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# Vertical integration at sea: MSC’s port acquisition attempt triggers competition concerns

Reddal Insights — 6 June 2025
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CK Hutchison’s decision to sell a majority stake in its global ports business to MSC has raised widespread concerns across the shipping and logistics industry. The deal, which would significantly expand MSC’s port presence worldwide, could disrupt competitive balance and tighten control over global trade routes.

CK Hutchison’s decision to sell 80% of its global ports portfolio to Terminal Investment Limited, a subsidiary of Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), in a 23BUSD deal has sparked significant concern in the global logistics and shipping industry. The transaction – covering 43 ports across 23 countries – would elevate MSC to the world’s largest container terminal operator, raising fears of reduced competition, limited access for rival shipping lines, and increased barriers to entry.

Industry executives and analysts warn that the deal grants MSC not only extensive port control but also strategic advantages through vertical integration, allowing the company to optimize operations and potentially access sensitive competitor data. The transaction has triggered regulatory scrutiny, including an antitrust review by China, and faces potential obstacles in key ports like Rotterdam. While MSC and its supporters argue the deal will not result in discriminatory practices, critics stress that the scale of the consolidation could distort the competitive landscape.

Kun Cao, a Senior Manager at Reddal based in Helsinki, contributed expert commentary to the article, noting that MSC’s expanded influence over port infrastructure could provide it access to valuable shipping data. Kun warned that this information could be leveraged for competitive advantage, reinforcing concerns about the broader implications of vertical

integration in the sector.

The original article was published by Financial Times on May 06, 2025 and can be accessed here: Panama port owner's deal fuels fears of dominance by world's top shipping group

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