NEOREALISM AND RUSSIAN BALANCING IN EUROPE

Sumantra Maitra

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due in first order to my advisers, Dr Matthew Rendall and Dr Bettina Renz. I admit I was not always the easiest of doctoral researchers that they perhaps supervised, due to my work/research balance, but I have never had anyone more supportive and patient with me, even during times of differences and stress. I could not have dreamed of better advisers.

Professor Patrick Porter, Dr Robert Lyman, Dr James Kraska, Dr Joseph Parent, Professor Mark Bauerlein, Dr David Gill, Dr Neville Wylie, Dr Wyn Rees, Dr William Ruger, Dr Jenna Robinson, Dr Derek Averre, deserve mention for their valuable time, advice, and encouragement. I would like to thank my colleague and friend, Dr Maria Burczynska, herself a doctorate from the same department, for her help and advice.

I could not have completed this research without funding. The University of Nottingham's Vice Chancellor's Scholarship for Research Excellence helped me through my PhD. I also got endless support from the School of Politics and International Relations for regular teaching and research positions, to sustain my living cost as well as gather valuable academic experience.

Special thanks to all my journalism editors, especially Ms Claire Lehmann of Quillette Magazine, Ms Joy Pullmann and Mr Ben Domenech of The Federalist, Mr Drew Griffin and Dr Marc LiVecche of Providence Magazine, Mr Jacob Heilbrunn of The National Interest, and Ms Helen Andrews and Mr Seth Mandel of Washington Examiner Magazine.

Ms Lynette Marie Morris-Craig was a rock during my disillusioned years and only she knows the ways she contributed and encouraged me, not just in my thesis, but to my life. Ms Sarah Johnson was an enormous help in polishing the final document. I am also thankful to Ms Daniela Zordova for her support, and to Ms Hannah Godofsky for her encouragement, and Mr Mitchell Blatt, who deserves special mention, for showing me that the American Library of Congress offers memberships to foreigners as well, and Mr Ryan Prong, for his enormous support.

Finally, I am grateful to my parents, Mr Syamal Kumar Maitra, and Mrs Rina Maitra. Words cannot convey the debt I owe to them, and I wish I prove myself to be worthy of their pride, affection, and faith.

Dedicated to my late grandmother, Mrs Nila Maitra.

Preface: A note to the reader, and a disclaimer

This is the draft of my PhD thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham, after addressing and accommodating the corrections suggested during the successful thesis defence.

As with any full-length work, there will always be some errors. My original draft had errors as well.

Typographical and grammatical errors aside, the four main viva suggestions from the defence committee were to (a) standardize the citations, (b) to consolidate one single theory chapter, (c) to elaborate the methodology part, and (d) to move up the central research question in the introduction chapter. All those suggestions were incorporated to the best of my abilities. Other minor suggestions included some stylistic changes, chapter designs, content details, and other advisory guidelines about adding more primary sources in support, most of which were also addressed, while staying true to the original intent, aim, and design of the research, which were decided at the very early stages in consultation with my supervisors.

Some time has passed since I successfully defended my thesis and, in that time, there were changes in European geopolitics, as well as a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic, which affected every aspect of life.

However, none of that so far, to my knowledge, had any effect on the overall findings of this thesis. Incidental errors are also unlikely to change my overall argument, which explores a particular theory of international relations, alongside the actual behaviour of a great power. Theoretical studies, as Kenneth Waltz once mentioned, are to determine timeless policy-relevant patterns. This project, while perhaps not comparable, is still at the end of the day, a theoretical contribution, and not an area-study. The attempt was to find similar policy-relevant patterns.

In the future, I hope to publish parts of it as research papers.

One such paper, titled "NATO, Russia and Balance of Threat", is already accepted at the Canadian Military Journal, Department of National Defence - Government of Canada, to be published in summer 2021, volume 21, issue number 3.

I am also currently working on a few more, including a monograph, after being elected as an Early Career Research historian, at the Royal Historical Society, London, UK.

My request to the reader is to treat this thesis holistically, given the fluidity of the situation in Europe, and the subject, Russian foreign policy.

Abstract

What explains Russian balancing behaviour and use of military force in Europe? Over the last decade and a half, shifting geopolitical setting in Europe renewed the question about Russian military capabilities and strategic intentions. Exacerbating the shift has been the evolving balancing behaviour of Russia regarding NATO and use of military force in Ukraine and Georgia. Recent literature, and conventional wisdom attribute Russian military posture and use of force in Europe primarily to domestic politics, but also to Christian conservatism, civilisational exceptionalism, imperial expansionism, and domestic factors like diversionary war and regime stability. My thesis attempts to test Russian post-soviet foreign policy, balancing behaviour, and use of military force in Europe, in light of Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory. Moscow indulges in the military use of force and balancing behaviour, only when it perceives its interests to be threatened, but seeks to preserve, uphold, or return to the status-quo the moment the threats, subside or are neutralised by balancing actions, acting more as a security maximiser, than a power maximiser.

The thesis employs a qualitative research design and case study method, relying on secondary literature, military sources, and observed and recorded news. The evidence relies on Russian strategic actions, and not Russian rhetoric. The evidence explored suggests that, first, Russia balances against perceived threats, and Russian use of force is directly proportional to any strategic and material loss. Alternatively, Russia behaves like a status quo power, when the perceived threat subsides. Second, Russian military aggression is focused on geopolitical balance and has narrow strategic aims, and Russia either lacks the will and/or capability, or both, to be an expansionist or occupying power. Third, Russia is inherently a reactive power with limited regional aims, which are not commensurate with an aspiration of a continental hegemony. The findings have future policy relevance for European/British security, as the U.S. grows increasingly isolationist, and NATO and EU rift widens.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

" *…what an intending ally trusts to is not the goodwill of those who ask his aid, but a decided superiority of power for action; and the Lacedaemonians look to this even more than others.*

At least, such is their distrust of their home resources that it is only with numerous allies that they attack a neighbour; now is it likely that while we are masters of the sea, they will cross over to an island? "

- Athenians, to Melians.

Thucydides: History of the Peloponnesian war (V 84-116)

***

Chapter 1: **Introduction**

This thesis aims to explore and understand Russian use of military force and Russian balancing behaviour in Europe, with an intention to understand the causes that lead to Russian military and strategic balancing actions.

There have been multiple academic and policy analyses about post-Soviet Russia from domestic and ideological foundations of Russian foreign policy.[1] A significant number of them focusses on Vladimir Putin's "regime" or "reign", and how that shapes Russian foreign policy. Others focus on the ideological aspects, for example, how "honour" or "identity" influences Russian foreign policy, or how Moscow is simply "imperial" in nature, and Russian actions are predicated on territorial expansionism.[2] There are only a few works of academic scholarship, mostly research papers, which studied Russian grand-strategy.[3] A lot of them focus on individual cases or events. Yet more such research simply focusses on the unit level tactical and military dimensions, such as analyses of Russian energy sector, or force structure and operational details.[4]

[1] For analyses focusing on domestic politics, regime stability, and economic influence on the ruling elite of Russian foreign policy, see Stoner, K. & McFaul, M. (2015) 'Who lost Russia (this time)?' *The Washington Quarterly*, 38(2): 167–187; Shevtsova, L. 'Putin's Russia', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (March 31, 2003); McFaul, M. 'Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin' *Slavic Review* 62(1): 198; McFaul, M. (2018) *From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; Sakwa, R (2008) 'Putin and the oligarchs' *New Political Economy* 13: 185, 191 etc.

[2] For scholarship on how Russian foreign policy is influenced by Christian conservatism, far right nationalism, etc., see, Snyder, T. (2018) *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* New York: Tim Duggan Books; and Clover, C. (2016) *Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia's New Nationalism* New Haven: Yale University Press. For scholarship on how honour influences Russian aggression, see Tsygankov, AP. (2012) *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor in International Relations* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[3] See, Götz, E. (2015) 'It's geopolitics, stupid: Explaining Russia's Ukraine policy'. *Global Affairs*, 1, 3–10; Haukkala, H. (2008). 'The European Union as a regional normative hegemon: The case of European neighbourhood Policy', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60, 1601–1622; Feklyunina, V. (2008) 'Battle for perceptions: Projecting Russia in the West', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60, 605–629.

[4] Hill, F. "Energy Empire: Oil, Gas and Russia's Revival," Report for the Foreign Policy Centre, London, UK, September 2004; Gelb, BA. "Russian Oil and Gas Challenges," CRS Report for Congress, RL33212, January 3, 2006; Ndefo, EO. et al., "Russia: A Critical Evaluation of Its Natural Gas Resources," Energy, Larsson R. (2007) 'Nord Stream, Sweden, and Baltic Sea Security' (February 13, 2007), *Tribune*.

What has not been done in research or scholarship is an attempt to explore two broad theoretical questions. First, what variables explain the differences *within* Russian behaviour, often in similar situations, and second, what does that lead to regarding characterisation of Russia as a great power. The central research question of this thesis is therefore as follows. Can neorealism as a systemic theory adequately explain post-Soviet Russian balancing behaviour and military actions in Europe? To date, at the time of the final submission of this thesis, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been a systemic study of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy using a single theoretical lens.

The absence of such a book-length theoretical analysis of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy and balancing behaviour is thus a significant gap in the academic literature which this thesis aims to fill. Is there a theoretical framework, that explains if not fully, at least satisfactorily the causes of Russian use of military force in specific cases, as well as the causes of Russian calm and rapprochement in similar instances? To what extent can one theory, in this case a neorealist theory, explain that difference in behavioural pattern? And if that is indeed done, can Russia be defined as a realist great power? These are some of the theoretical questions this thesis explores and addresses.

The rest of this introductory chapter proceeds to explain why theoretical analysis of a great power is important as a scholarly endeavour, before explaining why Russia was chosen as a subject of analysis. The chapter then charts the post-Soviet timeline in brief, before proceeding to introduce and explain some alternative explanations and clarifying some definitions for the purpose of this thesis, before explaining the structure of the rest of the thesis in details. In brief, the introductory chapter is followed by a chapter reviewing the relevant literature, which is then followed by a long chapter expounding the theoretical framework of this thesis, relevant case selection, and methodology. That is followed by three chapters on three different case studies, followed by a concluding chapter, which sums up the theoretical findings.

Why Theory?

A recent observable trend in scholarly literature argues that "theory" as a simplistic way to understand reality.[5] The world is, of course, enormously complex for one single theory to have

[5] See, Robert, A. 'Grand Strategy Isn't Grand Enough' *Foreign Policy*, February 2018; Fuchs, M. 'America doesn't need a grand-strategy' *Foreign Policy*, July 2019; Reus-Smit, C. 'International Relations Theory Doesn't Understand Culture' *Foreign Policy*, March 2019; Kirss, A. 'Review: Does Grand Strategy Matter? *Strategic*

complete explanatory power. But as Kenneth Waltz suggested, for that very reason, the purpose of a theory is to simplify reality, and facilitate a discussion, and most importantly, formulate a way forward. Waltz wrote, "A theory arranges phenomena so that they are seen as mutually dependent; it connects otherwise disparate facts; it shows how changes in some of the phenomena necessarily entail changes in others. To form a theory requires envisioning a pattern where none is visible to the naked eye."[6] "Data never speak for themselves" Waltz added, "observation and experience never lead directly to knowledge of causes."[7] The world might very well be enormously complex, with unit level differences, and there are in depth area studies to focus on that, but theories help to see emerging patterns, patterns which in turn are used for categories, categories which help formulate policy. At the risk of sounding like Henry Kissinger, it is not a perfect system, but it is better than enormous amount of information, data and knowledge, but zero wisdom, and complete policy paralysis. [8]

In light of that, Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory is used as a framework for this thesis. Walt argued that a theory is important as much as providing a causal connection, as well as explaining the said connection, and theories are therefore expected to provide patterns in perplexing phenomena.[9] This thesis attempts to understand Russia from a theoretical perspective, with the hope that that helps in formulating policy in the future.

One will also observe a visible similarity of structure and template of this thesis to Walt's book, *The Origins of Alliances*.[10] The similarity is deliberate. This thesis, as explained in detail later, is a theory testing exercise. It was therefore prudent to use the same template and design of the original theory, for hypothesis testing, using the same theoretical framework.

The importance of this subject is manifest. Since 2007, there has been one state versus state war in Europe involving Russia, and one ongoing proxy war, and an annexation of an entire

Studies Quarterly, 12:4 Winter 2018: 116-132; Carrese, P. 'High Theory versus Grand Strategy in Guiding Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, September 2017, etc.

[6] Waltz, KN. (1979) *Theory of International Politics* New York: Random House, 11.

[7] Waltz, Ibid., 6.

[8] Kissinger, H. (2018, 15 June) 'How the Enlightenment Ends', *The Atlantic*.

[9] Walt, SM. (2005) 'The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in IR', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23-48.

