

# **Gwadar Deep Water Port Project – heading for Boom or Doom?**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

Gwadar Deep Water Port Project has been a dream project. Strategic objectives set for the project were ambitious – Transshipment Hub, Transit Trade Gateway for Central Asian Republics and China, Gateway for National Seaborne Trade, Industrial Growth and Development of Gwadar City. Six years since Phase-1 of the Project was concluded and Gwadar Port operationalised, the Port remains dormant, waiting for its first commercial ship. To prevent the port from total dormancy, a modicum of government break-bulk agro-cargo is occasionally off-loaded at Gwadar which is then trucked 625 km to Karachi, the country's main port, incurring a substantial transportation subsidy which is eventually passed on to the taxpayer or the farmer. The current situation aside, the national leadership and think tanks continue to harp on the Project's brilliant prospects for the future, likening Gwadar to the leading ports of the World. This dichotomy between the thinking and the reality calls for a study on the Project and the Port to address the "why" and "where to" questions, as indeed the assessment of the whole project in terms of Delivery, Outcome and Impact, the established three-point success criteria for any mega project. The problem needs to be discussed and analysed in the perspectives of the contemporary strategic and ports and shipping environments; the results will be conclusions to the present and the future of the Port and subsequent three expansion phases of the Project. Only a positive outcome of the study will justify pumping in further funds into the Project which has already consumed over 300 million USD of the taxpayers' money. In the event of a negative outcome emerging from the study, the question to address then will be what to do with the Port and the Project.

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