Changing role of small/medium sized ports

Main factors of influence on the economy and the shipping in the English Channel

- Development of new techniques
- Development of fast ships and new propulsion technology
- Development of cross-docking platforms for trans-shipment
- Opening of new routes
- Continued increase in the size of container ships
- Changes consequent on energy distribution networks
- Increased role of Channel Tunnel

The cartographic representations making up this portfolio present the rich tapestry of activities to be found around the Channel. Clearly the picture is constantly evolving, which in turn begs the question of what we might expect to see in 30 years time. The key parameters shaping the direction of a probable scenario are already in evidence - the growing reach of globalisation, the ever present role of new technology and the political sensitivities of environmental impact. At the centre of this triptych is the whole issue of social acceptability, particularly in respect of major infrastructural developments (and not least the attendant questions relating to conflict resolution when protests arise). What is certain is that the pace of change is likely to be both intense and rapid.

So will the Channel continue to hold position as a premier global maritime transport corridor? Already the ‘Northern Range’ ports have seen their dominance giving way to the rapid rise of those in the Far East indeed a ‘global shift’ in favour of Asia and the Pacific. However, such trends do not preclude the Channel’s continuing strategic role, neither does the opening up of new sea routes, as in the case of the Arctic North West passage (or even the North East passage), still decades away. What is more immediately relevant is the emergence of China as the world’s new global workshop, when protests arise). What is certain is that the pace of change is likely to be both intense and rapid.

These new geographical and economic realities have been accompanied by an increasing maximisation of maritime transport in the search for greater energy and logistical efficiency. In December 2012, the CMA CGM ‘Marco Polo’, the world’s largest container ship (16,000TEUs), entered the Channel, and later just able to manoeuvre its way through the Dover Strait. Such a radical reorganisation would need to be seen their dominance giving way to the rapid rise of those in the Far East indeed a ‘global shift’ in favour of Asia and the Pacific. However, such trends do not preclude the Channel’s continuing strategic role, neither does the opening up of new sea routes, as in the case of the Arctic North West passage (or even the North East passage), still decades away. What is more immediately relevant is the emergence of China as the world’s new global workshop. Such a radical reorganisation would need to be seen their dominance giving way to the rapid rise of those in the Far East indeed a ‘global shift’ in favour of Asia and the Pacific. However, such trends do not preclude the Channel’s continuing strategic role, neither does the opening up of new sea routes, as in the case of the Arctic North West passage (or even the North East passage), still decades away. What is more immediately relevant is the emergence of China as the world’s new global workshop.