[10] Walt, SM. (1986) *The Origins of Alliances* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

region. There have also been multiple cyber-attacks, assassinations, chemical poisoning, commercial jet downing, and other domestic interference. All of these scenarios trace their roots to Moscow. While not a superpower, Russia is the world's 11th largest economy, 6th largest by purchasing power parity, second most powerful state in nuclear arsenals, with newly modernised military doctrines, and with growing capabilities in cyber security and artificial intelligence domains.

Added to that, since 2016, the balance of power in the European continent appears to be shifting with the rise of populist movements. Both Britain and the United States are showing signs of retrenchment, with the United States, the preponderant security guarantor of EU and NATO, demonstrating a desire to pivot to Asia. American, European, and British policy towards Russia alternates between a desire for complete détente and rapprochement, and a return to adversarial ideological competition. A better understanding of the causation behind Russian military actions will provide some clarity in understanding the character of a great power on the periphery of a continent, which has historically been antagonistic. It is imperative as a scholarly endeavour, and it fills a gap in the literature and is enormously topical and policy relevant.

In order to do that, a brief background is necessary. This chapter starts with a historical background which sets the stage to demonstrate a contradiction in Russian behaviour, followed by a summary of some recent literature exploring this topic, and followed by a laying out of the research design. I define some key terms and concepts, which are used throughout the thesis, and summarize the project with a guideline to subsequent chapters.

This introductory chapter is then followed by a chapter discussing the relevant literature briefly explaining the phases of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, and thereafter is followed by a detailed chapter on Realism and its key concepts, as understood in international relations theory, and on the theoretical framework of Balance of Threat theory that is employed in this thesis, the key concepts regarding balancing, some broad hypotheses, as well as a discussion on the methodology and limitations.

The next three chapters discuss three case studies, namely Russian relations with NATO, Ukraine and Georgia, and various Russian reactions, balancing actions, and military aggressions. Finally, a concluding chapter discusses the findings of this thesis, and ends with an attempt to formulate and briefly guide a future policy.

Why Russia?

This section attempts to introduce the subject and set the stage for further detailed discussion in the following chapters. Why and how is Russia important for a detailed theoretical study? From the Russian tanks in Chechnya for the second time in 1999 to gestures towards Washington right after 9/11, which almost bordered on an alliance formation, to the Russian tanks rolling into Georgia in the summer of 2008, the timeframe between 1999 and 2008, under Vladimir Putin, marked the return of Russia as a great power, a major international player, after a decade of relatively reduced influence and decline in status after the Cold War. This return, and renewed powerplay continues to this day, as evident from the Syria intervention, the ongoing Ukrainian crisis, and electoral interference in 2016 American elections, as well as added naval patrolling, forward deployment, and rearmament.[11] The new Russia is more economically stable, compared to the early 1990s, due to bourgeoning oil wealth and energy revenue (although since the interference in Ukraine and renewed sanctions, Russian economic growth has stalled) more authoritarian and considerably less free and democratic than even a decade back under Yeltsin.

Moscow is also not shy to demonstrate or use hard power and its renewed strength and confidence, as evident from the 2008 gas crisis with Ukraine resulting in a subsequent squeeze on Europe, South Ossetian war of 2008, renewed long range bomber sorties over the Atlantic since 2007, a rigid non-negotiating stance to the European ballistic missile defence shield, subsequent Russian foreign policy during the "Arab Spring" and Syrian crisis, to annexation of Crimea, and so on.

No serious wargaming analysis anticipates a full-scale military conflict between Russia and the West. [12] While there are studies simulating a war between Russian and NATO forces, as war planning studies are supposed to calculate, the statistical possibility of any full-scale conflict remains extremely low. Russian forces are primarily positioned and structured around key population centres and industries and forward bases, and the formations are mostly defensive

[11] For a detailed study on Russian aggressive acts, especially in Europe, see, Lanoszka, A. (2016) 'Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe', *International Affairs*, 92/1: 175–195

[12] Shlapak, A. & Johnson, M. (2016) 'Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics' Rand Corporation Wargaming Research Report.

in posture, with no visible long-term changes or remodelling. [13] There is no indication of Russia actively seeking a full-scale peer to peer conflict anywhere across the globe, and Russian military literature highlights the understanding of relative martial inferiority in Moscow.[14]

On the other hand, there is no visible intention of any European power, or United States or China preparing to go to war against Russia. In fact, the reaction from the United States, both under President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump, after the Georgian war 2008, Crimean annexation 2014, and even the 2016 cyber interference has been one of caution and restraint, much to the concern of a lot of allied countries in Europe.

While there are interminable differences between the current European powers and United States with regards to the crisis of Ukraine, Nord Stream pipelines, and overall European defence there is uniformity in restraint. It is of course possible that a conflict breaks out, due to miscommunication, miscalculation, or sudden geopolitical changes. But at the time of writing this thesis, the very last region where Western forces and Russian forces worked in close proximity, in Syria, and where the interests of Russian and Western forces differed, there were active measures taken by both sides to continue the process of deconfliction, and maintain backchannels of communication, as well as ensure extra caution. One can, therefore, infer from that and argue that if anything, this at least proves a desire from both sides, to avoid miscalculated conflict.

And yet, Moscow legitimately remains a concern. Since 2008, Moscow has used military force against two sovereign nations states, Georgia, and Ukraine, and annexed a region by force, within the European continent. Russia has also intervened militarily in Syria, far away from Russian immediate neighbourhood, a force projection feat most military analysts thought was impossible for Moscow to carry out. Russia has coerced Europe repeatedly with weaponised gas and energy, has committed cyber-attacks in Estonia and other former Warsaw pact countries, started massive re-armament programs, used proxies to shoot down a civilian airliner, committed war crimes in Syria, interfered in the 2016 American elections, and murdered dissidents in the United Kingdom. At the risk of an understatement, one might argue that the assessment of former US President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State John

[13] See, Kofman, M. (2016, October 21) 'The Russian Navy's Great Mediterranean Show of Force', *The National Interest*; and Kofman, M. (2016) 'US and Russia in Syria's War: Cooperation and Competition', in A. Pabriks (ed.), *The War in Syria: Lessons for the West* (pg.65-86). Riga: University of Latvia Press.

[14] Kofman, M. (2018, September 4) 'Russian Performance in the Russo-Georgian War Revisited', *War on the Rocks*.

Kerry, about Russia being a regional power, acting in a fashion similar to a 19th century great power, were not quite correct, and Moscow remains considerably dangerous, if not directly to the US, at least to European security and balance of power. [15]

And that is what leads to the central research question of this thesis; why did Russia behave the way it did, and what explains that behaviour? What are the sources of Russian use of military force, and what triggered Russia to go to war? The purpose of this dissertation was twofold. One, to answer the primary questions posed above. Russia remains, without doubt, a great power heavily invested in European balance, with its own set of interests and policies, Russia also acts independently and contrary to the norms of international law, and often against the interests of broader Euro-American positions. And given Russian belligerence in the last decade alone, which included one declared war, one proxy war, and one military intervention, it remains topical to understand the sources of Russian military use of force, especially in the context of European security.

Second, this thesis also attempts from those answers, to derive an explanation of a bigger theoretical puzzle. To what extent does neorealism explain Russian behaviour? Or alternatively, does Russian behaviour in Europe, broadly conform to the dictates of any realist international relations theory, or a broadly realist paradigm. To put it simply, by the end of this thesis, can we say, with reasonable certainty, that Russia is a realist great power?

The historical contradictions

To understand Russia's confusing pattern of demonstrating military power and reaction to perceived threats, there is a need to elaborate on a central puzzle. From Moscow's relative military weakness in the 1990s to Russian use of military force against Georgia in 2008, the visible changes in the growth of the Russian economy and Moscow's renewed assertiveness are observable. 2000 to 2008 were the most successful years in the Russian economy. Economic growth was around 7 percent, and national income was doubled. The total size of the economy increased six times, from US $ 221 Billion to US $ 1348 Billion, and measured in dollars the Russian economy grew even faster than China. [16] Russia benefited from the

[15] Haddad, B. & Polyakova, A. (2018, March 5) 'Don't rehabilitate Obama on Russia' Brookings Institution; and, 'Kerry: Russia behaving like it's the 19th century', *Politico*, March 2014.
[16] Gaddy, C. & Ickes, B. (2010, May) 'Russia after the Global Financial Crisis', Brookings.

growth, as real consumption rose by an average of 15 percent annually, more than twice the size of the GDP.

Until very recently scholarly arguments suggested that Russia used this new-found wealth and economic prowess to pursue a more assertive foreign policy in the geopolitical arena. That made perfect logical sense. Centralised government control and state-supported capitalism was a permanent fixture under this process, with an idea that a hierarchical state model is a workable economic model for Russia. [17] Economic determinism was the pressing model for Russia, and this was reflected in the RF Security Council document of May 2002, which stated, *"*Russia has to avoid being cornered by ideological notions of division between friends and foes. Economic benefits for Russia should become the main factor and criteria of foreign policy orientation*."*[18] Russia's goal was to use all opportunity of economic development to prepare Russia to face the potential security challenges, and in order to do that initial rapprochement with the West was not ruled out.

One of the implications of Russia's economic power was the correlation with its assertive foreign policy. An "aggression index" based on 86 events in Russian foreign policy from January 2000 to September 2007 was compiled in a report, a paragraph of which is quoted below:

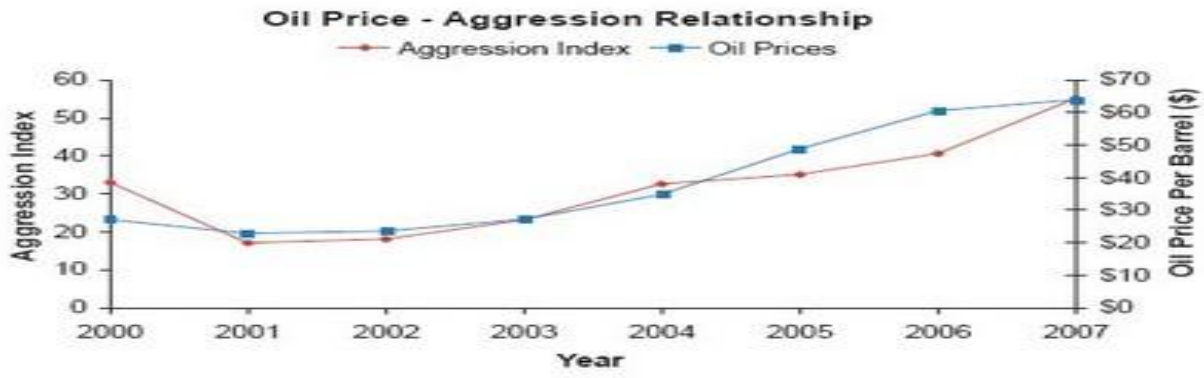
> "We found that as the price of oil rose, the aggressiveness index increased: that is, the more valuable oil became, the more hostile Russian foreign policy became. The reverse was also true: when oil prices dropped in 2001 and 2002, so did Russia's aggression. The relationship proved strongest at the annual level: a $1.48 increase in oil prices yearly correlated with an additional "point" increase in Russian aggression. Oil prices rose from $17.37 a barrel in December 2001 to $73.88 a barrel in September 2007; over that same period, the aggression index rose from 17 to 55. To the best of our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive dataset available to analyse the effect of oil prices on Russian foreign policy; a few events missed here or there will not alter the bigger picture."[19]

[17] Ibid

[18] Isakova, I. (2005) 'Russian Governance in twenty first century' *Cass Contemporary Studies*.

[19] Szrom, C. & Brugato, T. (2008, February 2). 'Liquid Courage'. The American Enterprise Institute.

The graph showing the correlation in the early years of Vladimir Putin up to 2007 Munich Conference, is here:[20]



Russia would repeatedly use this energy power as a persuasive, coercive diplomatic tool against European Union, by stopping the supply of oil and gas to Ukraine for show reasons like price of gas, and transit cost. Russia provides approximately a quarter of the natural gas consumed in the European Union; the majority of those exports travel through pipelines across Ukrainian soil prior to arriving in the EU. But one can gather, this was the Russian response to intimidate the colour revolutions, supported by United States which was happening in Georgia and Ukraine.

But Russian military posture changed after 2008, with the war in Georgia, despite economic downturn and sanctions. Moscow carried out substantial reforms, and capability transformation in the same timeframe. Russian military also changed and is now used again as an instrument of distant power projection, even when Russian military is still qualitatively inferior to a near peer adversary. This new assertive posture, as well as technological advances gave a new boost to Russian foreign policy. Russian aggression in the last decade, especially to seek to maintain the buffer zone in Ukraine to stop it from being too closely aligned to NATO or deciding that offensive actions are fundamentally a good deterrent, or to preserve the correlation of forces around Russian borders, especially in Georgia hints at newer grand strategy.

