Power Dynamics and Security Dilemma: Untangling Complexities in the Black Sea Region

Teya Radeva

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Political Science, Bulgaria

Abstract

This article delves into the security dilemma within the Black Sea region from Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Using a qualitative methodology, the study combines empirical data from NATO military strategies, Russian hybrid warfare tactics, and the geopolitical dynamics of energy security with theoretical insights. Through a detailed examination of primary sources (e.g., NATO documents, Russian government statements) and secondary literature, the research reveals how NATO's defensive actions—military exercises and strategic deployments—are perceived as offensive provocations by Russia, while Russia's cyberattacks, disinformation, and energy leverage are seen as existential threats by NATO. The study shows that the evolving security dilemma in the Black Sea is no longer driven solely by military postures but is increasingly shaped by hybrid warfare and energy geopolitics, where economic and informational power have become central to strategic competition. This research offers a fresh perspective on the intersection of military strategy, hybrid tactics, and energy security in the Black Sea, providing new insights into how these factors intensify the security dilemma and reshape the region's security architecture.

Keywords: NATO, Russia, security dilemma, Black Sea, war

Introduction

The Black Sea region is a key geopolitical crossroads, holding strategic significance due to its role as a major energy transit hub and its proximity to both Europe and Asia. This region has become a focal point of tensions between NATO and Russia, particularly following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing war in Ukraine. As NATO has increased its military presence in response to Russian actions, the Black Sea has become a critical theater in the broader NATO-Russia rivalry. These interactions exemplify the security dilemma, a core concept in international relations, which describes how actions by one state to enhance its security can inadvertently escalate insecurity for others (Herz, 1951; Jervis, 1978).

Although the security dilemma has been extensively applied to NATO-Russia relations, most studies have focused on military postures and traditional security threats. Emerging challenges, such as hybrid warfare and energy security, have only recently gained attention in the context of the Black Sea region. Maisaia (2019) has addressed the role of hybrid warfare,

including cyberattacks and disinformation, but these non-traditional security issues have not been sufficiently integrated into the existing frameworks of the security dilemma. Similarly, the strategic importance of energy resources, particularly Russia's control over critical pipelines and energy routes, remains an underexplored dimension of regional insecurity (Maisaia, 2024).

This study seeks to fill these gaps by analyzing NATO-Russia relations in the Black Sea region through the lens of the security dilemma. The research specifically integrates military postures, hybrid warfare, and energy security into a cohesive framework to explore how these factors interact to exacerbate tensions and regional instability. The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do NATO and Russia's military strategies in the Black Sea contribute to the security dilemma?
2. In what ways do hybrid warfare tactics and energy competition amplify regional insecurity?
3. What are the broader implications of these dynamics for European and global security?

By applying these theoretical frameworks, this research contributes to the understanding of contemporary security challenges in the Black Sea, offering insights into potential policy solutions for de-escalation and stability.

1.   Methods

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore the security dynamics of the Black Sea region through the lens of the security dilemma. The approach integrates theoretical frameworks, empirical analysis, and scenario development to understand how NATO and Russia's interactions contribute to regional instability. The research combines theoretical analysis with case studies, utilizing comparative and scenario-based methodologies to examine key factors like military postures, hybrid warfare strategies, and energy security.

1.1 Theoretical framework

The study is grounded in the security dilemma, which explains how measures taken by one state to ensure its security can provoke insecurity in another, escalating tensions. The analysis draws on the works of Robert Jervis, Shiping Tang, and Vakhtang Maisaia to understand NATO and Russia's strategic behavior.

1.1.1   Robert Jervis's Security Dilemma Model

Jervis (1978) emphasizes that defensive actions, such as NATO's missile defense systems in Romania and exercises like Sea Breeze 2024, can be seen as offensive by Russia. Similarly, Russia's militarization of Crimea and advanced missile deployments are viewed by NATO as offensive. These mutual misperceptions lead to a cycle of mistrust and escalation, highlighting the core of the security dilemma.

1.1.2 Shiping Tang's Security Dilemma and Conflict of Interest

Tang (2009) refines the security dilemma by distinguishing between latent and active dilemmas and subjective versus objective interests. While both NATO and Russia have objective interests in the region, their subjective perceptions of threat—with NATO seeing Russia's actions as aggressive and Russia viewing NATO's expansion as an existential threat—fuel the cycle of conflict and deepened mistrust.

