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Russian-ukrainian war at sea: strategic lessons and impact on international security

Summary. In the conditions of significant changes in the international security system as a result of Russia's aggressive actions in the world and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the determination of measures to improve European maritime security is an urgent issue. Ukraine repels Russia's armed aggression and successfully counters the enemy at sea. At the same time, the implementation of Ukraine's course to join the EU and NATO requires the implementation of lessons from the experience of war at sea in joint activities with European partners to improve international security at sea. The article defines the impact of the consequences of the war at sea and proposes joint measures to increase the level of European security at sea.

Key words: international security at sea, russian-ukrainian war, experience of war at sea, lessons learned. maritime security strategy, european security.

Formulation of the problem. With the start of Russian armed aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and the transition to a full-scale invasion in 2022, Europe has for the first time since World War II faced such a large-scale threat of war on the continent. As a result of Russia's aggressive actions, the entire system of international security is suffering a real defeat, because its foundations, founded more than seven decades ago, in the middle of the 20th century, are falling apart: the aggressor attacks and arbitrarily establishes new borders of the European states of Ukraine and Georgia, and the leader of the aggressor state in with his speeches he encroaches on the territory of Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldova.

An important space for Russia's aggressive actions is the maritime sphere. From the sea, Russia projects its power on the land territories of other states by ensuring a permanent naval presence, strikes with long-range missile weapons from the sea areas at objects on land, and finally - seizes parts of the territory of sovereign states from the sea, as happened in Georgia in 2008, with the Ukrainian Crimea in 2014 and other littoral territories of Ukraine in 2022. It also illegally exploits the resources of the occupied parts of the territorial sea and the exclusive (marine) economic zone.

In addition, the Russian aggressor, acting at sea, destabilizes the situation, violates accepted international regimes for the use of maritime spaces, violates the fundamental norms of international maritime law and paralyzes the security of the economic and other legal activities of states at sea. In the course of hostilities against Ukraine at sea, Russia tried to establish supremacy at sea and lost within a month of the beginning of the invasion, and subsequently

suffered a series of defeats and was forced to evacuate the main forces of the fleet to ports on the coast of the Caucasus. However, the consequences created by it at sea have not yet been overcome.

Therefore, **the problem that needs to be solved** is the determination of the strategic consequences and lessons from Russian-Ukrainian war at sea, their impact on national and international security at sea, and based on their analysis, the determination of ways to ensure regional and European maritime security in the future.

In the course of the speech, in order to find ways to solve the above-mentioned problem of ensuring regional and European security in the future, it is necessary to find answers to the following questions:

what are the main strategic lessons from the experience of warfare at sea, the study and implementation of which will affect the provision of security at sea?

what are the features of the effects of the war at sea on international security, primarily in the Black Sea region and in Europe?

what needs to be done to ensure the necessary level of international security at sea, primarily European, in the future?

Analysis of recent research and publications. In order to find answers to the above questions and achieve the goal of the research, we will analyze the acquired experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the conclusions provided in already conducted research, scientific works of predecessors and other sources. A number of works are devoted to the analysis of lessons from the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war at sea [1–6] and their impact on international security [7–9].

The problems of countering hybrid threats, including at sea, and the formation of international security in the conditions of hybrid actions were considered in works [10–13].

The analysis of the above works proves that they contain certain conclusions and lessons from the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war at sea, as well as certain directions and measures to neutralize threats to international security in the Black Sea region.

According to the views of Ukrainian and foreign experts [7, 8, 14], strategic lessons from the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war at sea require an update of maritime security strategies. As you know, the EU Maritime Security Strategy has been updated [15, 16]. Work on the update of Alliance Maritime Strategy [17] and the project of the Maritime Security Strategy of Ukraine continues.

At the same time, work on the classification of the spheres of influence and the systematic determination of the consequences of the war at sea on both national security and international security at sea needs to be continued, which determines the relevance of this article.

