SECURITY DILEMMA UNVEILED: A SCHOLARLY INQUIRY INTO THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI AND UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN CONFLICTS THROUGH THE PRISM OF OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE REALISM

Dejan MAROLOV

Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Goce Delcev University, Stip, North Macedonia
E-mail: dejan.marolov@ugd.edu.mk

Abstract

This research uses a comparative case study approach to explore the Israeli-Palestinian and Ukrainian-Russian conflicts within the framework of the Security Dilemma. It employs primary and secondary sources. The study analyzes each conflict individually while allowing for meaningful comparisons between them to identify patterns in each case. The research challenges the traditional dichotomy between offensive and defensive realism by proposing that state behavior is influenced by an interplay between both paradigms based on strategic calculations. States may engage in offensive behavior when advantageous or adopt defensive strategies out of necessity. This paper offers insights into these dynamics, thereby generating new perspectives in political science debates.

Keywords: Security dilemma, offensive realism, defensive realism, comparative case study, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ukrainian-Russian conflict, strategic calculations.

1. Introduction

Within the intricate tapestry of international relations, the Security Dilemma stands as a pivotal concept, offering insights into the complexities of conflict and cooperation among states. This research embarks on a journey into two significant geopolitical arenas—the Israeli-Palestinian and Russian- Ukrainian conflicts—utilizing a comparative case study methodology within the framework of the Security Dilemma.

The core of this inquiry is the fundamental theoretical framework known as the Security Dilemma. This theoretical perspective offers important understanding of the inherent difficulties that states encounter in their quest for security, frequently leading to unintended outcomes and increased tensions. The study seeks to illuminate the interaction between offensive and defensive realism frameworks in comprehending state conduct in these disputes.

The initial section explores the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, providing an analysis of its historical, political, and socio-cultural aspects. Likewise, the subsequent section investigates the Russian-Ukrainian conflict with its diverse factors contributing to its geopolitical challenge while emphasizing power accumulation and imperatives of security and survival.

The subsequent sections focus on the application of the Security Dilemma framework to each conflict individually—Russia-Ukraine and Israeli-Palestinian. Meticulous analysis of security policies aims to uncover patterns and dynamics specific to each geopolitical theatre.

The final segment synthesizes the findings from each conflict, engaging in a comparative analysis that unveils overarching patterns and distinctions. By challenging the traditional dichotomy between offensive and defensive realism, this research presents a dynamic perspective on state behaviour, proposing that strategic calculations influence a state's oscillation between offensive and defensive strategies.

The intricate nature of state behaviour in the Security Dilemma requires a sophisticated approach that surpasses the conventional classification of offensive and defensive actions. The goal is to demonstrate that the ongoing debate between offensive and defensive realism may be unnecessary, as state actions often defy categorization within these fixed frameworks.

2. Methodology

This research adopts a comparative case study methodology to conduct a investigation of the Israeli-Palestinian and Russian-Ukrainian conflicts within the theoretical framework of the Security Dilemma, particularly under the lens of defensive and offensive realism. Employing a structured comparative case study design facilitates a nuanced analysis of each conflict individually and enables meaningful comparisons between them within the context of defense and offense realism. Utilizing primary sources such as diplomatic documents, speeches, and security policies, the study captures the official perspectives and strategic decisions of the involved parties. Secondary sources, including academic journals, books, and news reports, provide historical context and contemporary perspectives. The Security Dilemma framework, with a focus on defensive and offensive realism, is systematically applied to both conflicts, identifying instances of arms build-up, military strategies, and perceived threats. The study's comparative analysis is guided by key variables such as military capabilities, threat perceptions, historical context, and international involvement, ensuring a systematic evaluation within the defense and offense realism frameworks. Case selection is justified not only based on the critical

nature of the conflicts but also due to their modern occurrence, offering a unique opportunity to analyze contemporary manifestations of the Security Dilemma.

Thematic coding and qualitative analysis techniques are employed for data analysis, allowing for the identification of patterns and recurring themes within each case. Findings are synthesized across the two cases to draw comprehensive insights into the manifestation of the Security Dilemma within the realms of defensive and offensive realism.

Nonetheless, while our methodology is attentive to contextual limitations, we acknowledge that incorporating additional conflicts, such as the Nagorno-Karabakh case study, could have enriched the research for a more comprehensive conclusion. However, due to length constraints, we have deferred its inclusion.

In the context of the Security Dilemma, this research introduces a novel perspective that challenges the traditional dichotomy between offensive and defensive realism. Our hypothesis posits that state behavior is characterized by a dynamic interplay between offensive and defensive strategies, influenced by strategic calculations. Given the observed tendency for states to portray aggressive actions as defensive, our hypothesis posits that the debate over the dominance of either offensive or defensive realism in explaining state behavior is redundant. We argue that both paradigms interact dynamically, with states engaging in offensive behavior when advantageous and adopting defensive strategies out of necessity. This behavior is not fixed and may evolve in response to changing circumstances.

