ports & harbors

Providing thought leadership on the role of ports in a connected world

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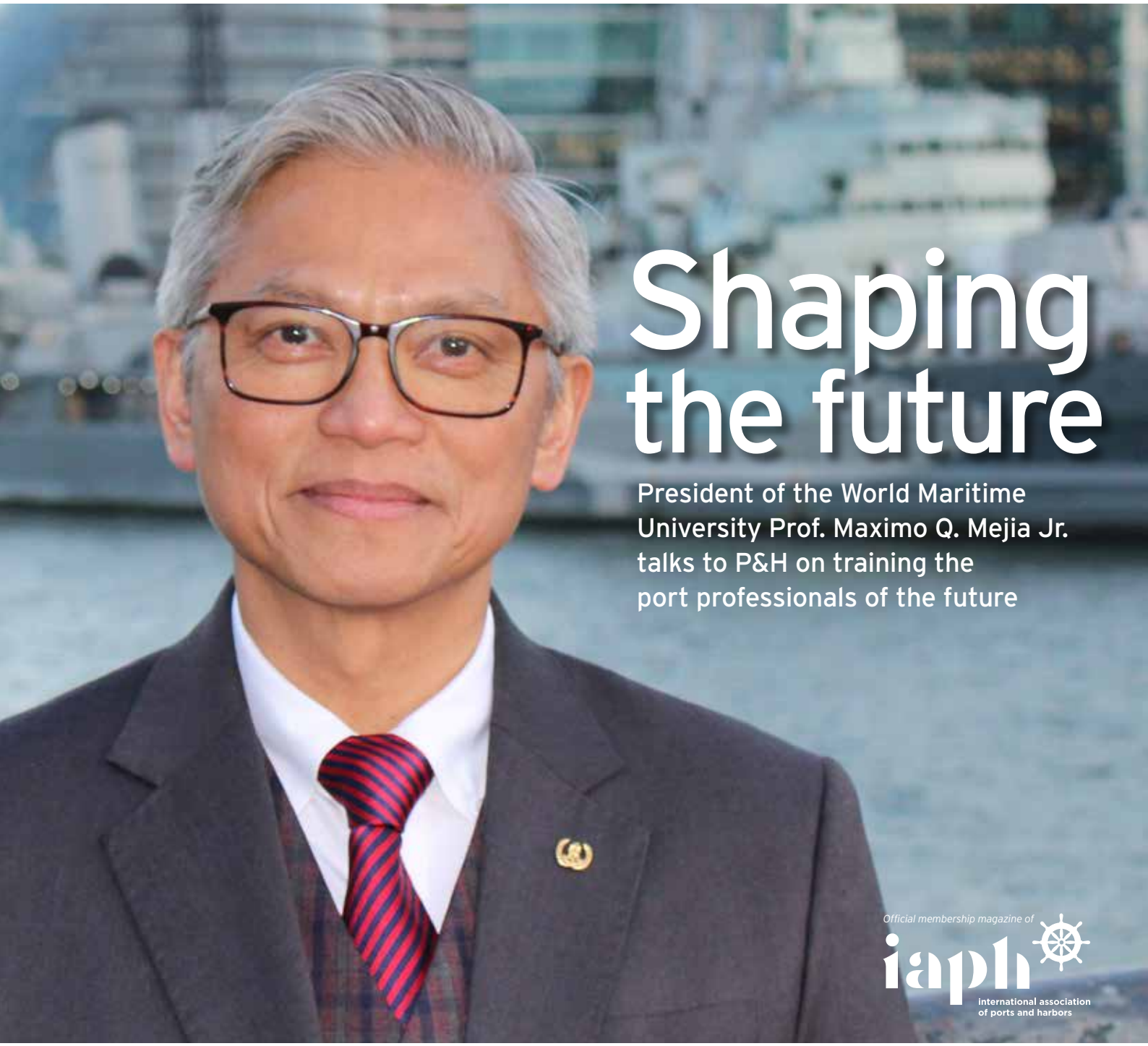

Shaping the future

President of the World Maritime University Prof. Maximo Q. Mejia Jr. talks to P&H on training the port professionals of the future

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Vol 70 | Nº 3 | 2025

CONTENTS

ports & harbors

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MARTIN CLARK
Editor

Navigating uncertainty

Welcome to the May-June issue of *P&H*. If you would like to see a particular article or theme explored in a future issue of the magazine, or you would like to contribute yourself, please get in touch. I would like to see more direct input from IAPH members (and non-members) to help shape your magazine, so please do not hesitate to make contact with me via the email address at the end of this note.

Inside this issue, we examine some of the geopolitical and other shifts that are now starting to reshape the industry in the first half of 2025, and their implications for the ports sector. This includes tariffs, of course, and their impact on world trade, as well as the outcome of the recent Marine Environment Protection Committee in its 83rd

BRUCE ANDERSON
Starcrest Consulting

Bruce Anderson is a founding principal and director of Starcrest Consulting Group, LLC and has been serving on the IAPH IMO delegation since 2011. Bruce has also been involved with IAPH ESI since 2008 and, as chair of the ESI Advisory Group, has been integral in the development of the new ESI 2.0. ■

session (MEPC 83). These are landmark events that are all covered inside.

Indeed, the heavy talk of trade tariffs and protectionism that has characterised the early months of 2025 even prompted some observers to claim that the era of globalisation has come to an end. "The world as we knew it has gone," stated UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer earlier in the year.

Yet the evidence of an industry pulling together at the IMO suggests that may not be entirely correct. Moreover, global trade has never been a constant; it has always been subject to fluidity, change and transition. The world is still interconnected, of course, and trade flows will keep moving, but there is no doubt that this is a period of change and upheaval.

Volatility around the globe is nothing new, though it does appear to have accelerated somewhat since the Covid-19 pandemic. Conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have each affected global supply chains, bringing implications for the shipping sector, and for ports. The way the industry, collectively, is finding ways to navigate these challenges, and other critical issues, such as climate change and environmental pressures, should give cause for optimism.

Amid the current market uncertainty, the level of investment into ports infrastructure also remains positive, an area that is covered in this issue. As one recent survey highlights, US ports ranked the highest of any infrastructure asset class — ahead of the nation's energy, water and telecommunications networks — in terms of state of good repair and being fit for service. While there are always calls for more funding, it suggests that the industry is performing well in spite of the many pressures it faces.

These include modernisation and expansion at a time when the energy transition is forcing further change on all infrastructure sectors. Again, the installation of onshore power supply at European ports, an enormous undertaking with immense cost, is not expected to break the bank given the high level of grants and subsidised funding available, though smaller ports may face a greater challenge than larger ports.

> "Inside, we examine some of the geopolitical and other shifts starting to reshape the industry in the first half of 2025, and their implications for the ports sector

Perhaps the greatest encouragement of all can be taken from Professor Maximo Q. Mejia Jr., president of the World Maritime University, who is tasked with training the port professionals of the future. Inside, he says the institution's primary goal is to support the maritime industry with training and education that leads to inspired leadership that will help us to solve not only the problems of today, but also those of tomorrow.

It's a calm and reassuring take that typifies the professionalism that permeates the sector. Despite all that is being thrown at them in the whirlwind of 2025, ports are holding up pretty well. ■

Get in touch with the editor: editor@ports-and-harbors.com

FELICITY LANDON
Freelance journalist

Award-winning journalist Felicity Landon is a well-known figure in maritime circles, with the depth of knowledge and network of contacts to prove it. Felicity is versatile in her areas of coverage, with these spanning the container, dry and liquid bulk, cargo handling, energy and diverse other subject areas. ■

MIKE MUNDY
Editor & independent analyst

Mike Mundy is a well-known commentator and independent analyst of the global maritime sector. He has edited a number of prestigious publications and worked in a consultancy capacity with leading port sector businesses. ■

IN CONVERSATION WITH PROF. MAXIMO Q. MEJIA JR.

Shaping the industry of the future

President of the World Maritime University Prof. Maximo Q. Mejia Jr. talks with IAPH managing director Patrick Verhoeven about some of the challenges facing the maritime sector, and how collaborative initiatives and quality education can help the industry steer a pathway to future success.

MARTIN CLARK

Q Maximo (M), please can you give us a brief introduction to the WMU?

M: The World Maritime University (WMU) was established by the International Maritime Organisation in 1983. Our main objective is to train and educate the future leaders, policy-makers and decision-makers in the maritime and oceans sectors. Every year, around 130 mid-career professionals from over 50 different countries enrol in WMU's flagship Master of Science (MSc) degree programme. Our graduates now form a remarkable global network of close to 6,500 professionals from 171 countries and territories, who serve as senior civil servants in government ministries, maritime administrations, regulatory agencies, coast guard and naval services, maritime academies and universities, among others. Many also serve as senior executives in shipping companies, ports, logistics firms and other enterprises.

Q: Can you give us an idea on just how many port professionals study for their professional qualifications at the WMU and their typical career trajectory?

M: Enrolment in the Port Management specialisation of our MSc varies from year to year. In 2024, 17 graduated in that specialisation, while 13 graduated the previous year. Our other specialisations – such as Maritime Safety and Environment Administration, Maritime Law and Policy, Shipping Management, Ocean Sustainability and Maritime Energy Management – also attract port professionals who wish to broaden their competence in other areas. The Maritime Energy Management specialisation, for instance, addresses the critical issue of energy management not only in the shipping sector, it also pays particular attention to the port energy cluster.

WMU graduates often move quickly into positions of responsibility and influence in their respective countries. Many become CEOs, port directors and senior managers at port authorities. They come to WMU with the goal of improving things back home, like making their ports more efficient or eco-friendly. In the next decade, as these alumni take on bigger leadership roles, they will be critical to implementing the green technologies, crafting the new policies and forging the international partnerships that we need.

Q: Are there any specific projects or initiatives you'd like to highlight that are especially relevant to the ports community?

M: The 2024 WMU Roundtable on Port Energy Transition and Stakeholder Engagement highlighted how WMU brings together stakeholders to tackle emerging challenges. This focused on how ports can shift to low- or zero-carbon energy sources, a key part of decarbonising maritime transport. We gathered experts from across the sector — port authorities, shipping companies, energy suppliers, regulators and academics — for an open discussion on both the opportunities and barriers in this transition.

WMU also contributed as a knowledge partner in producing the UN Global Compact's 'Sustainable Ocean Principles: Practical Guidance – Ports' report. Our input ensured that the guidance addresses areas such as ocean health, governance, data transparency, climate resilience, a just energy transition and finance. By integrating WMU's insights, the report offers practical frameworks for ports to enhance sustainability and align with global ocean stewardship goals.

We are also playing an active role as a consortium member in multiple significant research projects that aim to support the port sector's green transition.

Q: Patrick (P), can you tell us about any similar or related initiatives where the IAPH is also supporting work in this area?
P: IAPH is also active in several initiatives to accelerate the energy transition and one thing is clear – the move to new low- and zero-carbon fuels as both bunkers and as a future cargo will not be achieved by means of the market alone. It will require public-private sector collaboration. IAPH is co-partner of the ICS-led Clean Energy Marine Hubs (CEM-HUBS) initiative of the Clean Energy Ministerial, which breaks silos and brings together the energy and maritime sectors to de-risk opportunities to produce, transport and use low-carbon fuels at scale for shipping to transport and use. IAPH is also a partner of the IMO-Norway GreenVoyage2050 which aims at capacity building in developing countries to reaffirm their role and inclusion in the global energy transition.