1.1.3 Vakhtang Maisaia's Regional Security Perspective

Maisaia (2019) expands the security dilemma by emphasizing the role of external powers and the importance of energy security in the Black Sea. Russia's control over energy routes like TurkStream gives it geopolitical leverage, which exacerbates NATO's vulnerabilities, particularly in states like Bulgaria and Romania. This economic and informational influence, alongside military posturing, complicates the region's security dynamics.

1.2 Integration of Theoretical Perspectives

By integrating Jervis's focus on military postures, Tang's exploration of subjective interests, and Maisaia's regional and economic analysis, this study provides a comprehensive framework to understand NATO-Russia interactions. The interplay of military strategy, hybrid warfare, and energy security is analyzed through the security dilemma, offering new insights into how these factors contribute to regional instability and the broader European security architecture.

1.3 Data Collection and Sources

This study relies on a combination of primary and secondary sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of NATO-Russia dynamics in the Black Sea. The primary sources consist of publicly available documents and statements from NATO and the Russian government, which offer insights into their strategic priorities, military activities, and security perceptions in the region. These documents were selected based on their relevance to the Black Sea region and their ability to provide detailed information on military postures, hybrid warfare tactics, and energy security concerns.

1.3.1 Primary sources

1. **NATO Documents**: The primary NATO documents used in this study include:

   - Strategic Reports: NATO's annual defense reports, such as the NATO Strategic Concept and Defence and Deterrence Posture Review, which outline NATO's security priorities and defense strategies in the Black Sea region.
   - Press Releases and Official Statements: Official NATO communications, including press releases, speeches, and statements from high-ranking officials (e.g., NATO Secretary General), providing insights into NATO's military operations and responses to Russian actions.
   - Military Exercise Documents: Documents detailing NATO's military exercises in the Black Sea, such as Sea Breeze, offering valuable information on NATO's military readiness and strategic objectives.

2. **Russian Government Statements**: The Russian government documents used in this study include:

   - Official Government Statements: Speeches and policy documents from the Russian President and key officials, including State Duma speeches and reports from the Ministry of Defence, offering insight into Russia's security policies and military strategies.
   - Military Doctrine and National Security Strategy: The Russian Military Doctrine (2014, 2020) and National Security Strategy documents, which provide a detailed account of Russia's defense priorities, perceived threats, and strategies in the Black Sea region.

3. **Energy Security Documents**: Energy security in the Black Sea is central to both NATO's and Russia's strategies. Key documents on energy security include:

- Energy Strategy Reports: Reports from Gazprom and other energy companies detailing Russia's energy infrastructure (e.g., TurkStream and Nord Stream 2), analyzing how energy is used as a geopolitical tool in the region.
- Energy Policies and NATO Publications: Documents from NATO's Energy Security Centre of Excellence and EU reports on energy security, focusing on the Black Sea's role in energy transit and NATO's approach to energy dependency and security in the region.

1.3.2 Selection criteria

- Relevance: Only documents directly related to NATO and Russia's military presence, strategies, and security policies in the Black Sea region were selected.
- Timeliness: The selection focused on the most recent documents (2014–2024), particularly following the annexation of Crimea and the onset of the war in Ukraine, as these events significantly altered the security dynamics in the region.
- Official Sources: Priority was given to official documents and statements from both NATO and Russian government bodies to ensure accuracy and reliability in representing each party's strategic objectives.

1.3.3 Secondary sources

- Scholarly literature: Works by Jervis, Tang, and Maisaia, as well as regional studies focusing on the security dilemma.
- Policy reports: Analyses by think tanks and international organizations on the Black Sea geopolitics and security challenges.
- Case studies: Historical events such as the annexation of Crimea, NATO's Eastern European deployments, and notable hybrid warfare incidents.

1.4 Analytical Approach

This study employs three key methods of analysis to operationalize its theoretical frameworks and systematically examine the data collected on NATO-Russia dynamics in the Black Sea. These methods—comparative analysis, trend and pattern analysis, and scenario development—enable a comprehensive understanding of the evolving security dilemma between NATO and Russia in the region, focusing on military postures, hybrid warfare tactics, and energy security.

1.4.1 Comparative analysis

This study uses comparative analysis to evaluate NATO and Russia's strategies in the Black Sea, focusing on military, hybrid, and energy security approaches and their contributions to the security dilemma. The key areas of comparison include:

- Military Postures: A comparison of NATO's defense strategies, such as military deployments and participation in Sea Breeze exercises, with Russia's military build-up in Crimea and expanding naval capabilities. This analysis assesses how each side perceives the other's military actions as offensive or defensive.
- Hybrid Warfare: A comparison of Russia's use of cyberattacks, disinformation, and political subversion with NATO's countermeasures, including cyber defense and strategic communication. This highlights how hybrid tactics complicate the traditional offense-defense distinction, exacerbating the security dilemma.

