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Harbours Of Influence: Gwadar Vs. Piraeus-A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

China's Belt and Road Initiative is a top-tier scheme of political economy. This research paper aims to analyze China's BRI strategy by comparing the goals, implementation and outcomes of two current flagship projects of BRI: Gwadar Port (CPEC) and Piraeus Port. This research paper employed secondary data from official government websites and credible news outlets to conduct a comparative analysis. This research concluded that China's BRI strategy is built along the lines of neo-realism, hence, pure economic interest but China has incorporated its geo-political motives in it too. The BRI strategy focuses on operationalizing the bare minimum of each project to benefit China quickly while all the lucrative benefits promised to the partnering nations take a back seat and even these aspects of BRI-associated projects are used up for the Chinese betterment first while the ignorance of local sentiments tends to shape up a negative narrative for China. Moreover, China does not have a working plan in place to overcome possible hurdles for projects which causes delays and local grievances. Also, there is exploitation of local labour and environment-damaging practices. To improve its BRI strategy, China needs to pay more attention towards making its projects more sustainable and change its stance on being environmentally conscious and providing good working conditions. In addition, China should be more efficient and transparent while fulfilling the promises to the partnering nations and make case-specific plans of action regarding the tackling of hurdles towards the development of projects.

Key Words: China, BRI, Gwadar Port, CPEC, Piraeus Port,

i. Introduction

Ever since 1985, Pakistan has had full ownership of the small fishing town called Gwadar on the coastline of the Arabian Sea in the southwestern province of Balochistan after it was bought from Oman (Ansari, 2018). However, at that time, Gwadar's geo-strategic importance was little to none; it can't hold a candle to the importance of Gwadar today. On the other hand, the Piraeus Port is steeped in rich Greek history, especially since it has been around since the 5th century BCE and was the chief port of Europe for a very extensive period (Hadjimanolakis, n.d.). Although both these ports are aeons of miles apart from each other, on different continents, established centuries apart, they are united by something common in the contemporary geostrategic discourse. The common factor happens to be China's Belt and Road Initiative under which China has planned to invest in 150 states of the world in terms of infrastructure to up the level of China's economic game through efficient global access (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). China's BRI is the next big thing looming on the horizon of the international arena; it will put China on the pedestal of being a superpower. The work of the BRI started a good decade and it started with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the apex of which is Gwadar through which China will be connected to the westernmost part of China. Gwadar is so crucial for the BRI that CPEC is essentially the '*flagship*' project of One Belt, One Road. On the other hand, China gained majority ownership of the Piraeus Port in 2016 and it became the focal point of BRI in Europe to date. The comparative analysis of both these ports provides an insight into the BRI strategy of China and the level of adaptability showcased in it.

ii. Literature Review

Goals of CPEC

The objective which makes up the backbone of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is that the connection to Gwadar through Pakistan greatly cuts down the amount of distance that Chinese products have to travel to reach the rest of the world, hence facilitating a cut in the net cost of production (CPEC Secretariat, n.d.).

Apart from the straightforward economic benefits that it is supposed to bring for China, CPEC is supposed to benefit Pakistan too. A major aspect of the CPEC is that China has to make hefty investments in Pakistan in terms of infrastructure and energy-based projects among other things. This in turn is supposed to trigger a domino reaction of sorts because the development of infrastructure facilitates a better economy and subsequently, internal stability. This, in turn, is supposed to improve the economic conditions of Pakistan and bring much-needed stability to the region. This is targeted to lend political stability to the western region of China as well (Zhiqin & Yang, 2016).

In addition to this, by making Gwadar its new economic focal point in the region, China aims to gain much through the geostrategic location of Pakistan at a link between China, South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Since China's strategic space in the east is being challenged by America, the idea is to expand the Chinese influence westwards into the rest of the Asian continent (Zhiqin & Yang, 2016).

One of the strategic goals of investment in Gwadar through CPEC is to counter the weight of India in South Asia. If economic development in Pakistan lends stability to it and China digs its roots deep into Gwadar, it will give China's naval strategy a cutting edge against India and indirectly, against the United States too, especially since China has significant control over Hambantota port in Sri Lanka and it is building the Payra port in Bangladesh. CPEC will do loads to improve China's access to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean (Sacks, 2021).

