theories of adaptation and roles help answer the research question. The state assumes a specific role in international relations to adapt to the changes (Rosenau, 1981). The adaptation theory has been used because it explains the external actions of states in the context of

international influences and thus specifies critical processes without breaking away from reality (Pietraś, 1986). Three primary factors of adaptation processes can be identified: actions of internal policy entities, transnational actions, and changes in the tensions in external and internal decision-making fields. Three adaptive attitudes should be indicated, i.e., passive, submissive, and creative. Indeed, the foreign policy of the analysed countries demonstrates their creative adaptation. The presented initiatives involve activities aimed at shaping the changing international situation by the national interest. As Conway and Feigert (1987, pp. 136-39) point out, in this process, the role assumed by the state and its position with other participants are demonstrated. In this way, the interaction process occurs, i.e., impact and influence. This shapes the place and roles in their relationships (Keohane, 2012, p. 19). Thus, the theory of political adaptation also refers to change and its impact on individual elements of the international system (Morgenthau, 1954, p. 225). However, the reason for the emergence of adaptation processes is the dynamics of the entity's environment, in which changes in its state and impact on a given country are visible. The theory of political adaptation allows for an accurate analysis of the state's actions, which must constantly respond to the external environment, as it is subject to constant changes. So, the international environment is always dynamic. Therefore, applying the adaptation theory allows for the analysis of countries from the perspective of their needs and the possibility of adapting to environmental changes. In the case of the analysis of selected countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and India in the light of changes in the global order is justified.

The applied role theory shows that other actors' actions influence other entities' decisions, and thus, they mutually adjust their reactions (Turner, 2006, p. 445). The international role can be defined as "an organised and purposeful system of influence of one country on another, which is a function of the subjective assessment of international relations as well as the influence of the external environment" (Bielecka, 2004). India and Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Poland, as countries with a strong position in the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and Central and Eastern Europe, respectively, contribute to developing new trends. A position in international relations is a critical factor in shaping the roles of the state. The perception of a state by other international actors is also of great importance for the international position of a state and, consequently, for its international roles. That is why building a strong, positive image of the state is so important. This is directly related to the international identity of the state and its self-awareness of its position in the global environment (Bieleń, 2006, pp. 25-27). However, the international identity of a state is primarily shaped by history, culture, geographical location, economy, army, ideology, and psychology (Kukulka, 1999, pp. 11-15). Therefore, identity is crucial in shaping foreign policy and interests, both in the internal dimension, the canon of values (Wendt, 1992), and international norms (Katzenstein, 1996). Both factors influence value hierarchies, the goals of priority actions, and polystrategies that take on specific international roles. The analysed initiatives prove the assumptions of the adopted theories. The participating countries strive to balance the state's needs, interests, and the requirements set by the international and domestic political environment (Pietraś 1989, pp. 3-4, 6).

The research indicates that India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Poland have adopted the role of active independence in foreign policy, with an orientation focused on influence and development. The incredible complexity of the situation at the end of the 20th century became apparent primarily in the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe. Since then, the Western world has begun to look for its place and role in post-Cold War conditions. The process of forming a new shape of international relations has already started. In the 21st century, India, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, and Poland, wishing to have a leadership position in their regions and beyond, have implemented many initiatives and have assumed certain types of international roles. First of all, the role of a promoter is to look for opportunities to recruit new partners actively. It can be hypothesised that implementing the ambitious foreign policy of Israel, the UAE, and other countries participating in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and the Three Seas

Initiative will strengthen these countries' political and economic influence in international affairs. The analysed initiatives allow for more effective implementation of one's interests regionally and on a global scale.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data and methods used to consider the applied theoretical framework allowed for identifying the research results. They show that the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and the Three Seas Initiative are the adaptation strategies chosen by countries. On the one hand, they are a function of their international position, providing greater scope for action. On the other hand, they are a response to tension in the global environment. Moreover, the nature of the analysed initiatives influences the connections between their participants, contributing to interdependencies, impacts, and internationalisation processes.