Q: To what extent is WMU addressing the challenge of improving diversity and inclusion within the maritime sector?
M: During its first 15 years, WMU faced the same challenges in terms of promoting the inclusion of more women in the maritime sector, and enrolment of women hovered around the 4% mark. Since the early 2000s, however, WMU embarked on a vigorous campaign towards gender parity. I am proud to note that female enrolment in our MSc program is today at 40.2%. It is also worth noting that we have achieved gender parity in our staff – 51% of WMU personnel are women. In addition, there are two specific programmes that prepare women students to succeed in their professional careers after graduation. WMU has also been a front runner in terms of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity from its first year of operation. Our annual intake includes students coming from more than 50 countries and six continents.

P: Our recent World Ports Tracker report, which will be published in May, includes a survey of global ports on diversity and the results remain concerning. Of the 81 global ports surveyed, the share of women in port supervisory boards or similar bodies is quite low compared to the situation across all levels of the port authority. Approximately 17% of ports report that women make up more than 31% of supervisory boards, while this figure amounts to 47% when considering all levels of the organisation. However, in 44% of cases, women's share in supervisory boards or similar is below 10%. We hope that the impressive WMU efforts to address this will also positively impact ports in the long run.

Q: How will WMU ensure its academic programmes remain relevant for the future?
M: WMU is continuously adapting and updating its teaching programmes to remain relevant in the context of today's rapidly evolving world. In terms of content, the university keeps up to date with all the latest developments in advanced technological applications — AI, automation, digitalisation, environmental protection techniques, alternative fuels, alternative propulsion systems, cybersecurity, among others. This knowledge is shared with students through faculty staff and guest experts who are the leading lights in their field. In terms of course delivery, WMU is not only keeping abreast of developments in AI, it is actively involved in sharing of best practices with universities in Sweden and worldwide. We see AI as an important instrument our students must learn to master – not as a substitute for actual work, but as an essential element in the research and decision-making toolbox. Additionally, classrooms have been updated with the latest audiovisual streaming technology to allow for high-quality hybrid classes.

As a university, we need to harness and master the potential of this technology, which will promote the

Pictured: Patrick Verhoeven and Prof. Maximo Q. Mejia Jr. pictured recently at the IAPH Technical Committee Meetings in London

continued development in WMU's e-learning programmes and enhance research capabilities. This will also enable WMU to reach a wider audience of maritime and oceans stakeholders both in terms of the diversity of our programmes and in terms of our educational formats. The goal is to support the maritime industry and the oceans sector with training and education that leads to inspired, principled and servant leadership to enable individuals to solve both current and future problems.

> IAPH has also been working with the World Economic Forum to establish what job profiles will be needed in the future
>
> **PATRICK VERHOEVEN,** MD, IAPH

P: IAPH has also been working with the World Economic Forum (WEF) to establish what job profiles will be needed now and in the future by surveying our membership as part of their Future of Jobs report. The results patently point towards the need to recruit young talent by 2030 in technology, especially skilled in AI and big data, networks and cybersecurity who are analytical and creative thinkers, which is a move away from the main traits of operations and resource-management led resilient and flexible profiles in demand today.

Q: You are personally involved in the IAPH Sustainability Awards scheme as a judge in the expert jury that selects the finalists in each area of interest. Are there any examples of port projects you looked at last year that stood out for you?
M: The Ulsan Port project in South Korea struck me as a unique carbon capture project with demonstrated impact. The innovative Carbon Capture Unit utilises Direct Air Capture (DAC) technology. It can be deployed in very small spaces to capture carbon dioxide from the air and produce, through reactions, calcium carbonate and sodium carbonate. The captured CO2 from ambient air can, for example, be added to concrete, and used in turn in sidewalk blocks and/or construction materials.

Also, the EALING project accelerated the effective deployment of onshore power supply (OPS) in 16 European ports. EALING aimed to conduct all the technical, environmental, socio-economic and financial studies necessary to accelerate the preparatory works for the construction of OPS facilities in these EU ports. OPS is one of the most effective solutions to decarbonise and reduce particulate matter and noise emissions from ships while berthed at ports.

P: It is an honour and privilege to have you on board as one of our expert jury members. Along with your colleagues, you offer a guarantee of impartiality and good judgement on the many excellent submissions we receive every year from our membership. Judging by the thousands of people who take part annually in the voting for the finalists as part of the deciding factor on whose projects win, the selection of those finalists are always very popular ones as in many cases, scores between them are extremely close. We look forward to announcing our 2025 edition winners in October at the gala dinner during our 70th anniversary World Ports Conference in Kobe, Japan.

Q: Going forward, what would you say are the most significant challenges the global maritime industry faces?
M: By far, the biggest challenge is the requirement to reach net-zero GHG emissions by, or around, 2050. The transition to cleaner fuels and technologies is a massive undertaking. Also related to environmental concerns is the disruption of marine ecosystems brought about by underwater noise, plastics pollution and other marine litter.

In terms of technology and digitalisation, one of the big challenges is the need to develop policy and regulation relating to autonomous ships and increased automation in ship operations and port management, and to determine what new skills and training would be required for the maritime professional of the future. Related challenges include implementation of the maritime single window, preventing or mitigating cybersecurity threats and harnessing AI.

Geopolitical tensions have also increased over the past decade, causing uncertainty in global trade. Trade wars could lead to widespread economic downturn that will adversely affect freight rates and the profitability of shipping companies, as well as ports.

Addressing these challenges will require innovation, collaboration and robust regulatory frameworks across the entire maritime and oceans sectors. WMU's global network of maritime and oceans leaders, policy-makers, decision-makers and implementors can play a vital and active role in helping develop and facilitate solutions in these demanding times. ■

PERSPECTIVE CYBER SECURITY

Cyber risk in ports

As critical gateways for global trade, ports must adopt a proactive, collaborative approach to mitigate risks and ensure resilience in the face of evolving cyber threats.

Cyber incidents targeting the maritime sector are increasing in frequency and sophistication, with ports and harbours emerging as critical nodes of vulnerability. As the industry embraces digital transformation – adopting technologies like IoT, automation and cloud-based systems – cyber risks are escalating, exposing ports to potential operational disruptions, financial losses and reputational damage.

While the shipping industry has made strides in addressing these risks, ports and harbours must now take centre stage in the global conversation on cybersecurity. The International Association of Ports and Harbours (IAPH) Cybersecurity Guidelines Version 1.0 (for further information visit: https://bit.ly/3EOkkIn) highlight the urgency of addressing these risks and the upcoming IAPH cyber resilience guidelines for emerging technologies in the maritime supply chain offers practical guidance for ports.

Challenges ahead

Unlike vessels, which often operate in isolation, ports are complex ecosystems involving multiple stakeholders, including terminal operators, shipping lines, customs authorities and logistics providers.

This complexity amplifies the challenge of securing port operations, as a single weak link in the chain can compromise the entire system. Intensifying this issue is the reliance on legacy systems in many ports. These outdated operational technology (OT) systems were not designed with cybersecurity in mind, leaving them highly vulnerable to attacks.

This alarming trend underscores the need for ports to adopt proactive measures to safeguard their operations and ensure the resilience of global supply chains.

As ports integrate modern digital solutions into their operations, these legacy systems often create gaps in security, making it difficult to achieve a cohesive cybersecurity strategy.

Despite their critical importance, ports have historically received less attention in cybersecurity discussions compared to vessels. However, as cyber threats evolve, it is imperative for ports to align with existing international frameworks while advocating for more tailored regulations.

Key guidelines and regulations, such as the IAPH Cybersecurity Guidelines, NVIC

Pictured: The world's ports are all facing up to the mounting threat of cyber risk
Photo: Xuejingwen/Dreamstime

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANGELIKI ZISIMATOU is director of cybersecurity at ABS, focusing on the challenges and opportunities of securing operational technology and critical infrastructure in the complex maritime environment. Angeliki also serves as the chair of the International Association of Classification Societies' (IACS) Safe Digital Transformation Panel.

1-20, the EU NIS2 Directive, and the most recent USCG Cybersecurity in the Marine Transportation System regulation provide valuable starting points for ports to strengthen their defences.

These frameworks emphasise risk-based approaches, leadership accountability and collaboration among stakeholders, offering ports a roadmap to navigate the complex cybersecurity landscape.

Training, awareness & collaboration

One of the most significant challenges in port cybersecurity is addressing the human element. Cyber awareness and training remain critical gaps, as employees and contractors often lack the knowledge to identify and mitigate cyber threats. Changing behaviour and the culture around cybersecurity is a long-term effort, but it is essential for ports to mitigate risks stemming from human error.

Additionally, ports must address vulnerabilities in their supply chains, which are deeply interconnected with third-party vendors and logistics providers. A single breach in a vendor's system can compromise port operations, highlighting the need for robust third-party risk management.

Collaboration and information sharing are critical to enhancing cybersecurity in ports. Cybersecurity is not a solitary endeavour, it requires coordination and communication across the maritime ecosystem.

The IAPH guidelines emphasise the significance of sharing cybersecurity information, including threat intelligence and incident reports. Anonymised reporting systems, similar to those used for safety incidents, can help ports collectively address emerging threats without fear of reputational damage.

The role of class and next steps

Classification societies play a pivotal role in advancing cybersecurity in maritime. By offering impartial guidance, and promoting compliance with international standards, classification societies can help ports navigate the complex cybersecurity landscape. ABS has been at the forefront of maritime cybersecurity, issuing guidance and notations to support operators.

Port facilities should be considered with heightened criticality compared to vessels and other maritime infrastructure, as they serve as the vital link between ship and shore services. Their role as the primary gateway for cargo handling, customs processing and logistical coordination makes them indispensable to the global supply chain. A disruption at the port level can ripple across the entire maritime ecosystem, underscoring the need for robust cybersecurity measures tailored specifically to these facilities.

To strengthen their cybersecurity posture, port facilities must prioritise leadership accountability, allocate resources for advanced technologies, and align with international standards such as ISO/IEC 27001, and IEC 62443. Developing robust incident response plans is also essential to minimise the impact of cyber incidents and ensure rapid recovery.

Ports must also go beyond compliance to build a culture of resilience, where cybersecurity is treated as a strategic priority rather than a technical challenge. As ports become increasingly digitised, the need for robust cybersecurity measures has never been greater.

By embracing a risk-based approach, fostering collaboration, and leveraging the expertise of classification societies, ports can safeguard their operations and ensure the continuity of global trade.

Cybersecurity is not just a technical challenge — it is a strategic imperative for the future of the maritime industry. ■


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FEATURE GEOPOLITICS

Trade upheaval: the world's ports respond

The impact of geopolitical changes on ports: what does the new global landscape mean for trade?

FELICITY LANDON

How do the ongoing geopolitical changes impact ports and what does the new global landscape mean for trade? Any guesses? The only certainty, it seems, is that as soon as one has got to grips with the latest announcements from the Trump administration, the tables are likely to be turned again. So absolute unpredictability is the name of the game.

