

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN MARINE SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THREATS IN THE BALTIC SEA AND THE BLACK SEA

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Abstract: The straight-line distance from Gdynia (Baltic Sea) to Varna (Black Sea) is 1,450 km, although preliminary analysis shows that despite the distance separating these two water bodies, there are many similarities and differences between them. These include the dominant religion in the coastal states, regional and global political, economic and military importance, hydrometeorological conditions, climate, and, finally, historical conditions determining the perception of these water areas by the coastal states. The purpose of this article is to identify similarities and differences between these water bodies. The greatest attention in the research process was focused on the similarities and differences in their perception by Russia and the consequences resulting from Russia's Black Sea and Baltic policy. It should also be noted that in the next few years many of the presented conclusions may turn out to be incorrect or incomplete, because the outcome of the war in Ukraine and the peace provisions concluded between Ukraine and Russia. Those will be decisive in determining the real role and importance of mentioned water areas in the coming years.

Keywords: Baltic Sea; Black Sea; similarities; differences; war; Ukraine; Russia; role

Despite the distance separating these bodies of water, it is possible to identify both similarities and differences that are variable or permanent in nature. Their stability or variability results from regional specificity, which includes: geography, hydrology, political, social, military, or economic conditions. In the author's opinion, the analyzes conducted, especially in relation to Russia, should not ignore reactions and actions that may be irrational. In many cases, Russia's reaction results from its superpower mentality, national pride, nationalism, prejudices, or is intended to achieve specific internal policy goals. The perception of these two reservoirs, and in particular the Black Sea, has been changed by the ongoing war in Ukraine, which is no longer a local conflict. It is a regional conflict whose consequences are increasingly global. This war showed the international community that in a globalized world, armed conflict and disruption of the traditional supply chain result in smaller or larger regional or global consequences. The thesis presented above is confirmed by breaking the chain supplies of grain and agricultural products from Ukraine and the regional and global consequences it has caused. It can therefore be said, that the ongoing war has significantly increased the regional and global importance of the Black Sea. However, the event related to the damage to the undersea gas pipeline Nord Stream I and II, and the interruption of natural gas supplies to Western European countries, reduced the role and importance of the Baltic Sea.

At the beginning, referring to the analyzes of the similarities and differences between the Baltic and the Black Sea, it seems justified to consider the historical dimension relating to the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets. The history of the Russian Navy began in the Baltic Sea, and its beginning should be considered the creation of the Baltic Squadron on October 20, 1696 by Tsar Peter I, which gave rise not only to the Baltic Fleet, but also to the entire Russian Navy.

In 1703, during the Third Northern War, Russia captured the mouth of the Neva River into the Gulf of Finland, thus gaining narrow access to the Baltic Sea. In the same year, the construction of the first Russian naval base in Kronstadt on the Baltic Sea began. In the case of the Black Sea, Russia first gained access to this sea in 1700, capturing the fortress of Azov located on the Sea of Azov, but in 1711 the fortress returned to Turkish rule. In 1771, the Russians occupied Crimea, thus gaining access to the Black Sea. In 1783, the construction of the city and naval base of Sevastopol began. From that moment on, Russia became a Black Sea state.

When starting to consider the similarities and differences, one must remember the events and myths that are inextricably linked with Russian history and refer to these two reservoirs. It was on the Baltic Sea in Saint Petersburg that

the October Revolution began, and the salvo from the cruiser *Aurora* is its embodiment in Russian consciousness to this day. The headquarters of the Russian Navy is located in Saint Petersburg, and the headquarters of the Baltic Fleet is in Kaliningrad. Saint Petersburg is a hero city whose defense, lasting 872 days, became, for the Russians, one of the most important episodes of World War II. It should not be forgotten, that Saint Petersburg is the hometown of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev.

In the case of the Black Sea, the defense of Sevastopol was of similar importance to the Russians as the defense of Leningrad during the Crimean War and the years of World War II. It was in Crimea in Chersonesos that Prince Vladimir the Great was baptized in the Byzantine rite, and the Russian lands became Orthodox.⁹ An important event permanently present in the general national consciousness of Russians is the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin*, popularized in the film directed by Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin*.

These seemingly insignificant facts determine the perception of these two reservoirs, not only by the political and military elites of contemporary Russia, but also by Russian society.

