

Series 6: Maritime Traffic

Map 1: Merchant Ships Registered, 1830-1860

The map shows the development of the merchant vessel fleets in the period from 1830 to 1860. Seven benchmark years – in five-year intervals – are displayed. Even at first glance the dominance of Britain (United Kingdom), possessing a fleet of 2.2 million tons in 1830, becomes readily apparent. France is second, with the North German States coming in third, followed by Norway and the Netherlands. In 1860, the tonnage of all continental countries put together (4.6 million) is just barely more than that of Britain (4.2 million). During this period in maritime history the use of steamships began. The British merchant fleet had 30.000 tons of steam ships in 1830, rising to 450.000 tons – or one-tenth of the fleet's size - in 1860. On the Continent, only France shows a noticeable share of steam (70.000 tons) in 1860, while all the other countries lag far behind.

Map 2: Merchant Ships Registered, 1865-1895

During the thirty years depicted in this map Britain's lead remains uncontested. Norway has risen to second place, Germany (united since 1871) coming in third, followed by France and Italy (united since 1870). The size of fleets in France, Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands actually decline somewhat during this period, while those of Britain and Germany continue to grow, the others being more or less stagnant. There is an enormous growth in steamship capacity during this period, well depicted in the diagram of the United Kingdom, and in others (Germany, France, and Spain) as well. In these four cases steamships had overtaken sailing ships by 1895, while in all other countries shown in the map sail continued to lead steam.

Map 3: Merchant Ships Registered, 1895-1915

The map shows that in this period there was a nearly total replacement of sailing ships by steamships in all countries except for Finland (then still an autonomous Russian province). Britain's lead remains uncontested, with Germany having moved into second place followed by Norway, France and Italy. For the first time, Russian data is available and has been mapped, while the fleet of Austria-Hungary has been "split" into an Austrian and a Hungarian part. For a number of countries, data for 1915 – the second year of the First World War – is not available.

Map 4: Merchant Ships Registered, 1920-1930

The political and territorial changes caused by the First World War are depicted in this map. There are "newcomers" like Yugoslavia, Poland, the Republic of Ireland to the maritime countries of Europe, while others like Austria and Hungary have lost their coastal access. For the first time in this series there is some comparable data on Portugal, while for others, especially the Baltic States, the states of the Soviet Union, and Balkan countries data is lacking. In Denmark and in the Netherlands, a new measuring system of the capacity of ships has been implemented by 1925, rendering their data incompatible. In continuing with the theme of British maritime dominance: this is still present in 1930, as the map clearly shows. Germany, the great rival and loser of the War has no ships at all in 1920, since all vessels had to be turned over to the Allies, but rebounds by 1925 already and

with a capacity of some 1.7 million tons rivals the fleets of both Italy and France. Sail has lost nearly all its importance, the only exception being Finland, where in 1920 there are still more sailing vessels than steamships. But even this changes in the subsequent years as the diagram shows. By 1930, the age of the sailing vessel was over in Europe.