Statements:
The manuscript contributes to scientific research in international relations by enriching the knowledge base on the concept of security dilemma. It is important to emphasize that this paper must not be used to justify any illicit international actions, such as the Russian intervention in Ukraine.

AI was utilized for refining English language sentences. The specific AI tool employed for this purpose was Grammarly and Chat GPT. The decision to incorporate AI in sentence polishing was motivated by its effectiveness in enhancing linguistic precision and coherence.

3. Theoretical Framework: The Security Dilemma

The concept of security dilemma is a well-known theoretical idea in international relations. It falls within the realm of structural realism, also known as neorealism, and was developed by scholars such as Kenneth Waltz in his book Theory of International Politics (Waltz 2010). Unlike classical realism, which relies on anthropology and human nature to explain international policies, structural realism emphasizes that the structure of the international system itself has a greater influence on creating international policies and shaping relations between countries. This perspective underscores the

significance of the idea of structural realism. Neorealists such as Robert J. Art, Christopher Layne, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer argue that the behavior of countries is shaped by the structure of the international system. This system is inherently anarchic due to the presence of numerous actors, mostly sovereign states, without a central authority. In this environment, countries are responsible for their own security and well-being. This implies that every nation contributes to the development of international policies in a manner aligned with its own interests, and strives to pursue and safeguard those interests without being subjected to the priorities of other nations. The fundamental principles of the international system from the viewpoint of structural realism form the basis for the development of the theoretical concept known as the security dilemma. This theory stems from the anarchic nature of the international system, where all nations are equally sovereign and independent. As a result, each country, or more accurately, its policymakers, can only be fully aware and certain about its own intentions and objectives. Countries can never be completely sure about the intentions of other countries towards them. Determining these intentions is crucial in assessing the level of threat to a country's survival, which is among its most important interests. However, in an anarchic system, it is impossible to accurately predict the intentions of other countries. This uncertainty contributes to the inherent unpredictability of the international system based on anarchy. In situations where others' intentions are unclear, every country must always be prepared for potential threats. It is precisely this uncertainty that gives rise to security concerns for any one country, especially considering that defensive resources and capabilities can also have offensive applications. In ancient times, crafting new spears could signal preparation for hunting to gather food as well as readiness for war by increasing military capabilities. Similarly, in today's modern international system, a country may acquire weapons for defensive purposes, but other countries within an anarchic international system can never be certain of that country's intentions. In most instances, when a country enhances its defensive capabilities, it may not be perceived as purely defensive; rather, it could be seen as an aggressive move with hostile intentions. Consequently, any expansion of military capacities prompts suspicion about the country's motives. Even if the intention was solely to bolster defense without aggression, this action might be interpreted as a bid to shift the power balance in its favor at the expense of other nations. As states operate independently in an anarchic international system, they engage in actions triggered by what is known as the "action and reaction spiral" or security paradox (Wheeler 2013).

The cycle can be illustrated with a hypothetical scenario where Country A enhances its defensive capabilities without aggressive intentions. However, due to uncertainty about Country A's motives, Country B interprets this as purely aggressive conduct directed at itself. Subsequently, Country B responds in kind by boosting its defensive mechanisms. Even though the actions of Country A were solely defensive, it regards its neighbor's reaction suspiciously and views it as aggressive behavior, prompting additional defensive measures that are once again perceived as aggression by the neighboring country. In response to

this perception, the neighbor also escalates military capacities and so on. The reciprocal escalation of actions leads both countries into a full-scale arms race and increases the influence of the military in shaping national decisions. Despite their shared aim to enhance self-defense, the potential for actual conflict is real, due to mutual suspicion and misinterpretation of each other's actions, highlighting the concept of a security dilemma.

The structural realism encompasses both defensive and aggressive/offensive perspectives, which acknowledge the fundamental principles of survival, self-reliance, and the anarchic nature of the international system. Defensive realism, demonstrated by Kenneth Waltz, suggests that every country's main objective is its own survival. In this view, the lack of a global governing authority means countries must prioritize their own security and existence. Therefore, there can be no expectation of mutual trust between nations in an anarchic international system; instead, each country will work to guarantee its safety and survival due to the ongoing threat posed by other countries (Jervis 2018). The emphasis on upholding national survival above all else within defensive realism provides strong support for the concept of the security dilemma.