4.1. Abraham Accords

For international processes, the crucial issue is the influence of other participants, which is an impulse for adaptation activities and the choice of a specific adaptation strategy (Saaty & Khouja, 1976). The Abraham Accords could be realised with the involvement of the Trump administration. Relations with the U.S. remain the central reference point for normalising ties between the UAE and Israel. President Trump's first foreign trip to Saudi Arabia in May 2017 demonstrated a change in United States policy towards the Middle East. Consequently, the U.S. administration wanted to emphasise the importance of the U.S.-Saudi alliance. The visit to Riyadh also had a broader dimension, including a meeting with the heads of state of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and 50 leaders of Muslim communities. During the visit, the largest arms contract of the century was announced, worth USD 110 billion, covering aircraft, ships, and cruise missiles. Moreover, President Trump encouraged the creation of a NATO-style defence alliance under the control of Saudi Arabia, consisting of GCC members as well as Jordan and Egypt (Berger, 2020). On May 15, 2017, a few days before President Trump visited Saudi Arabia, the UAE signed a new security cooperation agreement with the United States. (Ketbi, 2020). From Riyadh, the U.S. president went to Israel, indispensable for building a community of interests with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

One of the first European countries that President Trump visited in July of the same year was Poland. He took part in the Three Seas Initiative summit in Warsaw, which has become a strategic initiative for the U.S., among other things, in Central and Eastern Europe (Trump, 2017). Due to its territorial scope, which covers the Adriatic and Black Sea countries, this new cooperation platform has also become the geopolitics of the Mediterranean and MENA. Considering the Abraham Accords, the conference on the Middle East in Warsaw in February 2019, organised by Poland and the U.S., is worth noting. It demonstrated that Arab countries are ready to cooperate with Israel. During the meeting in Warsaw, the establishment of seven working groups was announced to develop solutions for the Middle East in four areas: counteracting terrorism and its illegal financing; restrictions on missile development and proliferation; combating cyber threats, including for the energy sector; humanitarian issues, and human rights (Ożarowski, 2022).

Consequently, on September 15, 2020, in Washington, the United Arab Emirates signed an agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Israel called the Abraham Accords. Apart from opening an embassy, both countries also undertook to set up direct air connections and start cooperation in several areas, including investments, trade, tourism, scientific research, education, security, and energy (Samour et al., 2022). Part of the agreement - initially denied by Netanyahu's government - was to have Israel's consent for the transfer of advanced American (but also Israeli) weapons to the Gulf states, primarily F-35 multi-role aircraft. The UAE and Israel also announced cooperation in combating cyber threats. At the end of 2020, a

prominent Israeli delegation participated in Gitex Technology Week in Dubai, the most significant innovation exhibition in the Persian Gulf. It inaugurated the Israel Future Digital Economy Summit to strengthen cooperation in innovation and technology (WAM, 2020). The UAE is also interested in deeper relations with Israel within the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMG). Greece is a strategic partner for both countries and a member of EMGF and the Three Seas Initiatives. Abraham Accords contains a vision of a broader format for regional cooperation, including the strategic dimension.

In the same month as the Abraham Accords, both countries, recognising its strategic dimension, signed the first banking and finance protocol supporting joint investments. Consequently, the Dubai Chamber of Commerce signed an agreement to open its office in Tel Aviv. Moreover, in March 2021, the United Arab Emirates announced the establishment of a USD 10 billion fund for investments in Israel. One of the most significant commercial energy transactions is the purchase in September 2021 for USD 1.1 billion by Abu Dhabi-based Mubadala Petroleum of a 22 per cent stake in Israel's Tamar natural gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean (Munin, 2023, p. 16). In 2021, in the first full year of official relations, it reached USD 1.2 billion in trade. In September 2022, the UAE delegation participated in a joint business forum co-organized by the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange and Abu Dhabi Global Market, which resulted in the signing of three agreements on data protection, innovation, and fintech initiatives. 2022 recorded over USD 2.5 billion in trade (Uppal & Barrington, 2023), and in 2023 grew 17% to reach USD 2.95 billion (Figure 1). Then, in the first half of 2024, the trade exchange concluded with USD 1.68 billion. The parties expect the Abraham Accords to contribute over USD 10 billion in trade within a few years.