Recent circumstances in Crimea and Syria both also highlight a new impulse of seizing the initiative and to go on the attack. The Russian military is now more adaptive than the past,

[20] Ibid.

operational variance as well as implementation of planning are observable every day. For example, the Russian operation in Georgia, was flawed compared to Crimea, and Eastern Ukraine, which in turn was different than the far superior and sophisticated operations in Syria. Likewise, the Russian cyberattacks in Estonia was a crude cyber assault on grids. Compared to that, the Russian interference in US elections in 2016 was far more sophisticated.

To quote a Rand Corporation study on the Russian military preparedness, "Russia's historical experience of repeated invasions over the centuries has created a powerful legacy that shapes its defence and foreign policy. Its leaders expect to have privileged interests in the smaller states on Russia's borders; they maintain defensive treaty agreements with several of the former Soviet republics and have military bases in some of them. Owing in part to interpretation of how Western nations have conducted conventional warfare since 1991 and to concerns of a massed conventional aerospace attack on Russia, Russia has invested heavily in air defences and possesses one of the most advanced and extensive air defence networks in the world. Russia's reforms have augmented its military's offensive potential." [21]

However, the Russian security posture and military doctrines suggested that despite Russian use of force, the primary intention of the military was the defence of Russian territory and spheres of influence. From military posture, to training, to capability to force structure, all attest to the idea that the military exists to defend Russia, rather than to project power globally. Likewise, long-range surface to air missiles based in Kaliningrad, instead of short-range towed artillery and armour for rapid thrust into enemy territory, signify a deterrent force instead of an offensive force posture. Some of the most capable Russian weapons that are exported, are systems currently used for air defence weaponry. Russia has also invested in rapid deployment short range infantry readily available to be deployed in its near abroad, one that was visible with ruthless precision in Crimea 2014, instead of long-range expeditionary forces. While Russian military is far more capable and adaptive than the early nineties, it is still focused on conventional theatre strike capabilities, and focused on preserving Russian territorial integrity, and buffer zones instead of projecting Russian global power.

In short, to use one of the clichés, Russia remains a "riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma". [22] Russian use of military force in the near abroad, is incompatible with Russian force

[21] Boston, S. and Massicot, D. (2017) 'The Russian way of warfare'. Rand Corporation Report.
[22] Original quote, from Winston Churchill in 1939. http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/RusnEnig.html

structure and military doctrines and declared intention, and this is one of the many inconsistencies that led to the central research question, when and why does Moscow resort to military force and balancing.

Some alternative theoretical explanations

What explains such confusing Russian balancing behaviour, and use of military force in Europe? Theoretically, Russian balancing and use of force in Europe are attributed in recent scholarly literature commonly to domestic politics, but also to Christian conservatism, civilisational exceptionalism, imperial expansionism, and domestic factors like the need to divert public discontent, or to shore up the regime. Overall, Russia is broadly considered as an expansionist or revanchist power in Europe. [23]

A detailed literature review is in the latter chapters, but a brief summary here is needed. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has consistently tried to restore its privileged position of power in Europe, initially through a short-lived phase of Atlanticism, but soon, followed by a push for multipolarity, which continued despite changes in leaders and governments, and through phases of relative rapprochement and outright hostility. Two assumptions about Russian perspective are common in all analysis and is backed by observable evidence, discussed in further details in the latter chapters.

One, Russian policy makers believe that the world is in transition, and unipolarity is unsustainable, and therefore it is important for Moscow to facilitate that multipolarity, as one of the poles. President Vladimir Putin, for example, made this very clear in the 2007 in the Munich Security Conference, where he mentioned how the United States is acting as a hyperpower, and there is a need to bring balance in global politics. “Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts”, Putin said, in a speech that was considered a straight break from post-Soviet Russian foreign relations. [24] The speech also

[23] There is a detailed literature review in latter chapters, but see, for example, Snyder, T. (2018). op. cit.; M. McFaul & K. Stoner, (2015) op. cit. C Clover, (2016). op. cit; Lo, B. (2015). *Russia and the New World Disorder* Washington and London: Brookings Institution Press/Chatham House.

[24] Vladimir Putin Munich Conference Speech 2007 available at https://www.securityconference.de/en/about/munich-moments/a-breeze-of-cold-war/

highlighted that something which Moscow is predisposed to stop American unipolarity. The logic given was that unipolarity is destabilizing for the world and leads to greater chaos.

Which brings us to the second assumption Russia has, about itself being a natural pole. Russia's self-perceived role is one of a historical great power, as a centre of influence, best described in the words of Sergey Karaganov, Russian political scientist and head of the prestigious Council for Foreign and Defense Policy, "We want the status of being a great power: We, unfortunately, cannot relinquish that. In the last 300 years, this status has become a part of our genetic makeup. We want to be the heart of greater Eurasia, a region of peace and cooperation. The subcontinent of Europe will also belong to this Eurasia". [25]

Causal explanations about Russian behaviour can be accordingly divided into broad categories, discussed further in a detailed literature review later in the thesis. But to give an example of each, the first category consists of analysts who attribute Russian behaviour to the need to shore up the regime. This explanation ties up Russian foreign policy to the variable of Russian domestic concerns, i.e., regarding the stability of the regime in Kremlin.[26] Proponents of this idea claims that Russian policy makers, especially under Vladimir Putin, acts like a small coterie of privileged, interdependent oligarchy, and are paranoid about the survival of their system and regime. Naturally, any disorder, is seen as chaos and a push for regime change by external adversaries of Moscow. This line of thinking arguably influenced Russian decision-making process, during the breakup of Yugoslavia, the wars in Kosovo, the "colour revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia, as well as the Western support for democratic movements during the Arab Spring. The Kremlin, according to this understanding, wants to prevent the emergence of a "true democracy", which might instigate similar movements in Moscow, and which might destabilize the Russian ruling elite. In short, to forestall destabilisation in Moscow, Russia often takes actions in near abroad, whenever Moscow feels threatened, by what it perceives to be any snowballing movement, Western sponsored revolution or regime

[25] 'We Are Smarter, Stronger and More Determined' – Interview with Sergey Karaganov, Der Spiegel, July 13, 2016 https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-putin-foreign-policy-advisor-sergey-karaganov-a-1102629.html

[26] Shevtsova, L. (2003). 'Putin's Russia'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Sakwa, R. (2008). Putin and the Oligarchs' *New Political Economy* 13. McFaul, M. (1997). 'A Precarious Peace: Domestic Politics in the Making of Russian Foreign Policy,' *International Security* 22: 5-35; McFaul, M. (1999, Summer) 'Russia's Many Foreign Policies', *Demokratizatsiya* 7: 393-412; McFaul, M. (2001) 'Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin', *Slavic Review* 62/1.

change, and anarchy in the neighbourhood. Most liberal theorists use this lens to explain Russian behaviour.

The second causal line claims Moscow to be an expansionist power, motivated by hegemony, or imperial ambitions.[27] Scholarly opinion is divided about *what* exactly motivates the said imperialism, whether it is honour, pride, civilisational glory, Christian conservatism, neo-Sovietism, or great power expansionism and sphere of influence politics, but the common thread is that Moscow is considered as a hegemonic, expansionist and even imperial power. Moscow's approach to the post-Soviet states is characterised by a sense of privileged entitlement, and Russia's hegemony is tantamount to establishing Russian political authority as well as preponderant use of military power.

There is a third (and comparatively rare) line of causal explanation, which is structural in nature.[28] This explanation hints at strategic and material causes behind Moscow's aggression, whether resources or defensible terrain. This explanation while logical, is relatively under-explored. Most of the scholarly work focusses on individual events, and there is a lack of a systemic, or regional study over a certain period of time, which covers different regimes, different leaders, and different timelines.

John Mearsheimer, to give one example, has hinted that Moscow's actions in Ukraine in 2014, is a reaction to Western expansionism and "liberal hegemony", which he mentions to be an unnecessary, irrational, and foolhardy mistake. But even his argument fails to explain the halting aggression of Russia, or even the periodic retrenchment, even from positions of power and material advantage. For example, in Georgia, where Moscow controlled a huge part of territory, Russia returned to a status quo, once a peace deal was negotiated. And in Ukraine, Russian aggression was limited to a certain territorial sphere. In short, it was not simply expansionism or imperialism on Moscow's part, and there appears to be a method in the madness.

---

[27] Tsygankov, A. P. (2012). *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor in International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Mankoff, J. (2009). *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

[28] Götz, K. E. (2015) 'It's Geopolitics, Stupid: Explaining Russia's Ukraine Policy', *Global Affairs* 1: 3-10; Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). 'Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin', *Foreign Affairs*.

The drawbacks of the abovementioned analyses are manifold. Both constructivist and liberal analysis of Russian foreign policy offer causal explanations about some aspects of Russian behaviour. But both suffer from significant disadvantages, as discussed in the following chapters. One, any explanation that resorts to unquantifiable conceptual vacuums, for example the role of honour and pride, and civilisational exceptionalism, are almost all based purely on the "rhetoric" of politicians. While they are of valuable historical importance, they are not strictly objective. A constructivist analysis focusing on the resurgence of the Orthodox Christianity, and the influence of far-right ideologues and how that identity shapes Russian support for and far right parties, would fail to explain the same Russian support for left-wing populist parties around the same timeframe. Unless an explanatory theory is capable of at least somewhat answering these differences, it leaves further questions.

That Russian foreign policy is influenced by domestic elements also is insufficient in explaining the differences within foreign policy. Russia has been increasingly getting more assertive since 2007 and barring one sudden alignment during the Western intervention in Libya, has been antagonistic to NATO and EU interests, regardless of the domestic situation. Vladimir Putin has also overwhelmingly enjoyed positive approval ratings, both during the times of relative retrenchment as well as military aggression. At the time of writing this thesis especially in the last two years, Moscow has adopted the view that any uprising in any area where Russia has any strategic interest requires some sort of military pushback. While it is not a case study of this particular thesis, it is unlikely, for example, that Russian use of military force in Syria, Ukraine, and Georgia, are determined by either domestic considerations or Orthodox Christian and civilisational considerations.

That said, there is simply no broad overarching theoretical study done so far which can readily explain the differences within post-soviet Russian foreign policy, which is one of the purposes of this thesis, to ascribe a theoretical understanding on Russian foreign policy. If Russian foreign policy is not explained properly by constructivist lens, of honour, pride, religion, and civilisation, and if Russian foreign policy deviations are not fully explained by liberal theories focusing on economy or regime stability, then the only other lens which might provide a theoretical explanation is structural. Structural arguments, therefore, provide a better analytical lens. Is Russia then a realist great power? Perhaps so, but that needs more than scholarship focusing on individual events like the Russian annexation of Crimea. This thesis, with three different cases, attempts to chart a broader answer to that question, and attempts to till a significant gap in the literature.

For the purpose of this thesis, I chose three cases where I study Russian foreign policy, use of military force and/or balancing behaviour, in regard to NATO, Ukraine and Georgia. A detailed explanation behind the logic of case selection is given in the theoretical framework and methodology chapter, but to briefly summarize, all the three cases involve scenarios, which Russia perceived as threatening, whereupon Russia balanced against the threat.

Russia considered NATO expansion to be strategically threatening, and with both Georgia and Ukraine, Russia is engaged or has engaged in military aggression. Both Georgia and Ukraine are also cases where there had been a colour revolution and where older pro-Russian regimes were toppled by mass movements, which led to situations which Russia considered detrimental to its interests. Both those countries also provide cases where there has been both cooperative phases as well as military aggression and makes it easier to infer causation. NATO on the other hand, provides a greater external validity to this thesis. NATO being an institution and not a nation state like Georgia and Ukraine, avoids the allegation of selection bias. Each of these cases will constitute individual chapters in this thesis.

Structure of enquiry and chapter details

This thesis, if it is already not evident, will follow the same linear model as followed in Stephen Walt's *The Origins of Alliances* and will be divided into the following parts, all interconnected. with one segment leading to the next one.

The introduction will be followed by a chapter reviewing the relevant literature and summarizing the relevant scholarship dealing with the history of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy. The Russian foreign policy, for the purpose of analysis is divided into four broad periods or phases. The first phase of an Atlanticist foreign policy and liberalizing economy and Pro-Western outlook, immediately after the end of the Cold war, is followed by the start of the second phase around the first Chechen War, to the end of the Yeltsin presidency, where broad differences in interests of Russian federation vis-à-vis the West are observed. Widespread disillusionment over economic reforms, as well as hard-line pushbacks with regards to foreign policy marks this phase, even with relative military decline, in the face of peak American hegemony culminating in the War in Kosovo and the ascent of Vladimir Putin to power. The third phase with Putin in power, the second Chechen war, and September 11 terror attacks on US soil marks the return of pragmatic Russia with a huge economic boom, and which initially involves steady rapprochement between Russia and the United States, but which quickly ends with increasing rifts due to the Iraq war and the colour revolutions in the Russian

neighbourhood. That is followed by the fourth and final ongoing phase, the return of Great power Russia, which involves Russian military aggressions and wars in Georgia and Ukraine. This chapter lays down the background history of Russian foreign policy, as well as provides a thorough rundown of the current theoretical literature and provides an understanding of why that is inadequate.

