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Conference Paper

STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT AT SEA: ANALYSING THE 2022 RUSSIAN MARITIME DOCTRINE AMIDST GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS

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Abstract.

The adoption of the 2022 Russian Maritime Doctrine marks a decisive shift in the strategic orientation of the Russian Federation's maritime policy. Initiated by presidential directive, the doctrine constitutes a comprehensive revision of the 2015 framework, aligning maritime governance with prevailing geopolitical and military-strategic conditions. Grounded in legal instruments and state conceptual frameworks, it articulates Russia's national maritime interests across transport, scientific research, offshore resource exploitation, and naval operations. The paper applies qualitative content analysis to systematically examine the doctrine's structure, policy orientation, and legal foundations, drawing on international legal instruments, institutional reports, and peer-reviewed literature. Particular attention is devoted to the integration of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) with emerging maritime warfare technologies and humanitarian protection. The findings highlight the doctrine's focus on sovereignty, self-reliance, and global competitiveness, while emphasising its broader geopolitical ambition, most notably through the proposed 2024 Eurasian security architecture initiative. Consequently, the doctrine elevates maritime policy as a core instrument of national resilience and strategic influence in an increasingly contested global maritime order.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, maritime security; naval strategy, Russian Maritime Doctrine.

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Introduction

The adoption of the new Russian Maritime Doctrine in July 2022 (1) signalled a substantial transformation in the nation's strategic maritime orientation. Developed under a presidential directive (2), the doctrine reflects a comprehensive reassessment of the 2015 maritime doctrine in response to evolving global geopolitical and military–strategic dynamics. Its formulation aimed to ensure that the structure and content of Russia's maritime policy correspond with contemporary challenges and national priorities (3). Grounded in normative legal frameworks and guided by key conceptual documents on national maritime policy, the doctrine reaffirms the institutional role of the navy in determining maritime strategic direction. This renewed focus on naval responsibility demonstrates continuity in Russia's approach to maritime governance while adapting to changing international conditions.

Literature Review

Theoretical Studies

The maritime doctrine of the Russian Federation, as stipulated in current legal instruments, serves as the principal articulation of the state's official perspective on National Maritime Policy and maritime activities (3). It establishes the conceptual foundation for interpreting essential components of state maritime engagement, including definitions of national interests, assessments of maritime capabilities, and the identification of challenges and threats to national security in the maritime sphere. The doctrine sets out national policy concerning the World Ocean, shaping both the organisational structure and strategic direction of maritime governance. National objectives are operationalised through an integrated framework of functional areas and regional strategies, guiding the study, development, and sustainable utilisation of oceanic spaces and resources (2).

Within this framework, several core functional domains are identified (3). The domains include the development of maritime transport, the advancement of maritime scientific research, the sustainable exploitation and conservation of ocean resources, the conduct of naval operations, and the construction and management of offshore pipeline systems. Each domain operates as a strategic pillar of maritime policy while serving as a mechanism to advance national objectives, including economic independence and security. Considerable emphasis is placed on cultivating a legal and economic environment that promotes the growth of maritime transport. Policy measures involve expanding logistical capacity, strengthening competitiveness, and modernising coastal and port infrastructure. Strategic investments in these areas are regarded as essential for enhancing national autonomy and resilience in an increasingly contested global

maritime order.

Empirical Studies

Regarding World Ocean resource management, the strategic priority is to expand the national resource base as a means of safeguarding economic and food security (4). The priority includes advancing sea fisheries, developing aquaculture, and exploring and exploiting marine mineral and energy resources. Particular importance is placed on the strategic expansion of offshore pipeline infrastructure for hydrocarbon transportation, which is intended to meet domestic market requirements while also fulfilling broader external economic objectives.

Empirical evidence highlights the essential role of maritime scientific research in generating systematic knowledge about the World Ocean (5). Research initiatives cover the study of biological productivity, the distribution of mineral resources, and the dynamics of oceanographic processes at multiple depths. The results underpin sustainable marine development strategies, bolster national security initiatives, and support measures to mitigate risks arising from both natural and anthropogenic maritime hazards.

Naval activity is empirically positioned as a fundamental instrument for safeguarding national sovereignty and deterring external aggression (6). Conducted under state policy directives, naval operations are oriented toward protecting national interests throughout the maritime domain. The deployment and actions of naval forces in strategically significant maritime zones act as both a deterrent and a means of asserting strategic control, aligning defence priorities with the broader objectives of national maritime policy.

Methods

The research applies a qualitative content analysis approach, defined as a systematic technique for deriving valid and replicable inferences from textual data within its specific setting (7). This approach facilitates a structured examination of policy documents, institutional reports, and academic literature concerning the humanitarian implications of emerging maritime warfare technologies. The analysis draws on international legal instruments, official institutional publications, and peer-reviewed academic works published in the past decade, with selection criteria prioritising materials addressing international humanitarian law (IHL), armed conflict, maritime security, and the development of new technologies in the Indo-Pacific region. The unit of analysis focuses on the application of IHL to contemporary maritime warfare and the safeguarding of civilians and infrastructure at sea.