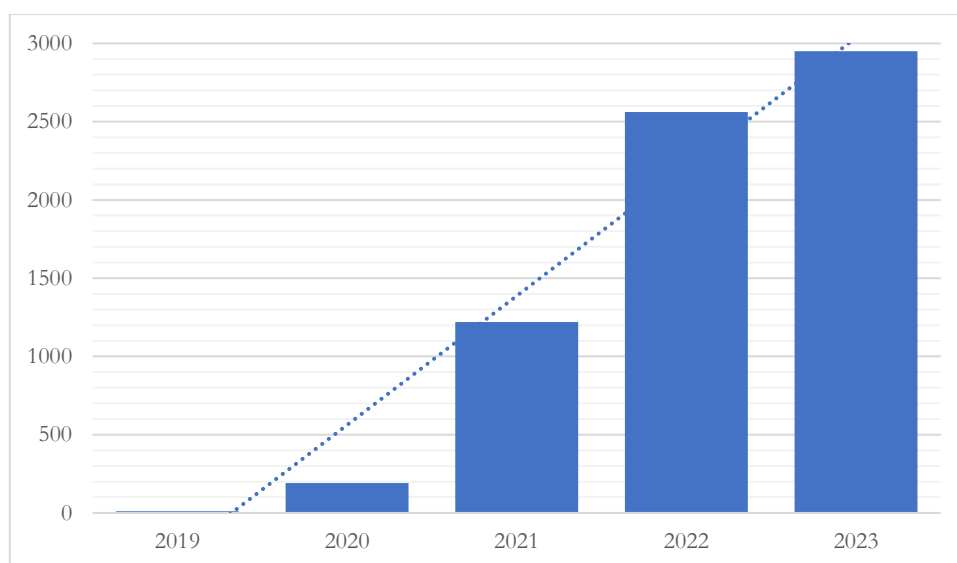


Figure 1. Israel-UAE trade exchange (in millions)

Source: Authors' results based on Statista (<https://www.statista.com>).

Both countries have already signed dozens of agreements in areas ranging from health care, water security, clean energy, and agricultural technologies to space, retail trade, culture, and sports. On December 11, 2022, Israel and the United Arab Emirates ratified the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, signed a few months earlier. It emphasises cooperation in advanced technologies, renewable energy, and food security. This agreement, among other things, reduces customs duties on 96% of goods or even abolishes them, contributing to high dynamics of economic cooperation. In addition, over 1,000 Israeli companies have been registered in the United Arab Emirates (Vakil & Quilliam, 2023). The Abraham Accords prove that the role of the countries participating in it is not only imposed from the outside but in

processes of interaction. However, it is shaped by relationships with other actors in these processes and under the influence of their expectations. Consequently, the role of states is strictly conditioned by its position.

4.2. India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

The international environment is one of the determinants of adaptation processes, including the strategies chosen by political leaders. Changes in the country's external environment are influenced by transport, communication, and economic factors (Gilpin, 1984, pp. 55-77). Moreover, under the law of interdependence, political decision-makers can significantly influence this environment and shape foreign and economic policy depending on their adaptation strategies, which also results in correcting and creating changes in the international environment.

India and the United Arab Emirates, on February 18, 2022, signed the crucial Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which should increase bilateral trade to about USD 100 billion in the next five years and gain USD 250 billion by 2030. Based on the CEPA, about 90% of exported products will be subject to zero tariffs (Embassy of India, 2022). Whereas, in New Delhi in September 2023, during the G20 meeting, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States signed a MoU on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. The initiative focuses on linking India with Europe via the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel by railway and by sea. India and the United Arab Emirates will boost maritime trade mainly through the ports of Mundra and Mumbai and Jebel Ali in Dubai. The goods will then be sent by rail, linking Dubai to Haifa in Israel, where they will be transferred to ships and delivered to the port of Piraeus in Greece (Figure 2), which is part of the European Union and the Three Seas Initiative. The goods will then be distributed by land via 3SI's infrastructure, such as Via Carpathia. It is estimated that, in addition to creating an alternative trade route to the Suez Canal, IMEC will help shorten the delivery time of goods by approximately 40 percent (Shahnawaz, 2023). The project also includes cooperation and connection with cables enabling digital connectivity and pipes to supply clean hydrogen (Das, 2024). The October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks and Israeli military actions in Gaza created a severe challenge to IMEC. Normalisation talks between Tel Aviv and Riyadh have been suspended. Any project linking Jordan with Israel encounters resistance from the large Palestinian population living in Jordan. However, considering the presentation of India's position, New Delhi is ready to implement the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (Khan, 2023). This project offers a wealth of potential economic benefits on both a regional and transcontinental scale, primarily by reducing costs and increasing the speed of cargo transportation.

