

## MARITIME CONSCIOUSNESS AS A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEA INFRASTRUCTURE

*The following article, presented on the TRANSNAV 2015 conference in Gdynia discusses the topic of maritime consciousness and its impact. Through maritime consciousness we perceive the raising and sustaining of social awareness and interest in marine economy. This is a critical factor in the efficient functioning of any maritime nation. The maritime tradition of a given state is a non-interchangeable component in the comprehending of the significant benefits flowing from naval commerce, by the society and, more importantly, its governing body. In this article we looked into the various elements influencing the growth of the merchant navies in countries such as China, Norway and Poland.*

**Keywords:** maritime consciousness, maritime policy, marine economy.

### INTRODUCTION

The value of seaborne trade combined costs are estimated to be worth around 300 billion dollars, which stands for 5% of the global trade expenditures, whilst as much as 80% of the goods transferred today are transported by ships [16, 17]. This combined with the rich natural resources hidden in the sea, especially oil and gas exploited by the rapidly evolving off-shore sector, clearly proves that the sea-based economy has a very promising future ahead of it. However, for a country to be able to fully benefit from it, an additional element is required – maritime consciousness.

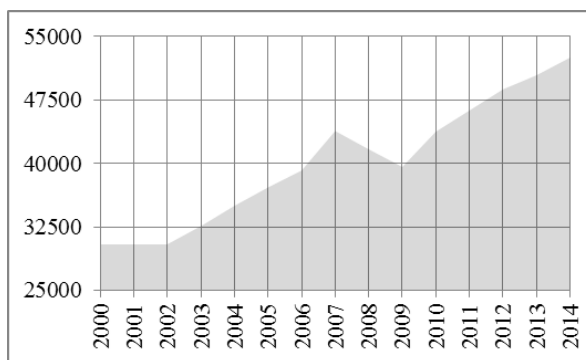


Fig. 1. World seaborne trade – billion tonne-miles [16]

By maritime consciousness we understand the merger of a variety of factors in a given country, such as naval tradition or the propagation of maritime commerce. It is therefore obvious that such an element is extremely complex to raise and attain in a society. Naval countries should derive as much benefits as they can from sea areas, which responsibly handled are seemingly infinite sources of wealth. This requires implementing proper politics aimed at developing a sea-based economy and every domain associated with it, as well as maritime education. Unfortunately though, not every nation having an elongated coastline is living up to its full potential.

In the 1920s the famous Polish captain Mamert Stankiewicz wrote about the lack of understanding and support for his country's mariners and officers, that had a direct detrimental output on maritime commerce. He knew that in order to create the foundations of a strong sea-based economy in his recently reborn country, social awareness had to be raised. After all, nobody would like to become a mariner only to be seen as a no-good drunkard and a womanizer by his countrymen.

We can generally divide the maritime nations into several groups. First would be the countries having a long standing and continuously cultivated maritime consciousness, like Great Britain or Norway. Secondly there are those, who sometimes despite being a naval power in the past, have just recently began to embrace this consciousness (India, China). Unfortunately there are also those, whose society's, it would seem, have abandoned their interest in the sea (Poland).