The identification of similarities and differences between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea should begin with the religious aspect. In the countries located on the Black Sea, Orthodox Christianity dominates (the exception is Turkey, which is a Muslim country), while in the Baltic countries the religious situation is more complex. In the case of Sweden, Latvia, Finland, Denmark, and the German Baltic states, the dominant religion is Protestantism, in the case of Poland and Lithuania it is Catholicism, and in Estonia and Russia it is Orthodoxy. In his book – *The Clash of Civilizations*, S. R. Huntington included the Baltic states in the circle of Western civilization, while the Black Sea states are predominantly Orthodox circles of civilizations, and Turkey was included in the circle of civilizations of „lonely“ states. History confirms that religion plays an important role in shaping national mentality and in many cases leaves a significant mark on state policy. It should be emphasized, however, that in many countries, both in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, a significant percentage of citizens declare themselves to be non-believers.

Another identified difference is the military and political conditions. The Baltic Sea is considered the internal sea of the European Union, and in the short term also as the internal sea of the North Atlantic Alliance. Following Sweden's formal membership in NATO, all Baltic states (except Russia) will be members of both NATO and the EU. In the case of the Black Sea, three countries belong to NATO, and only two Black Sea countries belong to the European Union. Another

important aspect is that Turkey controls the Black Sea Straits, while Denmark and Sweden control the Baltic Straits. Therefore, it can be said that control over the entry and exit from these waters is controlled by NATO member states, which is of key importance from the Russian point of view.

It should be recalled that three Baltic states regained their independence after the collapse of the USSR, in the case of the Black Sea states, these are: Ukraine and Georgia. The consequence of the nationality policy of the USSR are national minorities in the countries of the former USSR. A particularly complex structure of national minorities occurs in two Baltic countries – Estonia and Latvia, where the Russian minority constitutes 23.7% and 33.8% of the population, respectively. In the case of Ukraine, the Russian minority is approximately 18%.¹⁰ As the conflict in Ukraine shows, such a large Russian and Russian-speaking minority creates not only challenges, but above all, a threat to the national security of a country that has such a minority.

Over the centuries, subsequent Baltic Sea countries have strived to make the area their internal sea. In the 18th century, Sweden had such aspirations, and in the following centuries, the Russian Empire. In the case of the Black Sea, the main rivals were Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The key aspect in this rivalry was gaining control over the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. In the case of both water areas, no country has achieved full dominance over the Baltic or Black Sea.

Nowadays, Russia's superpower mentality is manifested by actions inconsistent with international law, regarding the status of the Pilsa and Kerch Straits (in the case of the latter strait after the aggression and occupation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia). Russia unlawfully restricts or denies the use of these straits for international navigation. It should be emphasized, that the Kerch Strait is much more important for Ukraine in the economic dimension than freedom of navigation through the Pilsa Strait for Poland.

Russia's illegal actions have resulted in a radical reduction in transshipment in the Ukrainian ports of Mariupol and Berdyansk. Russia has introduced „passive“ obstructions in the Kerch Strait (passage prohibition through the strait for ships longer than 160 m). This prevented 23% of ships (capable of transporting 43% of cargo) that previously entered these ports from calling at Ukrainian ports in the Sea of Azov. In the spring of 2018, the Russians began to „actively“ obstruct navigation. It involves extending the control and detention of ships entering the Sea of Azov. Ship detention times increased from 28 hours in July 2018 to 125 hours in November when entering the Sea of Azov, and from 57 hours in July and 115 hours in November when on the way from the Sea of Azov

to the Black Sea. The daily cost of berthing, depending on the size of the ship, ranges from \$15,000 to \$75,000. Therefore, the total increase in costs for ship-owners ranges from 100 to 500 thousand dollars for each vessel wishing to call at Ukrainian ports in the Sea of Azov. As a result of these activities, there was a decrease in transshipment in Mariupol, which amounted to 8.9% year on year, and in Berdyansk as much as 22%. Since 2014, transshipment in Mariupol has decreased from 14 million tons to 6.5 million tons per year.¹¹ The total losses caused by the Russian blockade of Ukrainian ports on the Sea of Azov amount to over USD 200 million per year, resulting in a decline in Ukraine's GDP by 1.8%.¹² Russia's actions resulted in an intervention by the international community condemning their illegality, but the effects of this statement are negligible.

In order to become independent from Russia, Poland built a ditch through the Vistula Spit, thus ships, Border Guard units, merchant ships entering the port of Elbląg, and recreational vessels do not have to use the Pilava Strait.

