

International Legal Regulation of States' Activities in The Greater Mediterranean Region¹

Vladimir N. Koval, Stanislav A. Vasiliev, Evgeniy V. Godovanik, Aleksandr V. Polischuk

Sevastopol State University

Abstract. A trend that is becoming increasingly noticeable in modern international and domestic maritime law is the regional fragmentation of legal regulation. This, in turn, objectifies and brings to the foreground the creation of complex arrays of legal norms, united by the consistency of the political and legal positions of contracting states that have national interests in the relevant water area – primarily coastal states extending their state sovereignty to certain areas of maritime space. In this context, the Greater Mediterranean region should be considered as one of the most important in world merchant shipping, and in naval support for international peace and security. From a logistical point of view, the basin optimally connects the Atlantic and Indian oceans, which requires the formation of an appropriate scientific and methodological basis for the full implementation of the fundamental principle of international cooperation in the maritime policy of the states of the region. The choice to identify the Greater Mediterranean as an independent object of legal regulation was justified by an examination of general and special international legal treaties, the domestic legislation of the Mediterranean states, as well as political and legal documents indicating the existence of certain disputes and situations around certain zones of the Mediterranean water area, primarily in the Eastern Mediterranean region. To obtain reliable and substantiated results, the following methods of scientific knowledge were used: formal-legal, logical, historical-legal, and system-structural analysis. The formal-legal method thus allowed the authors to clarify the content and meaning of international legal treaties concluded at different times and aimed at regulating public relations in the maritime sphere. The logical method made it possible to substantiate the need for comprehensive international cooperation among the coastal states of the Greater Mediterranean. The historical-legal method was used to create an overview of the global, Soviet and Russian practice of applying the norms of domestic and international law to issues related to ensuring international law and order in the Greater Mediterranean region. The logical method allowed the authors to build the necessary connections and patterns of development in international legal regulation in the Greater Mediterranean region in the general context of ongoing universal and regional political and legal processes and transformations. The method of system-structural analysis was used to create a holistic picture of law-making and law enforcement in the Mediterranean states aimed at the formation of unified principles and norms for the exercise of the sovereign rights of coastal states. International maritime merchant shipping is an extremely complex area

¹ English translation from the Russian text: Koval V.N., Vasiliev S.A., Godovanik E.V., Polischuk A.V. 2024. Mezhdunarodno-pravovoe regulirovanie deyatel'nosti gosudarstv v regione Bol'shogo Sredizemnomor'ya. *Moskovskiy Zhurnal Mezhdunarodnogo Prava* [Moscow Journal of International Law]. No. 1. P. 24–43. DOI: 10.24833/0869-0049-2024-1-24-43

of public relations involving a large number of entities with different legal status which, accordingly, are related to each other in a very different way. This work is devoted to the study of the main trends in the development of the Greater Mediterranean region in terms of formulating key international legal guidelines and rules of conduct for its constituent states. The object of the study is the legal relations carried out in the maritime spaces of the Greater Mediterranean as one of the key regions, which, along with its economic and political significance, is an integral zone for the implementation of the national interests of the Russian Federation, extending to the entire World Ocean.

Keywords: maritime law, merchant shipping, Greater Mediterranean, Maritime Doctrine, interstate relations, national interests, environmental cooperation, maritime security, naval forces, international legal regime of maritime spaces

International legal approaches to defining the concept and boundaries of the Greater Mediterranean region

When analyzing the unique aspects of international legal regulation in the Greater Mediterranean region, it is essential to first highlight the role and importance of these maritime areas in advancing the national interests of the Russian Federation. These interests are clearly outlined in the new Russian Maritime Doctrine, approved by Presidential Decree No. 512 dated July 31, 2022² (the “Maritime Doctrine”).

According to Clause 53 of the Maritime Doctrine, the Mediterranean basin falls under the Atlantic regional focus within Russia’s national maritime policy. From an oceanographic perspective, this classification is well-founded, as the Mediterranean Sea is an intercontinental sea connected to the Atlantic Ocean to the west through the Strait of Gibraltar (Gratsianskii 1971: 8).

However, we believe that the Greater Mediterranean should be understood as the entirety of its constituent water bodies – such as seas, straits, gulfs, and channels – along with the territories of the coastal states that hold political, socio-economic, environmental, humanitarian, and other significant public interests in these waters. These states possess sovereign rights over the relevant maritime zones, as established by universal and regional conventions under the international law of the sea, as well as by their national legislation (for instance, Russian national laws specifically regulate the status and use of the Sea of Azov as an internal sea of the Russian Federation).

Based on this interpretation of the boundaries of the aquatic and adjacent areas comprising the Greater Mediterranean, the region should be viewed as encompassing the waters of the Adriatic, Aegean, Alboran, Balearic, Cretan, Cyprus, Ionian, Levantine, Libyan, Ligurian, and Tyrrhenian Seas, as well as the Sea of Marmara, Black Sea,

² Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 31 iyulya 2022 g. N 512 "Ob utverzhdenii Morskoy doktriny Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [The Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation, approved by Decree No. 512 of the President of the Russian Federation of July 31, 2022]. URL: https://base.garant.ru/405077499/#block_1000 (accessed: 13.05.2023). (In Russian).

and Sea of Azov, all of which are part of the Mediterranean basin. Additionally, numerous officially recognized gulfs and straits form an integral part of the Greater Mediterranean, including the Strait of Gibraltar, which plays a crucial role in defining the Mediterranean Sea's connection to the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, we consider the Suez Canal – an artificial, lock-free shipping route linking the Mediterranean and Red Seas – to be an essential part of the Greater Mediterranean, as it provides a navigable passage between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, thereby serving as a vital corridor for global merchant shipping.

From a political and legal perspective, it is appropriate to understand the Greater Mediterranean region as encompassing not only the maritime areas themselves but also the coastal states that exercise full or internationally limited sovereignty over parts of these waters. These states include the Russian Federation (with respect to the Sea of Azov and Black Sea); Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Abkhazia, and Ukraine (Black Sea states relevant to the development of the Greater Mediterranean concept); Spain, France, Monaco, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Türkiye, Syria, Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Additionally, the region includes territories with other statuses, such as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Gibraltar, and the Gaza Strip.

The existence of numerous coastal states, each with distinct political and economic interests, naturally underscores the need for comprehensive regulation founded on compromise and respect for the sovereignty of every country.

Focusing specifically on the Mediterranean Sea basin as a geographical area where Russia advances its national interests within the broader context of its Atlantic-oriented strategy, it is important to highlight that, according to Clause 58 of the Maritime Doctrine, the long-term objectives of Russia's maritime policy in this region include: a) transforming the region into a zone of military and political stability and fostering good-neighborly relations; b) maintaining a sufficient and permanent naval presence of the Russian Federation in the area; and c) developing cruise shipping routes from the ports of Crimea and Krasnodar Krai to countries within the Mediterranean region.

The relevance and urgency of the first two strategic objectives stem primarily from the escalating confrontational policies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which are largely directed against Russia's vital political and economic interests. It is important to note that potential conflict situations are often instigated by the military and political leadership of states that, although they do not possess aquatic or coastal territories within the Greater Mediterranean region, seek to exert considerable political influence over it. In some instances, these attempts escalate into overt pressure that undermines the exercise of exclusive sovereign rights by the coastal states. Such rights, of course, fall within the internal jurisdiction of these states, as recognized by both national legislation and international law, including international maritime conventions.