The official agenda of CPEC shows that the goals of CPEC far exceed infrastructure and energy sectors, but cooperation between China and Pakistan is supposed to extend to science and information technology, human development, social service improvement and tourism for the betterment of Pakistan (CPEC Secretariat, n.d.).

In addition to this, China's investment in Gwadar is also aimed at branching out and fortifying China's access to the major oil routes of the world and countering India in the process because the latter has been keenly investing in the Chahbahar port of Iran and securing fossil fuels for itself and wants to prevent China from exuding more influence in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean at large (Khan, 2012).

Moreover, the ultimate aim that the rest of CPEC is designed to support is that Gwadar be turned into a transnational hub. This deep-sea port is supposed to be coupled by special economic zones and export-based industries are projected to prosper because of Gwadar port (Jorgic, 2017).

With the full functionality of Gwadar, China is looking at some serious savings on the fossil fuels that it imports. Analysts have calculated that if China only opts to transport half of its current oil imports through CPEC into the western region of the country, it is projected to save a whopping \$6 million every day and that shows how highly important Gwadar is to China (Salman, 2015).

Goals of Piraeus Port

The President of China himself stated clearly during his visit to the Piraeus Port that it would greatly enhance the connectivity between China and Europe since Piraeus is the biggest port in Greece and China's national company is the majority owner of the port. He described it as a speedy sea-land link (Bali, 2022). Not only that, China's investment in Piraeus is also aimed at improving its connection and accessibility to the Middle East (Kidera, 2021).

Moreover, the geostrategic location of the Piraeus Port is such that it is adjacent to one of the busiest shipping routes of the world which is the Suez Canal and into the Strait of Gibraltar. Not only is that very beneficial for China, but its access within Europe has increased significantly because an extensive road and railway network connects Greece to the rest of Europe and subsequently, Piraeus (Calatayud, 2023).

In addition, the prospective benefits for Greece in this scenario lie in the lobby of the ship owners because they are the source of much of the national revenue and their vested interests coincide with what China has in mind about Piraeus and there is much to be gained (Calatayud, 2023).

Also, further improvement and development of the Piraeus port will improve economic prospects for the Greeks and this will facilitate international trade in general, with China in particular. China's hold over Piraeus also comes with policies about the shipbuilding industry and loaning which are supposed to benefit the people of Greece too, along with fulfilling the Chinese interests (Calatayud, 2023).

Furthermore, Piraeus is not only important in terms of the cargo it handles, but it also garners a lot of attention about cruise ships and as a maintenance centre of ocean liners in the region (Global Times, 2021).

Other than that, China aims to gain much out of Piraeus by developing it into the biggest commercial port in Europe. The aim is to increase its capacity as a transit port so that the sheer volume of Chinese exports to that part of the world would rapidly increase. Not only this, China wishes to invest in other sectors in Greece like energy and banking (Reuters Staff, 2019).

Implementation of CPEC

The implementation of the development plans under CPEC has been underway for quite some time and is divided into phases. The infrastructure-oriented projects of CPEC are being implemented rapidly, especially the road network from the north to the south of Pakistan has improved a lot with the creation of new motorways, the railway network is also being worked upon and intra-city projects like the Orange Line Metro Train have also been completed (Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, 2023).

The majority of the energy sector-related projects have reached completion and the rest 6 are expected to be done by 2025. However, if all the projects of CPEC are seen, only 27 were completed till last year with 63 pending to be completed till 2030 (Anonymous, 2022).

Implementation of the projects of the first and second phases of CPEC has been slowed down due to several factors like political instability, economic crisis, corruption and resurgence of terrorism in Afghanistan (Ahmad, 2023). The progress was extremely delayed during the tenure of the PTI government and the power struggle involved in its toppling but the long-term collaboration between China and Pakistan stands strong (Kugelman, 2023).