- Energy Security: Analyzing NATO and Russia's energy strategies, focusing on NATO's efforts to diversify energy sources and reduce dependency on Russia versus Russia's use of energy routes (e.g., TurkStream, Nord Stream 2) to exert geopolitical leverage, showing how energy control contributes to the security dilemma.

1.4.2 Trend and Pattern Analysis

The trend and pattern analysis will trace the historical and contemporary evolution of NATO and Russia's strategic interactions in the Black Sea. By identifying recurring patterns and key turning points in their behavior, this method will highlight how actions by one actor lead to reciprocal reactions by the other, contributing to the cycle of escalation typical of a security dilemma.

- Escalation Patterns: By examining key historical events (such as NATO's post-2014 expansion into Eastern Europe and Russia's annexation of Crimea), the study will identify how military and diplomatic actions have escalated tensions over time. Trends in NATO's military activities (e.g., Sea Breeze exercises) and Russia's countermeasures (e.g., military build-up in Crimea) will be compared to show how each side's actions contribute to the escalation of conflict.
- Energy Competition Trends: The analysis will also focus on the evolution of energy security concerns in the Black Sea. This will involve tracing how Russia's use of energy infrastructure (e.g., pipelines) as a strategic tool has shaped the security landscape, and how NATO's responses (such as energy diversification efforts) reflect deeper concerns about energy dependence and regional stability.

1.4.3 Scenario Development

Based on the analysis of current trends and the trajectory of NATO-Russia relations in the Black Sea, future scenarios will be developed to assess possible outcomes for the region. These scenarios will offer insights into how the security dilemma might evolve and the potential consequences for regional and global security. Three main scenarios will be evaluated:

1. Strategic Russian Victory: In this scenario, Russia consolidates its military and energy control over the Black Sea region, expanding its influence in Crimea and surrounding territories, while NATO's attempts to counter Russian influence are perceived as ineffective. The scenario will examine the implications of a strategic Russian victory for NATO's security posture in Europe and the broader geopolitical consequences for the West.
2. Frozen Conflict: In this scenario, the Black Sea region remains locked in a low-intensity, frozen conflict, where both NATO and Russia maintain a delicate balance of power without direct military engagement. While military tensions persist, neither side is able to achieve a decisive victory, leading to a continued state of uncertainty and high-risk diplomacy.
3. Partition of Ukraine: This scenario explores the possibility of a partitioned Ukraine, where NATO establishes control over strategic zones in the country, particularly in the west and along the Black Sea coast, while Russia secures control over eastern regions and Crimea. This scenario will analyze how the division of Ukraine could lead to increased military engagement between NATO and Russia, as well as potential regional instability.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

1.5.1 Scope

This study examines the geopolitical dynamics between NATO and Russia in the Black Sea region from 2014 to the present. It specifically analyzes military strategies, hybrid warfare, and energy security, framed within the security dilemma theory. The focus is on understanding how the actions of both NATO and Russia contribute to escalating tensions, especially following the annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine. The study uses primary sources (e.g., NATO reports, Russian government statements) and secondary sources (e.g., academic articles, policy reports) to explore these dynamics.

1.5.2 Limitations

- Data Constraints: Reliance on publicly available data may exclude classified information on military strategies and covert operations.
- Rapidly Changing Context: The ongoing conflict in Ukraine introduces uncertainties, as real-time developments may impact the relevance of findings.
- Non-State Actors: The study does not extensively examine the role of non-state entities, such as private military companies or transnational corporations, in the region's security dynamics.

2. Results

The analysis of NATO and Russia's actions in the Black Sea region, based on the collected primary and secondary sources, reveals significant findings related to military postures, hybrid warfare tactics, and energy security dynamics. These findings highlight how the security dilemma between NATO and Russia has evolved and continues to escalate in the region.