An example of such hostile actions by NATO member states in the maritime areas of the Greater Mediterranean, including the sovereign coastal territories along Russia's Black Sea coast, is the incident on June 23, 2021. On that day, the British

air-defense destroyer D36 HMS Defender, while sailing from Batumi (Georgia) to Odessa (Ukraine), unexpectedly entered Russian territorial waters and only exited near Cape Fiolent, close to the federal city of Sevastopol, after Russian military jets scrambled from Belbek airfield threatened to intervene (Golovenchenko, 2022: 5). Such actions by the British navy are absolutely unacceptable, as they infringe upon Russia's state sovereignty over territorial waters and warrant responses to counter potential foreign military threats. Nevertheless, the Russian response was measured and firmly grounded in international legal principles and norms, successfully compelling the British ship to leave Russian territorial waters with the aid of an air escort.

Overall, it is important to emphasize that the delimitation and specific international legal regimes of maritime areas in the Greater Mediterranean – as in other regions of the World Ocean – are governed by universal conventions, namely by the relevant provisions of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea, adopted on December 10, 1982³.

Accordingly, all states in the Greater Mediterranean generally adhere to the limits for territorial waters (12 nautical miles), the contiguous zone (24 nautical miles), and the exclusive economic zone (200 nautical miles) as established by the Convention, having incorporated these standards into their national maritime legislation.

The most challenging aspect is the delimitation of the continental shelf, which is complicated by several factors: ongoing international legal disputes over the status of and sovereignty over certain islands; persistent political tensions between specific Mediterranean states leading to reciprocal territorial claims; and the continental shelf's critical role, both economically and resource-wise, due to the abundant and high-quality hydrocarbon reserves in the region.

A current example of international legal disputes concerning the status of and sovereignty over territories and waters in the Mediterranean is the mutual non-recognition of political and legal claims between Türkiye and Greece. This tension intensified following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding Between Turkey and Libya on Delimitation of the Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean⁴ on November 27, 2019, which was premised on denying the Greek islands' entitlement to a continental shelf.

Conversely, Greece takes a fundamentally contrasting position, asserting that Türkiye seeks to unilaterally appropriate a substantial portion of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) without a bilateral treaty between the two countries delimiting the EEZ. It is important to note that the European Union promptly supported Greece's position, as Greece is a member state, issuing an official statement declaring that the Turkey-

³ The United Convention on the Law of the Sea of December 10, 1982. URL: https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf?ysclid=mdn4toc4ms775441650 (accessed: 13.05.2023).

⁴ Full text of Turkey – Libya maritime agreement revealed. *Nordic Monitor*. 5.12.2019. URL: <https://nordicmonitor.com/2019/12/the-full-text-of-turkey-libya-maritime-agreement-revealed/> (accessed: 12.05.2023).

Libya Memorandum of Understanding on the delimitation of maritime jurisdictions in the Mediterranean Sea “infringes upon the sovereign rights of third countries, does not comply with the Law of the Sea and cannot produce any legal consequences for third States.”⁵ Greece’s position was also backed by the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, G. Pyatt, who affirmed that inhabited islands are entitled to exclusive maritime zones and continental shelves⁶. Meanwhile, Türkiye, following the Memorandum with Libya, published new maritime maps delimiting zones without recognizing the maritime claims of the Greek inhabited islands⁷. Türkiye bases its argument on the assertion that islands cannot establish maritime jurisdiction zones beyond their territorial waters. As an example, Hami Aksoy, the spokesperson for the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cited the Greek island of Kastellorizo, stating that it is purported to create a maritime jurisdiction zone 4,000 times larger than itself⁸.

From an international legal perspective, the central point of contention between Turkey and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean is the recognition – or non-recognition – of states’ rights to establish maritime zones around their islands. This issue contrasts with the uncontested legal basis for establishing maritime zones around continental coastal territories, which is universally accepted.

In recent years, Greece has also been actively pursuing a maritime policy aimed at legitimizing the expansion of its territorial waters under international law, primarily through bilateral treaties with other Mediterranean states. For example, on August 6, 2020, Greece and Egypt signed the maritime delimitation agreement,⁹ which, according to Greece, secures the Greek islands’ entitlement to their continental shelf and exclusive economic zone.

From an international legal perspective, it is important to highlight that the regime of islands is established at the universal level by Article 121 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of December 10, 1982¹⁰. According to paragraph 2 of this article, the continental shelf of an island is determined by the same rules that apply

⁵ V ES napomnili Turtsii, chto ne priznayut ee memorandum s Liviei o razgranichenii zon v Sredizemnomorie [EU Reminds Turkey It Does Not Recognize Its Memorandum with Libya on Mediterranean Maritime Zone Delimitation]. *Interfax*. 3.10.2022. URL: <http://interfax.az/view/877725> (accessed: 12.05.2023). (In Russian).

⁶ V SSHA zayavili o raskhozhdenii s Turtsiei po voprosu morskogo shel’fa u grecheskikh ostrovov [U.S. Expresses Disagreement with Turkey over Continental Shelf Claims near Greek Islands]. *TASS*. 12.12.2019. URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/7337109> (accessed: 12.05.2023). (In Russian).

⁷ ES: Memorandum Turtsii i Livii o razgranichenii v Sredizemnom more ne imeet zakonnoi sily [EU Declares Turkey-Libya Memorandum on Mediterranean Delimitation Lacks Legal Force]. *TASS*. 13.12.2019. URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/7338779> (accessed: 12.05.2023). (In Russian).

⁸ Vooruzhennye sily Gretsii privedeny v povyshennuu gotovnost’ iz-za namerenii Turtsii [Greek Military on High Alert in Response to Turkey’s Intentions]. 21.07.2020. *Aravot*. URL: <https://www.aravot-ru.am/2020/07/22/332527/> (accessed: 13.05.2023). (In Russian).

⁹ Parlament Gretsii ratifitsiroval soglasenie s Egiptom o morskikh zonakh [Greek Parliament Ratifies Agreement with Egypt on Maritime Zones]. *TASS*. 27.08.2020. URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/9308771> (accessed: 13.05.2023). (In Russian).

¹⁰ The United Convention on the Law of the Sea of December 10, 1982. URL: https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf?ysclid=mdn4toc4ms775441650 (accessed: 13.05.2023).

to the mainland territories of coastal states. However, paragraph 3 provides an exception for rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own; such rocks are not entitled to their own exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.

Therefore, according to a strict interpretation of legal provisions, determining whether a Mediterranean island qualifies for its own exclusive economic zone and continental shelf must be based on the international legal criterion of its capacity to sustain human habitation and/or economic life. Depending on these factors, the territory may be classified either as an island or as a rock, with the size of the territory not constituting a legally significant factor.

In other words, the most effective way to resolve the dispute would be for Greece and Turkey to reach a compromise, potentially with extensive international mediation under the auspices of the UN. This process should involve a fair and transparent comprehensive assessment of each island's characteristics, followed by the formalization of the agreed terms in a bilateral treaty, which would then be ratified by the parliaments of both countries.

