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CONCEPT OF THE SLOVENIAN MARITIME AFFAIRS

POJAM POMORSTVA U SLOVENIJI

SUMMARY

The paper first defines the semantic concept of maritime affairs, so as to present its comprehensive meaning. Then it gives the historical view of the Mediterranean in order to see how some of the most ancient civilizations flourished there. Further it presents the importance of the sea in the political, economic, cultural and social life of different nations. Then it deals with the current issues of maritime affairs in the European Union with a particular focus on the Mediterranean region being an enclosed and heavily-marine-exploited sea. In this chapter the paper points out the recent efforts of the European Commission which encourages a far-reaching reorganisation of maritime affairs in Europe by integrating maritime policy for the EU and exploring synergies to avoid overlaps between the existing policies that deal with sea-related issues. Finally, the paper places Slovenia in this context by pointing to excellent opportunities that the Slovenian presidency offers in order to reconsider its own maritime policy, which has long been neglected.

Key words: maritime affairs, importance of the sea, maritime orientation

SAŽETAK

U radu se najprije definira pojam "pomorstva" u njegovom najširem smislu. Zatim se daje povijesni pregled razvoja područja Mediterana s ciljem da se prikaže kako su neke od najstarijih civilizacija cvjetale unutar toga područja. Nadalje se naglašava važnost mora u političkom, ekonomskom, kulturnom i društvenom životu mnogih naroda. Zatim se bavi i sadašnjim aspektima pomorstva unutar Europske Unije s osobitim osvrtom na Mediteran koji predstavlja jedno zatvoreno i jako prometno more. U tom se odlomku ovog rada ističu napori koje je u skorajnje vrijeme ulagala Europska komisija, a koji upućuju na dalekosežnu reorganizaciju pomorstva u Europi temeljenu na ujedinjenu pomorske politike unutar Europske Unije i iskorištavanju sinergije kako bi se spriječila preklapanja unutar već postojeće pomorske politike koja se bavi morem obojenim stvarima. Na kraju se u radu postavlja Slovenija unutar ovog konteksta, naglašavajući izvrsne mogućnosti koje nudi predsjedništvo Republike Slovenije s ciljem da se ponovo razmotri slovenska pomorska politika, a koja je dugi niz godina bila zapostavljena.

Ključne riječi: pomorstvo, važnost mora, pomorska orijentacija.

1. THE SEMANTIC CONCEPT OF MARITIME AFFAIRS

According to Pritchard [1] the collocation *maritime affairs* is not originally English, but is so called pseudo-Anglicism, i.e. used in English on the basis of the lexemes taken from other languages, such as German *Seewesen*, Italian *marineria* or Croatian *pomorstvo*. In authentic English there is no such equivalent. English language has other collocations, which however have a narrower meaning, such as *maritime economy* or *maritime industry*. *Maritime affairs* covers a large semantic field. It refers to all activities directly or indirectly related to the sea. It involves economic and non-economic activities. The former comprise shipping, pilotage, towing services, port services, agency business, shiphandling, fisheries and nautical tourism. The latter activities include science and research institutions, harbour-master's offices, maritime police, customs offices, various safety services, navy, sport centres, etc. Dundović [2], for instance, defines maritime affairs in its wider and narrower sense. The former refers to the exploitation of the sea by traffic means (shipping, trade, shipbuilding, seaports - their functions and traffic links - and nautical tourism) and to the source of natural goods (fishing, mariculture and exploitation of other organic or anorganic substances of the sea). And the latter applies to *seamanship* (the skill, techniques or practice of handling a ship or a boat at sea).

2. HISTORICAL VIEW

The Mediterranean Sea stretches as far as the base of the Alps. Thus it provides the shortest and the most economical way from the Central and Northern Europe to Levant and further to the East. Researches, particularly after the Second World War, proved that the Eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea was settled already at the beginning of the Stone Age, i.e. along the whole length from the northern point to the coast of the Ionic Sea. For some parts of the Adriatic there is evidence which confirms the existence of even older settlements. All this confirms the assumption that the human history has since the very beginnings been tightly connected with the sea and that the sea does not separate but unites nations.

It is well known that civilization first developed in Mesopotamia, but soon after the Nile

River valley of the ancient Egypt was unified under the Pharaohs in the 4th millennium B.C., and civilization quickly spread to the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea and, which happens to make the Mediterranean countries of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Iraq part of the cradle of civilization.

The main expansion was delayed until ships, strong enough to cross the sea, were developed. Cyprus and the other islands developed, and the civilization flourished on the island of Crete. While the river valley civilizations always had larger populations, the trading societies on the coast of the sea soon became the most prosperous, and rose to power.

Some of the most ancient civilizations flourished around the Mediterranean. It was opened as a highway for commerce by merchants trading from Phoenicia. Carthage, Greece, Sicily, and Rome were rivals for dominance of its shores and trade; under the Roman Empire it became virtually a Roman lake and was called *Mare Nostrum* [our sea]. Later, the Byzantine Empire and the Arabs dominated the Mediterranean. Between the 11th and 14th century, the Italian city trading states such as Genoa, Venice, and Barcelona dominated the region; they struggled with the Ottomans for naval supremacy, particularly in the East Mediterranean. Products of Asia passed to Europe over Mediterranean trade routes until the establishment of a route around the Cape of Good Hope (late 15th century).