On the contrary, offensive realism, as exemplified by scholars such as Mearsheimer, Eric Labs, Fareed Zakaria, Kier Lieber, and Christopher Layne, posits that nations are inherently aggressive entities within the anarchic global system and are constantly engaged in a competitive pursuit to maximize their power. According to this perspective, increased power ensures greater security for a country. Therefore, offensive realists argue that states will seek to aggressively expand their influence and power through military means and offensive actions, even if it risks destabilizing the international system. In contrast, defensive realism argues that states should prioritize security through defensive measures and cooperation (Kural & Erdem 2023). They should focus on securing their borders, forming alliances, and maintaining a balance of power to deter potential aggressors. In the broader context of international relations, and within the framework of the security dilemma, the issue of alliance formation becomes a pertinent consideration. Generally, there is a dilemma when it comes to why and how a country would engage in a specific alliance. There appear to be two possible responses to this inquiry. First, countries form alliances with the intention of counterbalancing against an increasing power that poses a threat to shift the balance of power in its favor; these are referred to as balance alliances (Mearsheimer, 2010, 79-85). Second, weaker countries align themselves with more powerful ones through bandwagoner or join-the-trend alliances (Mearsheimer 2001, 139-161). Bandwagoning takes place when less powerful nations conclude that the disadvantages of opposing a stronger nation far outweigh the potential benefits. The dominant nation typically attempts to entice weaker countries with incentives such as land, trade agreements, protection, and other benefits in order to prevent them from uniting against it. This situation is generally deemed uncommon and usually arises only in cases where a country's geographical position leaves it surrounded by adversaries, constraining its strategic options. From this perspective, it makes sense that a country would be much better

positioned within a balance alliance rather than in a band wagoning alliance with far more dominant partners. Overall, there is an inclination for countries to prefer balance alliances, as particularly advocated by defensive realists like Walt (Walt 1987, 17-29).In the context of this discussion about alliances, it is important to consider Snyder's work, which suggests that the determination of which alliances countries are more likely to enter into is theoretically uncertain and depends on various factors such as deal-making processes, territorial interests, ideological affinities, and the structure of decision-making bodies. Additionally, according to Snyder, formed alliances are not entirely stable due to concerns about allies regrouping and joining other alliances. This fear can lead some countries to take preventive action by doing the same. Therefore, alliance stability hinges on mutual dependence among members and their past conduct (Snyder, 1997). Recent statements by US Secretary of State Blinken further underscore the intricate nature of international relations. In an interview conducted by Laura Bicker and Flora Drury (2024), Blinken highlighted China's role in fueling the Russian threat to Ukraine. This acknowledgment adds another layer of complexity to alliance dynamics, revealing the significant impact of external actors on regional tensions and security considerations.

Additionally, scholars have applied structural realism theory to real-world conflicts, such as the Balkan Wars, (Marolov & Stojanovski, 2015). However, there remains a gap in the literature concerning the application of this theory to more contemporary conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, particularly in comparative analyses between them.

4. Israel-Palestinian conflict an overview

The world witnessed another eruption of violence in 2023, marking a resurgence of the long-standing dispute between Israel and the Palestinians. This conflict became active again after the paramilitary organization Hamas launched an attack on Israeli territory. The final goal, according to Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas's political bureau, was and still is the destruction of Israel. "Israel is a country that has no place on our land," Hamad said in an interview with Lebanese TV channel LBC on October 24 (Pacchiani & Bachner 2023). The response from Israel was brutal as they entered the Gaza Strip, resulting in loss of lives, particularly among civilians due to its high population density. The Israeli prime minister Netanyahu said in a press conference, "The Bible says that 'there is a time for peace and a time for war.' This is a time for war," (Abrams 2023).

The Gaza Strip, populated by Palestinians, is 41 kilometers (25 miles) long and 6 to 12 km (3.7 to 7.5 mi) wide with a total area of approximately 365 km2 (141 sq mi). For comparison with around two million Palestinians living on this land, the population density is significantly higher than that of Luxembourg, one of the smallest members of the EU which has a territory about seven times larger than Gaza but with almost three and a half times smaller population. The Palestinian territories encompass not only the Gaza Strip but also include the West Bank, which refers to the Western Bank of the Jordan River. (Ahmed

2021). Most Palestinians live in the West Bank, and combined with the population of the Gaza Strip, they comprise the Palestinian population. When addressing these territories or populace, it is crucial to take into account both regions. However, these two areas are not geographically connected, being divided by Israel. The Gaza Strip has been controlled by Hamas since the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, while Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, have governance and administrative control over the West Bank. The conflict between Fatah and Hamas in 2007 resulted in political division with Hamas taking control of the Gaza Strip, leaving Fatah with control over the West Bank (Spitka 2023). Approximately 5 million Palestinians reside in Gaza and the West Bank, with an additional 1.5-2 million Palestinians living in Israel, along with a significant number of Palestinian refugees residing in Jordan. Most Palestinians are Arabs and Muslims, while Judaism is the predominant religion among Israelis.