In the short term, however, such a scenario based on mutual respect for sovereign rights and adherence to universally accepted international legal norms regarding maritime delimitation appears unlikely. This is due to the deep-rooted antagonism between the official positions of Greece and Turkey, as well as ongoing unilateral efforts by both sides to impose sharply conflicting boundaries for their exclusive economic zones and continental shelves through political and legal memoranda with third-party states in the Greater Mediterranean not directly involved in the dispute. Such actions hinder the establishment of direct bilateral dialogue and obstruct the search for a mutually beneficial, legally sound, and factually grounded resolution to the complex challenges of contemporary maritime policy in the Mediterranean region.

In addition to maritime delimitation issues, ecology and pollution prevention are key subjects of regional international legal regulation in the Greater Mediterranean. These concerns are comprehensively addressed in the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution, commonly known as the Barcelona Convention, which was adopted in 1976 and came into force on February 12, 1978¹¹.

The Barcelona Convention was adopted under the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme, launched in 1974. This programme is based on a framework of 18 regional multilateral environmental agreements (conventions) designed to protect marine environments and promote sustainable development in important navigational and geographically interconnected marine regions, designated as "regional seas."¹² The Mediterranean Sea's critical role for the surrounding coastal states is thus formally recognized and defined in UN documents.

¹¹ The Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) of February 2-16, 1976. URL: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7096/BarcelonaConvention_Consolidated_eng.pdf (accessed: 13.05.2023).

¹² UNEP Regional Seas Programme. URL: <https://www.unep.org/ru/issleduyte-temy/okeyny-i-morya/nasha-deyatelnost/programma-regionalnykh-morey> (accessed: 13.05.2023).

It is quite natural that the ecology and protection of the Mediterranean Sea basin from pollution serve as a unifying focus of international legal regulation, generating minimal political controversy. This consensus exists because all coastal states share a direct interest in the sustainable development and management of their maritime areas, enabling them to maximize economic benefits from transportation, industry, and tourism. Effective use of marine resources, in turn, positively influences government revenues and supports the stability and growth of national economies. For instance, a shared environmental concern among all Greater Mediterranean countries is the sharp increase in sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide levels in seawater. This issue was highlighted by Carlo Zaghi, President of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, during the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties, held in December 2021, in Antalya, Turkey¹³.

In this context, we fully endorse the perspective of D.K. Labin, which holds substantial methodological significance. He asserts that “marine environmental law is now central to international law of the sea.”¹⁴ Similarly, A.G. Arkhipova emphasizes the crucial role of environmental cooperation within international maritime relations, viewing these issues through a private-law rather than a public-law lens. Arkhipova metaphorically refers to abandonment, general average, and oil pollution of the sea as “the three whales of maritime law”¹⁵. Indeed, the massive volume of cargo transported by sea in the Mediterranean basin (Fancello 2022: 60-62) underscores the vital role of international legal mechanisms for environmental control as a key component in the comprehensive legal regulation of economic activities in these maritime areas.

An important institutional factor in ensuring effective environmental protection of the Mediterranean is the mandate granted to UNEP to oversee the implementation of the Convention’s action plan for the Mediterranean as a regional sea – or, more broadly, as a maritime region, which we consider a methodologically sound interpretation. Similarly, UNEP directly manages integrated environmental systems in other key regions such as the Caribbean, East Asia, East Africa, the Northwest Pacific, and West Africa¹⁶. This responsibility is driven in part by the need for strengthened environmental oversight in these World Ocean areas, which experience heavy maritime traffic and include some of the world’s most critical shipping corridors, such as the Suez Canal.

¹³ Yıldız A., Kalyoncuoğlu Y., Amuyeva U. V *Antalie obsuzhdayut ekologicheskuyu situatsiyu v Sredizemnomorie* [Antalya Hosts Talks about the Environmental Situation in the Mediterranean Region]. *Anadolu Ajansi*. 7.12.2021. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru> (accessed: 13.05.2023). (In Russian).

¹⁴ Koval’ V.N., Labin D.K. eds. 2023. *Mezhdunarodnoe morskoe pravo: publichnoe i chastnoe: uchebnik* [International Law of the Sea and International Maritime Law. Textbook]. Moscow: KNORUS Publishing House. P. 25. (In Russian).

¹⁵ Arkhipova A.G. *Tri kita morskogo prava: abandon, obshchaya avariya, zagryaznenie morya neftyu: videolektsiya* [Three Whales of Maritime Law: Abandonment, General Average, and Oil Pollution of the Sea. Video Lecture]. URL: <https://m-logos.ru/product/avtorskaya-lektsiya-a-g-arhipovoj-tri-kita-morskogo-prava-abandon-obshchaya-avariya-zagryaznenie-morya-neftyu-2/> (accessed: 13.05.2023). (In Russian).

¹⁶ UNEP Regional Seas Programme. URL: <https://www.unep.org/ru/issleduyte-temy/okeyany-i-morya/nasha-deyatelnost/programma-regionalnykh-morey> (accessed: 13.05.2023).

A distinctive feature of the institutional framework for implementing the Barcelona Convention is the extensive network of regional activity centres that conduct specialized work with direct support from the Mediterranean state parties to the Convention. Currently, these centres include the Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean (MED POL) (Greece); the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (PB/RAC) (Marseille, France); the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) (Spain); the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) (Tunisia); the Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) (Croatia); the Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication (INFO/RAC) (Italy); and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), established jointly with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) (Malta)¹⁷.

A distinctive aspect of the legal framework governing maritime relations in the Greater Mediterranean is the definition of the unique international legal regime applicable to the Mediterranean straits. These include the Strait of Gibraltar, which is strategically vital for global shipping as it provides access from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and serves as a transport corridor connecting the Atlantic and Indian Oceans – effectively linking the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Additionally, this regime covers numerous international and domestic straits within Greece and Italy.

As the author team from the Sevastopol State University rightly points out, “the Strait of Gibraltar holds the greatest economic, political, and legal importance for international navigation.”¹⁸

It should be noted that currently, both merchant vessels and warships have the unrestricted right to transit this maritime area. However, the presence of a NATO naval base in Gibraltar presents potential risks to international navigation. Such concerns are further exacerbated by the alliance’s periodic hostile and provocative actions toward sovereign states that do not share the unipolar security vision advanced by the United States and its closest allies. These issues are particularly urgent given the insufficient formalization of the international legal regime governing the Strait of Gibraltar and the lack of legal guarantees safeguarding the rights of all Greater Mediterranean states – without exception – to free and unimpeded passage. Such protections could be established through a multilateral framework treaty involving all coastal states.

When examining the international legal framework governing the Greater Mediterranean basin, it is important to highlight that the region (namely, Malta) hosts the world’s largest and most prestigious institute that focuses on international maritime

¹⁷ *Pochemu vazhno sotrudnicat’ s Programmoi regionalnykh morei?* [Why Cooperation with the Regional Seas Programme Matters]. URL: <https://www.unep.org/ru/issleduyte-temy/okeany-i-morya/nasha-deyatelnost/rabota-po-regionalnym-moryam/pochemu-vazhno> (accessed: 13.05.2023). (In Russian).