The purpose of the article is to identify ways to improve both regional security in the Black Sea region and recommendations for improving international security and, first of all, European maritime security, taking into account the experience of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine at sea.

Presenting main material. In order to determine the strategic lessons from the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war at sea, the following should be considered: the evolution of the views of the parties on the possible strategies of their actions at sea in the event of an escalation of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and a transition to full-scale military actions, which are reflected in strategic documents; the actual actions at the strategic level, carried out since the beginning of the military invasion until now; strategic consequences of the actions of the parties at sea, the level of achievement of the set goals; the main conclusions from actions at sea at the strategic level that must be taken into account in the future.

First of all, let's consider the Russian naval strategy before war. As you know in 2017 “Fundamentals of the Russian Federation state policy in the field of naval activities” Russians said that [18]:

main naval fleet task is “...to destruct of the military and economic potential of the enemy by destroying his vital facilities from the sea”;

in wartime fleet must “...successfully confront an enemy in near and far sea zones after 2025 fleet will be armed of ...robotic vehicles, including unmanned underwater vehicles...”.

Thus, the Russian naval strategy before the start of the war provided for the suppression of the economic potential and the destruction of the enemy's forces from the sea.

On the other hand before Russian-Ukrainian war Ukraine developed new state strategic documents on maritime and naval fields – Maritime doctrine of Ukraine, Doctrine of the Naval Forces of Armed Forces of Ukraine and Strategy of the Naval Forces of Armed Forces of Ukraine 2035 [19, 20, 21]. All of these strategic documents were accorded with NATO approaches (standards), primarily with the main provisions of Allied Joint Doctrine for Maritime Operations (AJP-3.1).

But the goals and objectives of Ukraine's naval strategy had to take into account the insufficient level of naval capabilities, because as of January 2022, not everything had been done. UAV Bayraktar TB2, patrol boats, awareness system Delta were accepted and started to be used. However, the division of the “Neptune” missile complex was not put into service, the agreement with Great Britain on missile boats had not yet begun. These limitations largely determined the nature of the actions of the Navy in the first days of the war.

In order to determine the lessons of the war at sea, we will briefly review the main events. Now as a result of analysis of the combat experience in 2022-2023 we can identify the following **stages of war at sea**:

stage 1 (February 24, 2022 – April 1, 2022), the Russian forces created and used command at sea;

stage 2 (April 2, 2022 – July 21, 2022), the successful Ukrainian missile strikes on the Russian's large warships (on frigate “Essen”, April 2, and cruiser “Moskva”, April 13), disrupted enemy command at sea;

stage 3 (July 22, 2022 – October 28, 2022), the restricted employment of forces at sea after concluding of agreements on the grain initiative between Ukraine, Turkey and UN, and same Russian agreement with these sides;

stage 4 (October 29, 2022 – August 4, 2023), the transition to robotic warfare at sea, that began on October 29, 2022, with a complex strike against Russian forces in Sevastopol by unmanned surface and aerial vehicles;

stage 5 (August 5, 2023 – to present time), the interception of the initiative by Ukrainian

forces at sea by unmanned surface vehicles strikes on russian ships near Novorossiysk and Kerch strait, partial blocking of sea communications and enforcement of russian naval forces to relocate to the eastern part of the Black Sea.

As the analysis showed that from the first day of war one of important strategic directions of russians was offensive actions from south with the following goals:

- use of the Crimean Peninsula for a strategic blitzkrieg from the south;
- cutting off Ukraine from the Sea of Azov;
- capturing Odesa, Mykolayiv, Kherson regions from the sea and cutting off Ukraine from the Black Sea.

For the defence of Ukraine from sea directions, the Ukrainian Naval Task Force had to oppose the enemy at sea, first of all: to prevent the enemy landing operations from the sea and the deployment of a new front of russian troops in the south of Ukraine; to support the troops defending the coastal areas, in particular to take part in the defence of ports from the sea; create conditions for disrupting the enemy's blocking actions against Ukrainian forces and seizing the initiative in actions at sea.