The Palestinian land was historically part of the Ottoman Empire, and with the decline of Ottoman powers, other global powers sought to exert influence in this region. The UK, France, and Russia were among those vying for control. Additionally, nationalist movements began to emerge within both the Palestinian and Jewish communities as they sought self-determination and national sovereignty in their respective lands. Tensions escalated between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish immigrants due to conflicting national aspirations in the early 20th century. Following WWI, the Ottomans lost on a global scale leading to dissolution while Russia experienced civil war after its revolution which had an impact on the political landscape in this region. In the early 20th century, Palestine became an area of contention with competing territorial claims. The weakening Ottoman Empire and the entrenchment of European powers in the region led to complex political interests. After World War I, the UK's mandate was established over Palestine by the League of Nations in 1920. However, this region was affected by the onset of World War II. Previous promises made by Britain concerning the creation a state for both Jewish and Arab populations were utilized during WWII to gain support against Axis powers. (Frieden 2015). The Holocaust intensified the urgency for a Jewish homeland which resulted in increased immigration despite opposition from Arabs living in the area.

The UN proposed a partition plan in 1947 which was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by Arabs (Mock et al. 2012). The British withdrawal in 1948, resulting in the declaration of the State of Israel and subsequent conflicts, marking a critical point in the complex historical interplay between British actions and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This longstanding conflict has involved numerous wars, periods of violence, and ongoing disputes over territory and national identity. The enduring conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has been marked by a series of wars and periods of increased violence. The 1948 Arab-Israeli War, followed by subsequent conflicts such as the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, have significantly impacted the geopolitical landscape of the region. Additionally, implications for Palestinian groups were observed during the

1982 Lebanon War primarily involving Israel and Lebanon. Moreover, prolonged periods of Palestinian resistance against Israeli rule were witnessed in events like the First Intifada (1987-1993) and Second Intifada (2000-2005), with an escalation in violent activities including suicide bombings and military operations. Conflicts in Gaza also garnered attention through events like Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Gaza-Israel Conflict in 2012, and Operation Protective Edge during the Gaza-Israel Conflict in 2014. The recent events in 2023, which included an attack by Hamas on Israel and Israel's retaliation in Gaza, highlights the enduring and intricate nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict is influenced by historical and current factors, contributing to its ongoing complexities.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has seen a series of peace talks, with each reflecting efforts to achieve resolution. The Oslo Accords of 1993 were a significant milestone in the peace process and allowed direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, establishing the gradual transfer of governing authority to Palestinians in specified areas. The Camp David Summit in 2000, hosted by U.S. President Bill Clinton, aimed for a final status agreement but ended inconclusively, resulting in increased violence including the onset of the Second Intifada. The subsequent Taba Summit in 2001, while reportedly making progress, did not yield a final accord. The Road Map for Peace in 2003, devised by the U.S., the EU, Russia, and the UN, outlined steps toward a two-state solution but faced implementation challenges. The Annapolis Conference in 2007 aimed to rejuvenate the peace process but did not culminate in a comprehensive agreement. The Kerry Initiative of 2013-2014 led by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry endeavored to address final status issues but regrettably did not result in a breakthrough. These instances reflect the persistent complexity and challenges inherent in achieving a lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through diplomatic means (İşleyen 2015).

The legal status of Palestine at the United Nations has evolved over the years. Following a General Assembly resolution passed on November 29, 2012, Palestine now holds the position of a non-member observer state at the United Nations (Ahmed 2021). This upgraded status allows Palestine to engage in General Assembly discussions and activities and participate in specific international treaties and organizations. It is important to clarify that being recognized as a non-member observer state does not equate to full UN membership, which would be difficult to achieve due to political complexities associated with Israeli-Palestinian conflict dynamics.

The involvement of Arab states in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complex and shaped by historical, political, and strategic considerations. Historically, Arab states played a significant role in early conflicts such as the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973. They have advocated for Palestinian rights through diplomatic initiatives such as the Arab Peace Initiative which proposed a comprehensive peace plan (Lintl 2018). Recent changes in regional dynamics include certain Arab states formalizing diplomatic ties with Israel while others like the UAE and Bahrain have signed normalization agreements. Despite this, internal

divisions persist within these states regarding their approach to diplomatic engagement, normalization efforts with Israel and continued support for Palestinian rights. Additionally, Arab states provide humanitarian aid to Palestinian territories and hold influence over various Palestinian political factions. The competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia adds a layer of complexity to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While Iran strongly backs Palestine, aligning with its broader geopolitical objectives, Saudi Arabia takes a more pragmatic approach influenced by its rivalry with Iran. These sectarian tensions contribute to the intricate web of regional politics impacting Arab states' positions on this dispute. In addition to these dynamics, involvement from other regional and global powers further complicates the situation. Turkey has notably supported the Palestinian cause and condemned Israeli actions through diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership.