Table 1. Comparison of hydrometeorological conditions in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea

	<i>Baltic Sea</i>	<i>Black Sea</i>
surface [thousands km ²]	427,4	422 (with the Sea of Azov 461)
medium depth [m]	52,3	1 315
maximum depth [m]	459	2 258
medium salinity [‰]	7	17,5
salinity near the surface [‰]	7,5	18,3
salinity near the bottom [‰]	16,5	22,5
meridional extension [km]	1 500	580
latitudinal extension [km]	600	1 150
coastal states	Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Poland, Russia, Sweden	Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine

Source: own study based on Łomniewski K. *Morze Bałtyckie*, Bajkiewicz-Grabowska E. *Hydrologia ogólna*

Another aspect of comparing water bodies are hydrometeorological conditions. The Baltic Sea and the Black Sea are inland seas, connected to other sea

areas or the ocean by narrow straits. In the case of the Baltic Sea, these are: the Great Belt, the Little Belt, the Sound, and the Kattegat. The Black Sea is connected to the Mediterranean Sea by the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and to the Atlantic Ocean by the Strait of Gibraltar. Such connections make it difficult to exchange the waters of these reservoirs with the open ocean, making them very susceptible to pollution. In the case of the Baltic Sea, water exchange takes 25 to 30 years, while in the Black Sea it takes about 2,500 years.¹³

Referring to hydrological issues, one can notice a very large range of salinity in the Baltic Sea waters. In the Kattegat and Skagerrak, it is about 20‰, while in the Gulf of Finland and Bothnia it drops to 1‰ – 2‰, while in spring, due to increased inflows of fresh water from rivers, the salinity in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland may drop even to zero. The main difference between these two reservoirs is the average depth of the reservoir. The differences presented determine the methods of using naval forces in these waters.

A significant difference between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea is the volume of inland transport, which is then transferred to ships in sea ports. In the case of the Baltic Sea, the share of inland transport in transshipment in sea ports is negligible compared to the role and importance of this transport in the case of the Black Sea. Inland transport, especially on the Danube and Dnieper, is a very important element of the Black Sea maritime transport chain.

In 2021, seagoing transshipments that reached the Black Sea ports via the Danube amounted to almost 27 million tons. The port with the largest transshipment of inland goods is Constanta. It should be noted the role played by Ukrainian inland ports (Ismail and Reni – their total transshipment in the year before the war was 4 million tons) in the export of Ukrainian grain during the ongoing war. The main goods transhipped in Danube ports are grain, agricultur-

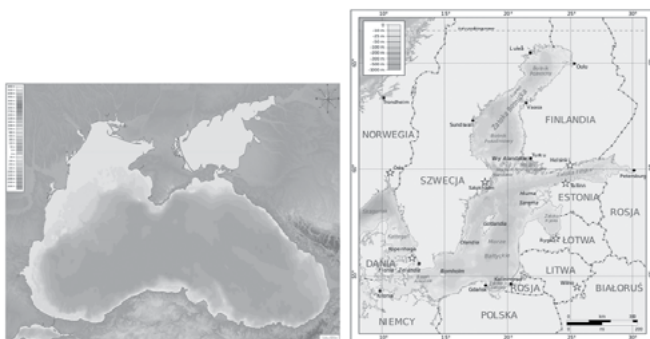


Figure 1. Maps of Black Sea (left) and Baltic Sea (right)

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sea#/media/File:Map_of_the_Black_Sea_with_bathymetry_and_surrounding_relief.svg and https://pl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Bathymetric_map_of_the_Baltic_Sea-pl.svg

al products, non-ferrous metal ores, metal products, and construction materials.¹⁴ In 2023, a high dynamic of growth in transshipment can be observed in the ports in question. Inland navigation on the Dnieper is equally important. According to available data, in the year preceding the aggression in Ukraine, this transport amounted to 14.36 million tons. These were mainly construction materials, cereals and agricultural products, and metal products.¹⁵

There is no question about the fact that in both the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, Russia is the main source of challenges and threats. Aggressive and provocative behavior by Russian planes and ships has been observed for several years. However, in the case of the Baltic Sea, probably due to the nature of this body of water and its importance for Russia's economy and exports, these actions are less aggressive than in the Black Sea, especially after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea.

