

The geopolitical dimension of the Polish Baltic Sea port of Gdynia

Geopolityczny wymiar polskiego portu Morza Bałtyckiego w Gdyni

This study provides an interesting analysis of the geopolitical influence of the port in Gdynia, Poland and its role in international relations with the European Union and the world, especially in three strategic areas: commerce, security and the environment.

Cette étude propose une analyse intéressante é propos de l'influence géopolitique du port de Gdynia en Pologne et de ses relations internationales avec l'Union européenne et le monde, en particulier dans trois domaines, é savoir : le commerce, la sécurité et l'environnement.

Este estudio corresponde a un interesante análisis sobre la influencia geopolítica del Puerto de Gdynia en Polonia y sus relaciones internacionales entre la Unión Europea y el mundo, especialmente en tres áreas: a saber, comercial, de seguridad y ambiental.

Słowa kluczowe: port morski w Gdyni, geopolityczny wpływ portu morskiego w Gdyni

Keywords: Polish Baltic Sea port of Gdynia; geopolitical influence of the port in Gdynia

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INTRODUCTION

The reconstruction of the Turning Basin No. 2 at the Port of Gdynia in Poland, the deepening of the harbor basins at 15.5 meters and the construction of the outer Port (*Port of Gdynia Authority S.A.*)¹ in the near future herald the dawn of a new era for Polish trade which warrants a closer look at the current maritime challenges of European geopolitics. In order to ascertain this new Polish commercial era it is necessary to first analyze whether the Port of Gdynia can in this case be considered as a new seaport in Europe, and continue the study with a focus on three areas, namely commercial, security and environmental.

THE PORT OF GDYNIA: A NEW SEAPORT OF EUROPE?

One of the major assets of the Port of Gdynia in Poland (*Latlong, 2018*)² is the protection afforded to it by the Hel Peninsula, which acts as a natural shield for ships anchored throughout the year. The 2.5 km-long outer dike and the 150-meter-wide, 14-meter-deep inlet make the port easily accessible from the

Baltic Sea (*Gdynia Port Authority*)³. Officially built in 1922 (*Helen Meller, Heleni Porfyriou*)⁴, this port is the fruit of post-World War I global geopolitics. The reestablishment of Poland's access to the sea by the Treaty of Versailles (*Haggenmacher Peter & Richard Perruchoud*)⁵ opened a new gateway for 1920s Poland to the Baltic Sea and thus to the world. This new sea gate offered alternative access to Poland, which at that time had only 140 kilometers of coastline on the Baltic Sea (*Michal Tymowski and Jean-Yves Erhel*)⁶. Until then, the substance of its commercial needs were fulfilled by the free city of Gdańsk (*Wolne Miasto Gdańsk, in Polish*).

This new sea anchorage has produced an economic boom that has helped to make Gdynia one of the largest shopping centers in the Baltic Sea, built in strict conformity with then current urban planning. After the Second World War, the free city of Gdańsk was included in Polish territory, forming the Polish Conurbation of 3-Cities (*three cities: Gdansk, Sopot and Gdynia*)⁷. Ten years later, the European Union Member States affirmed their desire to expand to the appli-

¹ Reference: *Official data from Gdynia Port Authority*, available online: <https://www.port.gdynia.pl> (accessed June 06, 2018).

² Geographical coordinates 54 ° 32 'N (longitude), and 18 ° 34' E (latitude). Reference: *Official website Latitude and Longitude Finder on Map Get Coordinates*. Available online <https://www.latlong.net> (accessed June 8, 2018).

³ Reference: *Official data from Gdynia Port Authority*, available online: <https://www.port.gdynia.pl> (accessed 07 June 2018).

⁴ Created by Polish SEJM (the lower house of the Polish Parliament), law of September 23th, 1922 on the construction of the port of Gdynia. Reference: Helen Meller, Heleni Porfyriou, "Planting New Towns in Europe in the Interwar Years: Experiments and Dreams for Future Societies". Cambridge Scholars Publishing, United Kingdom, 2016. p.120.

⁵ "The Treaty of Versailles is a peace treaty drawn up during the Paris Conference, signed at the end of the First World War, June 28, 1919 between Germany and the Allies, ratified by Germany on July 13, 1919 and promulgated by the Reichsgesetzblatt on 16 July 1919, finally brought into force on 16 January 1920". Reference: Haggenmacher Peter & Richard Perruchoud. *The powers of the state. Directory of Decisions and Documents of the Hague Court*, Vol. 4. Geneva, 1984, p. 102.

⁶ M. Tymowski and J-Y. Erhel. *A History of Poland, The Polish Bookstore*, editions Noir sur Blanc, Switzerland, 2013, p. 28.

⁷ M. Tymowski et J-Y. Erhel, op. cit.

Pic 1. Gdynia and the Free city of Danzig in 1939



cant countries⁸ through the adoption of a pre-accession strategy (*European Council, 1994*)⁹, with the identification of areas of cooperation and integration, including trade and maritime affairs. Poland finally joined the European Union on May 1st, 2004 (*Dumont Dominique*)¹⁰ and the port of Gdynia became a new seaport from Europe to the Baltic Sea.

THE PORT OF GDYNIA: COMMERCIAL, SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Today, from a commercial point of view, the Port of Gdynia has diversified its activities to various maritime sectors, including maritime trade, maritime tourism, but also, internal and regional security cooperation. Freight statistics between the years of 2013

⁸ European Parliament, Briefing No 24. Pre-accession strategy for enlargement of the European Union. Available on-line http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/briefings/24a1_en.htm (accessed 07 June 2018).