The theoretical framework of the thesis will be detailed in the next chapter. The purpose of this thesis is to analyse Russian foreign policy, especially focusing on Russian balancing behaviour and military aggression, and to see if there are patterns which emerge which in turn can be used to test hypotheses. This deductive approach is therefore narrow in scope, and case specific. Naturally, to understand that, one needs to explain why a chosen theory is a good framework to demonstrate if Russian behaviour as the dependent variable influenced by external factors consistent with the theory of neorealism. This thesis is at core a theoretical study and explaining why a particular theory is chosen and deemed to be causally explanatory is a significant part. This particular chapter is therefore the most important one to lay the groundwork for the case studies, longer in length than the others, and will discuss what realism in international relations is, and what it constitutes, and then proceed to answer the question about why neorealism is an ideal theoretical framework needed for this project, what neorealism as a research framework consists of, and whether it can be even deployed to successfully understand and explain the foreign policy of a great power. By the end of that section this thesis will demonstrate that neorealism is indeed a sound framework to study foreign policy and can be successfully used for the purpose of this thesis, and it would also show that neorealism contains various different sub-theories all useful in theory testing, further leading to the next part of the thesis. The chapter will also explain the logic of balancing in international relations and will lay down the theory of Balance of Threat, as the theoretical framework for the purpose of this thesis. It will then proceed to explains the research design, case selection criteria, the methodology and some primary hypotheses. Divided in two sub-sections, the first one providing the logic of balancing in realism and explain what Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory is, as well as how balance of threat works alongside external factors like revolution in the neighbourhood and changing security scenarios. Second, it will explain why, and in which order the three cases for study are chosen, and the methodology behind them.

The following three chapters will be the three detailed case studies, namely, exploring and testing Russian reactions, balancing behaviour, and use of force, with regards to NATO, Ukraine and Georgia respectively. All of them explore when and why Russia balances against

what perceived threats. The chapter on NATO highlights the differences in Russian balancing actions, depending on the interplay of variables, namely, aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and offensive intentions. NATO enlargement phases are studied alongside Russian reaction to them, and the reasons for Russian aggressive balancing action, as well as Russian muted reactions are explored. The next two chapters on Ukraine and Georgia combined, helps settle the theoretical questions of whether Russia is actually an expansionist power, or a reactive but status-quo power, and what leads to the triggering of Russian military actions. The Ukraine chapter highlights that the primary drivers of Russian actions, and the structural aspects of Russian reaction, like Russian naval bases as well as control over the material and industrial centres crucial to the continuation of the supply chains for the Russian military, and in turn, the continuation of Russian position and status of a great power in the balance of Eastern Europe. The chapter on Georgia explores the questions about Russian capability and intention in the broader balance of power with detailed discussion about Russian preparation for the war, as well as neutralizing and punitive operational procedures, force structures.

It is important to note at this juncture, that while there are three case studies employed to explore and understand one overarching theoretical question, the cases are, by definition, different from each other. But all of them explore Russian balancing against perceived threats. NATO is an alliance, and Russian reaction is measured against phases of NATO enlargement. The chapter on Ukraine gives us an understanding of what variables were lacking during Orange revolution which led to a relatively muted Russian reaction, compared to a proxy war after the Euromaidan. The chapter on Georgia examines a single case in depth and sheds light on the question of Russia being an expansionist power or status quo power. All three chapters in turn, combined, and only combined, gives an answer to the central research question, of what theoretical explanation can be satisfactorily attributed to Russian military actions and foreign policy, and whether Russia can be considered a realist power, acting according to the dictates of Balance of Threat theory. Social science is of course not like Physics, and any attempt to replicate a scientific structure in a historical study attempting to explore and construct a narrative will fall short. While there is an attempt to at least give a structural semblance to the three cases, they are still different than one another, and have differences in their structure within. The dissertation is after all theoretical, and the theoretical answers are tied up at the end. While individually each case study can form a separate academic paper, that is not the intention here, and this thesis is structured holistically.

The final chapter of the thesis, accordingly, summarizes the three empirical chapters on NATO, Ukraine and Georgia and outlines the findings. It then ties them up in light of the Balance of Threat theory and explains the basic theoretical findings of the thesis as a whole, connecting them to the primary hypotheses outlined in the third chapter. It explains why Russia broadly acts according to the dictates of balance of threat, why Russian aggressive actions, and even more importantly Russian muted reactions can be explained by the presence and absence of the causal variables, and which in turn explain if Russian foreign policy is broadly realist. The thesis explains if Russia balances against threats, and acts as a security maximiser determined to uphold what it considers a status quo. It also sheds some light on the broad auxiliary theoretical questions, if Russia is indeed a defensive realist power, or an offensive realist power, and if Russia has expansionist aim, will or capability. Finally, it clarifies, why this thesis contends Russia as a defensive realist power, which acts per the assumptions of balance of threat theory and ends with providing some brief policy prescriptions and suggestions.

Definitions and conceptualisation

Perhaps, one of the most important parts of any thesis is to outline the definitions, concepts, and limitations. Accordingly, for the purpose of this thesis, a few key concepts and terms are hereby defined.

First, "the West", EU, US, and NATO are often used interchangeably as a nominal concept. Of this, the concept of the West is arguably the most problematic. The "West" is of course not a defined territory, but during the Cold war, it was considered to be the countries formally under NATO, or NATO allies such as Australia and New Zealand. The concept has been significantly diluted lately, given Turkey's recent authoritarian turn, as well as NATO enlargement since the mid-nineties. For example, under no measurable metrics can Turkey be still considered more "Western" than even Russia.[29] Putting aside Turkey, even former Warsaw Pact countries like Hungary and Poland have shown recent signs of changes in domestic politics which are significantly different normatively, than the Western European and Scandinavian nation-states. One can also argue the West was never normatively "liberal democratic" but rather a territorial entity, and the current government of Hungary and Poland falls squarely within that tradition, given that NATO included dictatorial Spain during the Cold war. But Australia and New

[29] Johnson, K. & Gramer, R. (2019, July) 'Who Lost Turkey?', *Foreign Policy Magazine*; 'Kissinger's Prophecy Fulfilled in Syria' *War on the Rocks*, 23 January 2019.

Zealand are (and was) also considered Western nations, and they are as far away from the geographic West as possible.

That being said, two factors assist in clearing this conundrum. First, West is still used to understand any country under NATO, as well as Australia and New Zealand. Broadly, the Anglosphere, and European nation-states, which are either formally under NATO and European Union, or to use Karl Deutsch's terminology, under one "security architecture", are called "the West", in both regular conversation, media, as well as scholarly literature. [30] Almost any newspaper, for example would mention "The West" as a phrase, and use it interchangeably with NATO or EU.[31] Likewise, to give an example of the latest in academic literature, historian Timothy Snyder consistently used the phrase of "West" and "Western" to denote both United States and European Union.[32] And finally, for the purpose of this thesis, the Russian point of view is far more important, than the conceptual debates one can see within "the West". And as observed in later chapters, for the Russian political and military elite, there is no discernible difference between EU, NATO, US, and "the West".

Second, for the purpose of this thesis, although the phrase NATO enlargement is mostly used, there is no difference between the phrases, NATO enlargement and NATO expansion. The question of NATO, which will be studied in detail later, is still one of intense scholarly debate. There is still scholarly dispute, on whether there was any verbal guarantee or a no-enlargement pledge from NATO to Soviet Union. But scholarly opinion suggests that there was. [33] However, terminology wise, this thesis mostly uses enlargement, rather than expansion, as NATO did not proceed to conquer the new territories, or annex them by force, and the enlargement was mutual and consensual. That said, like "The West", enlargement and expansion are also used interchangeably in security studies academic literature. [34] And as with the previous point, from

[30] Deutsch, K. W. (1957) *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[31] 'Russia affair with Turkey has been blossoming for decades – why has it taken the West so long to pay attention?' *Independent*, 5 August, 2019.

[32] T. Snyder (2018) op. cit.

[33] NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard | National Security Archive, available at https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early#.Wi_f82RB8R0.twitter

[34] For example, see, Sarotte, M. E. (2019, Summer) 'How to Enlarge NATO: The Debate inside the Clinton Administration, 1993–95' *International Security*, 44/1: 7–41.

Russian point of view, there was (and is) no difference. As discussed in detail in the chapter on NATO, from the Western point of view, NATO enlargement was not just strategic, but also institutional and normative, not just meant as a strategic buffer but to institutionalize liberal democratic peace. [35] From the vantage point of Moscow, it was simply territorial encroachment of a hostile political and military alliance, closer and closer to Russian borders. Given that the thesis tries to understand and explore the causes of Russian "reaction", that distinction or lack thereof, should be kept in mind.

Third, "Russia", in this context means Russian ruling elite. There is a rich history in qualitative theoretical analysis of great power behaviour, to essentially use the name of the state or capital, to what usually amounts to the ruling elite or policy makers. [36] This thesis carries on that tradition. It is of course difficult to "process trace" Russian elite decision making. There are some examples of recent scholarship which uses backroom channels, administrative leaks, and even gossips to construct a narrative. Those are good as pop-history but may invite questions about academic research validity, especially in this field of "security studies". There are other forms of scholarships which does historical analysis over a long period of time, which uses primary sources, long form interviews, and archival material. Instead, as mentioned in the methodology section later in the course of the dissertation, this thesis uses secondary literature, and infers from observed Russian behaviour and military movements, and then tallies it with relevant Russian rhetoric, from the political, and military elites, to test the hypotheses. And as observed in later chapters, Russian decision making is usually hierarchical and contingent on a section of political and military elite, who have remarkably similar thought process and threat perceptions. There are opposition parties and fringe groups, but they do not carry much weight, nor does public opinion has any observed sway, in matters of war and peace. For the purpose of this thesis, therefore, the standard "security studies" template of interchanging the terms Russia and Moscow, for Russian ruling elite and state. [37]

Four, the ultimate aim of the thesis is to explore a simple assertion. Is Russia a realist great power? But to achieve that, one needs to first explain a set of complications. Realism is a very

---

[35] Whatever the merit of that endeavour was, remains debatable.

[36] See recent similar studies, by Itzkowitz Shifrinson, J. R. (2018) *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts* Ithaca: Cornell University Press ; and Parent, J. & Macdonald, P. (2018) *Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[37] See model research in *International Security* Journal, the highest ranked journal in IR and Security Studies.

broad theoretical paradigm. Realism as an International Relations discipline traces its roots to realism in philosophy, which in turn goes back to the times of Thucydides. Realism in international relations, is both a theoretical framework, as well as a research design. To take the example of a Russian matryoshka doll, realism as a philosophy can be divided between classical realism and neorealism, and neorealism in turn is divided between offensive, and defensive realism. Defensive realism has several different explanatory theories like Offense-Defence balance, Security dilemma, and Balance of Threat, which attempts to explain specific foreign policy behaviour. Of that, one specific realist theory of foreign policy, Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat, is used to explore and test various hypotheses. The idea being, that if majority of Russian actions match the hypotheses, it can be argued that Russia acts within the dictates of neorealism, and within the broader confines of realism as a theoretical framework. By that logic, Russia can be termed as a realist great power.

This thesis does not naturally claim to answer all theoretical questions. The intention of the thesis was to provide a theoretical understanding of Russian foreign policy, with multiple cases, over a given period of time, under different Russian regimes and leadership. At the time of writing this thesis, there are two conflicts Russia is involved in, in Syria, and Ukraine, with the United States reneging on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and possibly the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty as well, there are protests going on in Moscow, and NATO is increasing funding under constant pressure from Washington DC.

As Walt himself wrote in the opening of *The Origins of Alliances*, I am also primarily relying on secondary sources and research papers, instead of primary sources, in investigating a theory rather than building one, and the assessment is based on the scholarship provided by the area specialists and military theorists. Within the time frame of this thesis, and limitations of durability, funding, and primary source research, this thesis tests a theory to see if Russia can be termed as a realist power, which in turn will help Western policy makers to decide and debate on a future grand-strategy moving forward.

To sum it all up, this thesis attempts to explain Russian post-soviet foreign policy, balancing behaviour, and military use of force in Europe, in light of Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory. In order to address that overarching research puzzle of whether Russia acts per the dictates of Balance of Threat, and therefore broadly as a security maximiser and defensive realist power, this thesis endeavours to assess Russia's foreign policy and military ambition.

The thesis also debates some broad and topical theoretical questions, on whether Russia is a revanchist and expansionist power, and power maximiser, or a defensive realist power and security maximiser. The thesis employs a qualitative mixed methods research design, focusing on secondary military sources. The evidence is primarily determined from Russian strategic actions, and not Russian governmental rhetoric, as discussed in detail in the following chapters.