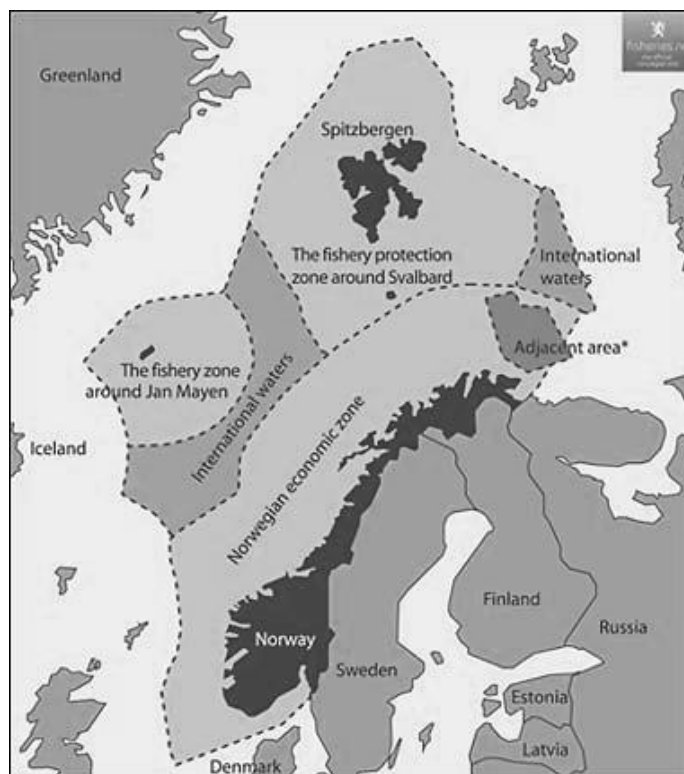
## 1. NORWAY

Norway is a country of rich history and tradition connected with the sea. Its coastline reaches 13 338 miles and it has a fishing zone of almost 2.5 millions square kilometers. Norway's economy was therefore determined to rely on the sea for ages, systematically developed by:

- fishery and rapidly expanding sea aquaculture;
- ship transport and industry;
- water energy and ecological energy constructions;
- dynamically developing oil and gas sector, along with the latest brands of technology endorsing it.

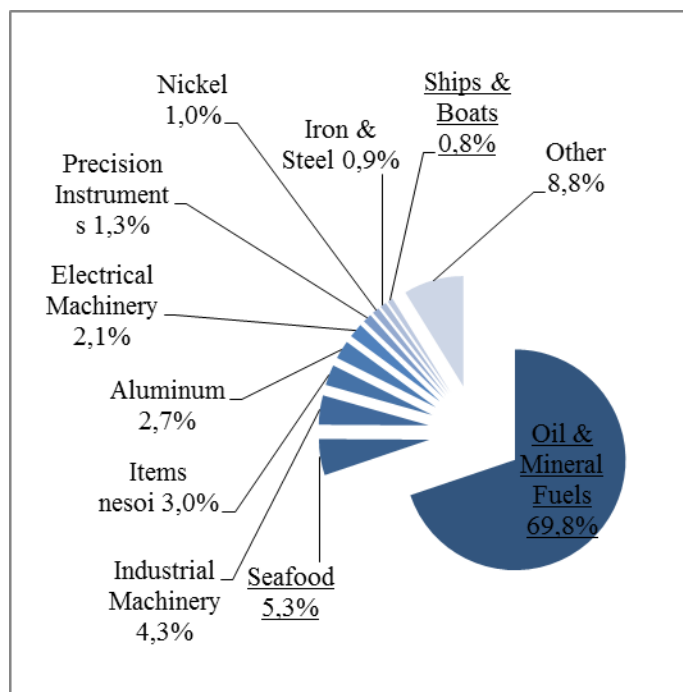
The sea is the foundation of Norwegian economy, and only by comprehending its specificity and composing far-reaching plans connected with it was this country able to accumulate such a fortune. Due to the wise politics of its government, in 1963 Norway earned the exclusive rights to exploit natural resources located in its seas. When vast amounts of oil and gas have been found in 1969, it became clear that this decision was worth every effort. As of today, Norway has an enormous flow of money coming from those resources, but uses only 5% of it for its internal needs [11]. Thanks to this sector of its economy, the current GDP of Norway is estimated to be at around 500 billion dollars, the unemployment level is a low 4,1% and the national average salary is 5400 dollars [14].

Deposits of Norwegian oil and gas are estimated to undergo depletion by around 2050 [10]. However, as a result of the money they will have accumulated up to that time, Norway will remain one of the richest countries in the world for a long time after. Norway restrains itself from consuming most of its income, systematically putting most of it aside as a reserve instead. As for today, it remains largest pension fund in the world.