On the world stage, the United States and Russia have historically been significant players. The US, a long-term supporter of Israel, has played a crucial role in facilitating peace efforts by hosting different peace negotiations and supplying substantial military assistance to Israel. Particularly, the Trump administration made moves such as acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocating the U.S. embassy there, which had notable implications for the dynamics of the conflict. Conversely, Russia has pursued diplomatic engagement while maintaining relationships with both Israeli and Palestinian leadership. Russia is involved in international peace efforts and the development of diplomatic ties with important players. Its strategic concerns, such as access to Mediterranean ports and influence in the Middle East, are driving its involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Lintl 2018). Nevertheless, there has been a noticeable increase in Russia's support for Palestine during the recent conflict, including extending an official invitation to Hamas. The UK and France, through EU and individually, have consistently expressed support for a two-state solution and have taken various diplomatic actions to promote peace between Israel and Palestine.

The involvement of Turkey, the U.S., and Russia adds further geopolitical complexities to the conflict, shaping the strategies and positions of key actors. This expands the issue beyond a regional matter, making it globally significant with implications for international relations and peacebuilding efforts.

5. Russian - Ukrainian conflict an overview

Ukraine stands as the second-largest country in Europe, surpassed only by Russia, encompassing a vast territory of approximately 603,000 square kilometers. To provide perspective, this expanse is nearly twice the size of Germany. In terms of population, Ukraine is home to approximately 44 million people. Conversely, Russia holds the distinction of being the largest country both globally and within the European context, particularly in terms of territory. Given the substantial size and geopolitical significance of these two nations, it is unsurprising that the conflict between them garners considerable

international attention and carries far-reaching consequences on the global stage.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has deep-seated roots in complex historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors. It is important to acknowledge the close ties shared by Russia and Ukraine as predominantly Orthodox Christian nations with intertwined historical and cultural relationships. Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, is often referred to as "the mother of Russian cities," holding similar cultural significance as Moscow and St. Petersburg. A 2001 census revealed around eight million ethnic Russians living in Ukraine, primarily concentrated in the south and east regions, with many Ukrainians also residing and working in Russia (Mandel 2016).

During the Soviet era, Ukraine was one of the republics within the federation. It held a prominent position as one of the largest and most influential Soviet republics, contributing significantly to agricultural output, defense industries, and military capabilities. Key assets like the Black Sea Fleet and a portion of the nuclear arsenal were hosted in Ukraine. Following the dissolution of USSR, Ukraine gained independence, since which Ukraine has strived to pursue its own path as a sovereign nation and establish closer ties with Western entities such as the EU and NATO as well as Russia. However, Kyiv has encountered difficulties in managing its foreign relations and addressing internal divisions. The western regions, characterized by a more nationalist Ukrainian-speaking population, generally favored stronger integration with Europe. In contrast, the eastern parts, mainly Russian-speaking, showed inclination towards strengthening ties with Russia (Harris 2020). It is noteworthy that the separation of Russia and Ukraine from the USSR occurred peacefully and diplomatically compared to instances like Yugoslavia's dissolution for example.

Amidst the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, which resulted in the ousting of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych, tensions between Ukraine and Russia heightened significantly. This led to Russia's annexation of Crimea and armed conflict breaking out in Eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatist groups and Ukrainian government forces. The situation culminated with the first instance since World War II where a European state annexed another's territory. In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine aimed at overthrowing Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Western-aligned government (Charap & Priebe 2023). The conflict remains ongoing.

Notably, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 with the aim of strengthening "brotherly ties between the Ukrainian and Russian peoples." (Malyarenko & Wolff 2018). Nevertheless, after the dissolution of the union, many Russian nationalists in both Russia and Crimea desired a return to the peninsula. Sevastopol is significant as it serves as the home port for Russia's Black Sea Fleet, which holds dominance in that region. Putin has used the narrative of protecting ethnic Russians and Russian speakers to justify his support for separatists in southeastern Ukraine. He portrays this intervention as a means of defending Russian compatriots and historical Russian territories. Putin notably referred to this region as Novorossiya, drawing upon terminology dating back to eighteenth-century

imperial Russia, to evoke a sense of historical legitimacy and nationalistic sentiment. In addition, he contested Ukrainians being classified separately from Russians (Schwirtz et al. 2022). "Vladimir Putin's decision to launch the full-scale invasion of Ukraine was based on a series of disastrous miscalculations. The most significant of these was his belief that Ukrainians are really Russians." (Solchanyk 2023). He also blamed Zelenski and the government as being neo-Nazi and ask for demilitarization of Ukraine.