Selected incidents involving Russian aircraft and ships are presented below.

On **February 1, 2017**, an anti-submarine corvette belonging to the Russian Black Sea Fleet fired small arms at an unarmed Ukrainian An-26 transport aircraft that was flying over the Odeska gas field, near the Boyko oil platform occupied by the Russians. No crew members were injured as a result of the gunfire, but the aircraft's fuselage was damaged.

On **January 30, 2018**, a Russian Su-27 aircraft in international airspace came within a dangerous distance (about 2 meters) of an American EP-3A reconnaissance aircraft.

The most serious incident occurred on **November 25, 2018**, on that day three Ukrainian ships¹⁶ were carrying out the planned passage from Odessa to Mariupol in the Sea of Azov. In accordance with international standards, in order to ensure navigation safety, the Ukrainian side had previously informed the Russians about the planned crossing route. The Russians, contrary to the international Convention on the Law of the Sea (Articles 24 and 38) and the bilateral agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on cooperation in the exploration of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait of 2003, did not consent to Ukrainian ships crossing to the Sea of Azov. The pretext for the refusal was false information provided to the Ukrainian side that traffic in both directions under the Crimean Bridge was blocked by a damaged Russian tanker. This information was not confirmed (no such information in the international navigation control system). Another confirmation that the information provided was false was that during the incident, Russian units (a minesweeper and two Raptor boats of the Russian Border Guard) passed through the Kerch Strait.

When the Ukrainian side did not comply with the illegal decisions, this gave the Russian side a pretext for four patrol ships of the Russian Border Guard, a Black Sea Fleet corvette, two Su-25 attack planes, two Ka-52 helicopters, and a Spetsnaz unit to take force. The disproportion of power during this incident is worth noting. The Russian Don patrol unit rammed and disabled a Ukrainian tugboat. The remaining Ukrainian ships were fired at by Russian helicopters with missiles. The aim of the attack was not to immobilize the units, but to destroy the rooms where the Ukrainian sailors were located. During the incident, the Ukrainian ships were shot at, pushed off course or immobilized as a result of ramming, and then captured by Russian special forces. The illegally seized Ukrainian ships were towed to the port of Kerch and the crews were arrested.

On **October 29, 2018**, the European Parliament took a position on this incident and adopted a resolution on Russia's violation of international law in the Sea of Azov. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also expressed concern, pointing out that maintaining freedom of passage through the waters of the Sea of Azov is important not only for Ukraine, but also for the vessels of the Alliance countries and maritime trade with Ukraine. Finally, on **May 25, 2019**, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg obliged the Russian Federation to return the seized ships and immediately release the Ukrainian sailors. This ruling confirms the unlawful nature of the Russian side's actions. The Kremlin, however, stated that the Tribunal has no competence to decide on this case, and the fate of the Ukrainian vessels and their crews will be decided by the Russian court.¹⁷ Ultimately, the Ukrainian sailors were exchanged on September 7, 2019, and the ships were returned to Ukraine on November 18, 2019.¹⁸

On **September 29, 2022**, in international airspace, a Russian Su-27 aircraft fired an air-to-air missile in the immediate vicinity of a British RC-135W Rivet Joint reconnaissance aircraft. The consequence of this incident was that reconnaissance planes carried out flights escorted by fighter planes.

On **March 14, 2023**, as a result of intentional, dangerous and unprofessional maneuvers of two Russian Su-27 aircraft in international waters, an American MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle was shot down.

On **May 5, 2023**, an incident occurred over the Black Sea with a Polish Turbolet L-410 aircraft of the Border Guard, which was carrying out a Frontex mission over the Black Sea (monitoring illegal emigration by sea). A Russian fighter approached the Polish Border Guard plane three times, and its aggressive and dangerous maneuvers caused the plane's crew to temporarily lose control of the plane.

On **August 13, 2023**, the Russian patrol vessel Vasily Bykov attempted to inspect the Sukru Okan ship, flying the Palau flag, in international waters. Be-

cause the ship's captain did not respond to the illegal attempt to stop and control the vessel, the Russian ship used weapons to force the vessel to stop. After the detention, a Russian boarding group using Ka-29 helicopters inspected the ship. The actions of the Russian ship were a consequence of Russia's withdrawal in July 2023 from the agreement on grain trade in the Black Sea, which allowed Ukraine to export agricultural products from Black Sea ports. Russia issued a statement that it considers all ships heading towards Ukraine as potentially carrying weapons for Ukraine.