One of the important tasks at sea, which consisted in inflicting damage on enemy ships – carriers of long-range cruise missiles, could not be performed due to the lack of capabilities to strike such ships in their combat maneuvering areas. However, it should be said that the issue of damaging such ships was considered by Ukrainian military scientists in the previous period, and certain ways and methods of neutralizing the actions of such enemy forces were proposed.

As a result of the disruption of the russian's command at sea the main **consequences of war at sea at the strategic level** were:

- the enemy's refusal to use most of the area of military operations;
- significant decrease in the probability of a sea landing and, accordingly, a threat to Ukraine regarding the emergence of a new dangerous strategic direction in the war;
- a significant negative impact on the moral and psychological state of the population and the military and political leadership of russia.

Consider the impact of war at sea on international security. First of all, it should be noted that this influence took place in various aspects and spheres, in particular: in the political, diplomatic and legal spheres, in economic and environmental issues, in the military sphere.

In terms of **political and diplomatic aspects**, actions at sea had the following **impact on international security**:

- the international security regimes created and maintained before the start of the war, which ensured peaceful coexistence and stability in the Black Sea region, were destroyed, in particular, the operation of regional international agreements and security initiatives was actually stopped: Measures to strengthen confidence and security in the Black Sea; Agreement on the establishment of Black Sea forces (“BLACKSEAFOR”), agreement on Black Sea economic cooperation; international operation “Black Sea Harmony”)

A huge impact during the war at sea took place in the **international legal sphere**, in particular:

- the norms of international law, in particular international maritime law, regarding the right of the independent state of Ukraine to the territorial sea up to 12 nautical miles wide and the exclusive (marine) economic zone up to 200 nautical miles wide adjacent to the land territory of the state, in connection with the seizure by Russia, have been violated parts of the territory of Ukraine, namely the Crimean peninsula, coastal areas of the Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, and Donetsk regions;

- the right to freedom of navigation of all countries of the world in the Black and Azov Seas has been violated as a result of the announcement by Russia on February 25, 2022 of an illegal zone of military risks in the northwestern part of the Black Sea (north of the line from the mouth of the Danube River to Cape Sarich in Crimea), illegal strikes were carried out on attacks on foreign (non-Ukrainian) civilian vessels in the sea near Odesa, as well as on civilian foreign vessels in the Ukrainian ports of Chornomorsk, Odesa, Yuzhnoye, and Mykolaiv, and in connection with this, the threat of damage to other civilian vessels flying the flags of the countries of the world;

In terms of **economic and environmental spheres**, actions at sea had the following impact on international security:

- disrupted peaceful international shipping throughout the Black Sea region;
- the volume of commercial shipping and, accordingly, the maritime economic activity of the states of the region, primarily Ukraine, has significantly decreased as a result of military operations at sea and the threat of damage to ships and loss of cargo;

- significant areas of the water area were littered with sea mines, there was a negative impact of the use of weapons and force on ecosystems, conditions were created for the death of dolphins and other representatives of marine

fauna, sea pollution occurred as a result of blowing up the locks of the Kakhov reservoir and other military actions of the aggressor.

A significant impact occurred directly in the **military sphere** of international security, in particular:

there was a change in the balance of military forces in the region and conditions were created for excessive armament;

growing risks of armed clashes and direct involvement of other states in military operations at sea; the emergence of a mine hazard and the facts of the discovery of mines near the Bosphorus, in the waters of Bulgaria, Romania, explosions of two ships in the area on the approach to the Sulina mouth of the large international shipping artery – the Danube river

Responding to changes in the international situation at sea as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the following **joint actions to improve European maritime security** in the **short term** are proposed:

formation of temporary mechanisms for ensuring international security at sea

continuation of the actions of the Ukrainian side to ensure the safety of “sea corridors” for international transportation within Ukrainian waters in the Black Sea (combat alternation of forces in readiness to cover maritime transportation; anticipatory active actions at sea to influence the Russian side and force it to observe the safety of international shipping; actions regarding the expansion of the controlled zone at sea and restoration of full control over Ukrainian waters as of 1991);

continuing the formation of safe “sea corridors” for international shipping in the areas of the Black Sea outside the area of hostilities, primarily in the territorial seas of Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey;

the creation and use of joint forces of the navies of the Black Sea NATO countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey) to protect maritime transport from various threats (air, surface, underwater, including strikes by unmanned aircraft systems, missiles, the impact of sea mines and special operations forces) – regular intelligence and surveillance forces, on-call forces and convoy forces.