Numerous attempts have been made to resolve the conflict, including agreements such as the Minsk Protocol, Minsk II, Normandy Format Summit Agreements, and the Steinmeier Formula. However, none of them were successful.

The 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation was aimed at establishing a strategic partnership and ensuring respect for territorial integrity. It also included provisions to prevent either party from using their territory to threaten the security of the other. However, following the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2014, Ukraine made it clear that they did not intend to renew this treaty, leading to its expiration. The 2022 invasion by Russia is often perceived by analysts as the result of the Kremlin's increasing resentment towards NATO's expansion into the former Soviet sphere of influence after the Cold War (Clem 2017). Russian leaders, including Putin, have claimed that the United States and NATO breached their promises made in the early 1990s not to expand the alliance into former Soviet territory. They regard NATO's enlargement during this turbulent period for Russia as a humiliating imposition over which they had little control. The Russian government's fear of NATO expansion and the perceived threat to their sphere of influence in former Soviet territory has played a significant role in shaping their aggressive actions in Ukraine.

The conflict has attracted involvement from various external parties. The European Union and NATO have taken part in diplomatic efforts to address the Ukraine situation, implementing sanctions against Russia for its actions and providing training and support to Ukraine (Davis 2016). The United States has strongly condemned Russia's actions and offered political, military, and economic aid along with defensive equipment to Ukraine (Charap & Priebe 2023). The United Nations has been actively involved in diplomatic efforts to address the conflict, resulting in discussions and resolutions within the UN Security Council. However, attaining agreement within the Security Council has proven difficult due to differing viewpoints among its members. Germany and France have worked together under EU but also individually under the Normandy Format, a diplomatic framework focused on resolving the conflict. Leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France have met in several summits dedicated to negotiations aimed at finding solutions to the crisis. Turkey has shown a keen interest in the Ukrainian conflict by engaging in diplomatic initiatives. Türkiye has sought to act as a mediator on specific occasions. Countries like Poland and the Baltic States have consistently backed Ukraine, calling for a strong reaction to Russia's actions. In addition to political lobbying, these countries have offered substantial political and humanitarian aid to

Ukraine. Belarus, on the other hand, supports Russia. The involvement of numerous external parties in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict highlights the complexity and global significance of the crisis.

6. Security Dilemma in Israeli - Palestinian conflict

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the security dilemma is a central issue arising from perceptions of threat and insecurity on both sides. It stems from a historical context of violence, mistrust, and competing claims to land. However, before analyzing the elements of this specific case study's security dilemma, we must stress that it is problematic to consider one (or maybe both) side as states. Palestine is not a member of the UN (but recognized by many countries and international organizations as a non-state actor), while Israel is recognized as a state by the majority of the international community (but not by some Arab states or Iran for example). Additionally, Palestine is not a unified entity; Hamas controls Gaza while the Palestinian Authority exerts limited control over parts of West Bank.

The security dilemma is a crucial factor in the Israel-Palestine conflict, characterized by mutual misperceptions of intentions. Both parties view each other's actions as hostile and threatening, leading to heightened insecurity. Defensive measures taken by one party are often interpreted as potentially offensive by the other side. However, it is unclear whether we can attribute this situation to misperception of intentions because Hamas has explicitly stated its goal of destroying Israel as a state, leaving little room for misunderstanding. Therefore, the concept might not be entirely applicable in this context.

The lack of trust and breakdown in communication between Israelis and Palestinians are significant factors contributing to the security dilemma. The absence of open channels for effective communication leads to mutual misperceptions and a sense of insecurity among both parties, especially considering Hamas's authority ruling Gaza being labeled as a terrorist organization by Israel. Additionally, historical grievances and competing narratives surrounding the conflict exacerbate distrust, perpetuating the security dilemma. Actions such as wars, displacement, and ongoing disputes have created a legacy of mistrust rooted in past experiences.

The arms race and military build-up are contributing factors. Actions taken by one state to bolster its security leads others to do the same, resulting in an arms race. In the Israel-Palestine conflict, both sides have engaged in military buildups and an arms race, which can further heighten tensions and raise the likelihood of conflict. Differing security policies among states may result in a lack of mutual understanding and increased tensions. Both parties are experiencing a form of security interdependence where actions from one state impact others' security matters, potentially creating a collective dilemma leading to cycles of insecurity and mistrust as each party perceives the other's actions as threatening and feels compelled to reciprocate similarly.

In the terms of offensive realism, Israel places a strong emphasis on maintaining military superiority in the region (Spitka 2023). The view is that a robust

military capability is not only essential for defense but also serves as a deterrent and a means to project power. Also, Israeli military doctrine has historically included a willingness to take pre-emptive action to address perceived threats and keep their position as a dominant regional power, as for example, Israel's actions in the Six-Day War of 1967.