Under CPEC, the creation of a whopping 2.3 million vacancies in Pakistan was promised by China by the end of 2030 but the way that things are going, only a measly 236,000 positions have been created and only 155,000 of these are occupied by the citizens of Pakistan. Similarly, a major hospital in Gwadar which was to be completed in 2022 has not been completed as of mid-2023. The progress of special economic zones has not hit the halfway mark yet (Ahmad, 2023).

Implementation of Piraeus Port

The speed of Chinese investments flowing into Piraeus is much slower than the expected pace and promised targets have not been met. This is leading to frustration for the Greeks, especially since the working conditions do not come on par with the

standards of the EU. There have been massive delays in implementation which arise from opposition from the locals, administrative delays and Greek non-acceptance of the way COSCO works around environmental regulations (Kidera, 2021). COSCO's lack of concern for the environment and safety of people working on their projects has been a major cause of delays because the wages and working hours put the locals in an unfortunate position and the Chinese national company has been unwilling to negotiate with them, resulting in organized protests, strikes and bans which creates hurdles in the working of the shipping company (Calatayud, 2023).

Outcomes of CPEC

The ongoing development of Gwadar and affiliated projects of CPEC has resulted in a significant increase in the volume of trade being handled there. Official statistics show that from 2022 to mid-2023, 637,124 metric tons were handled at Gwadar port which is far higher than 166,207 metric tons from the year 2018-2021 (CPEC Secretariat, 2023).

Several major infrastructural projects have been completed like the Havelian to Thakot section of the Karakoram Highway and M5 among other things. Energy projects like the Sahiwal coal power plant have become operationalized (Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, 2023).

New geopolitical implications have risen for Pakistan. There is a very strong narrative floating in the country that CPEC is undermining the sovereignty of Pakistan because it is a newly designed way of exercising neo-colonialism in a fashion somewhat similar to the entry of the British East India Company into the sub-continent (Ahmad, 2023).

Additionally, the loans being given to Pakistan by China under the umbrella of CPEC are leading to questions about debt sustainability particularly because Pakistan is a very debt-ridden economy (Khaliq, n.d.).

While on one hand, development in Balochistan has supposedly improved the security situation simultaneously CPEC is fueling unrest in the province because the local interests are at odds with the Chinese interests and Balochis demand more of a share in profits that the Pakistani national government is supposed to earn out of CPEC (Ahmad, 2023).

Outcomes of Piraeus Port

The volume of trade being handled at Piraeus port has increased a lot and it acts as the focal point for the transit of Chinese exports in the Mediterranean region its importance in south-eastern Europe has increased to the extent that it is actively damaging the profits of other transshipment ports in the vicinity (Bali, 2022).

Apart from the sheer cargo that it handles, Piraeus is now the biggest port for ferries in Europe and gains the third-most traffic of cruise ships (China Daily, 2023).

Moreover, China has been investing in social-service-oriented projects and has been creating jobs, leading to 13,000 jobs locals are employed both directly and indirectly. It is also working on education and culture in Piraeus (Xinhua, 2023).

COSCO does not operate by the EU's stringent guidelines regarding working conditions and environment and leans towards wanting to talk itself out of these regulations, which has been creating issues in the working of the company in Greece (Calatayud, 2023).

iii. Research Design and Analysis Approach

This is a qualitative piece of research, done with the use of secondary data obtained from several verified news outlets and government-run websites. The research design adopted for this particular piece of work is comparative and this comparison has been done between the case studies of Gwadar port and the Piraeus port. The measure of comparison was taken to be the goals, implementation and outcomes of both projects to analyze the BRI strategy of China appropriately.

iv. Analysis of the Goals of Gwadar and Piraeus Ports

Analysis of Goals of Gwadar Port

The primary goal of the investment in Gwadar and CPEC in the first place, happens to be the product of a cost-benefit analysis. To put it simply, in the modern age of free market economies and capitalism, the majority of the products on the shelves are produced in something called a supply chain with different components of a product might come from different places, depending on where the cost of production is the lowest. What China has, is a very large population and top-notch technology to support it which results in a significantly low cost of production. In the given scenario, China is one of the biggest exporting countries in the world. However, to reach the majority of the markets, the products have to go all the way around the eastern shoreline of the country to the rest of the world, which tacks on more prices to whatever is being exported. Therefore, the major motive of the development of Gwadar is to cut short the distance that Chinese exports have to travel which would result in a further reduction in the cost of production, hence, strengthening China's position as an exporting country which is in the pursuit of ultimate global power. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor essentially cuts diagonally through the length of Pakistan and makes the access to the deep-sea port of Gwadar, a much more feasible option.