"The uncertainty is frustrating to everybody," said Jacob Clasen, deputy CEO, politics and analysis, at Danish Shipping. "Perhaps we will see when the dust settles. Some ports might see more trade, some less and some a different mix. But the biggest risk factor for shipping in general is the risk of a global recession."

If Trump's goal is indeed to bringing manufacturing 'home' to the US, relocation isn't a straightforward equation. While tariffs will make imported goods more expensive in the US, there are other cost considerations, said Clasen.

"The US has higher wages than Asia. Even with tariffs it could still be cheaper to produce outside the US. There are other cost elements too, including specialisation and economies of scale. It may sound simple to talk about a factory somewhere in China being moved, but that factory will be part of an ecosystem, receiving parts from many other factories in the area. It doesn't make sense to take one part of that ecosystem and move it to another part of the world while it is depending on other things also from Asia."

The world economy is so intertwined, said Clasen, that all countries will still need to trade with other countries. Is he positive or negative?

"I am cautious," he said. "Shipping is adaptable. If you have invested in a factory dedicated to producing goods for the US and you see US demand disappearing – then you will need new markets. Trade will find its way around obstacles. Shipping is a mobile industry, and our vessels sail where trade flows exist."

'Ports are resilient'

It's the long-term view that counts, said Axel Mattern, CEO of Hamburg Port Marketing. While the tariffs (pre-Trump's about-turn) were 'important and horrifying', they would not affect handling activities at once, he said. "It's so complex and you can only intelligently talk about it next year, when you look back and analyse what happened. You don't know what the US or Trump is going to do today or tomorrow, so calculating how it might affect the port is nearly impossible."

Pictured: Major European ports, such as Antwerp-Bruges, have adopted multiple strategies, including scenario planning and risk monitoring, in an attempt to stay ahead of potential disruptions
Photo: Port of Antwerp-Bruges

However, he emphasised, ports are resilient – they've proved that time and again. "We are putting a lot of money and brainpower into being prepared for whatever will come. We had Covid, we had the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we had the energy topic, and we are trying to be prepared on sustainable energy, putting ourselves in a position for whatever comes forward for bunkering ships and being prepared to import enough hydrogen, methanol, ammonia, whatever it will be, to keep the country supplied. Import and export will not stop; we need a lot of things in Europe which we don't produce, and we produce a lot of things which are not produced elsewhere."

Notably, European ports are preparing for 'all kinds of military resilience', said Mattern. "The danger arising right now is not tanks rolling across European borders – it is more drones, IT, digital, etc."

Digital resilience is a particular focus for the port and port community, but an immediate, very real problem is drone incursions. "We have up to 20 drone attacks a day in the port," said Mattern. "We can't just shoot them from the sky or disable them – it would be too dangerous."

> "While policies may change overnight, we believe that a proactive, data-driven approach and dialogue helps the port and its users remain competitive and resilient
>
> **JACQUES VANDERMEIREN,** CEO, Port of Antwerp-Bruges

The Port of Hamburg encompasses a large industrial area with an Airbus factory and other production sites. The response to drones is to 'irritate them', he said. "You have to protect your systems and infrastructure in respect of these attacks from outside. This is happening at ports all over Europe."

In today's uncertain world, "being prepared infrastructure-wise and concentrating on what we are doing" is the main topic at the Port of Hamburg, said Mattern. "We must be prepared, effective and efficient. We are concentrating on rail traffic, efficiency and automation; that's not new, but an ongoing process and getting better and better."

'Tariffs are toxic'

Angela Titzrath, CEO of port and logistics services provider HHLA, described tariffs as "toxic for global trade", adding: "They claim to protect domestic economies but, in reality, jeopardise prosperity for all. In the end, businesses, employees and consumers – across Europe, the US and worldwide – will bear the cost."

The US tariffs, as proposed on 'Liberation Day', would hit the German and European economies hard, also affecting the ports that handle shipments to the US, said Titzrath. "While the exact impact on trade flows remains uncertain, one thing is clear — industry and logistics will suffer."

With its European network of seaport and intermodal connections, she said HHLA is well positioned to adapt to supply chain shifts even in uncertain times. She called for smart action from both politics and business. "We need a strong alliance against protectionism and isolationism – working together for free trade and economic stability."

Multiple disruptions

As with the whole world, the Port of Antwerp-Bruges (PoAB) has felt the effects of multiple disruptions, including Red Sea tensions, the war in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, said Jacques Vandermeiren, the port's CEO.

"Rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope has led to longer transit times, increased shipping costs and schedule unreliability. This affects container flows and vessel arrival patterns and puts pressure on terminal planning and hinterland logistics," he said.

Meanwhile, trade with Russia, especially in energy and bulk cargoes, has declined sharply. "However, flows have partially shifted to other regions, and PoAB's diverse trade portfolio helps cushion the impact."

Disruption in bulk trades such as fertilisers, grains and metals due to the war in Ukraine has impacted flows but also led to increased demand for alternative supply chains through European ports, said Vandermeiren. "Overall, while these challenges cause short-term pressure, the port's resilience, diversification and strategic location have helped maintain stability in volumes and service levels."

The US is PoAB's second largest trading partner, accounting for 10% of the port's total volume (28 million tons in 2024), mainly in containers and liquid bulk. Hence new US tariffs would likely affect the port, said Vandermeiren. "Terminal operators, shippers and exporters may face reduced volumes, cost increases and logistical disruptions."

The broader risk lies in trade diversion – for example, Chinese goods redirected to Europe – leading to oversupply and price pressure in European markets, he said. Meanwhile retaliatory EU tariffs could further impact cargo flows, especially in sensitive sectors like chemicals and plastics, he added.

'Added uncertainty'

The US threat to charge massive port call fees for Chinese-built ships could disrupt global shipping routes, Vandermeiren warned. "Many vessels calling at Antwerp-Bruges are Chinese-built, so higher US costs may lead to rerouted services, schedule shifts and added uncertainty for shippers and terminal operators. Even if not directly targeted, all European ports will likely feel the ripple effects."

PoAB focuses on agility, diversification and close stakeholder collaboration to cope with uncertainty, he said.

"Our strategy includes expanding capacity to meet long-term demand, maintaining close ties with global partners to anticipate and adapt to shifting trade flows, scenario planning and risk monitoring to stay ahead of potential disruptions, and investing in digitalisation to improve visibility and flexibility

across the supply chain," said Vandermeiren. "While policies may change overnight, we believe that a proactive, data-driven approach and dialogue helps the port and its users remain competitive and resilient."

US Ships Act

In the US, the maritime industry appears to be lined up for a boost, under the Ships Act and an Executive Order signed by Trump in April entitled 'Restoring America's Maritime Dominance', which sets out plans to revitalise the US shipbuilding industry.

"Everyone agrees we need to resurrect our maritime industry in this country," said Carleen Lyden Walker, chief evolution officer of Shipping Insight. The US took its eye off maritime when the Cold War was over, she said: "It was as if we didn't need to invest in maritime any more, we just walked away from our shipbuilding. It may be with this administration that we have the trifactor of opportunity, will and government support that maritime needs."

However, Lyden Walker is unhappy about the attacks on DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) "just when we are trying to encourage diversity in maritime" and laments the pushback against renewable energy. Investors are pulling back from offshore wind developments and US East Coast ports that were preparing and/or investing to provide support services for offshore wind farm construction will lose out.

If the threatened port call fees were levied on Chinese-built ships, "in the end, the consumer is going to have to pay", warned Lyden Walker. "And in the short term, we actually have US-flagged Chinese-built ships. Are you charging US-flagged ships US$1 million? I doubt it."

Shipping lines affected would likely consolidate all US volumes through one call, inevitably leading to congestion, she said. "They will seek to use big ports and then onward movement by truck and rail. Then you are talking about a supply chain crisis like Covid. Let's remember all those ships that were sitting outside Los Angeles and Long Beach. The terminals, trains and trucks were the choke points."

Lines are also looking at neighbouring ports to avoid US calls altogether. "We would expect to see cargo rerouted via Canadian and Mexican ports or via those ports that have direct intermodal links," said Eleanor Hadland, senior analyst, ports and terminals, at Drewry. "We'd also expect to see that transhipment hubs that are in proximity to the US are going to see an upturn in volumes as cargo could then be transhipped on to carriers with less exposure to Chinese vessels." ■

Pictured: Shipping and ports must together find ways to navigate the current volatile geopolitical environment
Photo: Dreamstime (Igor Groshev)

20TH ANNIVERSARY

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BRUCE ANDERSON
Principal, Starcrest Consulting Group, LLC

Wake-up call

Reflections on the historic step taken at MEPC 83 on the path to international shipping's decarbonisation

My first experience at the IMO was in 2011 at MEPC 62, during which the first vote on a greenhouse gas (GHG) measure — the Energy Efficiency Design Index (EEDI) — was held. While the adopted EEDI was underwhelming to many, it marked a pivotal starting point. The room was divided: only member states that had ratified Annex VI could vote, though all were allowed to speak. Key countries like China and India were against the measure. Despite the divided room, the measure passed, setting the IMO on its decarbonisation path.

Fast forward to 2023, the adoption of the revised 2023 IMO GHG Strategy marked another significant milestone. Although some thought it didn't go far enough, the strategy was adopted by consensus — a rare and extraordinary achievement. Some reset expectations, with many viewing consensus as the new benchmark for success at the IMO, which can artificially skew good agreements with a negative connotation when consensus is not reached.

Now, in 2025, the proposed IMO Net-Zero Framework (the Framework) represents a critical evolution. It introduces both technical and economic elements, the latter drawing particular attention due to its implications for funding and distribution. MEPC 83 was always expected to be challenging, but unfolding within an unpredictable geopolitical climate, its stakes became even higher. Notably, the US, an initial proponent, pulled its delegation before the meeting.

But in April, after two years of intense global effort and negotiations, the GHG Workgroup reached agreement on the Framework — despite a divided room. Though the final product didn't fully satisfy several delegations, a majority thought it provided a solid foundation for future work. A fundamental IMO fact: one cannot improve what one doesn't have.

The Framework was brought before the full MEPC for approval to circulate. This time, unlike MEPC 62, every member state could vote. The result was overwhelmingly in favour, with support added from China, India, several SIDS, Caribbean, African and Asian countries, including some who voted no back at MEPC 62; China and India represent a fundamental shift in the decarbonisation direction and momentum.

Critics who feel the Framework doesn't go far or fast enough are missing the point. In multilateral negotiations, extremes rarely prevail, and dismissing imperfect progress only strengthens those who oppose action altogether. True success lies in sustained, strategic effort — this is an endurance event.

To secure adoption of the Framework in October, the IMO community must remain unified and resolute in the face of building headwinds. The real work lies ahead: developing detailed guidelines while addressing food security concerns and ensuring no one is left behind. The path to full decarbonisation will require vigilance, collaboration and long-term commitment.