The findings have significant policy relevance for future European/British security, as the USA grows increasingly isolationist, and NATO and EU rift widens. If Russia balances against threats and only uses military force in areas where it already has entrenched material and military interests, it becomes easier for policymakers to somewhat calculate where Moscow would be determined to defend its interests compared to regions where Moscow will only be rhetorically aggressive. The findings also shed light on broad theoretical questions and suggest that Russia is a security maximiser as opposed to a power maximiser. That in turn, logically entails that Russia is a defensive realist power and not an offensive realist power. It is difficult to coexist with an imperial expansionist. It is, however, possible to maintain a negative peace with a power which is determined to uphold the status quo, but which lacks further hegemonic ambitions. According to the theory, post-Soviet Russia should indulge in aggression only when it perceives its direct interests to be threatened and revert back to status quo the moment the threats subside or are neutralised by balancing actions. To test that, in itself, is a contribution to the broader literature.

Chapter 2: **Literature Review**

To understand if Russia is a realist great power, and whether Moscow acts within the broad dictates of realism, this thesis, as elaborated earlier, explores Russian balancing in Europe, especially in reaction to NATO enlargement, and Russian use of force in its near-abroad. This chapter explores some recent relevant literature which attempts to provide a causal explanation of Russian foreign policy. Russian foreign policy underwent several major changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union, often overlapping. Scholars differed on the direction of Russian foreign policy, with optimism among certain sections about trade and cooperation between Russia and the West, as well as voices of concern that great power rivalry will be back. [38] The disintegration of the Soviet Union resulted in relative lack of coherent strategy and objective, and ideological vacuum.[39] These in turn, resulted in internal crises, power-struggles, economic downfall and diverging elite identities, that hindered Russia from developing a coherent foreign policy objective.[40] Russia, however, has since then re-emerged as one of the major geopolitical players.[41]

While there were broad changes, there has also been a distinct continuity. The notable and reflexive anti-western rhetoric that characterised Russian foreign policy for the most part also had elements of pragmatism. It included an acknowledgement of American military hegemony and American led Western Liberal International order. [42] There has also been notable similarity regardless of administration, especially when it comes to Russia's near abroad, and areas which

[38] See, Fukuyama, F. (1989, Summer) 'The end of history?' *The National Interest*, 16: 3–18. ; Fukuyama, F. (1991) 'Liberal democracy as a global phenomenon', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 24/4: 659–664. Krauthammer, C. (1990) 'The Unipolar Moment. Foreign Affairs', 70/1: 23–33. ; Van Evera, S. (1990) 'Primed for peace: Europe after the Cold War' *International Security*, 15/3: 7–57. Also, Mearsheimer, J. (1993, Summer) 'The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent', *Foreign Affairs*.

[39] Donaldson, R. H. (1999) 'Boris Yeltsin's Foreign Policy Legacy', *Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law* 285: 7.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Legvold, R. (2014, July/August) 'Managing the New Cold War' *Foreign Affairs.*

[42] Trenin, D. (2006) 'Russia Leaves the West', *Foreign Affairs*, 85/4: 87–96.; Sakwa, R. (2008) '"New Cold War" or twenty years' crisis? Russia and international politics', *International Affairs*: 2,241–267.; Tsygankov, A. P. (2012) 'Change and Continuity in Russia's Foreign Policy', *Russian Analytical Digest*, 109: 9–11.

Russia considered to be in its sphere of influence. Russia has often resorted to active diplomacy upholding the status-quo in its privileged sphere, and has resorted to military force, twice in the last decade. Russian actions and displeasure with the West during the Balkan conflicts, Russian aggressive behaviour in the Baltics, and outright hostility in Georgia and Ukraine points to a new resurgent Russia where Russia is not shy to use military force to assert geopolitical goals in the region it considers as its "privileged interest". [43]

On closer observation, patterns emerge in phases of Russian foreign policy. In this chapter, Russian foreign policy since the Soviet collapse is divided into four phases. Broadly, each short phase of cooperation and rapprochement is followed by a longer phase of disillusionment, and pragmatic balancing behaviour. The first phase runs in the early few years of Boris Yeltsin's foreign policy, with Russia being pro-Western in both international politics and economic orientation. The second phase follows that, when under the premiership of Yevgeny Primakov, when Russia faced with stalled economic reforms and structural difference with the West, looked for pragmatic multipolarity. The third phase started with Putin's first term and steady rapprochement with NATO and the US, over the War on Terror and Afghanistan campaign. The fourth phase starts around 2003, and continues to this day, barring minor rapprochement and reset in between, where Russia returned to its traditional great power role and balancing, with assertive foreign policy and willingness to use force in its spheres of influence.

The literature is also segmented, in explaining these broad trends, as noted in the subsequent sections. The liberal theories and analysis broadly focus on Russian behaviour predicated upon domestic regime stability and economic considerations, trade, and Atlanticist policies abroad, and attributes it to broadly lobby groups, energy sectors, and perceived threat felt by the Russian regime by colour revolutions in the near abroad.[44] No foreign policy analysis is of course monocausal, and naturally any liberal explanation of Russian foreign policy often attribute Russian behaviour to a combination of causes, nevertheless they are divided on their causal variables, which broadly fall under traditional liberal theories of foreign policy. The

[43] Trenin, D. (2006) op. cit., 85/4: 87–96; and Berryman, J. (2012) 'Geopolitics and Russian foreign policy', *International Politics*, 49/4: 530– 544.

[44] See, for example, McFaul, M. (2018) *From Cold War to Hot Peace:An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia* New York: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt; McKew, M. (2017, January 1) 'Putin's Real Long Game' *Politico*; McFaul, M. (2007, September) 'Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution' *International Security*, 32/2; Stoner, K. & McFaul, M. (2015) 'Who lost Russia (this time)?' *The Washington Quarterly*, 38/2: 167–187; Marten, K. (2015) 'Putin's choices: explaining Russian foreign policy and intervention in Ukraine', *The Washington Quarterly*, 38/2: 189–204, etc.

second line of analysis is a newer constructivist one, which focusses on Russian sense of honour, and identity. [45] This line of argument attributes to Russian elites having a sense of aspirational identity of a great power, determined to maintain Moscow's status, honour and privileged position in the European balance. An attempt is made hereinafter, to chart the arc of Russian foreign policy in the four abovementioned phases, followed by an explanation by these theoretical schools, and provide a short critique.

First phase: Pro Western orientation

The first phase of Russian foreign policy immediately after the Soviet collapse was one where Russia was oriented towards the West, more precisely, towards a Western modelled democratic liberal society. Boris Yeltsin, Russia's first elected President stated in 1991 that the country would turn "to the world community with pure intentions in order to win friends but not enemies, and to establish honest and civilised relations with other states". [46] During the early years of this new relationship, it appeared that the West and Russia could become strong partners. [47] Overall relation with the West, and especially EU, Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin was enthusiastic.[48] Yeltsin stated as late as in 1997, that Russia was working towards a recognition of being a full European state and in due course of time, join the European Union. [49]

This initial phase lasted until 1995-1996, although there were slow changes that started from 1994 onwards.[50] The objective of Russian foreign policy in the first few years under Yeltsin

[45] See, Clover, C. (2016) op. cit.; Snyder, T. (2018) op. cit; Lo, B. (2015) *Russia and the New World Disorder* Washington: Brookings Institution Press; Tsygankov, A. P. (2012) op. cit.; Clunan, A. L. (2009) *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

[46] Inaugural Speech by President Boris Yeltsin of the Republic of Russia. *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, 2/1. (1991).

[47] Hillion, C. (1998) 'Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the EU and the New Independent States of the ex-Soviet Union', *European Foreign Affairs Review,* 3/3: 399– 420; Fukuyama, F. (1991) op. cit.; Baranovsky, V. (2000) 'Russia: a part of Europe or apart from Europe?' *International Affairs*, 76/3: 443–458.

[48] Bonsor, N. (1996) 'Partnership with Russia in Europe. New Challenges for the EU-Russia Partnership', FriedrichEbertStiftung 8th Roundtable of the partnership with Russia, 141/5.

[49] Martin, S. (1997) 'Beyond the G8, Yeltsin sees his country in the EU', (24 March, 1997) *Irish Times*.

[50] Kubicek, P. (1999) 'Russian foreign policy and the West', *Political Science Quarterly*, 114/4: 547–568; Thorun, C. (2009) *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's*

can be summed up as consisting of "democratic peace" abroad, economic investment and support from the West, and being recognised as respectable law-abiding member of the international community. [51]

Yeltsin's early foreign policy was formulated by Andrei Kozyrev, and it broadly focused on the liberal ideas of democratic peace, promotion of human rights, and liberalisation of an economy from central-command. [52] Kozyrev and Yeltsin, and a section of the Russian ruling elite, were of the opinion that it would be in Russia's national interest to gain membership in the club of developed democratic states and their economic institutions, thus assuming the "fitting place that has been predetermined for us by history and geography." [53] Economic 'Shock therapy', sought to integrate Russia within the most important "transatlantic economic and security institutions" such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), NATO and the Group of 7 (G7) while limiting Russia's economic ties with its former territories in Eurasia, as it was considered necessary to combat stagnation. As Checkel and Donaldson both mentions, the primary goals of what came to be known as an Atlanticist, liberal foreign policy, were global economic integration, nuclear and environmental security, Westernisation and Europeanisation, and market reforms.[54]

Even when Kozyrev's foreign policy outlook was liberal, it was not strictly internationalist in the Soviet sense. [55] Kozyrev argued that the basis for the new foreign policy would be Russia's national interests as compared to the theoretical, more universalist, international class struggle which formed the nominal principle of the Soviet foreign policy.[56] [57] Kozyrev argued that good

---

Conduct Towards the West Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.; Tsygankov, A.P. (2010) *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

[51] Donaldson, R. H. (1999) 'Boris Yeltsin's Foreign Policy Legacy', *Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law* 7/285.

[52] Checkel, J. T. (1997) *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* New Haven: Yale University Press. pg. 107-15.

[53] Ibid.

[54] "Liberal Westernizers", "Pragmatic Nationalists", and "Fundamentalist Nationalists", are from Malcolm et al., Internal Factors. See especially the chapter by Margot Light, pg. 33-100. Jeffrey T. Checkel (1997) Ibid. pg. 107-15.

[55] For further reference on this, see Curtis, G. E. (ed.). *Russia: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1996.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Martin, S. (1997) 'Beyond the G8, Yeltsin sees his country in the EU' (24 March). *Irish Times*.

relations with the West were necessary because "no developed, democratic, civil society . . . can threaten us."", which scholars maintain was a Russian version of the Liberal Democratic Peace Theory. [58] Liberal scholars maintain that domestic consideration was more important in this phase, as Russian policy makers realised that with Western help in gaining entry to international economic institutions, a sound economy and subsequently a sound civil society would be formed. [59] The entire Russian administration was therefore focused mostly on domestic development and restructuring.[60] Added to that was structural reasons like sudden and relative inferiority in military strength, size, and economy and all these factors combined in shaping the early Post Soviet Russian foreign policy.[61]

There is broad scholarly consensus about this direction of Russian foreign policy from immediate post-Soviet collapse and during the early Yeltsin years[62] in the sense that this first phase of Russian foreign policy was relatively straightforward and pro-Western, without major deviations and shifts; there are differing theoretical analysis as to why.[63] Liberal scholarly opinion and interpretation of this period claims that the rapid economic decline and the relative weakness, produced an urgent need for the Russian administration to give a direction to its foreign policy. Regime stability as well as democratic peace seems to be the key driver behind the liberal push under Yeltsin and Kozyrev.[64] McFaul, for example, points out the centrality of Russian domestic politics during this period influencing the articulation and implementation of Russian foreign policy. McFaul argues that groups with economic interests, like Gazprom started to push away the traditional Russian state, and resulted in a peaceful direction of foreign policy. [65]

Even with differing expectations and ideas about Russia's global role among the ruling elites there were basic agreements, regarding objectives. Those objectives were revival of the

[58] Curtis, G. E. op. cit.

[59] Arbatov, A. (1993) 'Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives', *International Security*, 18/2: 5–43.

[60] Ibid.

[61] 'Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity', in C. A. Wallender (ed.) *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (pg. 69). New York: Westview, 1996.

[62] See Donaldson, R. H. (1999) op. cit.

[63] McFaul, M. (1999) op. cit.

[64] McFaul, M. (1997) 'A Precarious Peace: Domestic Politics in the Making of Russian Foreign Policy', *International Security* 22: 5-35.