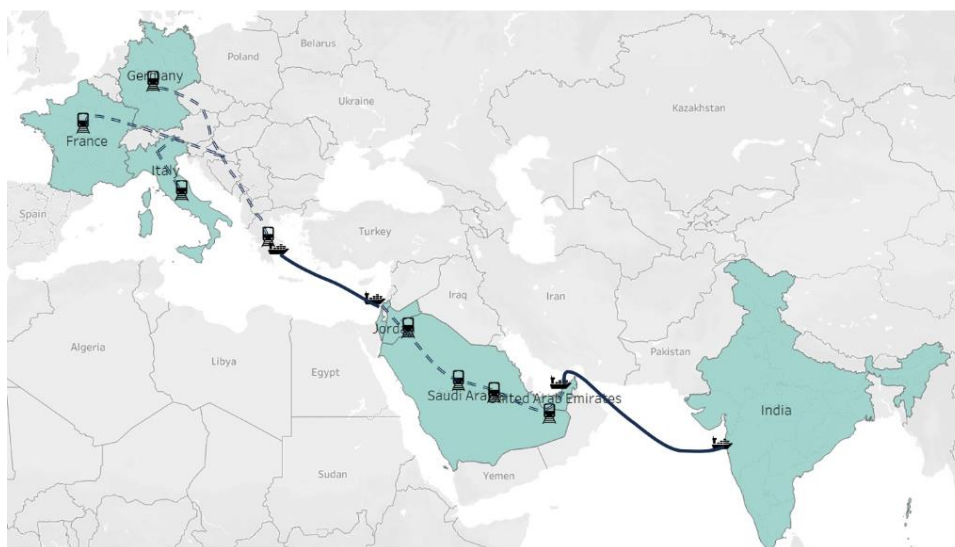


Figure 2. IMEC with West Europe Access

Source: Yagyavalk, B., and Jitendra, R. (2023). India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Bridging Economic and Digital Aspirations. *KAPSARC Instant Insight*.

In early February 2024, Indian Prime Minister Modi visited the United Arab Emirates and Qatar as part of New Delhi's continued diplomatic strategy to strengthen ties with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. The UAE is India's second-largest export market and third trade partner (Figure 3). The two countries signed a free trade agreement in 2023 to boost trade in non-oil products. During the Prime Minister's visit to Abu Dhabi, India and the United Arab Emirates signed the MoU on a trade corridor to connect Europe with India by sea and rail through parts of the Middle East. The two countries also signed a bilateral investment treaty and exchanged cooperation agreements covering electricity connections, trade, and digital infrastructure. It was signed in the face of Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, which have threatened global trade through the sea route. Moreover, agreements between India and the UAE supporting IMEC may reduce the effectiveness of China's global One Belt One Road Initiative strategy. The research results demonstrate enormous trade dynamics in the 21st century between India and the UAE. At the same time, the trade exchange of New Delhi with Israel remains at a low level (Figure 4). Nevertheless, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor's dynamic implementation will improve this situation. For the effectiveness of this goal, in January 2023, a few months before signing the MoU on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, the Indian multinational port operator and logistics company - Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ) outbid the Chinese in a tender for shares in the port of Haifa (Vohra, 2023).