¹⁸ Koval’ V.N., Labin D.K. eds. *Mezhdunarodnoe morskoe pravo: publichnoe i chastnoe* [International Law of the Sea and International Maritime Law]. P. 109.

law research and training – the IMO International Maritime Law Institute. Established in 1988 through an agreement between the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Government of Malta, the Institute offers advanced education, training, and research programs in international maritime law, primarily targeting qualified candidates from developing countries. The Institute places special emphasis on the international instruments adopted by IMO and their incorporation into national legal systems. It also provides a specialized Master's program in international maritime law designed for maritime professionals without a formal legal background. Beyond this, the Institute offers postgraduate and doctoral programs, as well as short courses and specialized programs developed in collaboration with internationally recognized universities. Additionally, the Institute regularly hosts lectures and seminars featuring distinguished scholars and practitioners in maritime law and related maritime sectors¹⁹.

Thus, the Mediterranean region stands as a major global center for the study of international law of the sea, possessing substantial organizational and intellectual resources to conduct promising research under IMO's guidance. This research has the potential to create the essential foundation for the significant enhancement and optimization of existing international legal frameworks, as well as to explore fundamentally new approaches to the regulatory and institutional support of mutually beneficial cooperation among sovereign states across the world's oceans.

Current challenges in ensuring navigation safety in the Greater Mediterranean region

In the context of a comprehensive analysis of the unique aspects of international legal regulation in the Greater Mediterranean region, it is important to highlight that contemporary law of the sea is predominantly security-focused. This emphasis arises because threats originating from the high seas – targeting coastal areas, biological resources, and infrastructure such as offshore platforms and installations – are far more likely than threats originating from a state's land territory. This is illustrated by the numerous attacks on the city of Sevastopol during the special military operation in Ukraine (Marchenko 2023: 9-38). These acts of aggression were primarily conducted from the air, with a few occurring by sea; notably, in the vast majority of cases, aircraft approached from over the water.²⁰

The Mediterranean Sea serves as a focal point where the interests of many states converge (Kosov, Nechaev, Tatarkov 2021: 123-139; Il'in, Nechaev 2022: 8-23), including those of countries geographically distant from the region (Baranov 2017: 75).

¹⁹ International Maritime Law Institute. URL: <https://imli.org/about-us/> (accessed: 13.05.2023).

²⁰ Petrova A. *"Bespilotnyi terror" Sevastopolya: expert otsenil ugrozy* [Sevastopol Under 'Unmanned Terror': An Expert Evaluates the Drone Threats]. Crimea News. 30.10.2022. URL: <https://crimea-news.com/society/2022/10/30/984626.html> (accessed: 25.03.2023). (In Russian).

This area is among the most congested and logistically challenging regions (Fancello 2022: 60-62), and the efforts to influence the legal frameworks governing shipping have sparked numerous unresolved conflicts that have yet to be settled through political means (Moskalenko, Irkhin, Kabanova 2022: 258-277). For instance, the previously mentioned military clashes along the Northern Black Sea coast gave rise to international legal practices concerning the trade of agricultural products originating from this region (Luchian 2022: 796-810; Lis'ikh, Romanov, Shcherbatov 2022: 168-170). To address these disputes, UN institutions became involved, leading to the establishment of the Joint Coordination Centre. This centre, involving representatives from Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and the UN, aims to ensure the safety of maritime transport during trade operations (Aivazyán 2022: 100).

A key aspect of security in the Greater Mediterranean region involves Russia's international cooperation with countries geographically distant from the area. For instance, Russia's growing collaboration with China – which maintains various bilateral agreements with Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, and other nations (Polyakov, Shportko 2022: 284) – can indirectly affect global stability. Chinese nationals engage in trade throughout the region, supply essential equipment and components to the logistics infrastructure of many countries, and invest in regional commercial projects, thereby establishing a broad national interest in the area. Consequently, the influence of organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and other actors whose activities are not directly focused on this region is growing.

Russian scholars argue that Turkey's expanding influence in this macro-region, alongside U.S.-China global rivalry, could facilitate the creation of a regional security framework to address instability, integrated into wider global security efforts (Agazade, Pavlova, Nikolova 2021: 121). In this context, Russia's political stance comes to the forefront, showcasing its independence and commitment to fully adhering to international law. It is the responsibility of a truly sovereign state – one that upholds international law and prioritizes the security of its people – to develop policies aimed at these objectives, as reflected in its legal frameworks and strategic documents.

Clause 15 of the Maritime Doctrine identifies the waters of the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea, and the eastern Mediterranean Sea as key areas for safeguarding Russia's national interests, particularly in terms of establishing necessary security conditions. Likewise, the doctrine highlights the straits and logistical routes along the African coast, effectively designating nearly the entire Greater Mediterranean region as an area of special strategic importance for Russia.

Clause 56 of the same document outlines that among the priority objectives of Russia's maritime policy in the Atlantic are strengthening relations with Middle Eastern and North African countries to promote military and political stability; maintaining a permanent naval presence of the Russian Federation in the Mediterranean Sea, including through the development of naval infrastructure in Syria and other states (for example, based on Article 2 of the Agreement between the Russian Federation

and the Syrian Arab Republic concerning the deployment of a Russian Armed Forces aviation group on Syrian territory, dated August 26, 2015)²¹; expanding military and technical cooperation with Mediterranean basin states; and conducting marine scientific research to support and reinforce Russia's position in the region.

Based on the above provisions, Russia's security strategy relies primarily on its own resources and capabilities, even when engaging in cooperation with other states. While the country extends its presence well beyond its borders, this approach is fundamentally aimed at preventing the emergence of potential conflict zones or other destructive impacts near its frontiers, thereby safeguarding the lives and health of its people as well as protecting material assets. The Russian Federation remains open to other forms of international cooperation that would, either directly or indirectly, contribute to ensuring domestic security and preventing various conflicts in the region.

Implemented practices have proven their effectiveness, whereas neglecting them exposes vulnerabilities to various threats. For example, European scholars have highlighted the inadequacy of national and international responses in the central Mediterranean Sea during the migration crisis of the 2010s (Kirillova, Suslikov, Tsokur 2016: 3561-3571). This failure forced EU countries to address resulting challenges within their own territories (Gruszczak 2017: 24), often with limited success. In this context, preventive measures are regarded as highly effective, and the use of force or similar actions beyond national borders has been a proven strategy employed by the United States for decades (Farkhutdinov 2020: 417).

According to Article 122 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of December 10,²² 1982, nearly the entire Greater Mediterranean region qualifies as a semi-enclosed sea (Nordquist, Nandan, Rosenne 1995: 346; Bekyashev: 2017: 512). This designation necessitates a particular focus on security issues across various domains, including environmental protection (Boklan 2014: 80-86).

Seas serve as a hub for numerous economically active participants and other actors carrying out their functions within the relevant area. However, under Article 225 of UNCLOS, all activities must be conducted without hindering navigation, and participating states are responsible for ensuring the safety of such operations.

The Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits, signed on July 20, 1936 (commonly known as the Montreux Convention)²³, plays a crucial role in ensuring the security of the Greater Mediterranean region. This agreement grants the coastal states

²¹ Soglasheniye mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Siriyskoy Arabskoy Respublikoy o razmeshchenii aviatsionnoy gruppy Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiyskoy Federatsii na territorii Siriyskoy Arabskoy Respubliki (s izmeneniyami na 18 yanvarya 2017 goda) [The Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic concerning the deployment of a Russian Armed Forces aviation group on Syrian territory, dated August 26, 2015 (amended on January 18, 2017)]. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/420329053?ysclid=mdn6jt7y6p829175004> (accessed: 13.05.2023). (In Russian).

²² The United Convention on the Law of the Sea of December 10, 1982. URL: https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf?ysclid=mdn4toc4ms775441650 (accessed: 13.05.2023).

²³ The Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits of July 20, 1936. URL: <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/1936-Convention-Regarding-the-Regime-of-the-Straits.pdf> (accessed: 13.05.2023).

of the Azov and Black Sea basin certain privileges over other countries regarding free passage through the straits near Istanbul, which are under Turkish control. As a result, it helps safeguard the internal security of these states by regulating the entry of foreign – particularly military – vessels into their coastal waters. According to Article 3 of the Convention, Turkish authorities are required to ensure sanitary safety by inspecting all ships passing freely through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. By being a party to this agreement, Russia, along with other signatory states, is able to indirectly enhance its own security in the region without incurring significant costs.

There are also additional mechanisms that impact security in the Mediterranean Sea, thereby mitigating threats to the Russian Federation. For example, under the NATO-Russia Council Action Plan on Terrorism dated December 9, 2004,²⁴ Russia participates in efforts to prevent the smuggling of weapons of mass destruction and other hazardous materials disguised as food shipments, doing so with minimal expenditure (Kolodkin, Gutsulyak, Bobrova 2007: 637).

Russia's bilateral agreements also focus on combating terrorism in the Greater Mediterranean region. For instance, the Joint Declaration on the Deepening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic, signed on January 25, 2005,²⁵ commits both parties to intensify their own efforts and urges the international community to strengthen actions in this area. Additionally, Article 5 of the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Arab Republic of Egypt on Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Cooperation, dated October 17, 2018,²⁶ provides for cooperation in the military and technical field. These initiatives are further elaborated in other agreements between the respective countries²⁷.

²⁴ The NATO-Russia Council Action Plan on Terrorism of December 9, 2004. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/1661385/ (accessed: 25.03.2023).

²⁵ The Joint Declaration on the Deepening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic of January 25, 2005. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/2167>. (accessed: 25.03.2023).

²⁶ Dogovor mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Arabskoy Respublikoy Egipet o vse storonnem partnerstve i strategicheskoy sotrudnichestve ot 17 oktyabrya 2018 goda [The Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Arab Republic of Egypt on Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Cooperation of October 17, 2018]. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/560897933?ysclid=mdn6wxfmzc394118193> (accessed: 25.03.2023). (In Russian).

²⁷ Protocol mezhdru Pravitel'stvom Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Arabskoy Respubliki Egipet ob uproshtennom poryadke zakhoda voennykh korabley v porty Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Arabskoy Respubliki Egipet ot 24 noyabrya 2015 goda [The Protocol between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt of December 24, 2015, "On the Simplified Procedure for the Entry of Warships into the Ports of the Russian Federation and the Arab Republic of Egypt"]. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001201601260050?ysclid=mdo5effmz868298692> (accessed: 12.10.2023). (In Russian); Protocol mezhdru Pravitel'stvom Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Arabskoy Respubliki Egipet o voenno-tekhnicheskoy sotrudnichestvetve ot 23 marta 2014 goda [The Protocol between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt of March 25, 2014, "On Military and Technical Cooperation"]. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/420218888> (accessed: 12.10.2023). (In Russian); Soglasheniye mezhdru Pravitel'stvom Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Arabskoy Respubliki Egipet o sotrudnichestve v oblasti bor'by s prestupnost'yu ot 23 sen'tyabrya 1997 goda [The Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt of September 23, 1997, "On Cooperation in the Field of Combating Crime"]. URL: http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&link_id=1&nd=203004897&collection=1&ysclid=mdo5rgljc358281079 (accessed: 12.10.2023). (In Russian); Soglasheniye mezhdru Pravitel'stvom Soyuzu Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik i Pravitel'stvom Siriyskoy Arabskoy Respubliki o morskoy torgovoy sudokhodstve ot 4 aprelya 1983 goda [The Agreement between the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic of April 4, 1983, "On Merchant Shipping"]. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1901355?ysclid=mdo5yngyn9533625011> (accessed: 12.10.2023). (In Russian).

Pursuant to Article 24 of the Montreux Convention, the Turkish competent authorities collect information on vessels passing through the relevant straits, which may be utilized to enhance security, provided such actions do not conflict with international law.

Contemporary legal scholars have highlighted violations of the Montreux Convention (Gutsulyak 2017). In particular, the United States has been identified as abusing its rights of passage through the Turkish straits, with its vessels remaining in the Black Sea for periods exceeding those permitted by the international agreement. For instance, in February–March 2014, a U.S. warship stayed in the Black Sea for 33 days, surpassing the allowed 21-day limit. In contrast, the Russian Federation has consistently maintained a firm stance on strict adherence to international law in the region, both in addressing these security challenges and in efforts to combat terrorism (Petrov 2018: 97-104).

International law violations of this nature undermine previously established relationships between countries, as the offending parties become unreliable partners. Continuing such relations may ultimately have a detrimental impact on overall security. Paradoxically, these actions can also contribute to strengthening the energy security of other states (Gusakov 2018: 14-19). For example, following Europe's reduction in hydrocarbon imports from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, energy supplies were redirected toward the Middle East and North Africa (Kapkan-shchikov, Omarov 2022: 272). This shift positively influenced stability not only in the economic and social domains of those regions but also strengthened their economies through new partnerships founded on mutual trust. Furthermore, it broadened opportunities for political influence aimed at stabilizing economic processes, free from the subjective and biased judgments of officials representing dominant international powers.

The activities of relevant domestic entities in this sphere of public life are increasingly met with active resistance from unfriendly states.²⁸ For instance, paragraph 6 of NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, adopted on June 29, 2022,²⁹ explicitly labels Russia as an aggressor state engaged in military interference with the sovereign functions of countries within the Euro-Atlantic area, thereby posing a potential threat to NATO members. Such declarations provide the alliance with a basis to take steps against Russia, with the Greater Mediterranean macro-region identified as the most probable arena for conflicting interests.

²⁸ Rasporyazheniye pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 5 marta 2022 goda N 430-r "O perechne inostrannykh gosudarstv i territorii, sovershayushchikh v otnoshenii Rossiyskoy Federatsii, rossiyskikh yuridicheskikh lits i fizicheskikh lits nedruzhestvennyye deystviya" ["The list of foreign states and territories committing hostile acts against the Russian Federation, Russian legal entities and individuals", approved by Order No. 430-r of the Government of the Russian Federation of March 5, 2022, (amended on October 29, 2022). URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/728367755?ysclid=mdo6cytgxg778747519> (accessed: 12.10.2023). (In Russian).

²⁹ NATO 2022 Strategic Concept. URL: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf (accessed: 25.03.2023).