From MEPC 62 to MEPC 83, we've come a long way. The EEDI has already been revised three times, moving closer to what stakeholders originally hoped for. It's time to keep working, step by step, to ensure a cleaner, more sustainable future for global shipping. ■

Digitalising Port Platforms

Differing Perspectives from Africa and Europe on digitalisation

AFRI ESAÏE KOUASSI and LAURENCE DEBAIN

As digital transformation becomes a key driver for improving supply chain performance, ports have emerged as central to competitiveness, security and the facilitation of trade. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) made a bold move by mandating, as of January 1st, 2024, that all commercial ports implement digital platforms to exchange information and streamline port call procedures. This requirement represents both an opportunity for modernisation and a challenge for many African ports.

THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Opportunities, challenges and best practices

For African experts, this digital transition is a unique opportunity to modernise port platforms, enhance operational visibility, secure public revenues and improve logistics corridor fluidity. Several African ports have taken steps in this direction with promising results:

- **In Benin**, interoperability between the customs platform, port system and the National Single Window has led to a revenue increase of over 30%.
- **In Guinea**, the Port of Conakry has implemented a digital system to improve vessel scheduling and logistics coordination.
- **In Côte d'Ivoire**, the integration of key stakeholders into a Single Window has digitised documentation and significantly reduced import/export processing times.
- **In Morocco**, digitalisation is embodied in PortNet (Casablanca) and Tanger Med's Port Community System. These interconnected platforms streamline trade, cut processing times, and enhance transparency, positioning Morocco as a continental leader in port modernisation.

Pictured: European and African ports each face unique challenges when it comes to digitalisation
Photo: Doberman84 (Dreamstime)

Persistent challenges

These advances highlight the importance of port governance that prioritises efficiency, transparency and collaboration among all stakeholders within the port community. However, significant challenges remain:

- Limited port infrastructure (berths, handling equipment, storage areas and internal logistics flow).
- Technical shortcomings such as unstable internet and power supply.
- Need for continuous training in digital tools for port and customs staff.
- Fragmented systems developed in silos, lacking integration and unified productivity vision.
- Ongoing need to enforce procedures and best practices.
- High costs of acquiring and maintaining advanced technologies.

Strategic approaches

Given these challenges, it is essential for African port authorities to adopt more ambitious strategies aimed at acquiring tailor-made solutions that are adapted to their specific context and capable of delivering measurable productivity gains. Support from Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to access sustainable technological solutions compliant with IMO standards and including effective skills transfer could be a credible pathway. This proven approach demonstrates that when projects are driven by a strong political vision, backed by a clear legal framework and well-selected partnerships, the results are tangible, as seen in Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and elsewhere.

THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Harmonisation and technological leadership

Alongside the digital transformation underway in Africa, Europe is also facing structural challenges in the digitalisation of its port platforms. While ports such as Rotterdam, Antwerp-Bruges, Hamburg, Le Havre, and Barcelona are global benchmarks in logistics innovation, the European Union (EU) still needs to harmonise standards and systems among its member states to establish a truly unified digital port platform.

The initiative to create a European inter-port platform (EMSWe), led by the European Commission, aims to interconnect national Port Community Systems to improve flow management, logistical resilience and environmental monitoring. It is important to note that ports within the same country often operate on different systems.

Key challenges facing Europe

This community platform will need to address the following challenges:

- System interoperability among ports and countries.
- Real-time data integration and sharing across port authorities, customs and stakeholders.
- Cybersecurity for digital windows and users.
- Intense competition among ports.
- Expanding use of AI and IoT technologies.

Collaborative digital culture, infrastructure and integration

While some European seaports currently collaborate and exchange electronic data, the absence of a unified platform hinders effective cooperation, information sharing and data utilisation.

Europe must also invest in co-creation with users, process standardisation and the adoption of a shared digital culture within port communities.

The EU will have to navigate a complex maritime infrastructure, involving numerous stakeholders and diverse IT systems, in order to successfully deploy a unified platform that ensures the secure use of European maritime data — ultimately transforming port operations.

Successfully deploying a unified platform requires the EU to navigate a complex maritime landscape with multiple systems and stakeholders, ensuring secure and strategic use of maritime data to revolutionise port operations.

Cross perspectives

It is important to highlight that the multiplicity of digital platforms within a single country — an issue observed in several European states — represents a real challenge for interoperability, trade fluidity and logistics governance.

In comparison, several African countries have made the strategic choice of a single national platform, which is more efficient and better suited to the needs of port communities. This centralised approach enables better coordination among stakeholders and optimised management of information flows.

In conclusion, whether in one or the other of the two continents, it is essential to define a clear digital roadmap for ports, focused on the standardisation of processes at the national and then sub-regional levels. Such an inclusive and coherent strategy will help meet international requirements, enhance the competitiveness of port platforms and better serve the trade communities. ■

Afri Esaïe Kouassi and Laurence Debain are logistics and port management experts at Webb Fontaine

Pictured: Successful port digitalisation can unlock significant operational efficiencies

Photo: Donvictorio (Dreamstime)

Sirimevan Ranasinghe

Sri Lanka Ports Authority aims to position Colombo as South Asia's leading green maritime and logistics hub, while ensuring all growth aligns with global environmental best practice. Here, its chairman, Sirimevan Ranasinghe, explains how it will be done

MARTIN CLARK

Admiral Sirimevan Ranasinghe (Rtd) has known the sea all his life. Appointed chairman of the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) in October 2024, he joined the Navy back in 1982 and trained as an anti-submarine warfare specialist. He later went on to serve as Navy Commander, and then as Ports and Shipping Secretary within the island's government.

He takes over SLPA at a time when business is booming. The Port of Colombo set a historic record in 2024, handling 7.7 million TEUs, its highest ever volume. It now ranks among the top 25 busiest container ports worldwide. But Ranasinghe wants more and hopes to position the port among the world's top 15 in the years ahead.

"This milestone resulted from strategic investments, infrastructure expansion, digital transformation and strong trade partnerships with global shipping lines," he said. "The addition of the East Container Terminal (ECT) significantly increased capacity, enabling more efficient cargo handling, while ongoing developments at the West Container Terminal (WCT) further reinforced Colombo's role as a major transshipment hub."

Colombo similarly witnessed growth in transshipment traffic, particularly between India, the Middle East, and East Asia, to become a key hub in the Indian Ocean. SLPA's other ports include Galle, Trincomalee, Kankesanturai and Point Pedro.

Sustainability drive

Ranasinghe's ambitions for Colombo are supported by a plan that encompasses further capacity expansion, modernisation and connectivity, all underpinned by an ongoing commitment to sustainability. "SLPA aims to transform the Port of Colombo into an eco-friendly port by 2030, focusing on renewable energy sources and aligning with the principles of the blue ocean economy," he said.

The authority is teaming up with terminal operators and other stakeholders to align with national climate policies and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through a series of measures including electrifying port equipment, adopting solar energy for offices, automation, and deploying onshore power supply to vessels at berth.

"ECT is set to become the port's first semi-automated terminal, integrating clean energy solutions. It will employ green robotics and AI-driven technologies for efficient ship and yard planning. Additionally, in 2025, the port plans to provide onshore power to vessels docking at its terminals, further enhancing sustainability." Ranasinghe said this work also includes exploring more advanced energy solutions, including green methanol, ammonia and hydrogen.

Capacity expansion

As well as the accelerated development of the ECT to accommodate larger vessels and boost transshipment, SLPA is partnering with the private sector to upgrade logistics infrastructure and invest in new technologies such as a fully-integrated Port Community System (PCS).

The completion of the Colombo East International Terminal (CEIT) and the West Container Terminal (WCT) will further enhance the port's capacity to accommodate ultra-large container vessels, Ranasinghe added.

There are further investments to boost port connectivity too, upgrading road, rail and inland waterway networks to facilitate cargo movements across Sri Lanka and beyond.

"Special emphasis is being placed on increasing transshipment traffic from India and African trade routes, leveraging Colombo's strategic geographic location to attract leading global shipping lines and reinforce its dominance in regional maritime trade," he said.

Challenges ahead

But there are plenty of challenges too, not only for Sri Lanka, but South Asia, according to Ranasinghe. "These include infrastructure constraints, geopolitical tensions, environmental concerns, and evolving global trade patterns."

Sri Lanka's ports continue to struggle with capacity limitations as well, underlining the importance in the expansion of the ECT and WCT to accommodate rising container volumes.

"Meanwhile, ports in India (Mundra, Chennai, Vizhinjam), the UAE (Jebel Ali), and Singapore are rapidly expanding, posing a significant threat to Colombo's transshipment business. India's push for self-reliant port infrastructure could reduce its reliance on Colombo, diverting transshipment traffic elsewhere. Sri Lanka's economic challenges, including foreign exchange constraints, also hinder infrastructure development and port modernisation. Currency fluctuations and high operational costs add further uncertainties for shipping lines and logistics providers."

To address these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities, Sri Lanka — and the broader South Asia region — must prioritise expansion and modernisation to meet rising demand, and look to collaborate, Ranasinghe said. "Strengthening regional trade partnerships can help mitigate competition from emerging ports," he said.

Additionally, workforce training is essential to equip personnel with the skills needed in the face of automation and AI-driven logistics. "By proactively tackling these issues, Sri Lanka can reinforce its position as a leading maritime hub, ensuring sustained growth for the entire South Asian region." ■

Investment pays but funding gap remains

Ports topped a recent grade listing of US infrastructure assets, scoring above energy and other areas, though clear funding gaps remain in the decade ahead

MARTIN CLARK

Investment matters when it comes to building modern, thriving ports. It was ports that secured the highest grade of all infrastructure classes in the US in an annual report card published by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). Significantly, it noted that the funding gap for ports was the lowest of all infrastructure types, suggesting that the industry is receiving and spending money where it counts — although funding gaps remain.

'A Comprehensive Assessment of America's Infrastructure: Report Card for America's Infrastructure' by the ASCE scores US ports with a 'B' grade in 2025, trailed by the rail sector with a 'B-' grade. The overall grade for US infrastructure — which includes everything from aviation and energy to public parks and broadband — stood at 'C', up slightly from 'C-' the year before. ASCE called it "promising momentum" highlighting that "investment pays".

The report notes that the trend has been broadly more positive from around late 2021 and the passing of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which it called "the most comprehensive federal investment in the nation's infrastructure in US history."

However, the ASCE report notes that while significant advancements are being made, there remains a "substantial" investment gap. Furthermore, this funding shortfall grows as existing infrastructure systems continue to age and demands on those systems increase. There is also added pressure to build or modernise infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events, with such resilience-focused measures potentially adding to upfront costs.

Top of the class

According to the report, cumulative investment needs for the combined 'Inland Waterways and Ports' sector through to 2033 is valued at US$45bn by ASCE. This figure is estimated as

Pictured: America's ports are thriving according to a recent US infrastructure score card
Photo: VinceZen/Dreamstime

deferred maintenance necessary to reach a system-wide state of good repair, according to the society.

Anticipated funded investments for the 2024-2033 period equate to just US$32bn, the ASCE noted, resulting in a funding shortfall of US$13bn through to 2033 — still the lowest of any of the infrastructure classes. By contrast, the funding gap for the roads sector, and the wastewater and stormwater asset classes, stands closer to US$700bn.

Despite the many challenges, it suggests US ports are faring well and in better condition than many other infrastructure asset classes across the country. Part of that is down to secured funding, according to the ASCE. "Recent federal investments nearly doubled annual funding levels for programmes such as the Port Infrastructure Development Programme to US$450mn per fiscal year, allowing America's ports to more robustly assess, balance and address their waterside and landside needs," it notes.