⁹ At the Essen European Council of 9th and 10th December 1994. See: *Conclusions of the Essen European Council: extract on relations with the CEECs. Reference: Bulletin of the European Union. December 1994, No. 12. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1994.*

¹⁰ At the Copenhagen summit, the fifteen members of the European Union decide that ten countries from Eastern and Southern Europe will be able to join the European Union from 2014, including Poland. Reference: Dumont Dominique, "Chronology of the great dates of the European construction", in Poulalion Gabriel (ed.) *The opening of Europe towards the East*, Presses Universitaires Franco-Rabelais, p. 252.

and 2017 show an increase, from 17659 (thousand tons), with 729607 containers in 2013, to 21225 (thousand tons) with 710,698 containers in 2017 (*Port of Gdynia Authority S.A.*)¹¹.

Today, the commercial and the tourism industry are complementary. Although container handling is slowly increasing, the Baltic Sea market continues to grow intensively and reflects the ever-increasing growth of this market (*García Cáceres*)¹². In particular, the Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) has launched two new ocean services to replace the existing MSC service connecting the port of Gdynia with transshipment ports in Western Europe¹³, with the arrival of *MV MSC Paris* (IMO)¹⁴ and *MSC Carolina* (IMO)¹⁵.

Notwithstanding investment efforts in the Port of Gdynia for commercial purposes, challenges regarding security and international cooperation between Poland and other countries remain present. For some time now, the world has witnessed the rise of Po-

land's strategic value vis-à-vis the European Union and geopolitical programs such as those of Russia, China and the United States (*García Cáceres*)¹⁶. Indeed, US guided missile destroyer USS Farragut (*DDG-99*)¹⁷ made a three-day visit to the port of Gdynia. "*The United States Embassy in Poland has announced that USS Farragut's visit will strengthen relations between Poland and the United States and help build a stable, secure and prosperous Europe*"¹⁸. It is apparent that the outlook of other countries regarding Poland, including those of China, Russia, and the Baltic countries, tends to change, especially in a period of geopolitical restructuring.

Yet, one of the major problems that the Port of Gdynia faces today is to provide an adequate response to issues of social and environmental responsibility. Among the challenges facing it, the Port of Gdynia focuses on: "*the monitoring and control of pollution of the marine environment from ship-generated waste, the supervision of maritime activities for the pur-*

¹¹ Reference: *Official website of the Port of Gdynia*, statistical information on developments in 2018. Available online: <https://www.port.gdynia.pl/en/about-port/statistics> (Accessed 8 June 2018).

¹² D. García Cáceres. *Mass tourism and ocean conservation: a new challenge for international Law*. Hypothèses research webbook – ISSN 2429-9103, Human Sea Program, University of Nantes, published on March 27th, 2018.

¹³ In particular, to connect the ports of Western Europe: Antwerp, Le Havre (France), Bremerhaven and Rotterdam (Holland), to the port of Gdynia in Poland.

¹⁴ The *MV MSC Paris*. Portuguese flag. IMO: 9301483. For more information about the *MV MSC Paris*, follow the link to: https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/shipid:300110/mmsi:255805569/imo:9301483/vessel:MSC_PARIS (accessed June 11th, 2018).

¹⁵ The *MSC Carolina* operating on the Panamanian flagship Australia Express service. IMO: 9295397. For more information about *MSC Carolina*, follow the link to <https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/371475000> (accessed June 11th, 2018).

¹⁶ D. García Cáceres, *Poland, a strategic link for European cooperation?*. Hypothèses research webbook – ISSN 2429-9103, Human Sea Program, University of Nantes, published on July 13th, 2017.

¹⁷ "*The Farragut (DDG 99) is an Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer of the US Navy and was named in honor of the Adm. David Glasgow Farragut (1801-1870)*". Reference: USS FARRAGUT DDG 99, published online <http://www.uscarriers.net/ddg99history.htm> (accessed June 11, 2018).

¹⁸ "*It's an Arleigh Burke class destroyer, over 156m Long and 20m wide*". Reference: US destroyer to visit port of Gdynia. Published in the newspaper *Telewizja Polska S.A.* 00-999 Warszawa, April 27th, 2018. <https://polandinenglish.info/36979599/us-destroyer-to-visit-port-of-gdynia> (accessed June 11, 2018).

Pic 2. Bay_of_Gdansk_Zakota_Gdanska, adapted. Author: Krzysztof, 2011.



Figure 2 : Adaptée de « Bay of Gdansk Zakota Gdanska » (carte simplifiée et française, ajout de l'emplacement de la Tricité). Auteur : Krzysztof, 2011.

pose of prevention and response to emergencies" (Port of Gdynia Authority S.A.)¹⁹. However, there is still a long way to go, including monitoring of non-native species. Ballast water management, the control of invasive aquatic organisms, regulated by the BWM Convention adopted in 2004²⁰, came into effect on September 8th, 2017 to establish global rules to control the transfer of potential invasive species and already indicates the road to follow.

CONCLUSION

The Port of Gdynia in Poland since its origin was born with a vision of integration and development of

Poland with the world. Its continuous improvement reflects a policy of openness to trade, tourism, but also cooperation (whether military or not) and maritime safety. However, there is a major axis, which has already been largely addressed by the Port of Gdynia, and which is still a challenge: the environmental responsibility of maritime companies, so that the Port of Gdynia can continue to fulfill its role as Europe's seaport.

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¹⁹ Reference: v Online: <https://www.port.gdynia.pl/en/about-port/basic-data> (accessed June 11th, 2018).

²⁰ International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention) see online: <http://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/ListOfConventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Control-and-Management-of-Ships%27-Ballast-Water-and-Sediments-%28BWM%29.aspx> (Accessed June 11, 2018).

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