Beyond advancing its own interests, Russia's role in the Greater Mediterranean region is also viewed as contributing to security, including within the territories of other states (Nechaev, Chikharev, Irkhin, Makovskaya 2019: 72). This involvement is supported by Russia's extensive experience in counterterrorism efforts in the Middle East, as well as its substantial military capabilities (Shevtsov 2013: 264).

The most significant aspect of Russia's security engagement in the region remains its military presence in Syria. Under the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic on the deployment of the Russian Armed Forces' aviation group in Syria, dated August 26, 2015,³⁰ Russia was granted free use – exempt from taxes and fees – of the airport where this military unit, along with its equipment, personnel, and resources, is stationed. This facility, situated on the Mediterranean coast, possesses several attributes akin to Russian state territory (Baburin 1997: 477), including the unrestricted import of weapons and ammunition and the application of Russian law within the zone.

A comparable legal framework governs the seaside infrastructure under the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic dated January 18, 2017, concerning the expansion of the Russian Navy's logistics base near the Port of Tartus and the access of Russian warships to Syria's territorial sea, internal waters, and ports³¹. Pursuant to Article 5 of the agreement, Russian vessels equipped with nuclear weapons are permitted to operate within these maritime zones of the Syrian Arab Republic.

This legal arrangement enables Russia to exert a degree of influence in safeguarding its interests, particularly in the eastern part of the Greater Mediterranean region. The Russian Armed Forces' capability to effectively address emerging security threats in this area has already been demonstrated in practice (Dolgov 2021: 203; Sivkov 2020: 75-82).

Ensuring security in the Greater Mediterranean macro-region is a key strategic priority for Russia, as reflected in numerous international and domestic documents. However, it is important to recognize that such efforts are often viewed negatively by other international actors (Chikharev 2021: 442), which significantly complicates the realization of these objectives. Nonetheless, despite these challenges, it is essential to

³⁰ Soglasheniye mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Siriyskoy Arabskoy Respublikoy o razmeshchenii aviatsionnoy gruppy Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiyskoy Federatsii na territorii Siriyskoy Arabskoy Respubliki ot 26 avgusta 2015 goda [The Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic concerning the deployment of a Russian Armed Forces aviation group on Syrian territory of August 26, 2015]. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001201601140019?ysclid=mdo66i1k26123970754> (accessed: 25.03.2023). (In Russian).

³¹ Soglashenie mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Siriyskoy Arabskoy Respublikoy o rasshirenii territorii punkta material'no-tekhnicheskogo obespecheniya Voenno-Morskogo Flota Rossiyskoy Federatsii v rayone porta Tartus i zakhoda voennykh korabley Rossiyskoy Federatsii v territorial'noe more, vnutrennie vody i porty Siriyskoy Arabskoy Respubliki ot 18 yanvarya 2017 goda [The Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic dated January 18, 2017, concerning the expansion of the Russian Navy's logistics base near the Port of Tartus and the access of Russian warships to Syria's territorial sea, internal waters, and ports]. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001201701200039?ysclid=mdo6n15rt476285222> (accessed: 25.03.2023). (In Russian).

continue progressing in this direction by upholding existing interstate norms to defend Russia's interests, preserve its sovereignty, and ensure the security of its diverse population.

In light of the above, it can be concluded that the Russian Federation, despite facing numerous challenges near its borders, is pursuing a coherent and systematic policy to ensure security throughout the Greater Mediterranean region, including its more distant areas. Given the prevailing international climate and the hostile stance of many states, Russia must conduct its activities in strict accordance with international law. At the same time, there are numerous instances where other parties to relevant agreements have failed to honor the rules they voluntarily accepted. This underscores the critical importance of robust domestic legislation and bilateral agreements in achieving the overarching goal of preserving sovereignty in its broadest sense.

Emerging trends in customs regulation in the Greater Mediterranean

The regional diversity and varied development paths of the Greater Mediterranean states frequently give rise to political, social, and religious tensions among them. Nevertheless, all countries in this region are actively involved in international trade, both with each other and with external partners.

Regional economic cooperation serves as a key factor in ensuring stability and fostering the successful development of the Greater Mediterranean. It also provides a foundation for addressing many other challenges that emerge within the region.

Thanks to its strategic geographical location, transport and logistics corridors connecting the international trade networks of Europe, Asia, and Africa pass through the territories of the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean countries.

Effective legal regulation of customs matters plays a crucial role in supporting trade cooperation throughout the Greater Mediterranean region.

In the Russian Federation, which is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), customs regulation is administered at both the national and supranational levels, encompassing countries from the European and Asian regions. It is important to note that the majority of customs regulation matters currently fall under the jurisdiction of the EAEU institutions.

The provisions of the EAEU Customs Code are grounded in the principles of the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (adopted in Kyoto on May 18, 1973), as well as the 2021 SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (the "SAFE Framework of Standards")³².

³² The Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union (amended on May 29, 2019, and March 18, 2023) (Annex No. 1 to the Treaty on the Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union). URL: <http://www.eaeunion.org/> (accessed: 25.05.2023).

At the national level, the Strategy for the Development of the Customs Service of the Russian Federation until 2030, approved by Order No. 1388-r of the Government of the Russian Federation on May 23, 2020 (the “Customs Strategy 2030”),³³ formulated in accordance with the aforementioned international documents, outlines the development priorities of the Russian Customs Service. Among other objectives, this strategy aims to support the key goals of Russia’s national maritime policy.

One of the priorities is the comprehensive digitalization and automation of customs authorities’ functions, including the implementation of customs operations enhanced by artificial intelligence via the introduction of an ‘intelligent’ checkpoint model (Skiba, Pozdnjakova 2022: 19-33). Unlike current checkpoint practices, this model minimizes the involvement of customs officials in processes, maximizes the use of customs control technologies, and leverages advanced information technologies. This innovative approach aims to significantly reduce the time and financial costs for foreign trade participants involved in the movement of goods and international transport across customs borders, while also holding potential for widespread application in international customs practices.

The adoption of advanced customs control technologies could serve as a foundation for enhancing international cooperation and expanding trade among the countries of the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions. The harmonization and simplification of customs procedures, along with strengthened information sharing and collaboration in customs regulation and trade security matters, will undoubtedly bolster economic ties within the Greater Mediterranean region.

Equally important for fostering regional and interregional cooperation is the implementation of modern technologies that ensure compliance with trade prohibitions and restrictions through integrated digital information systems. Furthermore, reaching international agreements on the harmonization and mutual recognition of product quality standards will promote increased investment and stimulate the growth of trade between contracting states and regional unions.

The implementation of international customs regulation initiatives, in line with the Customs Strategy 2030, can be carried out through integration associations, international organizations, and joint projects conducted in both multilateral and bilateral formats.

The SAFE Framework of Standards³⁴ (clause 2.11.1) emphasizes that governments should engage with all partner international bodies that are involved in international trade and supply chain security to develop, maintain and enhance harmonized international standards.

³³ Rasporyazhenie pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 23 maya 2020 goda № 1388-r "Ob utverzhdenii Strategii razvitiya tamozhennoy sluzhby Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2030 goda" ["The Strategy for the Development of the Customs Service of the Russian Federation until 2030", approved by Order No. 1388-r of the Government of the Russian Federation of May 23, 2020]. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/564952866?ysclid=mdo70xvbw965541119> (accessed: 25.05.2023). (In Russian).