**Fig. 2.** Norwegian economic zone and fishing zone [1]

Export goods of Norway should also be taken into consideration in light of maritime consciousness. Almost 76% of Norway's exported goods are connected with marine economy, like fish and seafood (5.3%), ships (0.8%), or crude oil and gas (69.8%) [6]. It is worth noting that fish and seafood are the second biggest group of shipped wares, with mackerels, herrings, cods, saithes, Greenland halibuts, redfishes, crustaceans and molluscs being mostly desired abroad. Norway is intensively harvesting the seas endorsing the fact, that while demand for seafood will increase, its pro-ecological background will become more meaningful. Norwegians are also pioneers in an off-shore technology branch, profiting from its experts and patterns being send to other countries.



**Fig. 3.** Export goods of Norway – overall 161 billion dollars [6]

Another aspect of the sea-based economy of this country is marine transport. The Norwegian Merchant Fleet had 1369 vessels and a gross tonnage of 15.2 million at the end of the 2014 [14]. Ship owners from this country are desired in the labor market, with the majority of mariners and officers willing to work for them due to the beneficial conditions. Even more important, is the fact that Norway educates its own merchant fleet officers as well in four of the maritime schools there: Ålesund University College, Høgskolen I Vestfold, Høgskolen Stord/Haugesund, Universitet i Tromsø.

All of this proves without a doubt, that Norway is deeply dependent of the sea and relies on it. Maritime consciousness in its society is humongous and worth adapting to every country with an access to the sea. Norwegians are aware of the benefits connected with marine economy and are proud of its thoughtful development. This is the result of a century-lasting naval tradition based on ship transportation and fishery. A tradition, that is constantly being nourished and promoted.

## 2. CHINA

Indubitably interesting phenomena are also countries that have just recently started to nurture their modern maritime consciousness, by adapting proven models from experienced naval nations. In consequence they have rapidly increased their presence at sea. One such country is China, which is famous for its exported goods worldwide. As of 2014, China's exports accounted for 2.34 trillion dollars and this is expected to grow (MENAFN, 2015). Strictly enforced governmental decisions started to focus on the sea, especially in recent years, when arduous work allowed for a beginning of a shift from an essentially land-based economy towards marine possibilities. What Chinese leaders exactly called "Maritime consciousness" became one of the priorities and eventually a huge success. Today China is home to one of the largest merchant fleets in the world, having over 2000 vessels sailing under their flag. This places them at the top of the world ranking, second only to the, flag of convenience countries, Liberia and Panama [3].

China's leaders, well aware of the gravity of the matter, often addressed the problem of maritime consciousness directly. For example, the at the time General Secretary of the Communist Party of China and President of the People's Republic of China Jiang Zemin said in 1995 that „developing and using the sea will have more and more significance to China's long-term development. We certainly need to understand the sea from a strategic highpoint, and increase the entire nation's sea consciousness" [13]. In the same year Chinese Lt. Gen. Mi Zhenyu stated that „China's political and economic focus lies on the coastal areas" and that „China needs to foster a maritime consciousness among its citizens, develop a maritime economy, and develop its naval security forces" [9].

It is worth noting, that emerging from the aforementioned statements is the deeply rooted conviction that maritime consciousness is not only important for a country's economy, but also is of vital importance to its national security. China's high ranking officials were aware that a holistic approach, encompassing the sea from a commercial as well as strategic standpoint is required. In order to accomplish this, public opinion had to be persuaded to the importance of the oceans. The results of a recent survey published by Andrew Chubb and the Perth USAsia Centre seem to prove that China has already achieved, at least a partial success. According to the study 60% of those polled reported paying a high degree of attention to China's Maritime dispute involving the Diaoyu Islands. Additionally, those polled were to choose 5 issues out of a list of 9, which they believed are currently the most important for China. The problem of „island sovereignty disputes with neighboring countries" was chosen by approximately 51,2% of people, more often than „legal reforms" or „continued economic development" and only about 2% less often than „environmental pollution" [5]. This clearly shows, that China's population is well aware of the importance of owning a group of what would otherwise seem insignificant, uninhabited islands. More so, 74% of the polled, believed that China already possesses the necessary military ability to take back those islands, even if the USA was to intervene [5].