2.1 Military Postures

NATO's military presence in the Black Sea has significantly increased since 2014, particularly following Russia's annexation of Crimea and its military activities in Ukraine. Key findings include:

- NATO's Defensive Strategy: NATO's military exercises, such as Sea Breeze, and the establishment of permanent defensive deployments in countries like Romania and Bulgaria, are perceived as threatening by Russia (NATO, 2020). Despite NATO's emphasis on defensive strategies, these actions are seen by Russia as offensive, exacerbating the security dilemma.
- Russian Military Build-Up: Russia's actions, including the militarization of Crimea, the establishment of advanced missile systems, and the expansion of its naval fleet in the Black Sea, have intensified tensions with NATO (Russian Federation Ministry of Defence, 2020). These military moves are framed as defensive by Russia, but are viewed as provocations by NATO.

2.2 Hybrid Warfare

Russia's use of hybrid warfare tactics, including cyberattacks, disinformation, and political subversion, has played a crucial role in escalating the security dilemma. Key observations include:

- Russian Tactics: Russia's cyberattacks on NATO-aligned states and disinformation campaigns targeting Ukraine and other Eastern European nations have contributed to

instability in the region (Maisaia, 2019). These actions are often perceived by NATO as indirect aggression, complicating the traditional definitions of offense and defense.

- NATO's Countermeasures: NATO's responses, such as its cyber defense initiatives and strategic communications to counter Russian disinformation, have been met with limited success, highlighting the challenges in countering hybrid warfare (NATO Communications and Information Agency, 2021). NATO's defensive measures are often interpreted by Russia as attempts to undermine its internal stability and influence in the region.

2.3 Energy Security

The competition for control over energy resources in the Black Sea is a central theme in NATO-Russia relations, with both sides using energy as a geopolitical tool. The following findings emerged from the analysis of energy security dynamics:

- Russian Energy Leverage: Russia has strategically used its control over energy routes, such as the TurkStream pipeline and Nord Stream 2, to influence NATO-aligned states in Eastern Europe, particularly Romania and Bulgaria (Gazprom, 2020). This energy leverage is viewed by NATO as a means of exerting control over its members and preventing energy diversification.
- NATO's Energy Strategy: NATO has responded by promoting energy diversification strategies and supporting initiatives to reduce reliance on Russian energy supplies (European Commission, 2020). These efforts are seen as defensive but are perceived as threatening by Russia, who views them as attempts to undermine its regional dominance in energy supply.

3.   Key Findings

The analysis of NATO and Russia's actions in the Black Sea region, through both primary and secondary sources, has led to the following key findings:

3.1 Escalating Military Tensions:

- NATO's increased military presence in the Black Sea, including joint military exercises (e.g., Sea Breeze) and the establishment of permanent deployments in Romania and Bulgaria, is perceived as offensive by Russia. Despite NATO's stated defensive objectives, these actions are interpreted by Russia as a direct challenge to its security, fueling the security dilemma.
- In response, Russia has militarized Crimea and expanded its naval capabilities in the Black Sea. Russia views these moves as necessary for its defense, but NATO sees them as provocations. This has intensified NATO's defensive strategies, creating a vicious cycle of military posturing and counterposturing that heightens tensions.

3.2 Hybrid Warfare as a Strategic Tool:

- Russia's hybrid warfare tactics, including cyberattacks, disinformation, and political subversion, have been instrumental in destabilizing NATO-aligned countries in the region, particularly Ukraine. These tactics blur the lines between conventional warfare and non-traditional forms of aggression, making it difficult for NATO to respond effectively.
- NATO's countermeasures, including cyber defense initiatives and strategic communication efforts, have been partially successful but often fall short in addressing the full scope of Russia's hybrid tactics. These asymmetric strategies make

the conflict more complex and increase the perceived threat from each side, exacerbating the security dilemma.

3.3 Energy Security and Geopolitical Leverage:

- Russia's control over critical energy infrastructure, such as the TurkStream and Nord Stream 2 pipelines, has given it significant geopolitical leverage over NATO-aligned states like Romania and Bulgaria, which rely on Russian energy supplies. This energy leverage is seen by Russia as a means to ensure its political and economic influence in the region.
- NATO's efforts to reduce energy dependence through energy diversification initiatives, including support for alternative energy routes, are framed as defensive actions. However, Russia perceives these efforts as an attempt to undermine its energy dominance and destabilize its influence in Eastern Europe.

3.4 Security Dilemma:

- The overall dynamic between NATO and Russia in the Black Sea region clearly exemplifies the security dilemma. Each side's actions, intended to secure its own interests, are perceived as threatening by the other, creating a cycle of mistrust, military escalation, and increased insecurity.
- NATO's actions, including military deployments and counter-hybrid measures, although defensive in nature, are interpreted by Russia as offensive. Similarly, Russia's military build-up and use of hybrid warfare tactics, while framed as defense against NATO's expansion, are seen by NATO as a provocation that justifies its own military and strategic response.