[65] Ibid.

economy to avoid further disintegration of the country and to stabilize the regime, economic and social revival with the help of financial aid from the West, to maintain a parity in the nuclear forces with the west. Boris Yeltsin, consequently, followed this foreign policy of peaceful accommodation with the West, and Russian diplomacy aimed at promoting Russian integration in mainstream, Western institutions, and securing Western help for internal transformation and stabilisation of Russia's economy and domestic polity. Russia's foreign policymakers were prepared to accommodate Western interests on a whole range of issues, including nuclear cooperation, and privatisation. [66]

While liberal analysis of this period is relatively straightforward, Constructivist arguments are broader, and are not very useful in explaining specific actions in time periods of Russian history, but rather Constructivist analysts try to explain the broad arc of Russian foreign policy and what shaped it. Constructivist theorists argue that Soviet disintegration altered Russian identity and therefore altered Russian national interests. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the official Marxist-Leninist state ideology left a conceptual vacuum, which also affected the Russian identity.[67] The policy paralysis during Yeltsin's early days was attributed to these debates within Russia regarding Russian identity.[68] The fundamental argument of all constructivists are that Russia as a nation state suffered from an identity crisis often oscillating between identifying as a European Great power or a unique land power between Europe and Asia, echoing the nineteenth century debates of Slavophiles and Westernizers.[69]

However, a strong sense of Russia being a unique civilisation remained. A significant majority of Russian elites believed that Russia is a unique civilisation, a Russian version of exceptionalism, and a bridge between the European and Asia landmass with a unique burden in history. [70] Clunan argues, "despite the rejection of the ideologically driven past, elites shared

---

[66] Ibid.

[67] Light, M. (1996) 'Foreign Policy Thinking', in Malcolm, N., Pravda, A., Allison, R. & Light, M. (eds.) *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy* Oxford: Oxford University Press. pg. 35-38; and Dawisha, K. & Parrott, B. (1994) *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pg. 26-29.

[68] Hopf, T. (1999) *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[69] Piontkovsky, A. (2006, January) 'East or West? Russia's Identity Crisis in Foreign Policy' Foreign Policy Centre, London.

[70] Clunan, A. C. (2009) *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. pg. 59.

common memories of Russia's past as a distinct civilisation that not only was premised on ideology but also arose out of Russia's history as a multicultural authoritarian empire as well as Russia's cultural traditions" adding that "the collapse of the Soviet Union left Russian political elites with a shared aspiration to restore Russia's status as a great power on a par with the leading countries in the West."[71] To explain the periodic pro-Western behaviour of Russia, Tsygankov also defined the Russian concept of honour as a key variable in Russian foreign policy. [72]Tsygankov claims that Russian elites consider being part of the West in virtuous joint projects as honourable, but since Russian cultural lenses vary, and Russia is more conservative as a society, it ended up sometimes feeling isolated from the West. Tsygankov defines two very different and opposed course of actions which historically Russian rulers have undertaken. Historically Russia sought to be either like the West and win its recognition or beat the West in their power game. Therefore, Europe's recognition of Russia has also been equally problematic as Europe's rejection of Russia, as Russian identity is reflected on Europe. The Russian honour has naturally two dimensions, European and local. Russia only acts on the Europeanness, when the West does not challenge the distinctive aspects of Russian honour. Similarly, when Russian distinct honour is challenged by the West, Russia tends to act defensively. An example of this "distinct sense of honour" is Russian traditional Eastern Orthodox and Slavic ties with Serbia and other Slavic allies and instinctive defence of such areas which Russia considers her traditional sphere of influence. What Moscow views as honourable objectives, West often views as revisionist behaviour.

This identity crisis reflects Russian foreign policy establishment "mindset" with simultaneous attraction and repulsion regarding Europe, where Europe is to be revered and pitied and feared and emulated all at the same time.[73] Tsygankov and Lo both states that this is a key factor in determining Russian behaviour, where the variable is how Russia views itself alongside the West. An instance of technological advancement, or great power show of force results in an elite aspiration in Russia to follow, in what Tsygankov considers an honourable cooperation. All the other times, honour is used defensively. This has been a key component deciding Russian behaviour during NATO expansions, wherein Russia cannot look over the fact that it

[71] Ibid.

[72] Tsygankov, Andrei P. (2012) Ibid. pg. 13-28.

[73] Ibid. This point of simultaneous attraction and repulsion has been subsequently pointed out by Bobo Lo as well.

was the Eastern European states which demonstrated interest to move Westward. [74] Russian policy makers during the early nineties started identifying themselves with the European nations again, as they regarded the Soviet times as an aberration from Russia's European past. The 'Westernisation' of foreign policy was rhetorically justified during the early days of Yeltsin on the ground of Russia's lost Western identity, which had been oppressed by Bolshevism and the Soviet experience.[75]

This first phase of Russian foreign policy immediately after the Soviet collapse is relatively straightforward, when explained through the lens of Liberal international relations theories. It logically makes more sense that the Russian elite viewed Moscow's diminished status, alongside still chaotic and turbulent domestic politics, and focused on regime stability within her borders, and a peaceful foreign policy abroad in relation with other powers, often at the cost of subservience to economic institutions. It is difficult to argue the same with Constructivism in this phase and it cannot explain short phases of Russian behaviour, especially where Russian actions and deviations can provide successful causal logic. None of the constructivist authors explain and define clearly what is a "unique Russian honour", and more importantly how is honour measured, quantified, and what variables influence the difference of behaviour in the same phase. For example, Clunan, cites polls about Russian elites aspiring a great power status, and argues that all sub-group of Russian elites aspired for regional hegemony. That however fails to explain subsequently the differences between Russian Atlanticists and nationalists or foreign policy pragmatists. Clunan notes, that "data suggests that shared memories of the Russian and Soviet past produced common aspirations with regard to Russia's international status, but not regarding its future political purpose." [76] She adds, that Russian elites were united in their opinion that Moscow "is to unite the best of both civilisations, thereby ameliorating the inevitable conflict between them. In another version, Russia's geographic destiny is to be the integrator of the Slavic or Turkic or Mongol peoples, as it is the natural hegemon and patron of the Eurasian continent." [77] Her argument, however, fails to explain the difference in Russian Atlanticist orientation from 1991 to 1993, and Moscow's more pragmatist balancing, during the latter years of Yeltsin's presidency. Likewise,

[74] Hopf, T. 2005. 'Identity, legitimacy, and the use of military force: Russia's great power identities and military intervention in Abkhazia', *Review of International Studies*, 31/1: 225–243.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Clunan, pg. 54.

[77] Clunan, pg. 66.

Tsygankov's qualifiers remain vague throughout, and as will be further illustrated later, often even contradictory. He fails to mention, why Russia would consider defending Slavic countries as honourable, while not explaining the numerous times when Russia actively failed or looked away without defending the honour of a fellow Slavic country. The notion of honour sometimes borders on civilisational exceptionalism and is non-quantifiable. Constructivist analysis of Russian foreign policy in this period, therefore, are holistic, and overarching, and fails to consider, for example, Russia's hard bargaining with IMF and the West even during the most pro-Western phase of Yeltsin's early years, negotiations with Ukraine and the West on the issue of nuclear weapons. Forces of economics were also neglected in this line of analysis.

Second phase: Seeking Pragmatic Multipolarity

The early phase of Atlanticism faced sporadic difficulties domestically, and was never very popular among Russian hardliners, culminating in the 1993 constitutional crisis.[78] The pro-Western tilt subsided with the nomination of Yevgeni Primakov in 1996 as the foreign minister of Russia.[79] Primakov solidified a strategic shift in Russian foreign policy which was already increasingly becoming evident, as Russian Western relations suffered from major differences over Russian hard-line actions in Chechnya since 1995.[80] This phase under the stewardship of Primakov saw Russia's return towards a more "pragmatic" foreign policy and Russia's shift from Westernisation towards a more multipolar realpolitik.[81] Russia's domestic politics at this stage was again nationally charged with anti-Western rhetoric. [82] Russia in this phase continued to seek trade partners like India and China while simultaneously courting Western investment, opposing Western interventions in the Balkans, as well as fending off Western criticism over

[78] Moments in U.S. Diplomatic History Yeltsin Under Siege — The October 1993 Constitutional Crisis – published by Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, available online at http://adst.org/2014/10/yeltsin-under-siege-the-october-1993-constitutional-crisis/

[79] Smith, G. (1999) 'The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 24/4: 481–494.

[80] McFaul, M. (1997) 'A Precarious Peace', *International Security*, 22/3: 5–35.; Bonsor, N. (1996) *Partnership with Russia in Europe. New Challenges for the EU-Russia Partnership.* FriedrichEbertStiftung 8th Roundtable of the partnership with Russia, 141/5.

[81] Lynch, A.A.C. (2001) 'The realism of Russia's foreign policy', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53/1: 37–41.

[82] Hopf, T. (1999) *Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Russia's first Chechen war. Simultaneously, Russia also continued to cooperate in nuclear proliferation issues, and partnered with NATO, while vocally opposing what it perceived as NATO's gradual eastward encroachment.

Liberal theorists argue that economic necessities and regime stability were the primary variables deciding Russian foreign policy at this stage. In simpler terms, Russia was suffering from a combination of factors, such as extreme domestic instability due to the failure of economic shock therapy as well as Chechen crisis and rising intolerance. Added to that was what it perceived as Western encroachment. Russia however needed the West as well, most importantly Western investment to keep the government and economy stable so that the Russian government stays stable. Kubicek, Hopf and Lynch argues that Primakov's pragmatism was essentially opportunistic manoeuvring, as Primakov had to resort to nationalistic rhetoric because Russian population was dissatisfied with the pace of economic reforms, as well as perceived highhandedness of the West.[83] They argue that simultaneously Russian business lobbies as well as Russian policy makers needed the West, which compelled Russia to be more pragmatic.[84] The stark realities of economic transition resulted in domestic disorder, corruption and poverty, and was exacerbated by the 1998 financial crisis, and therefore proved to be an obstruction for Russian Westward Atlanticism, while simultaneously kept Russian ambitious foreign policy grounded. [85] Russian economic situation negated the earlier pro-Western pro-liberal ideas within the country, as Russians were dissatisfied with the slow stalled reforms, and that in turn pressured Russian policy makers to be at least rhetorically opposed to the West, while simultaneously search for other regional trade partners and markets. Russian expectations concerning Western assistance were not and could not be met, and the euphoria regarding rapid change to market economy and liberalism also subsided. Primakov's strategy was intended to create a traditional multipolar environment, however, was hindered repeatedly due to domestic disorder, and financial instability.[86] Therefore, despite a change from pro-Western to sharp anti-Western rhetoric Russian foreign policy options were

[83] Hopf, T. (1999) Ibid.; Tsygankov, A.P. (2010) op. cit.; Baranovsky, V. (2000) op. cit. pg. 443–458.

[84] Kubicek, P. (1999) 'Russian foreign policy and the West', *Political Science Quarterly*, 114/4: 547–568; Lynch, A.A.C. (2001) 'The realism of Russia's foreign policy', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53/1: 37–41; Kassianova, A. (2012, July) 'Russia: still open to the West? Evolution of the state identity in the foreign policy and security discourse', *Europe-Asia Studies*, pg. 37–41.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Sakwa, R. (2008) op. cit. pg. 241–267., Lynch, A.A.C. (2001) Ibid. pg. 37-41.

constrained. While Russia continued to aspire to be a regional hegemon in its former Soviet space, it was compelled to acknowledge American and European geopolitical dominance.

This division within Russian elites regarding the West is explained by McFaul as he divided this period between Pro-Western pragmatists and Anti-Western pragmatists. [87]The previous group consists of groups with economic interests and lobby groups including Gazprom, oil companies, mineral exporters, and the bankers, influencing policy outcomes which resulted in somewhat asymmetric engagement in foreign policy. Russian business lobby groups and oligarchs were the Pro-Western pragmatists who had had limited set of interests including keeping Western funds channels open and not so much interest in other foreign policy aspects like NATO expansion, and Balkan conflicts. The anti-Western pragmatists like Russian military-industrial and security elite on the other hand desired equal treatment from the West and alternative funding sources to balance the West. The anti-Western pragmatists depended on reflexive anti-western sentiment to maintain their position, funding, and legitimacy in either bureaucracy or politics. McFaul explains that Russian foreign policy therefore suffered from instances of strain and inconsistency.

The constructivist argument of this period focused on the continuing crisis in Russian identity and defence of Russia's honour. Tsygankov claimed (without clarification) that Primakov's version of foreign policy objective fits the "defensive honour" vision.[88] The policy goals of Russia at this stage was shaped by Russia's relative decline, and desire to revive capabilities and prestige of a great power. Primakov realised that with actual diminished capabilities, the only way to maintain honour is to portray a stiff opposition to the West and NATO expansion. In relation with the West, Primakov insisted that Russia needs to "prove" her strength by balancing against the stronger power, in this case, the United States. In the context of growing security threats in Chechnya, a portrayal of strength was also needed to show Russia as a great power to both domestic and international adversaries. It is important to note here, that Tsygankov mentions honour as a cause that determined Russian actions, but in his examples, he has used logic of balancing against a stronger adversary to project strength, which falls essentially under neorealist theory. Tsygankov quotes Primakov as saying that NATO enlargement affects Russia "psychologically", and therefore a pragmatic foreign policy would ensure a Russia-China-India multipolar arrangement, to somewhat balance the overwhelming

[87] McFaul, M. 'Russia's Many Foreign Policies', *Demokratizatsiya,* 7: 393-412.