On the other hand, Palestinians also behaved offensively, the last example being the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel. The Hamas acted in hope of changing the balance of power by possible inclusion of their allies in the conflict. The previous can also be definied as a pre-emptive action of stopping the process of normalization of the Israeli relations with the rest of the Arab world by re-actualization the Palestinian issue as a goal.

From a defensive realist viewpoint, both Israel and Palestine prioritize their survival and security. They employ defensive strategies like military buildups and preemptive measures to safeguard their interests and ensure their own safety. This is evident in Israel's emphasis on retaining military superiority and its readiness to take preemptive action against perceived threats.

The Palestinians could also be seen as engaging in offensive actions as self-defense and to shift the power dynamic. Groups like Hamas have historically used armed resistance against what they perceive as Israeli occupation, viewing this resistance as necessary and legitimate in countering an aggressive Israeli presence in Palestinian territories (Canetti et al. 2019). The struggle is framed by Palestinians as a national liberation movement seeking to end perceived occupation and achieve self-determination, involving resistance against oppressors and occupiers that aligns with the broader theme of liberation struggles.

7. Security Dilemma in the Russia-Ukraine conflict

From a historical perspective, Russia and Ukraine had an auspicious start. Both were formerly part of the same state that no longer exists. Their separation took place without conflict, and they even entered into agreements on friendship and cooperation early in their respective independence. As previously discussed, both nations share close cultural and religious ties so it cannot be said that there were any significant historical grievances (Авеппе 2016).

The security dilemma indicates a lack of efficient communication between the involved parties. Inadequate diplomatic channels and breakdowns in communication have worsened the security situation. Ambiguity regarding Russia's intentions in Ukraine has led to uncertainty, with divergent narratives contributing to misperceptions and miscalculations since 2014. Russia's intentions to safeguard ethnic Russians and Russian speakers are met with suspicion by Ukraine, leading to uncertainty about Russia's actual objectives (Harris 2020). There exists a fundamental distrust between Russia and Ukraine, amplified by Russia's activities such as the annexation of Crimea and backing of separatist factions. This has fostered Ukraine's profound lack of confidence towards Russia, perceiving it as a possible aggressor. This has led to a cycle of escalation, where each side perceives the other's actions as threatening and

responds in kind, further exacerbating tensions and contributing to the security dilemma between Russia and Ukraine.

Russia has gradually been growing in power[1] and perceives shifts in the regional power dynamics, especially with Ukraine's aspirations to align with the West, as a threat to its influence and security. This perception has triggered Russia's efforts to maintain influence, contributing to the security dilemma. Russia perceives NATO's influence and potential expansion into Ukraine as a threat to its national security. On the other hand, Ukraine views Russia's interventions as a direct threat to its sovereignty and seeks to align with Western institutions for security purposes (Malyarenko & Wolff 2018). In response, Ukraine's attempts to bolster its military capacity and align with the West are perceived by Russia as provocative. This mutual military build-up exemplifies a typical expression of the security dilemma.

The dispute between Russia and Ukraine can be analyzed through the lens of offensive realism, a theory in international relations that centers on states' pursuit of power and security within a global system lacking a central authority. This underscores the necessity for self-defense strategies because of the absence of overarching governance structures. For instance, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its backing for separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine demonstrate this quest for power. Thus, there is an evident security predicament as Ukraine responds with defensive measures like military escalations and forging partnerships with Western nations in reaction to what it interprets as Russian threats. Balancing and aligning dynamics come into effect, with Ukraine pursuing alliances to counterbalance Russia's assertive behavior. Meanwhile, Russia strives for regional supremacy, demonstrating a pursuit of power beyond mere survival.

The concept of hegemony becomes central, as Russia aims to establish its zone of influence, while Ukraine aligns with the West to reduce dependence on Russian control (Clem 2017). Both Russia and Ukraine's strategic decision-making is rooted in the assumption of rational actors, guiding their actions based on calculated national interests. This interplay between major powers significantly shapes the conflict and influences the behavior of other key players like the United States and European nations within this ongoing geopolitical contest. It is important to bear in mind that Russia seeks to portray itself as a major power that cannot be disregarded by the West. Russia believes

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[1] Russia has gradually been growing in power due to a combination of resolving internal conflicts in the separatist Muslim region of Chechnya and engaging in strategic foreign interventions, like in Georgia (2008) and Syria (since 2015). By stabilizing these internal conflicts, Russia consolidated its domestic control and resources. Meanwhile, foreign interventions have allowed Russia to extend its influence abroad. In Georgia, Russia's military intervention in 2008 solidified its influence over the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In Syria, Russia's involvement since 2015 has bolstered the Assad regime and expanded Russian influence in the Middle East. These actions are proof of Russia's ability to assert its influence and military intervention not only within its own borders and former USSR territories but also beyond, as evidenced by its operations in Syria.

it has the right to its own sphere of interest in some of the countries that were once part of the USSR. The Ukraine wish to distance itself from Russian influence and align with Western institutions in order to ensure its security and sovereignty is seen by Russia as aggression.