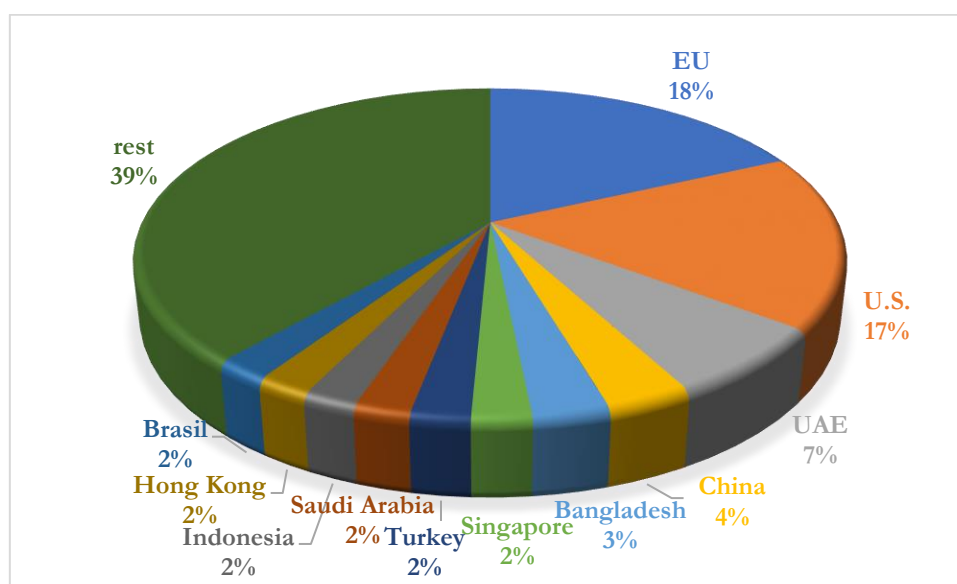


Figure 3. India's Trade Partners

Source: Authors' results based on the Observatory of Economic Complexity (<https://oec.world/en>)

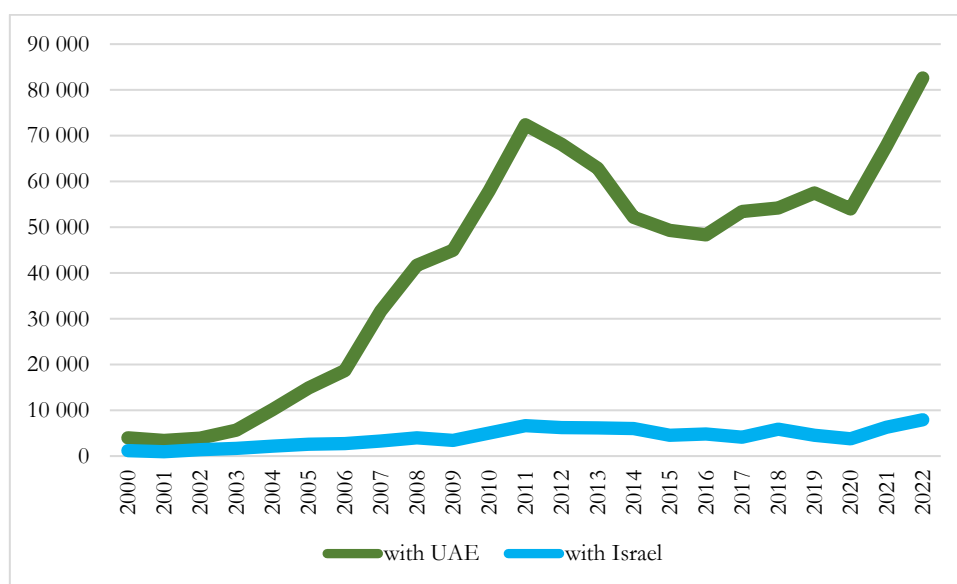


Figure 4. India's Trade with UAE and Israel (in millions)

Source: Authors' results based on the Observatory of Economic Complexity (<https://oec.world/en>)

However, due to the situation in Gaza, Saudi Arabia has suspended plans to normalise relations with Israel, which poses a severe challenge to the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor implementation (Cornwell & Kamdar, 2024). Although the biggest obstacle in implementing IMEC is the situation in Gaza, there have also been some logistical and financial challenges. So far, the project has not had a feasibility study on pipelines delivering clean hydrogen or high-speed digital cables intended to optimise digital business. It is not specified who will bear their costs, estimated at tens of billions of dollars (Vohra, 2023). However, in a positive sign that IMEC remains a focus of action, France has appointed Gerard Mestrallet, former CEO of French energy company Engie, as its official envoy for the project (Sullivan, 2024).

The research results indicate that the international role of a state is a system of activities and influences in the global arena, determined mainly by its international position. Moreover, the conditions of adaptation processes are highly complex and dynamic. The actual and perceptual dimensions determine them and come from the internal or external environment of the entity. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is an example of adopting a strategy considering the participating entity's hierarchy of interests.