Moreover, it is important to understand that China's BRI strategy is tied quite deeply to giving mutual benefit to Pakistan with the Chinese investment in CPEC and ultimately Gwadar. If the goal was just to develop Gwadar for straightforward economic benefits, it would've been a cheaper deal for China but there is a major reason behind turning CPEC into a mega-scheme of investing in a bunch of sectors in Pakistan like infrastructure and energy. The obvious answer to this would be that Pakistan was not going to let China take over its port for free; something had to be given in return. However, this reasoning only scratches the surface of how China aims to benefit from CPEC. The high-level, multiple-tiered investment is supposed to improve the socio-economic situation of Pakistan (Shahzad & Javaid, 2020) and with that; Pakistan will be on the road to better internal stability. This political stability in return is supposed to create stability in the western region of China which will increase its national integrity and help solve internal grievances. Therefore, the aim of CPEC is not only to stabilize and develop Pakistan just because these two states happen to be good friends, rather this is supposed to strengthen China from within too.

Furthermore, the geostrategic purposes do not happen to stop there. For a while now, China has been paving its way to become the next superpower. To do so, China needs to maximize the influence that it has. With America strategically challenging the Chinese influence and hold in the east with things like strong partnerships with states like South Korea and Australia, China needed to devise a way to counter that. This geostrategy is associated with the spatial location of Pakistan on the world map. Pakistan holds such a unique position in Asia that it is direct neighbours with China and India and is a stone's throw from Central Asia and the Middle East. Since extending its influence eastwards isn't working, China aims to use Pakistan as the centre point for increasing its sway over Central Asia and the Middle East, especially since the latter happens to be a very good market for China to sell to.

Other than that, China has naval interests attached to CPEC and this comes into play, majorly because of India. India gets America's support by the truckload and they both are at odds with China and the recent military modernization of India during the Modi government poses a security concern like no other (Javaid & Javaid, 2016). The presence of the USA in the Indian Ocean is quite notable as it is because of the South China Sea and adding Indian navy in the mix was not a good sight for China. Therefore, China resolved to improve its naval presence in the South Asian region, at the helm of major trade arteries of the world through the ports of other countries. On the eastern side of South Asia, China has created a presence for itself through the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka which it largely controls; through the building of Payra port in Bangladesh. Hence, it makes sense why holding Gwadar on the west of India has allowed China to be better prepared to encase the Indian navy from both sides when the situation might demand.

In addition to this, the scope on which the CPEC is supposed to unfold is very large. The cooperation between China and Pakistan is designed to extend way beyond the domains of energy and infrastructure. Firstly, they are supposed to collaborate in the various fields of science and technology. Pakistan is a developing state and lacks much innovation in all walks of life whereas China happens to be an ultra-developed country with some of the newest and groundbreaking inventions and tech coming out of China. Thus, it makes sense why Pakistan would put it on the agenda to get China's help on the matter. Secondly, human development and social services happen to be a part of the official agenda of CPEC. What is interesting here is that is a communist country with a regime which is not very transparent. The information that comes out of China is controlled by the state itself and all of China is not as developed as the sparkly cities of Beijing and Shanghai might fool people into believing. The labour laws and living conditions of China itself aren't on the standard of what we consider to be the welfare states. In this scenario, this particular agenda of the CPEC seems a little off-kilter because a state which isn't the best at human development and social welfare can only do so much in helping another state build its social welfare system on a solid foundation. Other than that, tourism is something that is supposed to improve under CPEC. Given the long nature of the friendly terms between China and Pakistan, naturally, people of both states develop an intrigue towards each other which can be seen exhibited in the increasing number of nationals from both sides who visit the Khunjerab pass each year, but then again China is not the most easy to navigate for tourists from around the world so not much can be said about the extent to which China might help boost the tourism sector and strategy of Pakistan.