³⁴ World Customs Organization: SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade 2021. URL: <https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/safe-framework-of-standards.pdf> (accessed: 25.12.2021).

As a key priority in international cooperation, the SAFE Framework of Standards highlights the development of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programs within regional customs unions and the establishment of procedures for their mutual recognition.

However, it is important to note that the legal framework governing AEOs within the customs legislation of the EAEU and the Russian Federation does not yet fully align with current best practices and requires further refinement (Sharoshhenko 2022: 28-33). The advancement of this framework could be facilitated through international cooperation with countries in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean regions by establishing regional AEO programmes.

The establishment and practical implementation of such programmes aim, first, to offer participating businesses advantages and easier customs procedures, and second, to ensure compliance with foreign trade laws by enabling participating countries' customs authorities to access AEO information online and collaborate to reduce customs violations.

Regional AEO programs are designed to ensure that a) customs authorities, by establishing a pool of trustworthy foreign trade participants (AEOs) and fostering cooperation with them in various forms, uphold customs regulations and strengthen the security of international trade; and b) AEOs receive support from customs authorities in customs control procedures and protection of their rights against unfair competition.

In practice, this approach is expected to expand international trade among contracting countries and regional associations, while significantly increasing the attractiveness of territories and maritime areas, including the continental shelf, for foreign investors.

The signing of free trade agreements plays a significant role in the development and reinforcement of foreign economic relations between countries. Considering the international trade priorities of each participant and their respective export/import profiles, such agreements should incorporate a list of goods eligible for duty-free trade that aligns with national economic interests and supports the advancement of regional integration and cooperation.

Regional customs cooperation should not remain a distant goal. The World Customs Organization Strategic Plan 2022-2025³⁵ highlights the integration of customs authorities into environmental compliance processes within international trade and their contribution to the global green economy as a key priority for customs development. Sustainable development involves establishing and advancing economic interactions based on closed-loop systems and effective waste management. These business processes are already emerging today and tend to be implemented more rapidly and

³⁵ WCO: Strategic Plan 2022–2025. URL: https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/about-us/administrative-documents/strategic-plan-2022_2025.pdf?db=web (accessed: 12.07.2023).

efficiently at the regional level. Delayed participation in regional cooperation could significantly limit the presence of Russian businesses in the emerging international circular economy. Therefore, strengthening and expanding collaboration with foreign trade partners – through coordinated efforts among customs authorities of contracting states and regional unions – will assist foreign trade participants from Russia and other EAEU countries in integrating into the global trade networks of the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

Conclusions

In summary, an analysis of the convention-based mechanisms and institutional framework governing the international legal regulation of maritime relations in the Greater Mediterranean region leads to the following key conclusions:

a) The most comprehensive and well-developed international legal regulation of maritime relations in the Greater Mediterranean pertains to environmental protection, as embodied in the Barcelona Convention. The effective enforcement of this convention is supported by a wide network of regional centers that monitor the marine environment and implement the necessary measures stipulated by the convention.

b) In recent years, the most contentious and sensitive issues in maritime relations in the Greater Mediterranean have centered on Turkey's and Greece's efforts to delimit the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in the Eastern Mediterranean according to their respective national economic and political interests. These efforts have failed to achieve the mutual compromise necessary to maintain peace and reach agreement, particularly concerning the legal status of small Greek islands whose exclusive economic zones extend beyond their territorial seas.

c) The international legal regime governing the Strait of Gibraltar requires further formalization and the establishment of guarantees protecting the rights of all Mediterranean states without exception. This could be achieved through the adoption of a multilateral treaty with the broadest possible regional scope.

d) Amid rapidly evolving international relations and Russia's role within them, implementing its Maritime Doctrine through bilateral agreements aimed at ensuring national security becomes critically important.

e) Modernizing the forms and methods of customs operations within integration associations is crucial for improving the investment appeal of Greater Mediterranean states and for boosting trade cooperation among them.

About the Authors:

Vladimir N. KOVAL – Doctor of Legal Sciences, Director of Judicial Institute, Sevastopol State University, 33, Universitetskaya st., Sevastopol, Russian Federation, 299053. E-mail: v.n.koval@sevsu.ru

Stanislav A. VASILIEV – Candidate of Legal Sciences, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law, Sevastopol State University, 33, Universitetskaya st., Sevastopol, Russian Federation, 299053. E-mail: mnogoslov@mail.ru

Evgeniy V. GODOVANIK – Doctor of Legal Sciences, Associate Professor, Professor of the Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law, Sevastopol State University, 33, Universitetskaya st., Sevastopol, Russian Federation, 299053. E-mail: evgodovanik@mail.sevsu.ru

Aleksandr V. POLISHCHUK – Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of International, Maritime and Customs Law, Sevastopol State University, 33, Universitetskaya st., Sevastopol, Russian Federation, 299053. E-mail: avpolischcuk@mail.ru

Conflict of interest:

The authors declare the absence of conflicts of interest.

References:

Agazade M. M., Pavlova P. M., Nikolova G. A. 2021. Bol'shoe Sredizemnomor'e kak kompleks bezopasnosti [The Greater Mediterranean as a Security Complex]. *History Journal of Omsk State University*, 8(3;31). P. 117–122. (In Russian).

Aivazyan D. S. 2022. Region Chernogo morya (iyun' – avgust 2022) [Black Sea Region (June – August 2022)]. *European Union: Facts and Comments*. No. 109. P. 98–101. (In Russian).

Baburin S. N. 1997. *Territoriya gosudarstva: Pravovye i geopolit. problem* [Territory of the state: Legal and geopolitical problems]. Moscow: Moscow State University. 477 p. (In Russian).

Baranov A. V. 2017. Konkurentsia Rossiiskoi Federatsii i NATO v Chernomorskom regione: voennye aspekty [Competition between the Russian Federation and NATO in the Black Sea region: Military aspects]. In: O. V. Yarmak ed. *Potemkinskie chteniya. Sbornik materialov II Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii*. Sevastopol: Sevastopol State University. P. 75–76 (In Russian).

Bekyashev D. K. 2017. *Mezhdunarodno-pravovye problemy upravleniya rybolovstvom: monografiya* [International law problems of fisheries management: A monograph]. Moscow: Prospekt. 512 p. (In Russian).

Boklan D. S. 2014. Praktika Mezhdunarodnogo tribunala po morskomu pravu po delam, vytekayushchim iz mezh-dunarodnykh ekologicheskikh i mezhdunarodnykh ekonomicheskikh ot-noshenii [The Practice of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Cases Arising from International Environmental and International Economic Relations]. *International Justice*. No. 4. P. 80–86. (In Russian).

Chikharev I. A. 2021. Rossiya v Bol'shom Sredizemnomor'e: novyi tikhoookeansko-evropeiskii transit [Russia in the Greater Mediterranean: a new Pacific-European transit]. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*. 21(3). P. 441–458. (In Russian).