However, the funding gap perhaps does not reflect additional uncertainties ahead, including those related to climate change. "Ports are increasingly contending with the current and future impacts of extreme weather events, which present unique challenges to their coastal facilities that are susceptible to sea level rise."

Investment pledges

Situated along the coasts and rivers, as well as the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence Seaway System, the US boasts more than 300 ports, handling 41.5% of the country's international trade by value in 2023, as well as domestic freight.

What's more, container traffic handled by the leading ports, such as Tacoma, Seattle, Savannah, Virginia, Oakland, New York–New Jersey, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Houston and Charleston, is on the rise, and has drifted upwards both before and since any pandemic-related interruptions. The country's three largest container ports — Savannah, New York-New Jersey and Long Beach-Los Angeles — all enjoyed double-digit container growth in 2024.

Last November, on the third anniversary of the signing of the infrastructure law, the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD) announced plans to invest nearly US$580mn to fund 31 port improvement projects to boost both capacity and efficiency. This funding comes from MARAD's Port Infrastructure Development Programme (PIDP), which received US$2.25bn from the infrastructure bill to improve ports and help meet the nation's freight transportation needs.

Increased momentum can also be traced back to February 2021, when the US ordered a multi-agency approach to tackle supply chain disruptions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, and later launched the Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force and the Council on Supply Chain Resilience to strengthen supply chains.

Feniosky Peña-Mora, 2025 ASCE president, said the report reveals the difference investment can make in improving infrastructure. "While this showcases that investment leads to direct results, the job is not yet done. As the report card makes clear, there is still a great need for sustained investments. Delaying upgrades to our nation's roads, bridges, transit and utilities will cost families and businesses time and money, in addition to creating unsafe yet often avoidable situations."

Recommendations

The ASME report suggests that despite recent investment pledges, and scoring the highest grade across all infrastructure sectors, there are plenty of additional steps that can be taken to strengthen the nation's ports.

ASME's recommendation to raise the current 'B' grade include:

- Sustain federal and state funding for ports to address outdated infrastructure and the maintenance backlog and invest in alternative energy options.
- Encourage innovation and adopt new technologies to reduce wait times, improve efficiency, increase resilience and security and reduce negative environmental impacts.
- Improve freight and landside connections, such as through on-dock rail and rail transfer facilities, to boost the efficiency of freight movement and reduce congestion.
- Include ports in comprehensive disaster planning and establish redundancies so commercial operations can proceed in the wake of a disaster or failure.
- Encourage port owners and operators to use asset management to best allocate available funding and identify critical repairs. In addition, by establishing data collection systems, ports can better assess asset conditions and infrastructure needs.
- Ensure ports of varying sizes can compete in both existing and new competitive grant programmes.
- Spend down the balance of the Harbour Maintenance Trust Fund on maintenance dredging needs while supporting approved port investments. ■

Pictured: Funding gaps remain despite significant recent investment in US ports
Photo: Port of Seattle

AJ KEYES
Independent journalist

THE COLUMN

On the tariff frontline

The San Pedro port complex on the US West Coast is on the front line when it comes to the impact of US tariffs on Chinese goods, so Los Angeles and Long Beach are the yardstick to other ports about what to expect going forward.

The US has a large domestic market for international products and trade and according to a recent impact study conducted by the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), its ports generate US$2.89trn in economic activity, supporting almost 22 million jobs. The largest gateway for containers entering North America is the San Pedro complex of Los Angeles and Long Beach; collectively they handle almost 20 million TEU annually, representing a share of over 30% of the total continental market.

East Asia, and primarily China, is responsible for generating as much as 90% of container shipments through the complex, so any impact on trade between the US and China remains of primary importance, including for other US ports from the impact of any tariff war.

Both ports have started 2025 strongly, with increases in total container volumes handled and loaded imports (the largest single contributor, notably China).

Long Beach results were particularly strong, with Q1 2025 seeing a total of 2.54 million TEU, an increases of 26.6% over Q1 2024, with loaded imports being the main driver due to a rise of 27.5% in Q1 2025 compared to Q1 2024.

Strategic efforts

It is clear this increased cargo movement is a strategic effort on the part of retailers and beneficial cargo owners to move goods in advance of the tariffs.

Gene Seroka, executive director, Port of Los Angeles, confirmed the gateway's growth at a recent media briefing: "Our volume remained strong throughout the first quarter…the start of the second quarter looks encouraging as importers begin to plan for spring and summer fashion, as well as back to school."

However, with tariff and counter tariffs dominating the news, he said he expects to see cargo decline in the second half of 2025 at least 10% compared to 2024. "That's because many importers have already brought their goods in early, and as prices begin to rise, consumers will think twice about many purchases."

He raised another concern for exports too. "The American farmer doesn't have an 80% margin to play with," Seroka said. "Cargo such as soybeans, red wheat, corn, alfalfa, that'll probably be sourced by our Asian trading partners from different countries predominantly in Latin America."

Despite concerns, Mario Cordero, CEO, Port of Long Beach expressed optimism that the likely upheaval will be resolved "in the long term." In a written statement, he confirmed: "We believe the trade issues at stake will be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, given the importance of international trade to all concerned." Despite this optimism, the Port of Long Beach is also expecting less traffic, perhaps losing about 20% in cargo volume in the second half of the year.

Companies that conduct business through the San Pedro complex have been front-loading or advancing inventories for the past several months as they expected President Trump to issue tariffs. With Q2 projections generally looking positive, the second half of 2025 will be the true test of the impact of tariffs on China – and other ports in North America will be watching what happens in San Pedro with great interest. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AJ KEYES is a highly experienced writer and journalist following shipping and port activities on a global basis. He has a long-standing interest, and specialises in, the North American maritime industry and for over 25 years has contributed regular articles to a wide range of publications. He also has a background in and direct involvement with the port industry.

OPS: counting the cost

The cost of European onshore power supply investment will be cushioned by subsidies, shielding ports from the true price of this large infrastructure roll-out, though smaller ports remain more vulnerable

MARTIN CLARK

As ports in Europe develop, or explore, options for onshore power supply (OPS), the capital expenditure (capex) involved in this immense infrastructure roll-out is coming into focus. But ports will not have to bear the full brunt of this investment alone. In the European Union (EU), subsidies will offset much of the potential impact, according to financial experts.

"We expect that this capex will be partly debt funded and therefore we expect it will increase the leverage of EU port operators," notes credit ratings agency Morningstar DBRS. "However, given that this capex will be highly subsidised by the EU to incentivise the transition to cleaner energy sources, we expect the increase in leverage to be moderate."

In force since 1 January 2025, the FuelEU Maritime Regulation (the Regulation), in line with the European Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulations, requires ships calling at EU ports to gradually reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by using cleaner fuels and to connect to an OPS when moored at the quayside. The goal is to reduce the annual GHG intensity of fuels used in shipping by 80% by 2050 from the 2020 baseline.

The zero-emission berth mandate requiring ships to use OPS or zero-emission energy sources while at berth will take effect in core EU maritime ports in 2030, and in all EU ports in 2035. If vessels don't use OPS when moored after these dates, EU member states can impose penalties on vessel owners.

To comply, EU ports are required to deploy OPS for larger seagoing container and passenger ships which means operators must increase their capex to build the necessary infrastructure. In analysis published in 2022, the European Commission estimated that investments totalling €7.4bn (US$8.4bn) would be needed to install OPS facilities over the 2025–2050 period.

According to Morningstar DBRS, the issuers in its ratings portfolio are "well positioned" in their current rating categories, and "therefore we are not expecting to take any negative rating actions because of the effect of the Regulation on their financing needs — although this will vary on a case-by-case basis."

However, the Regulation initially applies to EU core ports, which are usually well located and well connected to other modes of transportation. As such, these ports have stable cash flows and are better positioned to overcome uncertain economic challenges, including the current risk of increased tariffs.

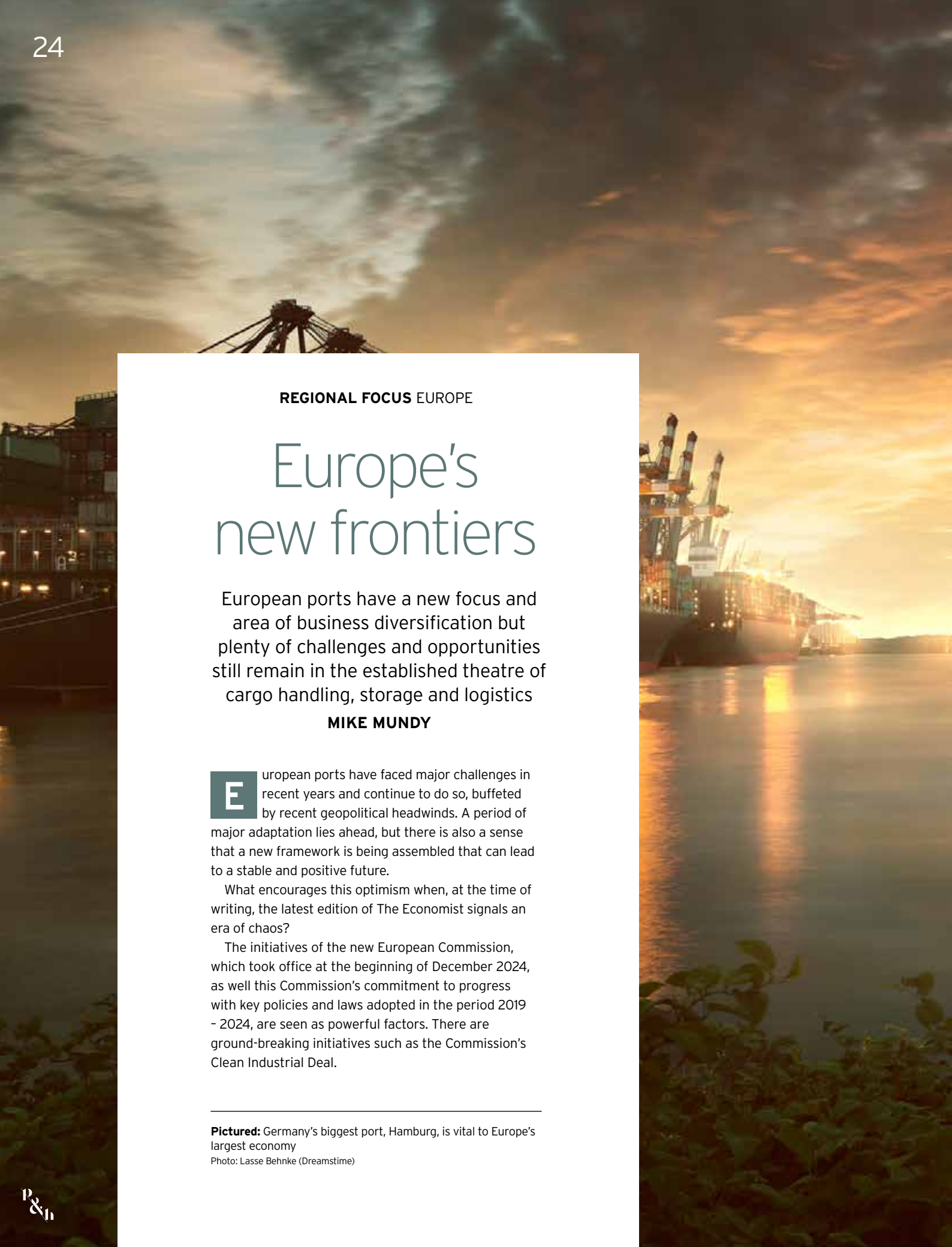
Of more concern, perhaps, is the financial impact on smaller ports, which could prove more significant. "Smaller port operators with expected higher cash flow volatility or higher amounts of debt with little buffer could be negatively affected given the expected increase in leverage," the ratings agency noted.