Moving on, the world runs on fossil fuels and the major supply routes from the majority of the OPEC countries (Middle Eastern states) pass through the feet of South Asia. India happened to improve its access to this route by creating a significant presence for itself in Iran's Chahbahar port. Therefore, to prevent India from having the whole cake, China's investment in Gwadar comes into play.

Additionally, the main purpose of CPEC is to turn Gwadar into a state-of-the-art port which would be a transnational hub, facilitating trade for not only China and Pakistan but the landlocked Central Asian states too. The more countries that get involved with the CPEC limb of BRI, the more transit revenue will be generated by Pakistan and the more trade it will be able to do itself. Moreover, for China, this means that trade with CAS will become more efficient and its influence over everything west of Pakistan will inadvertently escalate too. Also, other sectors of Pakistan which are to be improved under CPEC are designed in a way to make industrialization an easier hurdle to cross which will lead to the stream of trade already occurring through the use of Pakistani land.

Apart from the costs that China can cut on its production, with the use of Gwadar to import oil, it is projected that China can billions even if only the supply for the western areas of China is brought this way around, as much as \$6 million every day. This will lead to slashing in oil prices in the country which will further increase the level of production.

Analysis of Goals of Piraeus Port

As far as the goals of the Piraeus Port are concerned, it is supposed to serve as what is being called the 'sea-land link'. Since China's national shipping company has control of the port, it aims to serve the purpose of enhancing connectivity between China and Europe as well as China and the Middle East. Rather than Chinese cargo having to land in various Ports of Europe, the shipping operation will be streamlined through it, facilitating better organization on the part of China.

Other than that, the strategy behind acquiring Piraeus was also based on establishing a Chinese hub in very close proximity to the Suez Canal. If China uses Piraeus to head its operation in the region and products are stored there and shipped from there to Europe and the Middle East, it will be incredibly efficient. Moreover, Europe has a very well-established and vast network of means of transport and China's presence in Greece means that it has access to all these pre-made resources which can be used to trade within Europe itself while also accessing resources which are cheaper there yet more expensive in China.

Greece does not have the strongest economy in Europe but a prominent feature of its economy is that ship-owners are some of the biggest lobbyists. A large portion of the national income is generated by the ship-owners and they constitute a very persuasive interest group; the interests of this group closely align with those that China holds with regards to Piraeus Port. With the majority ownership in the hands of China, this port is supposed to develop a lot in terms of the level of operations it can carry out. Therefore, the shipping lobby will have increased opportunities for further elevating their income.

Other than that, a country which is already very well-off in terms of economy might not have a lot of interest in actively partaking in a foreign collaboration on one of its biggest ports but Greece has much to gain through COSCO's control of Piraeus. The Greek economy has a large room for improvement through international trade which is expected to increase in general, particularly with China.

Also, Piraeus is already much more important in terms of the functions it serves than a mere cargo handling port. This is because Piraeus is a very popular docking station for cruise ships which is a very profitable industry in itself. In addition, it also serves as a maintenance station for ocean liners which is a separate industry in itself which generates a lot of money as exhibited by the Netherlands. With the capacity-building of Piraeus, more cruises and maintenance vessels will head there. That's why the goal is to make Piraeus an even more versatile port which would garner more attention.

If there is one thing that makes China stand out, it would probably be the sheer scale of things that it does. The takeover of Piraeus is not just about having a port in Europe; rather it's about turning it into *the biggest* commercial port in the continent. Such a large-scale project is needed to handle transit cargo for China in the Western Hemisphere essentially. Additionally, China has explicitly expressed its intention to branch out into the energy and banking sectors in Greece. The reason behind this is to deepen its roots in the country which would make Greece a long-term ally for China in Europe because energy and finance, once linked, will make Greece extremely reliant on China for optimum functioning.