4. Discussion

This study examines NATO and Russia's interactions in the Black Sea region and shows how these dynamics exemplify the security dilemma. The findings both extend and challenge the traditional understanding of the security dilemma, particularly with the addition of hybrid warfare and energy security as key components in NATO-Russia tensions. The analysis reveals how these new factors complicate the traditional notions of offensive and defensive actions, necessitating an adaptation of the security dilemma framework.

4.1 Extending the Security Dilemma Framework

4.1.1 Military Postures and the Offense-Defense Balance:

The findings confirm Jervis's (1978) security dilemma theory, which posits that actions taken by one state to enhance its security are perceived as offensive by the other, leading to escalation. NATO's military build-up in the Black Sea, particularly after Russia's annexation of Crimea, is perceived as threatening by Russia, while NATO justifies its actions as defensive. Similarly, Russia's military presence in Crimea and increased naval operations in the Black Sea, framed as defensive by Russia, are interpreted as aggressive by NATO (Russian Federation Ministry of Defence, 2020). These dynamics support the core of the security dilemma, where each side's actions lead to reciprocal threats and military escalation, deepening mistrust.

The findings extend the theory by showing that military postures in the Black Sea are framed differently by NATO and Russia, reinforcing the traditional logic of the security dilemma. However, the increase in military presence by NATO in response to Russian actions demonstrates how both sides act defensively but perceive each other as offensive, amplifying the dilemma.

4.1.2 Hybrid Warfare and Psychological Dimensions:

The rise of hybrid warfare, including cyberattacks, disinformation, and political subversion, adds a new layer of complexity to the security dilemma. These tactics are often ambiguous and difficult to categorize as strictly offensive or defensive, which is traditionally at the heart of the security dilemma theory. Russia's use of hybrid warfare, particularly cyberattacks on NATO-aligned states and disinformation targeting Ukraine, blurs the lines of aggression, making it harder for NATO to respond in traditional military terms (Maisaia, 2019). NATO's countermeasures, such as cyber defense initiatives and strategic communication, remain effective to some extent but fail to fully neutralize Russia's asymmetric tactics.

The study extends the security dilemma framework by showing how hybrid warfare complicates the offensive-defensive binary that Jervis (1978) established. Hybrid threats force both NATO and Russia to reinterpret each other's actions through a psychological lens, where cyberattacks and disinformation are perceived as indirect aggression, deepening the mistrust and perception of threat.

4.1.3 Energy Security as a Geopolitical Tool:

The findings show how energy security plays a pivotal role in escalating NATO-Russia tensions, beyond the traditional military competition. Russia's control over critical energy infrastructure, such as the TurkStream and Nord Stream 2 pipelines, allows it to exert geopolitical leverage over NATO-aligned states in Eastern Europe (Gazprom, 2020). NATO's efforts to reduce dependency on Russian energy supplies through alternative routes and diversification strategies are seen as defensive actions by NATO, but are perceived by Russia as an attempt to undermine its geopolitical position.

The inclusion of energy security in the analysis expands the security dilemma theory by illustrating that control over strategic resources—not just military capabilities—can drive the escalation of tensions. Energy security adds a complex dimension to the theory, where economic and resource-based leverage plays a critical role alongside traditional military strategies (European Commission, 2020).

4.2 Challenges to the Security Dilemma Framework

4.2.1 Hybrid Warfare's Ambiguity:

While hybrid warfare contributes significantly to the escalation of tensions, it also challenges the traditional security dilemma framework, which has been predominantly grounded in military postures. Russia's use of cyberattacks, disinformation, and political interference are often difficult to define as either offensive or defensive, thus creating ambiguity. The lack of clear attribution and the difficulty in assessing intent complicate the application of the security dilemma framework, which traditionally relies on visible military actions as indicators of threat.

Hybrid warfare challenges Jervis's (1978) model, as it introduces a form of asymmetric aggression that does not neatly fit into the offensive-defensive binary. The psychological dimension of hybrid warfare—where the threat is not always visible or directly confrontational—complicates the theoretical understanding of the security dilemma. This suggests that the traditional framework needs to be adapted to include cybersecurity and information warfare as legitimate factors in the escalation of security dilemmas (NATO Communications and Information Agency, 2021).