4.3. Three Seas Initiative

Trends influence the state's position in the evolution of the international relations system. These processes affect the actions of various actors in global affairs and are subject to internalisation. They determine the behaviour of states and, consequently, influence the roles they declare and play. They may also constitute the basis for roles imposed on the state. However, the degree to which trends in the international environment influence state roles will depend on the state's position. A state with a more robust position is instead the creator of new trends or at least contributes to their development. In contrast, a state with a weak position does not influence changes in the international order but is more susceptible to their consequences. The position in international relations is a significant factor in shaping the roles of the state.

The Three Seas Initiative was adopted in 2015, based on the initiative of Poland and Croatia. At that time, it included 12 European Union countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that decided on closer economic cooperation, including opening trade routes between the Adriatic, Baltic, and Black Seas (Krzymowski, 2022). Two years earlier, four countries of the later Three Seas Initiative (Visegrad Group) prioritised cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (Krzymowski, 2021b). The research results show that 3SI countries have an increasing trend in trade exchange, especially in the last few years, despite the pandemic time (Figure 5). In September 2023, simultaneously with adopting the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, the Three Seas Initiative was expanded for the first time to include Greece - a Mediterranean country with strategic links with Israel and the UAE and key to IMEC. Athens strives to be a trading centre between Europe and the Middle East (Krzymowski, 2023). The Three Seas Initiative is implementing the Via Carpathia project, which will connect the Baltic Sea with Greece and prepare a new trade route. One of the main goals of 3SI is to expand transport infrastructure to enable the new strategic North-South route (Krzymowski, 2020). The Greek port of Piraeus, part of the Three Seas Initiative, is crucial for MEC (Figure 6). In addition, the dynamically developing port of Rijeka on the Adriatic Sea is also connected to the European railway infrastructure (Krzymowski, 2021a). Greece, like other participants in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, identifies this project as an opportunity for its role in trade and international relations (Cafiero, 2023). However, implementing IMEC depends on normalising relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel (Vohra, 2023).

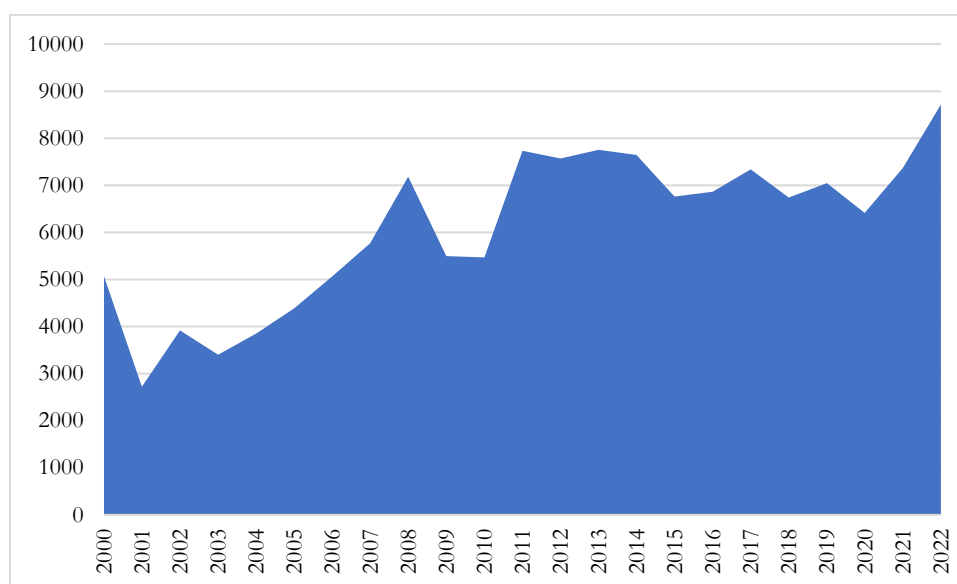


Figure 5. Trade between 3SI and UAE (in millions)

Source: Authors' results based on the Observatory of Economic Complexity (<https://oec.world/en>)



Figure 6. IMEC with 3SI Access

Source: Simpson, W.S. (2023). The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor: Prospects and Challenges for U.S. Businesses. *Bradley Intelligence Report*.