On **September 8, 2022**, 25 nautical miles north-east of the port of Constanța, a Romanian ship was damaged due to the explosion of a sea mine. The explosion occurred during an attempt to defuse an explosive contained in a drifting mine. None of the crew members were injured as a result of the explosion. Already 28 floating sea mines have been defused by ships of various countries, since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in the western waters of the Black Sea.

The number of incidents involving Russians has been systematically increasing since 2014, and they are becoming more and more aggressive. These incidents are aimed not only at Ukraine, but also at the British, American and other countries. However, these actions, despite their clearly aggressive nature, do not cross the border that would force the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance to provide an adequate military response. They prove that Russia is arrogating to itself the right to complete domination in the waters of the Black Sea, and does not allow its rights to the illegally occupied Crimea, and the territorial waters surrounding the Crimean Peninsula, to be questioned. When the war breaks out, it is hard not to notice that, unlike the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea is a body of water where military operations are carried out, often in violation of the principles of international law.

Over the last dozen or so months (since the day of Russia's aggression against Ukraine), the regional and global importance of both the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea has changed. After the start of the war and the introduction of sanctions on the export and import of goods to and from Russia (in particular energy, raw materials) and the damage to the Nord Stream I and Nord Stream II gas pipelines, the importance of the Baltic Sea in the regional and global dimension decreased significantly. The Baltic Sea will probably cease to be a key basin for Russia for Russian exports. It is also not important for Russia in terms of the extraction of energy resources. However, it is still the location of the most important shipyards building ships not only for the Russian Navy, but also for export, which is why an important task of the Baltic Fleet is to orga-

nize and secure delivery and acceptance tests of new units built. The command of the Russian Navy is located on the Baltic Sea in Saint Petersburg. Another specific feature of the Baltic Sea is that the most important base and key infrastructure of the Baltic Fleet is located in the Kaliningrad Oblast, which has no direct connection with Russia and is surrounded by NATO countries (Poland and Lithuania). This creates serious logistical challenges for Russia, which is particularly important in the event of a potential crisis or armed conflict. Therefore, sea transport plays a key role in the logistics security of the Kaliningrad Oblast.

The ongoing war has significantly increased the importance of the Black Sea area both regionally and globally. This has been proven by the grain crisis, the effects of which are felt in particular by African countries. In the case of the Black Sea, the question arises whether it is possible for the Black Sea Fleet Command to still be located in Sevastopol, which is also the main base of this fleet. It seems obvious that after Ukraine regains the Crimean Peninsula, the authorities of this country will not consent to the leasing of Sevastopol by Russia, to the stationing of Russian ships in the Sevastopol and Feodosia naval bases, or to the use of the military infrastructure located in Crimea. If such a scenario were to materialize, the Black Sea Fleet would only have a naval base in Novorossiysk and a secondary base in Tuapse. The ongoing war has significantly increased the importance of the Black Sea Fleet as one of the important pillars of blocking Ukrainian ports and projecting power from sea to land.

In an attempt to identify potential challenges and threats to these two water areas, it seems necessary to analyze the provisions contained in the latest Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation relating to the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. This doctrine was approved by Vladimir Putin on July 31, 2022, on the 158th day of the war with Ukraine. It should be emphasized that this document is, in many aspects, of a propaganda nature and was developed for internal policy purposes.

When analyzing security aspects in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, it is necessary to analyze which areas of Russia's national maritime interests these water areas fall into.¹⁹

According to the provisions contained in the doctrine, the vital areas for securing national maritime interests include: internal waters, territorial sea, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of Russia, as well as their bottom and the area beneath it, and the air space above these waters. Thus, the territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone in the Baltic and Black Sea have been included among the vital areas for securing Russia's national maritime interests.

Important areas for securing Russia's national maritime interests²⁰ include water areas that have largely influence the economic development, material well-being of the population and the state of Russia's national security, and are also important from the point of view of maintaining the strategic and regional security of the state. These include: the areas of oceans and seas adjacent to the coast of Russia, including the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, as well as the Black Sea and Baltic Straits. It is worth noting that the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, despite the fact that they surround the coast of Russia, were highlighted in this point of the analyzed document. It should be suspected, that such a distinction results from the fact that the international community does not recognize the legality of the annexation of Crimea. Thus, such a distinction is intended to indicate the importance that Russia attaches to these water areas.