With the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) the Mediterranean resumed its importance as a link on the route to the East. The development of the northern regions of Africa and of oil fields in the Middle East has increased its trade. Its importance as a trade link and as a route for attacks on Europe resulted in the European rivalry for control of its coasts and islands and led to campaigns in the region during both world wars. Since World War II the Mediterranean region has been of strategic importance to both the United States and, until its dissolution, the Soviet Union.

The Mediterranean Sea, around which some of the most ancient human civilizations were arranged, has had a major influence on the history and ways of life of these cultures. It provided a way of trade, colonization and war, and was the basis of life (via fishing and the gathering of other seafood) for numerous communities throughout the ages.

The combination of similar-shared climate, geology and access to a common sea has led to numerous historical and cultural connections between the ancient and modern societies

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SEA TRANSPORT

The wisdom of Sir Walter Raleigh seems to be an everlasting topical issue. He sagely remarked several centuries ago that “Whosoever commands the sea commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself.” [3]

From the time immemorial the sea and its routes had a great importance in the political, economic, cultural and social life of different nations. Water routes have always been cheaper and more convenient than land routes. Besides, the land routes were fewer. Sea trade encouraged goods exchange and consequently wellbeing and culture.

Domination over the sea enabled ancient nations the control of sea routes and consequently also the monopoly in maritime trade, gaining of wealth and political influence. Crete, Phoenicia and Greece reached their economic and cultural rise when they dominated the seas. And when they lost the domain, they also lost their leading role.

The basic medium enabling the development of maritime transport is the world sea. The sea connects all continents, which are in fact huge islands in the world ocean. Since maritime routes need not be constructed and maintained, it is the cheapest transport, as the only cost represents the building of seaports. The unlimited traffic flow of the sea routes and the overall capacity of ships greatly contributes to relatively low freight charges. Besides, sea routes are free and open to all countries, consequently it has not only an economic but also a geopolitical meaning. Therefore, the countries directly connected with the open sea, particularly if the sea is warm, have a great advantage. The known proverb *Navigare necesse, vivere non necesse* (to navigate is necessary, to live is not necessary), which is ascribed to Plutarh¹, and which was literally adopted by the middle aged seamen,

¹ **Plutarh** (45 – 120 B.C.) – Greek historian, biographer, philosopher, priest, judge and ambassador.

proves the importance of shipping for the economic and cultural development of humanity. However, the sea, long in the history of humankind, meant the dividing factor, as it was an insurmountable obstacle for the human capabilities of the times. Only a few thousand years ago, with the occurrence of ancient cultural entities, the development of maritime trade began, bringing unthought of possibilities and prospectives. After a long “Mediterranean era” in the history of humankind which brought the first wider international economic and cultural cooperation and exchange, it was followed by the “ocean era”, which meant the turning point in the development of shipping and the world in general. The consequence of the cross-ocean navigation, enabled by the use of compass, were great geographic discoveries establishing permanent intercontinental relations. And this led to a complete change of the economic and social image of our planet (transfer of agriculture and animal species, migration of inhabitants).

4. CURRENT ISSUES

The Mediterranean region is an enclosed and heavily-used sea, which in some areas is stretched to the limit of sustainability. Its waters are subject to a number of regulatory systems, including those originating from multilateral organisations, international conventions, the European Union and the EU Member States, candidate countries and other partner Mediterranean countries. The relatively small size of the Mediterranean Sea and the limited exchange of waters with the Atlantic Ocean makes its environment vulnerable to pollution, especially with 30% of the world’s maritime transport passing through. The maritime transport in the region is also the source of additional challenges in terms of maritime safety or competition among Mediterranean ports. Furthermore, scientific and research resources need to be pooled together to speed up the economic growth and generate innovative solutions. Formal cooperation between the States bordering the Mediterranean began in 1975 with the drawing up of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). This strives to protect the environment and to encourage sustainable development in the Mediterranean basin, signed by 16 Mediterranean States and the EC, under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Its legal framework com-

prises the Barcelona Convention adopted in 1976 and revised in 1995, and six protocols covering specific aspects of environmental protection.

The Directorate-General of the European Commission encourages a far-reaching reorganisation of maritime affairs in Europe. The Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU aims to explore synergies and avoid overlaps between the existing sector policies that deal with sea-related issues. As Europe's oceans and seas are the resource-base for a number of activities, such as shipping, fisheries, offshore energy, and tourism, enhanced coordination is essential, both between different sectors and on local, regional, national and transnational levels. The reorganisation is particularly focused on the new EU integrated maritime policy regarding Mediterranean fisheries and the control in international waters. The policy is supposed to be sustainable, integrated and tailor-made. Under Slovenian Presidency of the EU the Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Joe Borg, presented his analysis of the serious shortcomings of the current system. At the same meeting Commissioner Borg stated that the Commission intends to propose a new policy framework at the beginning of October 2008. It will also allow for the coordinated use of all resources and policy tools in relation to each maritime region: maritime policy, conservation of fish stocks, fisheries control and enforcement, and structural policy. The Commission is also seeking the advice of the stakeholders from the region.