Analysis of Implementation of CPEC (Gwadar Port included)

As far as the implementation of the infrastructure projects under CPEC is concerned like projects associated with the extension and betterment of the road and railway network, they have been started since the time that CPEC was initiated and several of these projects have been completed like the new chunks of motorways dissecting the belly of the country, massive amounts of work on the KKH and projects like Orange Line Metro Train in Lahore. What the official website of the CPEC secretariat reports is a very rosy picture of the implementation of CPEC and the statements issued by the Pakistani government officials overseeing it reflect the same glorified sentiment.

Moreover, the implementation of energy-related projects by CPEC presents a very unique conundrum. It is reported by the Pakistani government that most of the energy-generating projects have been completed with only 6 pending ones which will be completed by 2025. This figure shows that most of the work is done and it would meet the deadline. However, in the same article, it was highlighted that out of all the projects under CPEC, a mere 27 have reached the state of completion but 63 more need to be developed by the end of this decade. This shows the real speed of development and raises questions over why the lack of speedy implementation is being sugarcoated by the Pakistani government when it needs to put all hands on deck to fulfil the targets which have been publically set.

As mentioned earlier in this research, one of the goals of developing Gwadar and projects feeding into it is to create political stability in Pakistan yet the on-ground scenario is that the political instability of the country has been slowing down the pace at which things are done. Frequent changes in leadership with things like mass protests and sit-ins create a lot of issues like delays in relinquishing funds and permissions as well as a lag in the transport of building materials. The whole tenure of the PTI-led government was very rocky with the government first being sceptical about CPEC since it was initiated by the previous PML-N government and then the whole struggle of trying to oust Imran Khan from the seat of power put national security and stability on the back-burner. Moreover, the economic crisis within Pakistan has become so severe in recent years that the state was on the brink of bankruptcy naturally, CPEC and Gwadar took a back seat in the debt crisis, and inflation and a shrinking job market became the top priorities for things to be worked on. Also, corruption happens to be one of the chief issues that have plagued the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor with things sometimes happening in not the most efficient way, but in a way that fills the most pockets with money that definitely should not be going there. People involved in different tiers of administration keep their cuts from whatever funds are received by the government, which means that the actual project which was supposed to be done with that money has to be completed with less money than what is shown on paper which compromises the quality of the work being done. Other than that, with Taliban regaining the control of Afghanistan and the resurgence of terrorism so close to Pakistan, the safety situation in the southwestern province of Balochistan is not very ideal, especially since Chinese nationals are involved in the on-ground work being done in the area which has also posed a hurdle in the implementation of all that CPEC sets out to do.

The interesting thing about CPEC is that with it being the flagship project of the BRI, big promises were made by China and big goals were set but its ability to deliver on these promises is still up in the air. The extent to which the development of Gwadar would benefit Pakistan was hyped up quite a bit and the creation of 2.3 million jobs in the country by 2030 was promised but at the end of 2023, with 7 years pending on this due date, the statistics tell a very harsh story. The jobs created so far have been 236,000 but only 155,000 of these jobs are done by Pakistani citizens. Therefore, it is important to understand that there have been omissions in the fine print of CPEC which were overlooked by the Pakistani government and the supposed welfare which was to emerge as a result of CPEC is not being particularly felt because these jobs are needed in Pakistan with an overwhelming youth population and a continuously shrinking job market.

Apart from many other projects under the headline of CPEC, the development of Gwadar itself has not been the most amazing with China just focusing on the essential functionality of the port rather than things that would improve the locality of Gwadar itself or the creation of facilities that are needed in Gwadar for it to be the international transit hub of its dreams (Javaid, 2023). For example, a hospital in Gwadar was scheduled to be completed in 2022, but it has not happened even a year after that deadline. Similarly, there is very little progress on the front of specialized economic zones in the country.