The document also defined the regional directions of the national maritime policy,²¹ including the Arctic, Pacific, Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Arctic, and Caspian. The Atlantic direction covers the Baltic, Azov-Black Sea and Mediterranean areas. It can therefore be said that both the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea are perceived by Russians as important water bodies from the point of view of securing Russia's national maritime interests (military, political and economic).

A comparison of the priorities of the national maritime policy in the Atlantic direction covering the analyzed water areas is presented in the table below.

The analysis of the priorities of Russia's maritime policy in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea presented in the table above indicates that some of them are common not only to the analyzed water areas, but also to other sea areas surrounding Russia. These priorities include: development of the combat potential of the Baltic Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet, development of undersea transmission systems and expansion of transshipment infrastructure. Differences in the priorities adopted for the analyzed water areas result from their specificity. In the case of the Baltic Sea, such a specific criterion is to ensure uninterrupted sea transport to the Kaliningrad Oblast, while in the case of the Black Sea, such priorities are the development of the shipbuilding industry in the Black Sea. This priority results from the need to provide the necessary infrastructure and potential for the renovation of ships of the Black Sea Fleet. An equally important priority from Russia's point of view is to ensure a legal regime in the Black Sea that is favorable to Russia. The adoption of this priority is a consequence of the international community's failure to recognize the current status of the Crimean Peninsula.

Table 2. Priorities of Russian maritime policy in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea

<i>Baltic Sea</i>	<i>Black Sea</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – development of the combat potential and base system of the Baltic Fleet, and its ability to ensure the protection of Russia’s national interests in the Baltic Sea; – development of national coastal and port infrastructure, including the processing, transshipment and transport of hydrocarbons; – further development of the underwater pipeline system, ensuring their efficient and safe operation; – ensuring communication accessibility by sea to the Kaliningrad Oblast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – comprehensive strengthening of Russia’s geopolitical position in this region; – development of the combat potential and level of training of the forces of the Black Sea Fleet, as well as the development of military infrastructure in Crimea and on the coast of Krasnodar Krai; – development of Black Sea underwater pipeline systems; – ensuring, in accordance with the norms of international maritime law, favorable to Russia, the legal regime of the Black Sea, the rules for the use of marine biological resources and the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon deposits, as well as the laying and operation of underwater pipelines; – modernization and expansion of coastal infrastructure and port facilities allowing for an increase in sea transport; – development of the regional shipbuilding industry.

Source: *Maritime doctrine of the Russian Federation of July 31, 2022*

Another aspect analyzed was maritime interests. The latest Russian Maritime Doctrine recognizes the following as national maritime interests:

- ensuring the independence and sovereignty, territorial integrity of Russia;
- ensuring sovereign rights and jurisdiction in maritime areas under Russian jurisdiction, including the continental shelf;
- Russia maintaining its status as a global maritime power;
- development of maritime potential and strengthening of Russia’s defense capabilities in the Ocean region;
- development of the Northern Sea Route as a national transport communication, competitive on the world market;
- effective protection of human life at sea.

The consequence of such adopted national maritime interests was the definition of the main challenges and threats to the national security and sustainable development of Russia in maritime areas, which were identified as:

- maritime dimensions of American military and economic dominance;

- actions limiting Russia’s access to marine living and inanimate resources provided by other countries;
- territorial claims by other states against Russia regarding some of its coastal and island territories;²²
- economic, political, legal-international, informational and military pressure on Russia in order to discredit and reduce the effectiveness of its activities on the seas and oceans;
- moving NATO military infrastructure to Russia’s borders;
- systematically increasing the number of military exercises conducted in the waters of the seas adjacent to Russian territory;
- lack of a sufficient number of naval bases outside Russia to protect navy ships performing tasks in areas far from its own coast.

However, the authors of the doctrine considered the most important threats to Russia’s maritime activities to be: the provisions of international law relating to the legal status of the demarcation of maritime areas and attempts to revise the provisions of international law regulating maritime activities in the Arctic, the Black Sea and other waters, and in particular the legal regime of the Sea, which is favorable to Russia. Black and Azov and the principles of obtaining marine animate and inanimate resources, exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon deposits, and laying and operation of undersea pipelines.