Investments in OPS infrastructure will be port specific but may include electrical substations, heavy-duty cabling and connection points. Many of the EU's major ports, such as Hamburg and Le Havre, have already developed OPS networks, while more are in the planning or execution phase.

Port operators can explore various financing options and leverage grants available from the EU to finance OPS deployment, such as national schemes or the Connecting Europe Facility for Transport Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility Fund (AFIF), which has a total budget of €1.5bn (US$1.7bn).

There are also potential revenue opportunities, according to Morningstar DBRS. "We expect ports will gain some ancillary revenues from their investments through the rental of OPS installations in cases where operations are outsourced, and the margin of profit per kilowatt hour sold over the cost of electricity."

Pictured: Europe is leading the world in the roll out of onshore power
Photo: Port of Gothenburg



REGIONAL FOCUS EUROPE

Europe's new frontiers

European ports have a new focus and area of business diversification but plenty of challenges and opportunities still remain in the established theatre of cargo handling, storage and logistics

MIKE MUNDY

European ports have faced major challenges in recent years and continue to do so, buffeted by recent geopolitical headwinds. A period of major adaptation lies ahead, but there is also a sense that a new framework is being assembled that can lead to a stable and positive future.

What encourages this optimism when, at the time of writing, the latest edition of The Economist signals an era of chaos?

The initiatives of the new European Commission, which took office at the beginning of December 2024, as well this Commission's commitment to progress with key policies and laws adopted in the period 2019 – 2024, are seen as powerful factors. There are ground-breaking initiatives such as the Commission's Clean Industrial Deal.

Pictured: Germany's biggest port, Hamburg, is vital to Europe's largest economy
Photo: Lasse Behnke (Dreamstime)


TERMINAL BURCHARDKAI
TERMINAL BURCHARDKAI

This, at heart, aims to tackle three main challenges: the climate crisis, maximising competitiveness and building economic resilience. These are multi-sector goals but this approach has been welcomed by port and shipping associations alike. The key to it all is basically turning decarbonisation into a catalyst for growth for European industries by bringing on, at pace, renewable energy sources.

The European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) stated on the launch of the Clean Industrial Deal in February: "ESPO welcomes the Clean Industrial Deal, the new flagship project, launched by Commission President Ursula von der Leyden. Europe's ports," it said, "support the Commission's intentions to intensify efforts to ease permitting procedures in Europe, the willingness to look into a more pragmatic approach to the definition of low carbon hydrogen, the proposal to identify and focus on industrial clusters, the initiatives regarding the circular economy, and the plans to lower energy prices. Europe's ports also back the Commission's understanding that the demand side needs to be boosted in order to build the business case for decarbonised products. Ports share the view that there must be a market in order to successfully attract investors."

The Clean Industrial Deal essentially has a number of integrated and complementary objectives that hold the promise of a major new development path for Europe's ports.

Industrial clusters

This broader perspective to base future port activities on is further underlined by a study undertaken jointly by the ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp-Bruges in which they identify a new value framework which has taken into account in their role and development.

Underpinning this framework is the thinking that together "the two ports form a port-industrial region that combines large-scale logistics, a concentration of energy flows, industrial production and an integrated infrastructural network with a European coverage." They further point out that their combined industrial cluster is unique in Europe for its size, diversity and integration and that they are situated close to large market demand.

Thus, the contention is that decisions for investments in and in support of the two ports must be taken by applying a broad view. A view that emphasises the industrial function, considered to be crucial regarding Europe's major challenges: "its energy transition, its transition towards circularity and its strive for strategic autonomy."

The precise Rotterdam and Antwerp-Bruges model is of course not a model suitable for all European ports but elements of it may well be, and indeed their could be, similar cases – perhaps Gdynia and Gdansk, even closer together in Poland.

The symbolic point is, however, that new thinking and methodology is opening up about the direction of port development in the European Union – an approach that focuses on strengthening international chains and industrial clusters, rather than specific sectors or regions.

The traditional cargo handling and storage and logistic activities are still important, but growth potential in this arena is generally limited reflecting, with one or two exceptions, a mature economy environment.

There is some distance to go as yet but if European ports enjoy some significant success in this new arena then they may prove to be in striking distance of world leadership in this class. The race is on with signs of similar thinking in the UK, USA and China.

Versatility demonstrated

European Union ports and those of the UK have, in recent years, been subject to a number of shocks – Covid-19, extreme port congestion, the Ukraine war, the ensuing energy price hikes and now the ongoing Red Sea crisis.

Without doubt there have been setbacks as a result of these exceptional events but as the saying goes 'every cloud has a silver lining'. Many European ports can be seen to be much more resilient now to these external shocks – an ongoing goal of the IAPH (to build resilience across all of its global membership). This is exemplified in the IAPH publication, Risk and Resilience for Ports – Guidelines for Ports.

In Europe, as elsewhere, hard lessons have been learnt which contribute to an enabling mentality when it comes to calculating risk and pursuing major structural changes.

> "The Clean Industrial Deal holds the promise of a major development path for Europe's ports

Nothing stays the same

It would be wrong to assume, however, that in the traditional sphere of cargo handling and storage and logistics activities, that this is excluded from the structural changes ports have to respond to, as can be seen most visibly in the container sector. There are established trends that are still exerting a strong influence and others that are comparatively recent including:

- The growing concentration of power in the hands of large shipping consortia or individual lines.
- The extended influence of shipping lines along the supply chain from point of cargo origin to destination.
- A massive injection of funds into terminal operations by shipping lines providing dedicated capacity.
- The resurgence of short-sea shipping in conjunction with cargo owner supply strategies from point of cargo origin through to destination.
- Market uncertainty potentially becoming the norm accelerated by exceptional events including, most recently, erratic actions emanating from the White House.
- The rise of digitalisation and the so-called Smart Port, and
- The pursuit of sustainable solutions.

Examining just one of these points underlines their individual influence and points to the bigger collective impact of them all.

Terminal investments

On the question of shipping line investment into terminals, MSC, the world's largest container line, exemplifies the trend. Looking at the north European coastline, MSC has in recent years taken steps to add major capacity beyond its established Antwerp base. In Rotterdam, MSC has a project with Hutchison Ports to establish a major new terminal in the Europhaven. This will be developed on a phased basis and will eventually feature five new deep-sea berths over a 2.6 kilometre quay line. The first phase is expected to come into operation in 2028.

In Le Havre in mid-2022, TIL, MSC's terminal division, became the sole owner of both the larger TNMSC facility, in which MSC took a stake in 2001, and the adjacent Terminal Ponte Oceane. It is implementing a US$705mn investment programme across the two terminals to provide a major capacity boost with all works scheduled to be completed in 2028.

In November 2024 MSC/TIL finalised its purchase of 49.9% of the equity of HHLA, the port of Hamburg's main terminal operator and it currently has pending for closure its purchase of the Port of Felixstowe as part of its proposed acquisition of the Hutchison ports' portfolio.

By any standards, this is an aggressive build up of capacity which, without doubt, will impact the competitive profile of container terminal operations in Northern Europe and the UK. Interestingly, at one time it may have attracted the attention of the European Commission from an anti-trust point of view – back in the early 2000s Hutchison Ports came under tough scrutiny as it initially bought into Rotterdam's Europe Combined Terminus and then progressively upped its stake – but such scrutiny does not appear to be an issue nowadays. The Commission concluded in the case of the recent HHLA buy in and other similar MSC initiatives that the transaction would not raise significant competition concerns.

The market has spoken, however, with the shipping line Hapag Lloyd notably acknowledging that MSC's presence will produce a new competitive dynamic and also saying at one point that it considered it to be something of an affront having to pay terminal fees to its competitor MSC.

In a general context, this also raises the point about the availability of adequate level playing field terminal capacity, particularly as future terminal capacity gets snapped up by cash-rich shipping lines. The port of Felixstowe in the UK will be a case in point if the proposed sale of the Hutchison portfolio to MSC does go through. It will doubtless leave questions in the minds of lines other than MSC calling at the port about the neutrality of the services offered.

The reshaping of European port development and operations is taking place in both old and new theatres of operation. Leaving aside the impact of volatile geopolitical events, it promises to be a very interesting forward period. ■

Pictured: Shipping lines such as MSC are increasingly active in terminal investment
Photo: Sheila Fitzgerald (Dreamstime)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NEW ORION

Wind-powered shipping

Once upon a time, ships depended on wind power to sail the oceans. That time may be set to return, prompted by collective industry efforts to curb emissions from the heavy engines that have largely powered our vessels over the past century.

Shipbuilders and fleet owners are now actively exploring ways to commercialise wind power once more on large cargo vessels. Two years ago, the Pyxis Ocean set sail to test WindWings technology to bring cutting-edge wind propulsion back to commercial shipping.

Shown here is the Neoliner Origin, Neoline's first sail-powered cargo vessel, which recently took to the water. Built at RMK Marine shipyard in Tuzla, Turkey, it is the company's first sail-powered ro-ro cargo ship and the largest of its kind to be powered primarily by wind.

The vessel is now undergoing final outfitting, mast installation and dock trials, ahead of a maiden transatlantic voyage. Sea trials will take place in the coming months, before its expected delivery in late June 2025, followed by its inaugural voyage departing from Saint-Nazaire, France over the summer.

The Neoliner Origin will eventually operate a regular route on its pilot line between Saint-Nazaire, Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Baltimore (USA) and Halifax (Canada).

It will be an eye-catching sight for those lucky enough to see her. At 136 metres in length, propulsion comes from two 76-metre Solid Sail carbon masts with retractable leeboards, capable of operating speeds of 11 knots.

With a crew of 13, the vessel will also be able to accommodate 12 passengers in double cabins of 27 cubic metres, each with a balcony. Passenger crossings, marketed by Sailcoop, will begin in summer 2025.

But it is the vessel's environmental scorecard that stands out, with greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions of up to 80% compared to a conventional ship of similar size.

As the vessel slid off the slipway for the first time, back in January, Neoline's president, Jean Zanuttini, called it an "emotional moment" and one that demonstrates how the most modern technologies in industrial maritime transport are being utilised for the protection of the environment.

Though in many respects, it marks a return to the old ways, as the industry once more rediscovers the power of wind. That might not be a bad thing at all. After all, the bold sailors of the past certainly knew a thing or two about the ways of the oceans after charting their course centuries ago. ■

Pictured: The Neoliberal Origin takes to the water at RMK Marine shipyard, Turkey
Photo: Claire Ronsin & Nicolas Pougnand

Ports, terminals and LNG

Ports and their terminals have always differentiated themselves by the number of attributes they can offer ship owners, operators and cargo owners. Certainly, water depth, berth availability, logistics capabilities, husbanding and bunkers are all important services that are considered when making port and terminal decisions.