4.2.2 Energy Security's Role in Strategic Bargaining:

The energy competition between NATO and Russia complicates the security dilemma theory because it introduces a form of economic leverage that is not traditionally addressed in military-centric models. While NATO's energy diversification strategies are framed as

defensive measures to reduce dependence on Russia, they are perceived by Russia as an attempt to undermine its strategic position and influence over Eastern Europe. This dynamic blurs the lines between economic competition and traditional military conflict.

The study suggests that the security dilemma theory needs to be expanded to account for economic and resource-based competition, particularly in energy security. The role of energy infrastructure in regional security cannot be overlooked as it has become a geopolitical tool for both NATO and Russia, influencing their strategies in ways that go beyond traditional military posturing. Energy security introduces a new form of strategic leverage that challenges the military-centric view of the security dilemma (Gazprom, 2020; European Commission, 2020).

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolving security dynamics between NATO and Russia in the Black Sea, revealing how both traditional and non-traditional forms of conflict contribute to the security dilemma. Through examining NATO's military postures, Russia's hybrid warfare tactics, and the geopolitical significance of energy security, this research extends and challenges the traditional theoretical framework of the security dilemma.

The findings confirm the relevance of Jervis's (1978) security dilemma theory, particularly in the context of military postures, where defensive actions by NATO and Russia are perceived as offensive by the other, leading to escalating tensions and an ongoing cycle of mistrust. This dynamic, where each side's actions fuel the other's insecurities, exemplifies the classic security dilemma, highlighting the complexity of the region's strategic landscape.

However, the study also extends the theory by incorporating hybrid warfare—including cyberattacks, disinformation, and political subversion—as a significant factor that complicates traditional interpretations of offense and defense. These tactics, often difficult to attribute and categorize, challenge the binary framework of the security dilemma and introduce a psychological dimension to the conflict. As NATO and Russia engage in these non-traditional forms of warfare, the security dilemma is not only driven by military postures but also by the perception of invisible, asymmetric threats, which deepen mistrust and escalate tensions.

Additionally, the study highlights the growing importance of energy security in exacerbating NATO-Russia tensions. Russia's control over energy routes, particularly the TurkStream and Nord Stream 2 pipelines, gives it significant leverage over NATO-aligned states in Eastern Europe. NATO's efforts to diversify its energy sources are seen as defensive, yet are interpreted by Russia as an attempt to undermine its geopolitical power, further intensifying the rivalry. This new dimension of the security dilemma underscores the need for a broader understanding of how economic resources—not just military force—play a critical role in modern geopolitical conflicts.

Ultimately, this research suggests that the traditional security dilemma framework, while valuable, must be adapted to account for the hybrid threats and economic competition that are increasingly shaping modern security dynamics. The intersection of military strategy, cybersecurity, and energy geopolitics in the Black Sea reveals the multi-dimensional nature of contemporary security dilemmas, which cannot be fully captured by military actions alone. As these new forms of aggression become more prevalent, a more holistic approach to the security dilemma is necessary, one that incorporates both asymmetric threats and the strategic importance of economic and informational power.

In conclusion, the study provides critical insights into the security dynamics between NATO and Russia, offering a deeper understanding of how modern security dilemmas are not confined to military postures alone. The evolving nature of the Black Sea conflict highlights

the need for new theoretical frameworks that can accommodate the complexities of hybrid warfare and economic leverage, ensuring that the security dilemma theory remains relevant in an increasingly interconnected and multifaceted geopolitical landscape.

References

European Commission. (2020). *EU energy security strategy*. European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-security_en

Gazprom. (2020). *Gazprom annual report*. Gazprom. https://www.gazprom.com/f/posts/85/103057/gazprom-annual-report-2020.pdf

Herz, J. H. (1951). *Political realism and political idealism: A study in theories and realpolitik*. University of Chicago Press.

Jervis, R. (1978). Cooperation under the security dilemma. *World Politics, 30*(2), 167–214. https://doi.org/10.2307/2009948

Maisaia, V. (2019). Hybrid warfare and regional security in the Black Sea. *The Geopolitical Review, 10*(3), 45–59.

NATO Communications and Information Agency. (2021). *NATO cyber defense report*. NATO. https://www.ncia.nato.int/ncia-cyber-defence/

NATO. (2020). *NATO strategic concept*. NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_82787.htm

Tang, S. (2009). Security dilemmas and conflict of interest: A theory of regional security. *International Security, 33*(4), 34–65. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2009.33.4.34

Russian Federation Ministry of Defence. (2020). *Russian military doctrine*. Russian Federation Ministry of Defence. http://eng.mil.ru/en/documents.htm