[88] Tsygankov, A. P. (2012) op. cit. pg. 172-195.

power of the United States. Like most constructivist theories, the analysis heavily relies on political rhetoric emanating from Moscow, in this instance, one particular politician, Yevgeni Primakov. [89]

Other Constructivist argument of this period also are broadly theoretical about the nature of the Russian state, without explaining how they define or explain Russian foreign policy. For example, Lo argued, as Piontkovsky and Hopf before him, that Russian behaviour was essentially caused by an identity crisis, where Russia's perception of the West is a declining civilisational entity, which needs to be engaged and feared at the same time, and it is guided by Russian crisis of identity (European/Eurasian) and insecurity (economic/socio-cultural). [90] Prizel argued that Russian national identity always reflected a nation's identity in contrast with "the other", that is Europe and the West, therefore Russia instinctively opposed Western dictates.[91] Russia, of course does not, as that is evident from the various cooperative partnerships even during the most trying of times between Russia and West, which points out that there are some other incentives at play.

The Constructivist analysis of Yeltsin's period, both in the first phase and the second phase raises valuable points in understanding the nature and character of Russian state and the influences on Russian elites, it also suffers from limitations, as arguments fail to provide a direct link between idea and measurable foreign policy output. While these are all valid observations about Russian identity crisis during the 1990s, none of them give us any testable measure for Russian behaviour. Tsygankov mentions that Primakov understood Russian domestic conditions are dismal due to the Chechen crisis, and needs a strong stabilisation but it is not clear how that could not be explained by more liberal regime stability argument. Tsygankov argues that real income at this stage fell drastically and therefore forced Primakov's pragmatism. Put simply, even when Primakov wanted to balance the West by looking for partners in India and China, Russia could not afford to antagonize the West as Primakov needed IMF assistance. While this is a logical explanation of Russian behaviour, it is hardly a Constructivist argument. Heller, Prizel and Piontkovsky while providing an understanding of factors which might or might not cause Russian behavioural changes, never provide a way to

[89] Ibid.

[90] Bobo, L. (2015) op. cit. and Piontkovsky, A. (2006) op. cit.

[91] Prizel, I. (1998) *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pg. 8.

measure ideational factors like historical experience and perception and how much in reality they shape Russian foreign policy. The Liberal analysis of Yeltsin's Presidency is comparatively straightforward and is better at explaining the pro-Western orientation of Russia immediately after the Soviet collapse, as well as the disillusionment of Russia with the West after failed economic policies.[92]

If one compares the Constructivist arguments and the Liberal arguments of this period, the Liberal argument is more logical, and could be used to determine the causes of Russian behaviours. For example, Constructivist logic of the identity crisis between Eurasians and Pro-Western Atlanticists is flimsy compared to the Liberal argument that the Russian economic crash during August 1998, and the subsequent Kosovo crisis severely diminished the influence of the Pro-Western Liberals in Russian policy making circles. The majority of constructivist arguments are predicated on rhetoric emanating from the political class but fails to account for the causal behaviour. Arguments like Primakov desiring a multipolar world with China and India, to balance against NATO enlargement is logical, but they do not make it conservative. Liberal theories on the other hand, appear more logical on why Russia might have looked for more multipolar alignments and diverse trade partnerships, and why Russia was more inclined to accept Western preponderance in European balance, given that domestic situation especially in the Caucasus was unstable. [93]

The Kosovo crisis, in particular illustrates a Liberal causal explanation why Russian foreign policy establishment regardless of ideology, goes rhetorically anti-Western to preserve domestic legitimacy while acting pragmatically in reality. As McFaul and other liberal theorists highlighted, Russian policy makers understood that Russia, collapsing under heavy economic stagnation, needed western engagement, but anti-Western sentiment was high during the NATO bombing campaign. As McFaul demonstrates, Russian politicians, carefully balanced their anti-Western rhetoric, while paying attention that the anti-Western sentiment on the streets of Russia never spills out of control. It allowed Russia to carefully position itself as a staunchly anti-interventionist country, while positioning itself as pro-peace and pro-International law. [94]

[92] Donaldson, R. H. (1999) op. cit.

[93] Ibid.

[94] McFaul, M. 'Russia's Many Foreign Policies', *Demokratizatsiya*, 7: 393-412.

Third phase: Rapprochement and tactical alignment

The third phase of Russian foreign policy started around the time Putin ascended the Russian leadership at the turn of the millennium. Putin's rise gave new directions to Russian foreign policy, one of a great power rapprochement, with a shift in orientation and objective [95] Putin aspired to be a partner or even a member of NATO and cement his partnership with the United States.[96] The primacy of the United States was implicitly recognised, and Putin was the first leader to call the United States after the September 11 attacks, and initially also did not respond to the United States unilaterally withdrawing from the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty which maintained strategic stability in Europe since the Cold War. Russian and US cooperation during the campaign in Afghanistan, sharing intelligence, and allowing US military presence in Central Asia and flight over Russian air spaces. While there were alternative routes that the United States could have taken in case of Russian reluctance, this cooperation highlighted a turn towards a tactical alignment of sorts during the early days of the War on Terror.

Liberal analysis of Russia's actions under Putin during this phase is more consistent with the idea how internal factors and regime stability shaped Russian policy abroad and focused on the domestic, institutional and the economic factors which influenced Putin's policy. The distinct and marked transition of Russia from Yeltsin to Putin symbolised Russia's return to the ranks of major powers and was starkly influenced by domestic level variables and economic prosperity which in turn led the Russian regime to be secured, and have more leverage in dealing with Europe and the US. [97]

There are of course minor differences in what liberal analysts argue with regards to Putin and how Moscow deals with foreign policy during the early Putin period. Compared to Kozyrev and Yeltsin's early era, where Russian foreign policy was influenced by a distinct democratic peace objective, the liberal analysis of Putin's early era suggests the primary objective of Russian government was and remained regime stability. The main factors which influenced

[95] Lo, B. (2008) op. cit.

[96] See, Trenin D. (2012) 'Putin the peacemaker?' *Foreign Policy.*

[97] Kaczmarski, M. (2014, July) 'Domestic Politics and Russia's Foreign Policy", *Warsaw, Russian Analytical Digest* 154; McFaul, M. (1997) 'A Precarious Peace: Domestic Politics in the Making of Russian Foreign Policy' *International Security* 22: 5–35.

Russian behaviour was therefore economic leverage and domestic stability and for that Russia wanted to have good relations and forge tactical alignments with the West. The Russian ruling political elite agreed on the essential argument that the Russian state needs to be strong and centralised in order to have a cohesive unified foreign policy objective. The foreign policy objective was to maintain Russian economic stability, use oil and gas as bargaining blocks in negotiation with Europe, try and find common grounds with Washington and use the rhetoric of the war on terror to solidify Russian domestic stability and suppress dissent. [98] Russia was waging the second Chechen war, and it was imperative for Russia to align with the West. It was in the immediate aftermath of the Kosovo bombing campaign, and Russia needed the West to not be overtly critical of its own Chechnya campaign, and Russia was worried that the West would give diplomatic and moral support to the rebel groups. Headley argues that from 1999 onwards Russian policy makers were talking about an "Islamist" arc of instability from Afghanistan to Turkey, while facing growing Islamist insurgency at home. Russian policy makers were baffled that the West was not seeing the infiltration of Chechen fighters by Al Qaeda. The American war on terror immediately after the World Trade Center attacks provided impetus to this idea that Russia was a natural ally against global Islamism, and helped Russia solidify its status as an important geopolitical actor, while stabilizing at home.[99] Russian cooperation with United States was from Russian side partly about gaining great power status, but mostly a tactical alignment, addressing Russia's own Chechnya crisis. [100] Russian cooperation during the Afghanistan invasion also proved Kremlin's willingness to act within the Western led international system, while acknowledging US hegemony, Putin pragmatically hijacked the war on terror to tackle and suppress the Chechnya insurgency, and ratchet up domestic and international support against Chechen militants. Russian domestic problems, regime stability and suppression of dissent was the primary goal. Sakwa summarised that a stable Russia, pursuing its national interest while aligning with the West was the primary foreign policy objective of Putin. [101]

[98] Cohen, A.(2007, November) 'Domestic Factors Driving Russia's Foreign Policy' The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder #2084; and Sutela, P. (2013) *The Political Economy of Putin's Russia* London: Routledge.

[99] Headley, J. (2003) 'Russia and NATO forge closer ties', *New Zealand International Review*, 28/5: 7-11.

[100] Ibid. Also, Headley, J. (2005). 'War on terror or pretext for power? Putin, Chechnya, and the 'Terrorist International'. *Australasian Journal of Human Security*, 1/2: 13-35.

[101] Sakwa, R. (2008) op. cit. pg. 241–267.

Constructivists like Tsygankov argued that Russian great power confidence came back due to the quick recovery from the 1998 financial crash. The economic recovery that coincided with Putin's first term alleviated much of Russian domestic woes and allowed Russia to chart a more assertive and coherent foreign policy, in a way, that the Russian ruling elite found this domestic economic resurgence useful to install a sense of pride and honour and patriotism, which in turn led to an uptick of regime support which allowed Russia to act more aggressively. [102] In search of a national identity and purpose, Putin combined czarist and Soviet symbols, adopting the czarist double-headed eagle as the national symbol and the Soviet national anthem (with new lyrics) while giving increased support to the Russian Orthodox Church and promoting orthodox and conservative forces abroad.[103] Tsygankov argues that Putin's personal sense of honour was one of the Russian state as a great European and Christian power, able to defend against external adversaries and threats. Putin therefore sought to join the West in "honourable" joint projects such as "fighting the global war on terror". [104]

It is important to mention that while Tsygankov talked about how "cooperative honour" explained Putin's tactical alignment with the West against Islamism and the war on terror, his examples could be attributed to traditional liberal analysis. For example, Tsygankov states that a "cooperative vision of honour" works when there is a recognition from the West, and Russian economic conditions made it attractive to foreign investors, which in turn helped in the Kremlin's desire to integrate with the West further.[105] Tsygankov also mentions quite correctly in the later part of his analysis, that Russian assertiveness and antagonism towards West increased after the colour revolutions which started around 2004-2005 but failed to mention why Russian behaviour changed as Russian economic conditions did not change much and Russia was still an economically attractive destination for the West. Cooperation over terrorism and central Asia also continued even after the Iraq war fallout and Russian Western relation

[102] Mankoff, J. (2009) *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, London: Rowman & Littlefield; . Tsygankov, A.P. (2007) 'Finding a Civilisational Idea: "West," Eurasia," and "Euro-East" in Russia's Foreign Policy', Geopolitics, 12/3: 375–399.

[103] Stent, A. E. (2008, August) 'Restoration and Revolution in Putin's Foreign Policy', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60/6: 1091. The primary argument of this school is this, the Russian elites think that the West cannot tolerate a strong and powerful Russia, and therefore in turn lets their foreign policy being defined with confidence and insecurity. Read, Lapidus, G. W. (2007, April-June) 'Between Assertiveness and Insecurity: Russian Elite Attitudes and the Russia-Georgia Crisis', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 23/2: 150; and Welch, D. & Shevchenko, A. 'Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy' *International Security*, 34/4: 63-96.

[104] Tsygankov, A. P. (2012) op. cit. pg. 118-37.

[105] Ibid.

despite all the bombastic rhetoric was broadly cooperative till 2008. The argument that Putin steered the course of Russian policy simply based on arbitrary measures of Christian honour, without any rational geopolitical calculations, seems extremely far-fetched.

Fourth phase: Return of Great Power Russia

The fourth phase of Russian foreign policy that started around 2003-04 saw Russian rapprochement and tactical alignment with the West come under strain. This period 2003 onwards saw a return of hard balancing and realpolitik in Russian foreign policy, which broadly continues to this day. Putin's second term starting from 2004 saw even more international disagreements between Russia and the West. [106] It is during this phase, alongside the US unilateral invasion of Iraq, and the perceived Western encroachment in Eastern Europe, due to the potential for NATO to expand membership in post-Soviet space in Ukraine and Georgia, as well as the colour revolutions added to Russian threat perceptions and exacerbated the traditional conflict of interests. [107] Broadly, this period marks the return of the Russian use of traditional hard power, more assertive foreign policy in its former spheres of influence, constant balancing tendency especially with United States. Russia alongside Germany and France opposed American intervention and was vocal about NATO expansions. Colour revolutions in former Soviet states like Georgia and Ukraine further strained the relation between West and Russia as Russia perceived them to be both a geopolitical threat as well as a threat to domestic regime stability. This great power resurgence reached a culmination point from Munich Conference 2007, and subsequently with Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, which highlighted that Russia is willing to actively use its military power when it comes to what it considers its core area of interest. [108]Russian intervention in Georgia also further sent a signal of deterrence to EU and NATO from pursuing expansion further eastward and marked a significant strategic shift in Russian foreign policy marking military hegemonic intentions. Scholars highlighted this period as the start of a completely unilateral and self-interested action

[106] De Haas, M. (2011) *Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century* London: Routledge.