Defensive realism, as applied to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, focuses on how both Russia and Ukraine interpret and respond to security risks. It underscores measures taken by each country to ensure their survival and defend against possible aggression. In this context, Russia views NATO expansion and Western influence in Ukraine as direct threat to its security. Consequently, from a defensive perspective, actions like the annexation of Crimea and backing for separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine are undertaken by Russia to uphold a strategic buffer zone and safeguard its perceived sphere of influence through security maximization strategies. These actions are seen as defensive in nature, as Russia seeks to protect its interests and maintain a balance of power in the region. The military actions in Ukraine are viewed as defensive measures aimed at preventing the expansion of Western influence and upholding regional stability (Clem 2017). By asserting control in neighboring regions, Russia seeks to mitigate perceived security threats, underlining the importance of a strong defensive stance against what it perceives as Western aggression. However, these actions have been interpreted as aggressive behavior towards Ukraine by those seeking independence from Russian dominance and alignment with the West for their own security and survival. This is precisely how Russia views this move by Ukraine - an act of aggression.

8. Conclusion

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have notable distinctions. The creation of independent Ukraine and Russia after the dissolution of the USSR was not contested by either party. In contrast, the establishment of Israel as a state and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been highly disputed from their inception.

In the first case, there are two globally recognized states, both of which are members of the UN. In contrast, Palestine is not universally recognized as a state by all nations and encounters obstacles in establishing its sovereignty. Furthermore, Palestine has two distinct governing bodies: Hamas governs Gaza while the West Bank is under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

The religious aspects of each conflict also play a role in their individual characteristics. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is influenced by the complexities of religion, considering the majority Jewish and Muslim populations, while the Russia-Ukraine conflict is primarily driven by geopolitical and territorial issues, reflecting their mutually predominantly Orthodox societies. Therefore, we can infer that religion may have an impact but it does not necessarily have to be decisive.

The demographic makeup of Russians in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russia reflects similar population distributions, particularly for many Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine. This situation is reminiscent of Palestinians

residing in Israel while Israelis are absent from Palestinian governed territories, except for border regions or settlements.

It is intriguing to observe that Russia, which has been gaining power in recent years, seeks to challenge the current status quo on the world stage while also aiming to maintain its influence in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Israel strives to maintain the existing situation amid Hamas's military offensive or terrorist attacks aimed at altering it.

In both instances, one side has significantly more power than the other. This is evident in Ukraine's decision to form a balancing alliance with the West against Russia's increasing influence and Palestine's choice to also enter into a balancing alliance with Arab states against Israel, which holds considerable power. In both the Palestinian-Israeli and Ukrainian-Russian conflicts, there is a noticeable disparity in power between the opposing parties.

However, when analyzing the conflicts several similarities can be identified. Both conflicts involve competing claims over territory, with both sides seeking to ensure their own security and survival. Both conflicts also involve the use of military force and violence as a means to protect their interests and assert control. In both conflicts, there is a lack of trust and fear of potential aggression from the opposing side, leading to a security dilemma where offensive actions are taken to protect one's own interests and shift the power dynamic. Moreover, both conflicts have been characterized by a struggle for control and dominance over the disputed territories. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this struggle has resulted in Israel's colonization project and the military occupation of Palestinian territory. In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, it has led to the annexation of Crimea by Russia and ongoing territorial disputes in Eastern Ukraine.

The theoretical concept of the security dilemma can offer some insights into the ongoing conflicts, particularly in relation to inefficient communication and arms races. However, it does not fully account for all aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as seen above. For instance, it is challenging to determine whether the security dilemma's "misperception of intentions" element has been present in the case study between Israel and Palestine, considering that Hamas has clearly communicated its intentions even for the future. Additionally, the security dilemma framework may not fully capture the complexities and nuances of these conflicts, such as the role of historical grievances, cultural and religious factors. Additionally, the security dilemma framework does not address the underlying power asymmetry between the parties involved in these conflicts.

This section highlights the difficulty, if not impossibility, of strictly delineating between defensive and offensive actions. As previously shown, even when a state's aggressive behavior is evident, it seeks to present this action as defensive rather than aggressive. Therefore, the debate over which paradigm – offensive or defensive realism – prevails is deemed redundant. Our analysis indicates that both paradigms interact and states behave according to the offensive paradigm because they can do so, while also adhering to the defensive paradigm out of necessity. This is subject to change based on evolving circumstances.

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