Conducted over a twelve-month period, the research ensured credibility through source triangulation and cross-referencing of findings with expert-reviewed and thematically relevant publications.

Results and Discussion

The implementation of National Maritime Policy proceeds through well-defined functional areas and regional strategies, encompassing the study, development, and utilisation of maritime spaces and resources. The core functional areas consist of maritime transport development, scientific research, resource exploitation and conservation, naval operations, and the construction and management of offshore pipeline infrastructure. Maritime transport initiatives prioritise the establishment of a supportive legal and economic environment to expand logistical opportunities, enhance competitiveness, and modernise coastal and port infrastructure. These measures are integral to securing economic independence and reinforcing national security.

Regarding marine resources, the policy prioritises the expansion of the national resource base to safeguard both food and energy security. Key activities include fishery enhancement, the advancement of aquaculture, and the exploration and exploitation of marine mineral and hydrocarbon resources. Offshore pipelines fulfil a strategic role in linking these resources to domestic and international markets, thereby consolidating Russia's external economic position. Maritime scientific research has generated systematic knowledge on biological productivity, seabed mineral distribution, and oceanographic processes, contributing directly to sustainable development strategies, supporting risk mitigation for natural and anthropogenic maritime hazards, and informing broader security planning.

Naval activity forms a fundamental pillar of national defence strategy. Naval operations are conducted to deter aggression, project strategic influence, and safeguard maritime interests at the global level. Operating within the legal and policy frameworks established by national authorities, these operations remain closely aligned with Russia's broader geopolitical objectives. Regional strategies within the doctrine reflect geographic, economic, political, and military considerations. Strategic priorities in the Pacific and other oceanic regions include strengthening maritime partnerships, enhancing naval cooperation, expanding navigational capacity, and maintaining a continuous maritime presence. Additional aims involve promoting maritime tourism and increasing Russia's visibility in regional maritime affairs.

The doctrine sets out comprehensive support mechanisms for maritime activity, including shipbuilding, human capital development, education, maritime safety, and environmental

protection. The enhancement of domestic shipbuilding remains a primary priority, emphasising the adoption of modern technologies, resilience to political pressures, and consistency with national security and socio-economic goals. Human capital strategies concentrate on attracting and retaining skilled maritime professionals, preserving naval and maritime traditions, and fostering a favourable public perception of maritime policy. Maritime safety is reinforced through secure navigation systems, search and rescue operations, medical support, and robust measures to counter piracy and maritime terrorism.

Sovereignty and self-sufficiency occupy the central position within Russia's maritime strategy. The doctrine introduces several innovative components, including three dedicated sections on national security and additional subsections on citizen protection and the application of international maritime law. Russia's maritime interests are explicitly extended across the entire World Ocean and classified into three categories: of primary importance, important, and other, thereby establishing a clear hierarchy for policy execution and strategic focus. The newly added subsection on piracy sets out preventive and responsive measures against attacks targeting vessels sailing under the Russian flag. It also strengthens the role of legal frameworks and promotes international cooperation, particularly adherence to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which reinforces Russia's legitimacy and operational clarity in international maritime affairs.

Finally, the doctrine links maritime resilience to broader regional stability. The 2024 initiative for a new Eurasian security architecture, presented at the highest political level, aims to foster a fair and multipolar world order. This initiative addresses continental tensions through cooperation among Eurasian states rather than confrontation. By advancing collective security measures and promoting diplomatic dialogue, it strengthens the resilience of both maritime and continental systems, providing a strategic platform to prevent future conflict and reinforce regional equilibrium.

Conclusion

The 2022 Russian Maritime Doctrine sets out a comprehensive framework to safeguard national interests in response to evolving maritime and geopolitical challenges. It articulates core strategic concepts covering security threats, maritime capabilities, and functional policy areas, including transport, research, naval operations, and offshore resource development, while placing sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and global competitiveness at the centre of policy priorities. By

extending national interests across the entire World Ocean and reinforcing legal, institutional, and technological foundations, the doctrine consolidates defence, economic, scientific, and diplomatic priorities within a unified strategic vision. The incorporation of a regional security dimension, most notably through the 2024 Eurasian security architecture initiative, strengthens Russia's orientation towards cooperative stability and a multipolar world order. Overall, the doctrine positions maritime policy as a cornerstone of national resilience and strategic influence at both regional and global levels. Its integrated approach provides a reference point for future maritime policy research and offers valuable insights for states aiming to align maritime governance with long-term security and development objectives.

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