The Slovenian presidency convened a Meeting of Environmental Ministers of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative in October 2003. At this meeting three implementing protocols were presented: Contingency plan for the Adriatic; the trilateral Croatian-Italian-Slovenian Contingency Plan for the Adriatic; The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) technically assists all countries in the preparation of a Sub-regional contingency Plan. Financial resources from donor agencies and entities should be sought and provided in order to speed up and facilitate the process. The Action Plan also recommends further strengthening of co-operation among countries and with international institutions in the field of sustainable management of the marine environment and conservation of marine habitats.

A good example of cross-border cooperation in the region is the founding ceremony of the Euro-Mediterranean University based in Portorož. The presence of José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission, and Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament, who recently inaugurated this University, gives us an additional guarantee that the efforts are taken seriously.

5. WHAT ABOUT SLOVENIA?

The above European initiatives and the Slovenian presidency offer an excellent opportunity for the Slovenian maritime authorities to reconsider their own maritime policy, particularly within the Mediterranean. The brunt of the task should bear the Slovenian Ministry of Transport, and within it the Maritime Administration which carries out and coordinates a wide range of tasks encompassing all aspects of the maritime activity, such as economic development of the port infrastructure, the use of public goods and the performing of public services, safety of navigation, pollution prevention, sea routes, ports and harbours, port state control, etc... Last but not least a great role in this respect has also the Maritime Law Association of Slovenia, which among other things is supposed to draw attention of the Slovenian Government to the neglected role of maritime affairs in Slovenia, and which co-operates with the government bodies in preparing and adopting marine-related legislation, promotes the harmonisation of Slovenian legislation with the EU, as well as offers assistance and consulting services on maritime law to individuals and companies.

Slovenia should aim at the modernisation of shipping (merchant fleets, ports and routes) and this should include the safety of navigation, fishing, maritime education and training. All countries which exploit the sea for economic purposes depend on maritime policy to develop their economy. Greater or smaller significance of the national maritime policy depends on: the dimensions and significance of the marine borderlines and its geographical position, the importance of sea trade as a whole, the role of marine merchant transport in the country's economy, the growth of coastal industry, which might use raw materials imported through cheap sea routes enabling cheap final products to citizens.

In the Republic of Slovenia, the role of maritime affairs has long been neglected. We should however be thankful to a few former researching enthusiasts in the field of maritime affairs (maritime economy, social and natural potentials), since their findings encouraged greater interest in the coastal region resulting in the economic growth there (though mainly in summer). However, it is not enough. Now we should take further measures to take advantages of our natural resources.

Understanding the importance of the sea signifies having the so called “maritime awareness”. This directs maritime nations to base their economic power on the sea. Only maritime awareness brings major benefit from the sea and employs its merchant fleet for the purposes of export and import of goods² for its own needs and as a transit country. In Slovenia so far, partly with the exception of maritime tourism, the Port of Koper seems to have been able to implement its maritime awareness. In the container transport segment, the Port of Koper achieved a sharp grow of 40% in containers throughput in 2007 compared to the previous year(s). By 2010 the existing container terminal is expected to gain additional berthing facilities and a new hinterland property for the transshipment of containers. The Port of Koper will also be able to receive the largest ships with a capacity of 8,000 TEU. We possess the coast and what we need now are well organized and marked approaching routes, modern merchant fleet, well equipped ports with good connections to the hinterland and last but not least – well trained seamen. Falling behind in this competition means jeopardizing own vital interests. On the one hand we hear constant claims that we are a maritime nation, but on the other

hand it has to be repeated that the development of shipping does not make benefits only to the littoral region. The national economic power should be based on the sea and the Adriatic Sea should become an integrated part of our country as well as our awareness. The maritime orientation signifies flourishing of maritime economy and the whole national economy. Consequently we can achieve economic and political freedom. Our domestic and foreign trade should be oriented to the Adriatic Sea, which provides the most convenient traffic route.

6. CONCLUSION

The history of mankind teaches us that the sea has always been the source of wellbeing and prestige for all maritime countries as well as the source of power of those that dominated the seas. For a country whose further development considerably depends on sea transport each regulation related to foreign policy must consider the maritime aspect. The exploitation of the sea must be based on an adequate maritime policy. This should aim to providing the cheapest transport. The Adriatic Sea is the gulf with which the Mediterranean Sea intrudes deepest in the land as far as the base of the Alps. This makes the shortest and most economical way from and to Central and Northern Europe. The geographical position and the rich maritime tradition enable the Republic of Slovenia to develop and become a recognizable maritime country, as it is well known that the countries which possess the sea have considerable comparative advantages over others. Research and innovation are indispensable prerequisites for the growth and employment in the maritime economy as well as for political decision-making.

² It is incredible how much money is lost in the Republic of Slovenia as these principles are not respected.

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