Now that the maritime industry is embarking on a major change to cleaner, more environmentally friendly fuels, such as LNG (liquified natural gas, also known as methane), the bunker services provided by ports and terminals are changing, quickly and dramatically.

Already, there are some 1,300 vessels now capable of and planning to utilise LNG bunkers. Given the need to continue the environmental initiatives to reduce carbon and continue to improve local emissions, we can expect that almost all new vessels built in the coming decades will need to be capable of utilising alternative, cleaner, and lower carbon fuels such as LNG and biomethane.

This suggests that the need to bunker these alternative fuel products will continue to grow exponentially in the coming years. We have already seen dramatic increases in bunker capability at the major liner ports around the world. Today, there are over 65 bunker vessels in service, with a further 25 on order. This number will grow as more alternative-fuelled vessels are ordered and come into operation.

Market demand

Uptake of LNG has been driven by vessels operating on predictable, liner trades. Large container and PCTC (pure car, truck carrier) vessels, as well as tankers and cruise ships, have dominated these new, environmentally superior builds. If the industry is to continue to move to net zero, other classes of vessels, especially those that are dedicated to tramp type trades and calling at smaller global ports, need to receive attention. Ports and terminals must likewise develop methodologies to provide LNG bunker services.

> “The bunker services provided by ports and terminals are changing, quickly and dramatically

With bunker vessels requiring investments from US$50mn-US$100mn per asset, and the vessel operators still reluctant to commit to fuel contracts for

Pictured: Aerial view of LNG carrier moored to a small gas terminal at night
Photo:Evgenii Bakhchev/Dreamstime

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PETER KELLER is principal of Peter I. Keller and Associates, a consulting and advisory practice serving the international maritime industry. He is also the chairman of SEA-LNG, an organisation that is committed to furthering the use of liquefied natural gas as an important, environmentally superior maritime fuel.

extended periods, a serious challenge is emerging. For most ports and terminals, to make sizeable investments in bunkering infrastructure, bankable contracts are needed to mitigate risk and allow the parties to commit capital.

Ports and terminals are also looking to provide as many services as possible as they work to protect existing business and develop new opportunities. How to do that in this new LNG environment when long-term bunker contracts are difficult to solicit, especially with owners and operators with tramp-type businesses, is a major issue. Without innovation, the growth of alternative fuel vessels for the maritime industry will hit a wall. The problem is exacerbated by smaller locations that do not have the background and expertise, and in alternative fuels, which are less often well-equipped to address regulatory issues that have been solved by larger, better-resourced ports.

Bunkering solutions

When considering this dilemma, we also need to note that approximately 200 ports around the world have LNG supply in one form or another. In some locations, this includes actual liquefaction plants, regasification terminals and FSRU (floating storage and regasification unit) facilities. This means there is a bulk supply available, and the issue becomes the 'last mile', or how do we get the product to the LNG-fuelled vessel? As LNG has developed as a fuel, especially for smaller and medium-sized vessels, we have seen the development of a number of different bunker solutions. Smaller vessels were and are still supplied by trucks.

> "Another option is the 'gas station' type approach, where a storage tank is located at a terminal, near the berth, and LNG is pumped from a storage tank to the ship

In locations such as Hamilton, Ontario in Canada this might include multiple truckloads often pumped through larger LNG tankers with pumping capability, often called Queens. Where more LNG is needed and bunker operations must be accelerated, trailer-type units, as pioneered by TOTE in Jacksonville, Florida, USA, represent an innovative development. Multiple trailer loads can be transferred from trailers to the ship through these pumping skids. For a few million dollars a port or terminal can develop such a device and provide bunker capabilities for medium-sized vessels. Another option is the 'gas station' type approach, where a storage tank is located at a terminal, near the berth, and LNG is pumped from a storage tank to the ship. The storage tank is filled as necessary and is not tied to a vessel schedule. Jacksonville is also a pioneer in this concept at the port's Crowley Terminal. Both the TOTE skid and Crowley 'gas station' have been operating safely and successfully for many years.

Call for education

Education is another issue that needs more attention when we look at expanding the use of LNG as an alternative fuel. The safety record is impressive, and local regulators and environmentalists must be educated in not only the safety of this energy source but also the fact that it does not pollute water as traditional, oil-based marine fuels do. It is critical that regulators and especially fire officials understand the properties of these new fuels to develop and implement appropriate bunker safety guidelines. ■

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QUICK 10

GADI BENMOSHE

Managing director, Marinnovators Consulting and vice-chair of IAPH Data Collaboration Committee

Nº 1

Favourite app?
Duolingo, the language-learning app. It is a great morning exercise for the brain in my long journey of trying to learn French.

Nº 2

Something unexpected that brings you joy
I feel great when I manage to connect the dots: an idea from one colleague perfectly fits a need I heard from another colleague. Bingo!

Nº 3

An item you cannot live without and why?
My laptop is my number one tool. As an advocate for digital transformation, I haven't used pen and paper for many years. I'm fortunate that my work can be done remotely, no matter where I am.

Nº 4

What world record do you have a shot at beating?
I'm not an athlete at all, but I have the patience required for a marathon. The same patience is needed during the implementation of digital transformation and innovation in the maritime supply chain!

Nº 5

A quality that impresses you in a business partner?
I'm always impressed when a business partner knows to ask all the right questions. A valuable business partner doesn't need to have all the answers but should ensure that the right questions are on the table.

Nº 6

What mythical creature would you like to believe was real?
Pegasus, I think that winged horse flying across the skies would be a beautiful sight.

Nº 7

If you could time travel where would you go and what would you do?
I'd go to 2035, to Latin America, hoping to see that digital transformation & innovation have been implemented in the maritime supply chain of the Global South as well.

Nº 8

Dream dinner date and why?
As a Star Trek fan, I think it would be fascinating to have a conversation over dinner with Gene Roddenberry, the creator of the series. Many of the technologies we use today were inspired by his imagination.

Nº 9

Three things you take to a deserted island?
I would take my music collection, on a music player, along with a solar panel to recharge it. Whether working, driving or relaxing on a deserted island, I need music to accompany me.

Nº 10

Best advice ever received?
One inspiring manager once told me: "You have to choose whether you're just watching the game or playing on the field. I suggest you get on the field and influence the result of the game". That is one of the reasons I'm active in IAPH.

If you would like to be featured in this column in a future edition of P&H please email: editor@ports-and-harbors.com

Made in Italy

The Amerigo Vespucci is the oldest ship in the Italian Navy, named after the explorer and navigator who lived from 1454 to 1512, and whose legacy lives on today through 'America' – it is generally accepted that America is derived from Vespucci's first name.

Commissioned in 1931, the magnificent tall ship is now predominantly used as a training vessel for Navy cadets and young members of sailing associations.

Twenty years after her last circumnavigation, this stunning vessel from yesteryear is now at the end of her most recent round-the-world voyage, which began back in July 2023.

One of the world's most beautiful sailing ships, the latest trip has taken in five continents, 30 countries, 35 ports, and covering over 46,000 nautical miles along the way.

The voyage has also brought with it a cultural dimension, celebrating the very best of Italy in distant parts of the globe, and at some of the world's biggest, most famous ports, from Singapore to Tokyo to Los Angeles.

This iconic ship created a unique opportunity to promote Italy's image around the world, strengthen international relations and celebrate the excellence of the 'Made in Italy' brand through events, meetings and initiatives – and live performances from some Italian legends.

That includes tenor Andrea Bocelli, pictured here in Abu Dhabi performing to a select audience, overlooked by the Amerigo Vespucci. During his time in Abu Dhabi, the maestro also boarded the vessel itself to sign the book of honour and meet the Commander of the ship, Captain Giuseppe Lai.

The Amerigo Vespucci completed its circumnavigation in March and is now back in Italy, but will be continuing with a shorter Mediterranean tour in the coming months for those who want to catch a glimpse of her.

She will also continue to play an important role in the training of young sailors. For over 30 years, the vessel has been engaged in important environmental protection efforts as well, in various collaborations with the likes of UNICEF and WWF.

The ship's motto is also worthy of note: "Not he who begins, but he who perseveres." Attributed to another famous Italian, Leonardo da Vinci, it emphasises perseverance, an age-old quality that is worth remembering in the fast-paced times of 2025. ■

Main picture: Amerigo Vespucci in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
Inset: Andrea Botecelli performs in Abu Dhabi
All Photos: Tour Vespucci (tourvespucci.it)

New members

We are pleased to welcome as new members of the association:

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Welcome back to Guimara Tuñón Guerra

Founder, managing partner and CEO of Maritime Policy Bureau, Guimara Tuñón Guerra, has rejoined IAPH as development director for the Central and South America region

Guimara Tuñón Guerra, based in Panama, has been appointed by IAPH as development director for the Central and South America region.

With more than 20 years of experience in the maritime and port sectors, she has worked across public and private institutions in the fields of port operations, maritime transportation, logistics and maritime business administration.

The new appointment for Guimara actually marks a return to IAPH – she is already more than a familiar face at the association, having occupied the role of regional vice president for the Central and South America region between 2017 and 2019.

At that time, she served IAPH during her tenure as general director of ports and maritime ancillary industries at Panama Maritime Authority. She also served as Panama delegate to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and Organisation of American States (OAS).

Guimara currently occupies the role of managing partner and chief executive officer of Maritime Policy Bureau, which is a consulting firm in maritime policy and innovation, including sustainability and port leadership.

She is also Dean of the School of Business, Logistics and Tourism at the Universidad Católica Santa María La Antigua (USMA) in Panama City.

"We are delighted that Guimara has accepted this newly-created role to strengthen our presence in this vital region of the world for our association," said IAPH managing director Patrick Verhoeven.

"She has the advantage of having worked at board level in our organisation, and her consultancy, Maritime Policy Bureau, has been a long-standing associate member."

Patrick added that the role of the regional representatives is crucial in building connections and expanding membership in other corners of the globe.

"We have seen the positive impact of our regional representative of India, Ennarasu Karunesan, in bringing Indian members onboard and ensuring they are highly active in IAPH and we intend to replicate this with Guimara's appointment for Central and South America."

This is a sentiment echoed by Vinicius Patel, regional vice president for Central and South America, and director of port administration at the Port of Açu, Brazil.

"The incorporation of Guimara to our region is an important step forward in realising our ambitions to ensure greater engagement by our regular port members and associate members as well as the expansion of membership in the Caribbean, Central and South America," he said.

"With Brazil hosting COP30 later this year, in Belém – where IAPH will play a key role in representing global port interests – now is a perfect opportunity for Latin American ports to highlight their role in the energy transition, digitalisation and improved resilience in our industry."

COP30 is scheduled to take place from 10 to 21 November, 2025, in Belém, the capital and largest city of the state of Pará in the north of Brazil and gateway o the Amazon River. ■

IAPH delegation welcomes inclusion of port-related infrastructure and equipment in MEPC 83 compromise

IAPH welcomes the historic agreement reached on Friday 11th April at the United Nations' International Maritime Organization (IMO) headquarters in London on the package of new greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction regulations known as the "IMO net-zero framework".

