



Black Sea and Russia

For Prelims: Black Sea's Geography.

For Mains: Russia War against Ukraine, Black Sea's Importance to Russia, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Why in News?

Recently, the sinking of the **warship Moskva, flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet** — whether due to a **Ukrainian missile strike** or, as **Russia claims, a fire on board** — is a serious setback for **Russia in the War against Ukraine**.

What is the Black Sea's Geography?

- **Littoral Geography:** The Black Sea is bordered by **Ukraine** to the north and northwest, **Russia and Georgia** to the east, **Turkey** to the south, and **Bulgaria and Romania** to the west.
- **Maritime Geography:** It links to the **Sea of Marmara** through the **Bosphorus Strait** and then to the **Aegean Sea** through the **Dardanelles Strait**.



What is the Importance of Black Sea to Russia?

- **Strategic Importance:** Domination of the **Black Sea region is a geostrategic imperative for Russia**, both to project Russian power in the Mediterranean and to secure the economic gateway to key markets in southern Europe.
 - **Gateway to Mediterranean Sea:** It has traditionally been Russia's warm water gateway

to Europe.

- **Strategic Buffer:** It is a strategic buffer between the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#) and itself.
- **Black Sea Fleet:** In this context, Russia has been making efforts to gain complete control over the Black Sea since the **Crimean crisis of 2014**.
 - Thus, Russia has stationed its **Black Sea naval fleet in the Black Sea**.
 - **Black Sea Fleet:** The Black Sea Fleet has a long history and is considered to have been **founded back in 1783**.
 - It comprises warships of the Russian Navy in the **Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and the eastern Mediterranean**, and is headquartered at **Sevastopol**, the major port on the **Crimean peninsula**.

What is Russia Doing in the Black Sea?

- During the ongoing invasion, the **domination of the Black Sea has been a major Russian objective**, along with the land bridge to connect Russia and Crimea.
- **Capturing Mariupol:** There have been intense efforts to capture Mariupol, the Sea of Azov port in the breakaway eastern **Ukrainian oblast of Donetsk**.
- **Capturing Odessa:** Russia was also expected to focus its military efforts on Odessa, to the west of Crimea.
 - If the Odessa region were to fall as well, **Ukraine would lose access to its entire Black Sea coastline** and would in effect be reduced to a **landlocked country**.
 - It is also the largest region in Ukraine which serves as an **important energy and transport corridor with abundant natural resources**.
 - The **Rhine-Main-Danube canal** connects the **Black Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and the port of Odessa** serves as a vital link between Ukraine and the outside world.

What are Russia's Prospects?

- The loss of the warship Moskva is expected to **put brakes on an anticipated amphibious assault on Odessa**.
- This incident means Russia has now suffered damage to two key naval assets since invading Ukraine, the first being **Russia's Alligator class landing ship Saratov** in March 2022.
- Both events will likely lead Russia to review its **maritime posture in the Black Sea**.



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2019)

Sea Bordering	Country
1. Adriatic Sea	: Albania
2. Black Sea	: Croatia
3. Caspian Sea	: Kazakhstan
4. Mediterranean Sea	: Morocco
5. Red Sea	: Syria

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (b)

Q. Turkey is located between (2014)

- (a) Black Sea and Caspian Sea
- (b) Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea
- (c) Gulf of Suez and Mediterranean Sea
- (d) Gulf of Aqaba and Dead Sea

Ans: (b)

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