When identifying similarities and differences between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, analyzes relating to the potential of the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets cannot be omitted. The table below presents a summary of the ships that were part of these two Fleets.

Table 3. Ships of the Baltic Fleet and Black Sea Fleet

	<i>Baltic Sea Fleet</i>	<i>Black Sea Fleet</i>
patrol submarine (Improved Kilo class) SSK	-	6
patrol submarine (Kilo class) SSK	2	-
destroyer (Sovremenny class) DDGHM	1	-
frigates (Admiral Grigorovich class) FFGH	-	3
frigates (Neustrashimy class) FFHM	2	-
frigates (Steregushchiy class) FFGHM	4	-
frigates (Krivak class) FFM	-	2
corvettes (Dergach class) PGGJM	-	2
corvettes (Nanuszka class) FSGM	4	2
corvettes (Karakut class) FSGM	6	6
corvettes (Tarantula class) FSGM	6	5

	<i>Baltic Sea Fleet</i>	<i>Black Sea Fleet</i>
corvettes (Bykov class) FSH/PSOH	-	5
corvettes (Parchim class) FFLM	6	-
corvettes (Grisha class) FFLM	-	6
patrol boats (Raptor class) PBF	8	7
patrol boats (Grachonok class) PB/YTD	1	6
patrol boats (Mangust class) PBF	2	-
landing ship (Ivan Rogov class) LHD	-	1
landing ship (Alligator class) LSTM	-	2
landing ship (Ropucha class) LSTM	3	2
landing craft (Serna class) LCU	3	2
landing craft (Ondatra class) LCM	3	5
hovercraft (Pomornik class) ACVM/LCUJM	1	-
landing craft project 02510 LCPF	-	5
minehunters (Alexandrit class) MHSC	1	3
minehunters (Gorya class) MHSO	-	1
minesweepers (Sonya class) MHSC/MHSCM	6	1
minehunters (Lida class) MHC	6	-
survey and research ships	14	8
intelligence vessels	4	2
auxiliaries ships	53	43

Source: *Janes Fighting ships 2022 – 2023*

The presented potential of the Baltic Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet changed during the preparation of this publication, which resulted from the losses incurred during the war and changes resulting from the subordination of ships from other Fleets to the Black Sea Fleet.

The analysis of the potential of the Baltic Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet, despite certain generalizations, allows us to draw general conclusions regarding Russia's perception of these water areas from the perspective of military aspects. Hydrometeorological conditions have an impact on the structure of the combat potential of each fleet. The Black Sea Fleet has a greater quantitative and qualitative potential of submarines than the Baltic Fleet. One of the reasons for this structure of underwater forces is the differences in the depth structure of these water bodies. The Black Sea has a much greater average depth. Moreover, a much larger area of this water region has depths favorable to the use of submarines.

However, the Baltic Fleet has (had) a greater quantitative and qualitative potential of large surface ships, but the potential to project power from sea to land in the case of the Black Sea Fleet is almost 30% greater, and what is more, Russian ships based in Black Sea bases have much more modern missiles (e.g. more modern Kalibr-type missiles). The size of the missile salvo of the ships of the Baltic Fleet is 104 rockets, and the size of the torpedo salvo is 84 torpedoes. The ships of the Black Sea Fleet have a salvo of 130 surface-to-surface missiles and a salvo of 80 torpedoes. It is also worth mentioning that 10 patrol units of the Russian Border Guard can operate in the Baltic Sea, while in the Black Sea the Russian Border Guard has 16 patrol units.

The Black Sea Fleet also has a much greater potential of landing ships. One should not forget about the potential of research units, logistic support and reconnaissance ships. In each of the mentioned ship types, the Baltic Fleet has much greater potential, not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. In the case of intelligence vessels, it is 2:1, in the case of research units it is 1.75:1, and for auxiliary units 1.25:1.

However, it should be emphasized that currently there is no publicly available data regarding the actual quantitative and qualitative potential of the ships of both Fleets. This is due to the conduct of war in the Black Sea and the losses suffered by the Black Sea Fleet.

To sum up the conducted analyses, it should be stated that some of the presented similarities and differences between the two reservoirs are permanent and will not change regardless of the results of the war in Ukraine. These include social and religious similarities and differences, climate and hydrometeorological conditions. However, the remaining ones may be revalued after the end of the war, these are: the economic importance of each of the analyzed water areas and the historical conditions determining their perception by the coastal states (in particular in relation to Russia and Ukraine).