<https://www.bradley.com/insights/publications/2023/10/the-india-middle-east-europe-economic-corridor-prospects-and-challenges-for-us-businesses>

The research results indicate that the role is not only a reflection of the position already occupied by the state but is also of an individual's aspiration. Moreover, the case study of the Three Seas Initiative shows that it should be analysed in the dimension of a group of countries with a particular set of roles, which is shaped by the process of adaptation taking place in international relations, as well as in the internal environment of a given participant. 3SI states create mechanisms of influence by shaping their foreign and economic policy and that of other countries. Consequently, such a system constitutes an impulse to develop

adaptive processes. Another impulse necessary to start adaptation is the appearance of a change in the international system or the internal environment of the entity. Thus, change and influence are crucial to influencing individual elements of the global system (Morgenthau, 1954, p. 225) by one's interests.

4.4. The Discussion of research results

By discussing the importance of answering the research question: What is the geopolitical connection between the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and the Three Seas Initiative, and what is their impact on the role and position of the critical states for those initiatives? It should be emphasized that it is of fundamental importance to shape global economic and political relations that affect the transatlantic and Indo-Pacific areas. Countries participating in these initiatives account for approximately 40 percent of the world's population and 50 percent of the global economy. Therefore, the research results are essential for both theoreticians and practitioners, including decision-makers. The findings present that the Abraham Accords countries, Central Eastern Europe, and India should dynamically adapt their foreign policy and economic diplomacy. The fourth industrial revolution radically changed many spheres of human life, including providing new political and economic dynamics, which created a new environment for economic diplomacy. 21st century faces challenges resulting, among others, from a changing world economy, U.S.-Chinese tensions, and opposition to globalisation. These tensions cause increased dynamics of competition between great powers. In such a situation, the Arab Accords and 3SI countries have an opportunity to grow their role and significance. Furthermore, economic diplomacy should balance commercial openness with broadly understood strategic foreign policy goals and support the state's interests in new world economy instruments. In an interconnected world, applying digital technology is the key to competitiveness. On the other hand, the new impulses of fragmentation in the global trading system result from the escalation of political and economic confrontation. This, in turn, leads to a tendency to use trade means to resolve political tensions.

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor analysis shows the competition between India and China. Beijing wants to maintain its influence over IMEC. Although in January 2023, the Chinese company COSCO lost control of the Haifa port in Israel to a company from India, this company from the Middle Kingdom has been the majority shareholder in the Greek seaport of Piraeus since 2016, influencing its future. Despite India's intensive efforts and Prime Minister Modi's visit to Greece in August 2023, New Delhi failed to take control of this strategic port for the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and the Three Seas Initiative (Vohra, 2023). In addition, Beijing is a crucial investor in the Etihad Rail project, which is an essential part of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, connecting the Jebel Ali seaport in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and Haifa in Israel with a rail network. Additionally, China holds a 20 per cent stake in the Red Sea Gateway Terminal, Saudi Arabia's largest port (Khan, 2023). China's role in the Arab states of the Persian Gulf is growing dynamically, which is reflected in the level of trade exchange. In 2022, the value of China's trade with Saudi Arabia (nearly USD 105 billion) and the United Arab Emirates (over USD 90 billion) will exceed three times the level of trade exchange between these countries with the United States (OEC, 2022). Thus, China influences the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.

Therefore, in implementing IMEC, the Modi government also wants to leverage India's growing ties with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states that have significant populations of Indian diaspora (Huwaidin, 2022). Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reached an agreement with the United Arab Emirates to continue work on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor despite the deepening regional conflict resulting from the war between Israel and Hamas. Shortly after October 7, 2023, the US president stated that "although there is no evidence, in his opinion, one of the reasons for the Hamas

attacks was to hinder progress in Israel's regional integration" (Forough, 2023). Moreover, the high dynamics of the Indian Prime Minister's visits to the United Arab Emirates show the strategic dimension of the relationship. Since 2015, Modi has made seven visits to the UAE. Before this period, the last Indian Prime Minister to visit Abu Dhabi was Indira Gandhi in 1981 (Bloomberg, 2024). In implementing IMEC, India has the support of the United States, which sees this project as a counterweight to China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI) (Afterman & Urhová, 2024, p. 135). For this purpose, the I2U2 Group was established in 2021, consisting of the USA, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and India (Agarwal, 2022). Referring to the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen described the project as "the most direct connection ever between India, the Persian Gulf and Europe." Moreover, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said IMEC will be "the backbone of world trade for hundreds of years" (Sullivan, 2024). Moreover, the European Union has prioritised energy and trade in 2022 under the Strategic Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council, including the United Arab Emirates.

The Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and the Three Seas Initiative are closely interconnected and fit into the strategies of the participating countries based on creative adaptation (Kodabux, 2019). The research results show that countries participating in these initiatives accept their roles in international political and economic relations, adapting to ongoing changes (Rosenau, 1981). In light of global competition among leading actors, these new trade routes and dynamic economic cooperation enhance their soft power, influencing other participants in international political and economic relations (Evans & Bruce, 1991, p. 325). In these initiatives, small countries such as Israel and the United Arab Emirates can pursue them with greater flexibility and, consequently, greater creativity (Katzenstein, 1985). The combination of the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and the Three Seas Initiative should be a model of creative adaptation that will contribute to shaping the changing international situation through national interest. As a result, the roles and positions of countries participating in these projects and other entities will also be shaped (Conway & Feigert, 1987, pp. 136-39). Then, interaction and shared influence determine the place and roles in their relationships (Keohane, 2012, p. 19). Therefore, the role theory complements the adaptation theory when examining the foreign and economic policies of the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and the Three Seas Initiative (Walker, 1987, p. 244).

5. CONCLUSION

The outcomes show that the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor, and the Three Seas Initiative countries have an inspiring role in shaping a new global order. All three of these initiatives are strategies for active and creative adaptation to the high dynamics of changes in the international order. The study results show that their strategic connection should be noticed as an area connecting the North with the South and two spaces, i.e., the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific, which influence each other. 3SI projects have a chance to be a source of new Gulf Cooperation Council countries' economic diplomacy initiatives. On the other hand, in the security dimension, both areas can potentially increase the impact on the emerging new global security architecture through transatlantic and Asian structures. The dynamic development of the relations between the United Arab Emirates and Israel may increase the potential to influence international relations through a new formula of Israel-UAE-3SI. Four Three Seas Initiative countries, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, within the V 4+ mini-lateral group, initiated cooperation with Israel and GCC. Moreover, joint Israeli and UAE projects should be an important area of cooperation between the Abraham Accords and the Three Seas Initiative countries. The project outcomes will demonstrate how the initiatives of the Central Eastern Countries and India with IMEC have the potential to become influential platforms of cooperation for building sustainable

international relations, including in the economy. The research results will contribute to developing ideas about role and adaptation, effectiveness, and impact on the emerging (multi)polar world order.

The presented research problem is significant because it concerns the growing role and position of international relations between Central and Eastern Europe, the Abraham Accords countries, and India. Its importance takes on an even deeper dimension considering the dynamic development of cooperation in recent years between the two areas considering the emerging new global order. Moreover, the proposed article fills the gap in the research area. It is the first research linking Central Eastern Europe, especially the Three Seas Initiative, with the Abraham Accords and India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor countries, with the deep consideration of those platforms of cooperation's role in co-shaping a new economic corridor.

The research results indicate that the leader countries of the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and the Three Seas Initiative, i.e., India, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, and Poland, demonstrate the roles of conception, prescription, and performance. However, declared roles have a more significant impact on the final shape of the state's activities than expected roles (Holsti, 1970, p. 239). Moreover, these countries introduce their roles in foreign policy as active independence, influence, and development orientation. Considering Walker's (1987, pp. 287-293) concept of combining various classifications of international roles of the state, the Abraham Accords, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and the Three Seas Initiative are examples of exchange as a type of political process and cooperation as a model of situation shaping the essential international role. Moreover, state leaders in the presented initiatives show three types of roles distinguished by Aggestam (1999, p. 9), i.e., expected - by other actors and groups (expectation roles), declared (conception roles) and played, meaning decisions and actions taken in politics foreign as performance roles.

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