Dolgov B. V. 2021. Siriiskoe protivostoyanie: vnutrennie i vneshnii faktory (2011–2021 gg.) [The Syrian confrontation: Internal and external factors (2011–2021)]. Moscow: URSS. 208 p. (In Russian).

Fancello G. 2022. Technologies and innovation for improving performances logistic operators: The Techlog project. *International Business Logistics Journal*. No. 2. P. 60–62.

Farkhutdinov I. Z. 2020. *Amerikanskaya doktrina o preventivnom udare ot Monro do Trampa: mezhdunarodno-pravovye aspekty: monografiya* [The American Doctrine of Preemptive Strike from Monroe to Trump: International Legal Aspects. A monograph]. Moscow: INFRA-M. 419 p. (In Russian).

Golovenchenko A. A. 2022. K voprosu o Konventsii Montre: rol' dokumenta segodnya i zavtra [On the issue of the Montreux Convention: The role of the document today and tomorrow]. *Vlast'*. 30(4). P. 52–59. (In Russian).

Gratsianskii A. H. 1971. *Priroda Sredizemnomor'ya* [Mediterranean nature]. Moscow: Mysl'. 510 p. (In Russian).

Guculjak V. N. 2017. *Rossiiskoe i mezhdunarodnoe morskoe pravo (publichnoe i chastnoe)* [Russian and international maritime law (public and private)]. Moscow: Granica. 448 p. (In Russian).

Gruszczak A. 2017. European Borders in Turbulent Times: The Case of the Central Mediterranean “Extended Borderland”. *Politeja*. 5(50). P. 23–46.

Gusakov V. Y. 2018. Ponyatie i osobennosti pravovogo rezhima energeticheskikh ob"ektov neftegazovoi otrasli [The concept and features of the legal regime of energy facilities in the oil and gas industry]. *Pravovoi energeticheskii forum*. No. 4. P. 14–19. (In Russian).

Il'in M. V., Nechaev V. D. 2022. Vyzovy i perspektivy izucheniya Bol'shogo Sredizemnomor'ya. *Polis. Political Studies*. No. 3. P. 8–23. (In Russian).

Kapkanshchikov S. G., Omarov I. I. 2022. Rol' GUAM v regione Bol'shogo Sredizemnomor'ya [The Role of GUAM in the Greater Mediterranean Region]. *Aktual'nye voprosy ucheta i upravleniya v usloviyakh informatsionnoi ekonomiki*. No. P. 267–273. (In Russian).

Kirilova E. A., Suslikov V. N., Tsokur E. F. 2016. The legal problems of forced migration: A comparative and legal analysis illustrated by the European Union countries and Russia. *Man in India*. 96(10). P. 3561–3571.

Kolodkin A. L., Gutsulyak V. N., Bobrova Y. V. 2007. *Mirovoi okean. Mezhdunarodno-pravovoi rezhim. Osnovnye problem* [The World Ocean. International legal regime. Main problems]. Moscow: Statut. 637 p. (In Russian).

Kosov G. V., Nechaev V. D., Tatarkov D. B. 2021. Rossiiskii projekt Bol'shogo Sredizemnomor'ya: ot imperskikh traditsii k novomu vitku bol'shogo protivostoyaniya [The Russian project of the Greater Mediterranean: From imperial traditions to a new round of great confrontation]. *Voprosy elitologii*. 2(3). P. 123–139. (In Russian).

Lis'ikh V. V., Romanov M. V., Shcherbatov M. V. 2022. “Zernovaya sdelka” – ee predstaviteli i vozmozhnye varianty razvitiya sobytiy [The “Grain Deal” – Its representatives and possible scenarios]. In: *Aktual'nye problemy menedzhmenta, ekonomiki i ekonomicheskoi bezopasnosti. Sbornik materialov IV Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii*. Chelyabinsk: Chelyabinsk State University. P. 168–170. (In Russian).

Luchian V. 2022. The impact of the “grain deal” on global food commodities exports: Northern Black Sea region case (Romania, Russia, Ukraine). *International Agricultural Journal*. 65(5). P. 796–810.

Marchenko I. E. 2023. Ofitsial'nyi otdel [Official department]. *Morskoi sbornik*. 1(2110). P. 9–38. (In Russian).

Moskalenko O. A., Irkhin A. A., Kabanova N. E. 2022. Chernomorskii region kak prostranstvo konflikta v diskurse zapadnykh analiticheskikh tsentrov (2018–2021 gg.) [The Black Sea region as a space of conflict in the discourse of Western think tanks (2018–2021)]. *Regionologiya*, 30(2):119. P. 258–277.

Nechaev V. D., Chikharev I. A., Irkhin A. A., Makovskaya D. V. 2019. Kontseptsiya geostrategicheskogo atlasa Bol'shogo Sredizemnomor'ya [The concept of a geostrategic atlas of the Greater Mediterranean]. *Lomonosov Geography Journal*. No. 1. P. 67–74. (In Russian).

Nordquist M. H., Nandan S., Rosenne S. 1995. *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea Commentary 1982. Vol. III*. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff. 736 p.

Petrov O. Y. 2018. Mezhdunarodno-pravovoi rezhim Chernomorskikh proливov primenitel'no k voennomu moreplavaniyu [International legal regime of the Black Sea straits in relation to military navigation]. *Pravo v Vooruzhennykh Silakh*. No. 7. P. 97–104. (In Russian).

Polyakov A. P., Shportko D. M. 2022. Znachenie Shankhaiskoi organizatsii sotrudnichestva dlya stran Bol'shogo Sredizemnomor'ya [Significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation for the countries of the Greater Mediterranean]. *Aktual'nye voprosy ucheta i upravleniya v usloviyakh informatsionnoi ekonomiki*. No. 4. P. 280–285. (In Russian).

Sharoshhenko I. V. 2022. Razvitie instituta upolnomochennogo jekonomicheskogo operatora: sovershenstvovanie form vzaimodejstviya [Development of the institution of authorized economic operator: Improving forms of interaction]. *Vestnik of the Russian Customs Academy*. No. 1. P. 28–33. (In Russian).

Shevtsov V. M. 2013. *Natsional'nye otnosheniya i voennyi potentsial gosudarstva: (na primere Rossii): monografiya* [National relations and the military potential of the state: (on the example of Russia): monograph]. Moscow: Military University of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. 264 p. (In Russian).

Sivkov K. V. 2020). Uroki siriiskoi kampanii dlya voennoi bezopasnosti Rossii [Lessons from the Syrian Campaign for Russia's Military Security]. In: *75-letie Velikoi Pobedy: istoricheskii opyt i sovremennye problemy voennoi bezopasnosti Rossii. Materialy 5-i Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii nauchnogo otdeleniya № 10 Rossiiskoi akademii raketnykh i artilleriiskikh nauk: v 2 t. Tom 1*. Moscow: Bauman Moscow State Technical University Press. P. 75–82 (In Russian).

Skiba V. Y., Pozdnjakova K. E. 2022. Sovremennye avtomatizirovannye informacionnye sistemy dlja sovershenija tamozhennykh operacij bez uchastija dolzhnostnykh lic tamozhennykh organov [Modern automated information systems for performing customs operations without the participation of customs officials]. *Vestnik of the Russian Customs Academy*. No. 2. P. 19–33. (In Russian).