All in all, China is an example of a state which fully realizes the importance and potential of maritime consciousness at the governmental level. This can be observed through its policies, propaganda and by direct actions, such as the support of the Shanghai Maritime University, being currently in the lead when it comes to molding new merchant fleet officers for China and the World.

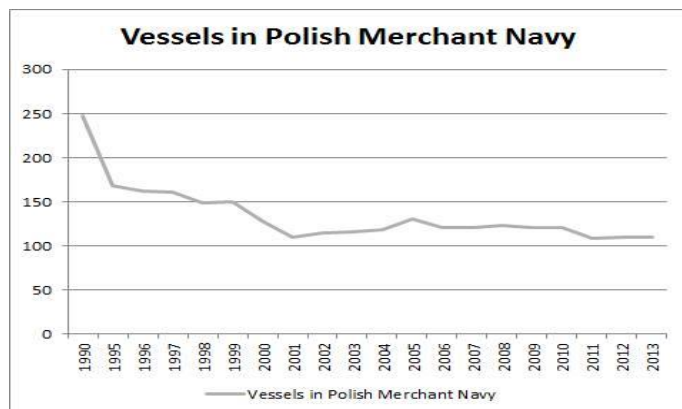
### 3. POLAND

Unfortunately a model of a country that has shifted its focus away from sea and is in fact losing maritime consciousness among its inhabitants, is one that has regrettably been adopted by Poland. Along with the political changes of 1989–91, this nation has abandoned its interest with the sea, leading to many unfavorable consequences. The inability to reform its maritime laws and to create a flag of convenience, hindered the functioning of Polish ship owners, and made it very hard for new ones to be able to enter the market. After joining the European Union, Polish officials also failed to represent its needs, which has resulted in the closing down of Polish shipyards in favor of those of other member states of the EU.

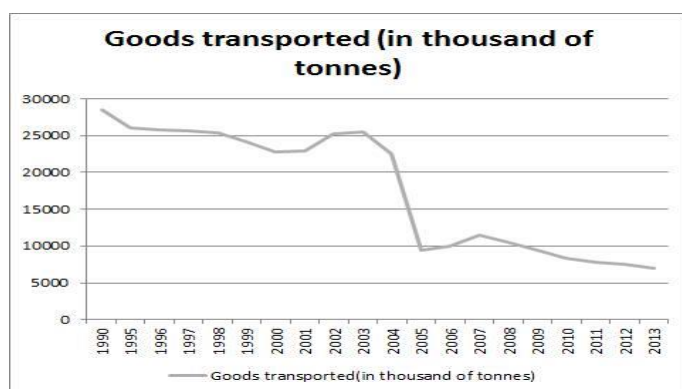
This is in stark contrast to Poland's policies in the inter-war period, when much emphasis was put on the importance of the sea. A good example of this are the 1932 boisterous celebrations connected with the "Sea Holiday" (Polish: Święto Morza). Organized mainly by the city of Gdynia, which had only 40 000 inhabitants at the time, the ceremony attracted 100 000 people from all over Poland, including many from the governing elite of the country. Additionally, all those wishing to attend were given an 80% discount on the train tickets, so as to further persuade them to take part [12]. This shows, that at the time Poland greatly cared about spreading maritime consciousness among its population, even if it was to be involved with additional monetary expenses.

Today, all is not good. Marian Turek, a former professor of Economy at the University of Gdansk, said that when he showed his students a film from the celebrations of the aforementioned Sea Holiday, the students did not recognize hardly any of the important officials associated with the sea and had a miniscule knowledge of Poland's recent maritime history [12]. The Polish have somehow forgotten their maritime tradition and hardly anyone still believes that Poland can or should strive to become a maritime power.