The joint actions to improve European maritime security **in the medium and long term** are proposed:

improvement of the norms of international law involving the mechanisms of the UN and other international organizations, in particular regarding the improvement of the efficiency of response and the improvement of the procedure

for adopting resolutions with decisions on countering the aggressor state;

improving the norms of the international responsibility of the aggressor state, forming mechanisms for operational isolation of the activity of the aggressor state in order to stop its influence on other parties and creating conditions for the aggressor to review its actions;

improvement of joint mechanisms for ensuring international security at sea, in particular, the formation on a permanent basis of maritime security forces deployed in maritime regions on a multilateral basis, including ship groups, unmanned aviation, and other forces. With their mandatory intervention in restraining the aggressor in the crisis area.

Conclusions. Based on the results of the analysis, this work identifies the areas in which the effects of the war at sea on national and international security occur, and the specifics of this influence. In turn, on the basis of the analysis of the impact on maritime security, recommendations for joint actions to ensure European security at sea have been proposed.

The prospects for further research on this topic are the substantiation of a detailed list of measures for each of the proposed directions.

In our opinion, the recommendations proposed above, if implemented in the maritime regions of Europe, will allow to increase the level of European security at sea.

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Російсько-українська війна на морі: стратегічні уроки та вплив на міжнародну безпеку

Анотація

В умовах суттєвих змін у системі міжнародної безпеки внаслідок агресивних дій РФ у світі і російського вторгнення в Україну актуальним питанням є визначення заходів щодо покращання Європейської безпеки на морі. Україна здійснює відсіч збройній агресії росії та успішно протидіє противнику на морі. Водночас, реалізація курсу України на вступ до ЄС та НАТО потребує впровадження уроків з досвіду війни на морі в спільну діяльність з європейськими партнерами щодо покращання міжнародної безпеки на морі.

Для визначення стратегічних уроків досвіду російсько-української війни на морі враховувано:

еволюцію поглядів сторін на можливі стратегії дій на морі в разі ескалації збройної агресії РФ та переходу до повномасштабних військових дій;

стратегічні наслідки дій сторін на морі, рівень досягнення поставлених цілей;

основні висновки з дій на морі на стратегічному рівні, які необхідно враховувати в майбутньому.

Виділено такі етапи війни на морі:

1-й етап (24.02.2022 – 01.04.2022) – створення та підтримання РФ панування на морі;

2-й етап (02.04.2022 – 21.07.2022) – нанесення низки успішних ракетних ударів українськими силами по крупних військових кораблях Росії;

3-й етап (22.07.2022 – 28.10.2022) – обмежене застосування сил на морі після укладання гібридних угод щодо реалізації “Чорноморської зернової ініціативи” між Україною, Туреччиною та ООН, а також – подібних домовленостей і РФ з цими ж сторонами;

4-й етап (29.10.2022 – 04.08.2023) – перехід до роботизованої війни на морі, який розпочався 29.10.2022 з нанесення комплексного удару по російських силах безекіпажними надводними та безпілотними літальними апаратами;

5-й етап (05.08.2023 – по теперішній час) – перехоплення ініціативи українськими силами у воєнних діях на морі.

У статті визначено вплив наслідків війни на морі та запропоновано спільні заходи щодо підвищення рівня Європейської безпеки на морі.

Ключові слова: міжнародна безпека на морі; російсько-українська війна на морі; досвід війни на морі; уроки з досвіду; морська безпекова стратегія; європейська безпека.