Analysis of Implementation of Piraeus Port

As far as the implementation of what China has envisioned and promised concerning Piraeus Port is concerned, it is not picking up the pace that China would've wanted. The initial targets for the development of Piraeus were a tad too ambitious

which is why they have not been met yet. The volume of Chinese trade that it was set to handle is still in the process of being reached and other aspects of port development which were supposed to benefit the Greeks; this is a source of frustration for the locals. There are certain hurdles in implementation which need to be considered. Firstly, China has a reputation for putting economic prosperity at the forefront of its operations and human and environmental aspects of things go on the back-burner. However, the European Union has strict codes in place for what labour is supposed to look like and how the environment needs to be safeguarded. China's approach towards these things at Piraeus collides head-on with European standards and falls severely short. This leads to public outbursts, delays on the administrative end and pushback from the Greek government regarding the environmental regulations all of which cause delays in implementation.

Also, China has a reputation for unethical labour practices within the country, it is not very great when it comes to complying with the labour standards and working conditions that other parts of the world have. Therefore, the wages that they pay to the Greek labourers are sub-par and the hours are long and not regulated. While the Greek locals want this to change, COSCO is not willing to budge from its practices because doing all this would mean that it would have to pay more to get the same amount of work done and it would take longer too. Therefore, the locals and labor unions tend to organize a lot of protests which mess with the timelines that China has set for the development of the Piraeus Port.

Analysis of the Outcomes of Gwadar Port

One of the main agendas for the development of Gwadar port to begin with, was that a lot more volume of trade in general (China's in particular) would be handled through it. What the Pakistani officials say is that CPEC is becoming successful and the development of Gwadar is paying off by looking at the increase in the volume of trade in 2022-23 as compared to 2021-22.

Moreover, part of CPEC included major investments in infrastructure in Pakistan several major roads and railway initiatives have been completed and some energy-related projects like the Sahiwal coal project have been completed. These examples have been used by the Pakistani government to convince the people that CPEC's targets are well on the way towards completion.

In addition to this, one of the outcomes that China might not have expected was that not all Pakistanis are very open towards the concept of China becoming so involved in such a key port of Pakistan. The Chinese presence and ties with the Pakistani economy are also viewed as a type of neo-colonialism. There is a narrative going around that China will gradually take over all resources that Pakistan has to offer, in a fashion similar to the British East India Company. The reason behind this sentiment might be that the citizens of Pakistan do not see themselves benefiting from CPEC as much as the hype created by the government suggested.

Another major outcome of CPEC is that the loans that China gives to Pakistan under this project have raised significant questions about debt sustainability especially since Pakistan has a history of being a debt-ridden country and this has led to significant political crisis, inflation and political unrest. At the end of the day, loans are loans in whatever form they come and they need to be repaid by Pakistan.

What also needs to be considered is that on one hand, it seems that a lot of development is being done in Balochistan. Gwadar is the focal point of CPEC which has improved the security situation of the area but on the other hand, the locals of the area resist the Chinese because their interests clash directly. While the Chinese are just focused on the operationalization of the port itself, the city of Gwadar continues to suffer and life for the natives has become harder.

Analysis of the Outcomes of Piraeus Port

The Piraeus port was already decent-sized and with COSCO taking over, its role as a transit port has become much more important. The amount of transit trade being handled has seen a lot of boom and it is also actively damaging the business that other transit ports of Europe were getting. Also, Piraeus is not just a destination for cargo ships and with the expansion in its operations, the amount of ferries and cruise ships visiting the port has increased too.

Although the general outlook of the Greek nationals says otherwise, China claims that it is working on social-service-oriented projects in Greece and is also contributing towards education and culture in Piraeus. Moreover, with the expansion of the port, more jobs have been created which amount to 13,000 but what China glosses over is that a lot of these are fulfilled by the Chinese nationals brought by COSCO.

Another outcome is that there is a constant tussle between COSCO and the Greek and EU officials because COSCO is not that invested in actually fulfilling the environmental regulations and labour laws which have been set in place.

v. Findings

Through the process of analyzing the goals, implementation and outcomes of Piraeus Port and Gwadar Port under CPEC, several findings are generated about the BRI strategy of China.

What has become abundantly clear is that the idea behind the BRI strategy is to ultimately make China a global superpower based on its economic power. Both the Gwadar and Piraeus ports are supposed to help do so in different ways. China's presence and trade through Gwadar means that it is going to save billions each year on just the petroleum products that it imports and it will be cheaper for it to buy things and the cost of its products will reduce too, facilitating more trade. Piraeus on the other hand is designed to help China reach this goal by increasing the volume of Chinese products in the Mediterranean region.