It can also be assumed, that even after the end of the war in Ukraine, Russia will generate incidents in the waters and airspace over the Black Sea. These will be incidents with varying levels of aggressiveness towards other countries. Their number and level of aggression will depend on the outcome of the war. If Russia loses the war, it is expected that there will be more and they will be more aggressive. In this way, the Russians will want to show, for the purposes of their internal politics, that despite the defeat, Russia has not been defeated and is still fighting hard for Russian interests in this area. In the author's opinion, the Black Sea will be perceived by Russia as a basin of confrontation between Russia and the forces that it considers Russia's enemy. Despite some differences, one may be

tempted to say that Russian activity in these waters, taking into consideration the specificity of each of them, may provide clues for predicting directions of future Russian actions in inland maritime areas.

Regardless of the results of the war in Ukraine, we should remember the words of Norman Davies, who said that in case of failure, the Muscovite state postponed its plans, but never gave up on them.

NOTES

1. Some researchers of the history of Orthodoxy believe that the baptism of Rus took place in Kiev.

2. It is worth recalling, that among ethnic Ukrainians, 85.2% declared Ukrainian as their native language, and 14.8% said it was Russian. Among ethnic Russians, 95.9% declared Russian as their native language, and 3.9% said it was Ukrainian. See: <https://www.eurac.edu/en/blogs/mobile-people-and-diverse-societies/ethnic-and-linguistic-identity-in-ukraine-it-s-complicated>

3. In 2020, 6.5 million tons of goods were transhipped in Mariupol (fifth place in Ukraine), and in Berdyansk 2.06 million tons,

4. <https://www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl/bez-kategorii/rotator/ukraina-liczy-straty-i-szuka-rozwiazan/>

5. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Black-Sea/Climate>

6. <https://gmk.center/en/news/danube-ports-operation-is-limited-due-to-the-shallowing-and-shelling-of-the-russian-federation/>

7. <https://english.nv.ua/business/cargo-transportation-along-dnipro-river-up-by-more-than-a-quarter-in-2021-50206939.html>

8. These were two armored gunboats Berdiansk and Nikopol and the tug Jany Kapu

9. See Niecypor K., *Orzeczenie Trybunału ONZ w sprawie incydentu na Morzu*, <https://milmag.pl/incydent-na-morzu-azowskim/>

10. <https://milmag.pl/rosja-zwrocila-ukrainskie-okrety/>

11. The Doctrine defines, among others: such concepts as: vital, important and other areas of securing Russia's national maritime interests, or regional directions of national maritime policy

12. Areas important for securing Russia's national maritime interests are water areas that have a decisive impact on the country's socio-economic development, ensuring the sovereignty and integrity of the state and strengthening its defense. Losing control over them could threaten Russia's national security and even the existence of the state

13. The regional directions of the national maritime policy are set in accordance with the most important regions of the world for Russia, united by common physical-geographic, economic-geographic, political-geographic, and military-geographic features. See *Maritime doctrine of the Russian Federation of July 31, 2022*

14. The key issues from Russia's point of view are: the dispute over the Kuril Islands with Japan, the international community's non-recognition of the annexation of

the Crimean Peninsula, and the non-recognition of demands regarding the extension of the Exclusive Economic Zone to 350 nautical miles in the Lomonosov Ridge area.

15. BAJKIEWICZ-GRABOWSKA, E., 2020. *Hydrologia ogólna*. Warszawa: PWN.

16. Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation of July 31, 2022.

17. *Janes Fighting ships 2022 – 2023*.

18. ŁOMNIEWSKI, K.; MAŃKOWSKI, W.; ZALESKI, J., 1975. *Morze Bałtyckie*. Warszawa: PWN.

19. NIECZYPOR K., *Orzeczenie Trybunału ONZ w sprawie incydentu na Morzu*, <https://milmag.pl/incydent-na-morzu-azowskim/>

20. <https://www.eurac.edu/en/blogs/mobile-people-and-diverse-societies/ethnic-and-linguistic-identity-in-ukraine-it-s-complicated>

21. <https://milmag.pl/rosja-zwrocila-ukrainskie-okrety/>

22. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sea#/media/File:Map_of_the_Black_Sea_with_bathymetry_and_surrounding_relief.svg

23. https://pl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Bathymetric_map_of_the_Baltic_Sea-pl.svg

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