The decline of Polish sea-based economy can easily be seen on the following data graphs created by the Central Statistic Office of Poland. The amount of goods transported by sea and the number of ships in the Polish Merchant Navy is constantly decreasing. But even more detrimental for this country was the downfall of the once powerful shipyards. The inability to maintain their proper functioning resulted in their collapse. As of today, there is some hope in retrieving the former glory due to the private sector that had bought off as much as it could of the former state-controlled firms.



**Fig. 4.** Polish Merchant Navy in years 1990–2013 (GUS database)



**Fig. 5.** Goods transported by Polish Merchant Navy in years 1990–2013 (GUS database)

Some might say, that it is only logical that Poland should abandon its maritime dreams, as it only has slightly over 500 km of coastline on an inland sea, that is the Baltic. However, Germany being in a similar position has a relatively developed marine sector. With proper managing and investments Poland could make good use of its shipyards, and focus on becoming a major shipping hub. Unfortunately if this is to be done on a bigger scale maritime consciousness has to be raised, so that people will be willing to invest in the sea and to force much needed legislation in the European Parliament.

## CONCLUSIONS

Now, in the XXI century the sea is as important as ever, and it is only up to those lucky countries that have direct access to it, to fully benefit from its riches and possibilities in a profitable and sustainable way. It can already be seen that the territorial waters and exclusive economic zones of any country are nearly as important and as worth fighting for, as its land territory. With the passing of time and the development of new technological advances the role of the sea will only be magnified. Marine trade is not only cheap and more efficient compared to other ways of transporting goods, but also the most ecological one [2]. As “green” technologies are becoming more and more important, it is an additional argument for embracing the maritime consciousness. New, more efficient ways of harnessing energy from ocean currents or wind power are just another example of this movement of popularising ecology in economy, which can be also profitable for the maritime business. Nonetheless, in order for any state to be able to fully exploit the myriad of prospects that the sea offers, strong maritime consciousness among its population is vital. Any nation with proper politics can increase their maritime consciousness, and thus considerably benefit from it, as we have explained with China as an example. Losing the focus on the sea can on the other hand create an opposite situation, where a country like Poland has lost its former merchant navy power. As maritime trade is significantly expanding, we will be able to see many governments increasing their maritime consciousness in the near future.

With Poland this is already the case. The increase in frequency of such events as the Gdynia Maritime Business Forum, which attracted over 500 attendees discussing ways to improve maritime trade in Poland, is one such example. Another is the recent establishment of a new Ministry of Marine Economy and Inland Navigation by the newly elected government. While we cannot be certain whether this will bring direct benefits, it certainly means that the government’s consciousness of the importance of marine trade is increasing. We can only hope that after being weakened by the sociopolitical changes of the 1990’s, Poland’s maritime economy will once again enter an age of prosperity and recognition.

It is additionally worth noticing that not only countries themselves, but also bigger compositions like the European Union are enforcing development in this direction on their members. The EU directives specifically influence the sea-based economy of the entire Union, promoting certain countries and investigating possible investments in the future. As of today, a substantial project “Mobility of Growth” regarding the transport inside European Union is slowly starting. Our scientific circle inside Gdynia Maritime University, “Nawigator” became part of that project, so we hope for it to increase the maritime consciousness in Poland and all the other member states.



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## ŚWIADOMOŚĆ MORSKA JAKO CZYNNIK ROZWOJU INFRASTRUKTURY MORSKIEJ

### Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł zaprezentowany na konferencji TRANSNAV 2015 w Gdyni porusza temat świadomości morskiej oraz jej znaczenia dla handlu. Poprzez świadomość morską należy rozumieć szereg składowych wpływających na sposób, w jaki morze oraz związane z nim sektory gospodarki są odbierane przez społeczeństwo. Stanowi ona niezmiennie ważny element w prawidłowym funkcjonowaniu każdego państwa z dostępem do morza. W tej pracy przeanalizowano wpływ wszelakich czynników na rozwój flot handlowych i gospodarki morskiej w takich krajach jak Chiny, Norwegia i Polska.

**Słowa kluczowe:** świadomość morska, polityka morska, ekonomika przemysłu morskiego.