Moreover, since it is well beyond the era of colonialism, China is countering the usage of these ports by offering benefits to Pakistan and Greece out of its involvement in their national soils. In the case of Greece, these benefits have a much smaller scope and the Greek nationals do not seem to think that they are getting much out of COSCO's control over Piraeus. In the case of Pakistan, China's operations in Gwadar have been expanded to include a lot under the umbrella of CPEC.

Furthermore, the geo-political goals and implications for CPEC and Gwadar are more in number and significance as compared to those associated with the takeover of the Piraeus Port.

Also, the way that China is implementing its targets for both these ports, has left people of both receiving countries relatively unhappy because they expected more out of these projects, especially in Gwadar because the scale of CPEC is so large and its outcomes were so hyped but Pakistanis have yet to see the economic benefits that they were promised. Also, the CPEC Secretariat paints a very rosy picture of how the implementation is going but international media reports that the implementation is far slower than what people are being made to believe. What stands common in both case studies is the complete disregard for the environment in a pure neo-realistic fashion. In Pakistan, it is manifested through the goal of creating several coal plants when the country's air quality is already so bad and in Greece, it is manifested through the complete disregard of the environmental regulations that the EU has set in place.

Other than that, China has chosen to put its money into the long-term economic benefits that it is projected to reap out of these ports and in doing so, it has disregarded the hurdles in the implementation of these projects. With the political instability of Pakistan and unrest within the country, CPEC is not coming together as fast and in the way that it was envisioned. In Greece, the hurdles are seen in the form of labour unions, pushback from the EU and administrative delays.

Moreover, it was also observed that although China promises more jobs, it omits in the fine print that a lot of these would be handed out to people who are Chinese nationals who would be brought in to work on these ports and the projects affiliated with them.

In addition to this, China focuses on the bare minimum of getting the ports up and working to its liking and all else promised to the recipient country is put on the back burner. The BRI strategy focuses on the benefit of China first and everybody else later down the line. In Gwadar city itself, there is an energy crisis faced by the regular citizens, clean drinking water and access to education and healthcare are burning issues along with Chinese trawlers harming the traditional livelihood of local fishing families. In Piraeus, the labour laws are disregarded with very poor wages and unregulated long working hours which are resisted by the locals through protests and strikes but COSCO refuses to negotiate.

vi. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of the case studies of Piraeus Port and Gwadar Port under CPEC shows that China's BRI strategy is geared towards long-term economic benefits with no apparent need to rush things. For China, its economic gains come first and neo-liberal living standards like those of labor and environment are not a cause of concern and things which it does not pay heed to. Other than that, China seeks to reduce its national expenditures through some projects like CPEC and aims to increase its income through other projects leaning on the expansion of trade. China's strategy is to paint lucrative pictures of prosperity for partnering states that they would not be able to refuse. Even with the aspects of these projects which are advertised as beneficial for the other country like the creation of jobs, they majorly help China because a large portion of these vacancies are occupied by Chinese people. Other than that, China does not have a working plan in place to overcome the hurdles that different projects of BRI face, it just continues to ignore them despite the significant development delays that they cause. Other than that, China seeks to fulfil certain geo-political goals too along with fulfilling its economic interests through the projects which fall into BRI.

vii. Recommendations

1. China needs to give more attention towards the environmental implications of its economic actions because going forward, the world is becoming more environmentally conscious and if projects are made to be sustainable, only then can they last the lifespan that China wants.
2. China needs to regulate its take on labour laws if it wishes to expand further into the more developed regions of the world like Europe.
3. China needs to deliver on the benefits promised to partnering nations in the promised timelines because non-compliance changes the attitude of the locals which might make them totally against Chinese intervention in their country if this continues further down the line.
4. China needs to create a plan of action beforehand for countering hurdles in the implementation of its goals regarding each project before jumping into initiation so that delays during development can be avoided.

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