The compromise agreement on the economic measure was put forward by MEPC83 for formal adoption later this year shortly after the upcoming IAPH World Ports Conference in Kobe in October and is scheduled for implementation by 2028.

In addition to allocating revenues to researching, developing and making globally available and deploying zero and near-zero GHG emission technologies, fuels and/or energy sources, the agreement stipulates for the IMO Net-Zero Fund created by the economic measure to disburse collected revenues to develop the necessary maritime, coastal and port-related infrastructure and equipment.

This concurs with the original submission made by IAPH containing this proposal, as well as a study IAPH submitted to MEPC 82 last year on infrastructure investment requirements, citing specific needs in developing countries.

IAPH will be contributing in the work ahead in further detailing the IMO net-zero framework after its formal adoption in October, in the form of guidelines to be developed by the organisation.

Managing Director Patrick Verhoeven commented: "Ports require regulatory certainty on a global level. They also require a global standard to prepare themselves for receiving vessels under propulsion from new zero and near-zero carbon fuels. They further need to ensure port and terminal readiness for safe bunkering operations, as well as preparing masterplans for putting infrastructure in place for loading and unloading operations of these fuels as a cargo. This requires risk management, and substantial, multi-billion dollar final investment decisions, not least in developing countries. It will also require the upskilling of port personnel and significant lead times for implementation to meet shipping needs. IAPH will continue to support the sterling efforts of the IMO, which is uniquely placed to ensure a level playing field globally to achieve a just and equitable energy transition in the maritime sector for all countries." ■

Pictured Top: At the Intersessional Working Group ahead of MEPC 83, IAPH was represented by Sarah Ogier, Port of Seattle's director maritime environment and sustainability, IAPH's Rhona Macdonald and Antonis Michail and Bruce Anderson of Starcrest Consulting

Pictured Left: Port of Seattle's senior director, environment, sustainability and engineering Sandra Kilroy joins associate member Bruce Anderson of Starcrest Consulting as part of the IAPH delegation at the historic IMO MEPC 83 meeting in London

Spearheading sustainability

IAPH's reputation as a sustainability leader was built through its campaigning work during the 1980s and 1990s – as *P&H* explains in the third of a series of articles marking the association's historic 70th year

For IAPH, the 1980s began with celebrations and reflection. The association's 12th biennial conference, which took place in Nagoya, Japan in May 1981, marked 25 years of operation. Prior to the gathering, IAPH paid tribute to its founding fathers by placing dedicated memorial monuments at the graves of Gaku Matsumoto in Tokyo, and Chujiro Haraguchi in Kobe. In his address at the occasion of the Tokyo memorial, IAPH president Paul Bastard quoted an old Chinese proverb: *those who drink the water must remember those who dug the well*.

IAPH's silver jubilee was marked by a determination that the association should present itself as the leading force in solving global port challenges. Around the world, tanker accidents were generating headlines. March 1978 had seen the largest oil spill disaster ever, when the tanker *Amoco Cadiz* ran aground off the coast of Brittany, France spilling 220,000 tons of crude oil. Collisions and explosions just outside port limits off Copenhagen, Oman and Singapore earlier in the decade demonstrated the high risk of hindered port traffic, not to mention environmental damage and loss of life. Resolutions made in Nagoya provide evidence of IAPH's determination to influence the direction of reform on this topic, making proposals on appropriate levels of liability for damages from such incidents and adequate effective insurance covering the responsibilities of shippers and shipowners, to be considered in future updates to IMCO instruments.

Further resolutions were made at the 1983 Vancouver conference and correspondence continued between senior figures at the IAPH and the (renamed) IMO, ahead of a 1984 IMO Diplomatic Conference. That meeting saw the adoption of draft Protocols to the 1969 Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage and to the 1971 Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage. That year, IAPH also joined ICS and OCIMF in producing the second edition of the *International Safety Guide for Oil Tankers and Terminals* – further evidence of the association's commitment to bringing a port perspective to the most critical maritime matters of the day.

Connecting and protecting

Long-serving IMO secretary general C P Srivastava set the scene for IAPH's 14th biennial conference, held in Hamburg. His keynote address at the 1985 edition reflected on three decades of change within maritime transportation, spanning IAPH's life to date. He noted that collaboration had proven crucial, with the IAPH playing a major role in supporting IMO initiatives – including those around vessel traffic services, ship reporting systems, and port traffic signals – that had improved maritime safety and port efficiency.

Appropriately, the 1987 conference in Seoul saw IAPH strengthen its international relationships with a resolution to conclude an MoU with the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC), founded on the basis of significantly assisting authorities in the gathering of information and combating customs fraud, in particular drug smuggling. In 1994, the CCC adopted the working name of the World Customs Organisation and the organisation continues to be a significant partner for IAPH to this day, producing definitive guidance that, in the spirit of that 1987 agreement, strengthens each organisations' understanding of the other's tasks and priorities, for the betterment of global trade.

Meanwhile, the emphasis on environmental stewardship continued throughout the 1980s. In 1988, the

Pictured: Delegates enjoy music at the opening of the 1993 IAPH Conference at the Sydney Opera House

association contributed $20,000 towards the organization of an IMO Workshop on the Environmental Impact Assessment of Port Development, held in Baltimore. This organisational focus carried through to the 1991 edition of the conference, held in Barcelona with the support of His Royal Majesty King Juan Carlos I of Spain. The event saw the passing of a resolution on the environment, focusing on three key areas: environmental planning and management, dangerous goods, and water pollution impacts on port development and operations. The association recommended that each member port include 'an environmental as well as an economic context' to its operational decision making. The resolution would lead to the creation of IAPH environmental guidelines that were introduced at the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Earth Summit in 1992.

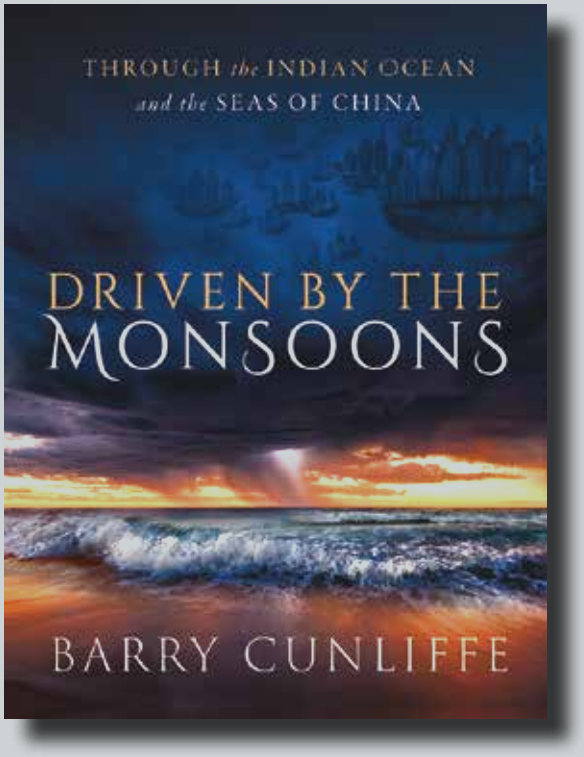
Leadership and resilience

Further action was taken the 1993 conference, held in Sydney, where a resolution on ship's port fees was passed, asserting that 'members of IAPH should consider incentives [...] including the possibility of adopting a Scheme in which environmentally friendly equipped and operated ships are encouraged in the structuring of port tariffs and fees.' Notably, the following January Rotterdam Municipal Port Management began to reduce port dues by 10% for tankers with segregated ballast tanks. These first moves toward a program of port incentives for environmentally friendly shipping would one day be formalised in an IMO-recognised global scheme: the Environmental Ship Index (as of 2020, an IAPH initiative).

In June 1995, a case study of remarkable resilience was presented at the 19th edition of the conference, hosted by the ports of Seattle and Tacoma. The year had begun with news of the Great Hanshin Earthquake that devastated the city of Kobe. Masaaki Eguchi, director general for the Port of Kobe, addressed the delegates. He noted that – although port facilities suffered US$11bn in damage – urgent reconstruction work had made it possible to rapidly accommodate ships transporting water, food, medical and relief goods. Relief goods from the Port of LA were transshipped from Nagoya to assist the recovery.

On 20 March, two months after the disaster, full-scale container handling resumed and the first ship departed, bound – appropriately – for Seattle. Kobe had been a candidate to host the IAPH Conference for the first time in 1999, but had to withdraw following the disaster. A quarter of a century later, the city will finally be able to fulfil that vision. ■

Pictured above: IAPH president Paul Bastard at the memorialising of founder Gaku Matsumoto, Tokyo, 1981
Pictured left: IAPH conference delegates contemplate Hamburg's Old Warehouse District in 1985



BOOK AUTHOR

BARRY CUNLIFFE is a British archaeologist and academic. He taught archaeology in the Universities of Bristol and Southampton and was Professor of European Archaeology at the University of Oxford from 1972 to 2008, thereafter becoming Emeritus Professor.

THE REVIEW

Driven by the Monsoons: Through the Indian Ocean and the Seas of China

BARRY CUNLIFFE

★★★★☆

To be released this summer, Driven by the Monsoons: Through the Indian Ocean and the Seas of China tells the story of trade across the Indian Ocean through time using the evidence of archaeology and the tales of great travellers – the likes of Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, and the Chinese Admiral, Zheng He.

Covering a vast period of several thousand years (from approximately 5,000 BCE to the 1600s AD), it is a comprehensive, insightful and enjoyable read from a renowned archaeologist with a back catalogue of published work behind him.

The book also provides a look at the economic systems which spanned the Indian Ocean throughout this time and uses this history to explore the origins of globalisation. In this sense, it offers a new historical perspective which gives an understanding of modern world economies.

Beyond this, it is a fascinating look at one of the world's oldest and most famous maritime trading routes. While the fabled Silk Road may be one of the origins of modern-day globalisation, resurrected in modern times by China's Belt and Road Initiative, the Indian Ocean is clearly another. Here, the author brings his considerable archaeological and historical expertise to bear on maritime spaces that have been sailed intensively for many thousands of years, not just the Indian Ocean, but the seas off China as well.

From ancient times and early beginnings (circa 5,000 to 1,000 BCE), the book moves on to explore the nascent maritime networks of the region, and then the impact of the Western empires, reflecting the complex interplay of cultures, countries and commodities that have shaped the area.

"The story of these seas is the story of how Asia, Africa and then Europe became connected, first through trade and migration, and then through conquest," one fellow academic notes in an early review of the book. "It is also the story of cultural interactions, as religious ideas moved east and as silk and spices moved west."

Though some of this history may be challenging (the timeline ends around 1600 CE when European companies emerge to takeover) the book also highlights how even the ancients were driven, many thousands of years ago, to create and maintain networks, by land or sea, whatever the difficulties. It is a tale of exotic goods, material needs, adventure and desire, one that explores the birth of our modern, connected, world. ■

Driven by the Monsoons: Through the Indian Ocean and the Seas of China by Barry Cunliffe is due to be published on 28 August, 2025 (Oxford University Press)

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