[107] Sakwa, R. (2008) op. cit.; Tsygankov, A.P. (2010) op. cit.

[108] Putin Munich Conference Speech 2007 available at https://www.securityconference.de/en/about/munich-moments/a-breeze-of-cold-war/

of Russian foreign policy, and some even highlighted it as the potential start of a 'New Cold War' between Russia and the West. [109]

Why did Russia start to turn away from the West? Scholars are divided on that. Stoner and McFaul claimed that Putin's shift towards anti-Americanism, anti-liberalism, radical nationalism, and an ever more aggressive foreign policy toward his neighbours is a direct consequence of Russian domestic political and economic developments. [110] They both argue that despite occasional belligerence, the Russian relation with the West was relatively calm, and was only hampered after tumultuous elections of 2012, which turned Putin hostile to the idea of Western interference in Russian domestic politics. Leon Aron highlights that Putin enjoyed the first two terms with strong Russian economic growth, while in his third Presidential term, the domestic economic growth that Russia enjoyed, stopped, even with oil prices at a historic high, which might have influenced Putin to act more aggressively to divert domestic attention, in a continuation of the analysis that domestic politics primarily continued to shape Putin's foreign policy.[111] Rumer and Wallander argued that Russia maintains its aggressive diplomacy and energy sector as a leverage and maintain regime stability at home. Instead of military alliances, therefore, Russia seeks to diplomatically balance the United States, often playing Europe against US, as Russia remains relatively weak in institutions, with declining demographic and economic outlook. [112] Trenin states that during the first few years of Putin, Russia wanted to be friendly to the West, but was pushed around. The Putin administration came to the conclusion that the multipolar world idea of the 1990s is becoming a reality, and the relative decline of American power is a fact. Alongside, the Western model of democracy is no longer something to be imitated and perceived Western interference and economic warfare in Russian domestic affairs resulted in Russia taking an antagonistic role. That

[109] Sakwa, R. (2008) Ibid.; Lucas, E. (2009) 'EU–Russia relations: between cooperation and confrontation', *European View*, 8/2: 217–220; Also Lucas, E. (2009) *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces Both Russia and the West* London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

[110] McFaul/Stoner states that despite Putin's occasional belligerence, Putin was relatively stable as opposed to the West till 2012, when he started to think about preserving his regime after a tough election in Russia. Read, Kathryn Stoner & Michael McFaul (2015) op. cit. and 'Vladimir Putin', *The Washington Quarterly*, 38/2: 167-187.

[111] Aron, L. (2016, June) 'Statement before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs On US Policy toward Putin's Russia Drivers of Putin's Foreign Policy' AEI; Also, Aron, L. (2013) 'The Putin Doctrine', *Foreign Affairs*.

[112] Rumer, E. B. & Wallander, C. A. (2003) 'Russia: Power in weakness?', *The Washington Quarterly*, 27/1: 57-73.

coincided with Russian perception of Western interference in the colour revolutions in Russia's near abroad. According to Trenin, Russian leaders therefore started to use Russian "patriotism" as a mobilizing factor. [113] Russian policy makers were opposed to these colour revolutions as they viewed these events as foreign interference in former Russian sphere of influence and consequently a threat to Russian regime stability. Liberal analysis provides evidence that to tackle and thwart this perceived threat, since 2006 onwards, there has been a continuous political assault on the western idea of democracy promotion and intervention alongside creating youth movements within Russia like the Nashi, as a counterweight to the various youth movements that were the driving forces behind the colour revolutions in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine, while maintaining that the Western form of democracy is incompatible with Russia. [114]

Domestic regime stability is also regarded as the key component by another slightly different take within the broader liberal analysis of Putin's foreign policy, which focusses on Putin as an individual and his "cronies", and claims that it is the economic/political/survivalist interests of these elite that is the chief determinant of Russian policy. According to this thesis, Putin's Russia paid lip service to the Western institutions and order to maintain a strictly elite driven authoritarian model within Russia. Shevtsova therefore predicates Russian foreign policy as a reactive idea to the threats to this model. Shevtsova's case study is Ukraine, where Russian elites led by Putin lead to a public mobilisation against the threats to the motherland, and the "Putin Doctrine" legitimizing a harsher rule at home and a more assertive stance abroad. Putin's foreign policy is therefore based on the stance that he is opposed to anything that threatens his rule, any real or perceived threats, like colour revolutions in the near abroad, and any Great-power aspirations or rhetoric are "just a way of sustaining personalized power at a time when internal displays of might are no longer sufficient." Shevtsova argues that Putin Doctrine is based on an imitation of the liberal order, and what she calls Russian interpretation of liberal institutions to prolong its life and power structure. [115] The Putin doctrine, or Putinism,

[113] Trenin D. (2012) 'Putin the peacemaker?' *Foreign Policy*; 'Russia Leaves the West', *Foreign Affairs*, 85 (2006); 'Vladimir Putin's Fourth Vector: Changes in Russian Foreign Policy' *Russia in Global Affairs*, (2013); 'Russia's Strategic Choices' *Carnegie Policy Brief* (2007).

[114] Finkel E. & Brudny, Y. M. (2012) 'Russia and the colour revolutions' *Democratization* 19/1.

[115] Also, read Stent, A. E. (2005) 'America and Russia: Paradoxes of Partnership', in Motyl, A. J., Ruble, B. A., & Shevtsova, L. (eds.) *Russia's Engagement with the West: Transformation and Integration in the Twenty first Century* Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.

essentially calls on Putin and his allies and cronies deciding the policy of Russia based on their own sustenance.[116] Applebaum shares a similar thesis, which states that Putin and his "cronies" are essentially a product of the Soviet System,[117] who gained political ideas during the reign of Andropov, and for them the fundamental lesson was that the West is out to dismember Russia.[118] Russian and in turn their own economic and political survival therefore primarily depends on opposing the West at any cost, in every way possible. Nichols states that Putin is a "Sovok" and there is no concrete rational ideology, other than to recreate the last two decades of the Soviet Union system of a handful of Russian elites taking advantage and sharing the profits of the Russian economy. [119] A version of this line of analysis claims that Russian foreign policy is essentially run by a handful of lobby groups who are close to Putin, especially the oil and gas and energy lobby, and the military industrial lobby. The Russian energy lobby and Russian state therefore has similar interests and the influence of the energy sector on Russian behaviour is evident in Russian aggressive influence and will to use the weaponised oil and gas economy, over the post-Soviet space by such means as cutting off the supply of oil and gas, as an energy superpower. [120] The supremacy of the Russian energy sector is something which is regarded as the sole determinant and not an area to be bargained, according to this analysis. The primary national goal is therefore, to manage and strengthen the Russian role in global markets, and energy security is therefore a priority agenda. [121] A slightly different analysis was

[116] For more on this, read, Shevtsova, L. (2015, April) 'The Authoritarian Resurgence: "Forward to the Past"' in *Russia. Journal of Democracy* Article"; and 'The Ukraine Crisis: Falling into Putin's Trap', *American Interest*, (2014, March). On the Putin Doctrine, see Shevtsova, L. 'The Maidan and Beyond: The Russia Factor', *Journal of Democracy* 25 (2014, July): 74–82 quoting 2013 essay by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, "Russia's Foreign Policy Philosophy," and Vladimir Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation," 18 March 2014, at http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/6889. See also his September 2013 speech (in Russian) at www.rg.ru/2013/09/19/ stenogramma-site.html. Also, from the same "Authoritarian Resurgence" Lyudmila Klimentjeva, "Kremlin Plans to Toughen Control over Internet Providers—'Kommersant,'" 29 April 2014.

[117] For a detailed discussion on what the Soviet Systema entails, read Arbatov, G. (1992) "The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics" Hardcover – July1992 by Georgi Arbatov, Times Books.

[118] Applebaum, A. (2013, February) 'Putinism, the ideology' *Strategic Updates* LSE Ideas.

[119] Nichols, T. (2014, September) 'Russia's Leader Is Neither A Realist Nor A Nationalist', *The Federalist*.

[120] For a detailed read, see Goldman, M. I. (2008) *Petrostate: Putin, Power, and the New Russia* Oxford: Oxford University Press; and Baey, P. K. (2006) *Russian Energy Policy and Military Power: Putin's Quest for Greatness* London: Routledge.

[121] Case studies that corroborate this chain of analysis are the Ukraine-Russia gas standoff, interruption of deliveries in the South Caucasus, as well as Turkish Russian relations. Detailed discussions on this "energy superiority strategy" can be found in Isakova, I. (2006), op. cit.; Bugajski, J. (2004) *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism* Westport: Praeger; Rosefielde, S. (2005) *Russia in the 21st Century: The Prodigal Superpower*

that Russian foreign policy, is shaped by its military industrial complex, and that Russian aggressive actions in Syria and other near abroad is either due to an internal budgetary battle between its different segments of armed forces,[122] or a showcase of Russian weaponry to prospective buyers. [123]

If we return to the argument of colour revolutions, as an aside, it is important to mention that while there are not many realist analyses of current Russian foreign policy, especially under Putin, there is a similarity between realist and Liberal scholars highlighting the colour revolutions as one of the chief factors behind Russia turning antagonistic. As mentioned above, the Liberals highlight that colour revolutions were perceived by Russian elites as a threat to Russian regime stability and increasing interference by the West in domestic affairs of Russia's near abroad in the name of democratic promotion. Realist scholars also agree, at least on this point that colour revolutions and NATO expansion in Russia's near abroad was the final straw in the already toxic relationship between Russia and the West, although the causality is different. The recurrent theme of this line of analysis is that Russian assertive foreign policy from 2003 onwards had been a reaction to Western actions, which forced Russia to focus on more traditional geopolitical balancing roles. Putin's strategy here since 2003 is analysed as a pragmatic, fluid use of resources and power, as a means of statecraft, especially when there is in effect no specific grand strategy other than balancing the West by successfully using economic, political, and military resources. [124] The rapid successive European developments, especially NATO expansion and colour revolutions in former Soviet states, were regarded as a direct security threat to the Russian state, as well as a covert Western attempt to destabilize Russia's traditional sphere of influence. [125] The colour revolutions and new democratic governments in Georgia and Ukraine, especially was regarded by Russia as a threat to the status

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Baey, P. K. (2006) *Russian Energy Policy and Military Power: Putin's Quest for Greatness* (Contemporary Security Studies).

[122] Felgenhauer, P. 'Budgetary Fight in Moscow Sends US-Russian Relations Into Deep Crisis' *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 13/161.

[123] Gault, M. 'Is the Syrian war partly an ad for Russia's arms industry?', Reuters Blog Podcast (Feb 2016); Myers, S. L. & Schmitt, E. (2015) 'Russian Military Uses Syria as Proving Ground, and West Takes Notice' (Oct 2015), *The New York Times*.

[124] Oldberg, I. (2010) 'Russia´s great power strategy under Putin and Medvedev', Research monograph, Swedish Institute of International Affairs.

[125] Sakwa, R. (2008) op. cit.; Trenin, D. (2006) op. cit. Trenin, D. (2007) op. cit. Trenin, D. (2009) 'Russia Reborn-Reimagining Moscow's Foreign Policy' *Foreign Affairs*, 88:64.

quo and survival of the Russian state. [126] This line of analysis was continued more recently when Russian actions in the Baltics, Ukraine and Georgia drew renewed attention on Russian strategy, including how or if Russia uses hybrid tactics to sow discontent. Umland suggests Putin does not have a unified or coherent grand strategy as such, but rather reflexively playing on the fear of the West, and Russia, acting as a traditional great power here, is focused on dividing Europe and is making it up as it goes, an assessment shared by Galeotti. [127] Putin, therefore, is using a classic balancing tactics since 2003, and is using "pragmatic" divide and rule policy in Europe within NATO is highlighted in both Russian and EU analysis. [128]

Mearsheimer echoed similar arguments that Russia's growing aggressive actions, since 2004 which culminated in the Ukrainian crisis, were primarily reactions to what he terms as crawling "liberal hegemony" of the West for the last twenty years, including NATO expansion, and intervention in Kosovo. [129] The arguments were essentially similar that Moscow was pushed to the corner, as a great power, due to NATO/EU expansion, and saw its strategic and military interests threatened in Ukraine (and later Syria). As a result, according to Mearsheimer, as per the theoretical predictions of neorealism, it was inevitable that Moscow lashed out militarily, even at great cost of economic retribution.

From this lens, every action of Russia is a reaction to Western actions. Götz echoed similar arguments in explaining why Russian aggression towards Ukraine, underlining three separate causes for Russian behaviour namely the geographical location of Ukraine, the EU activism in

---

[126] Hale, H.E. (2006) 'Democracy or autocracy on the march? The colored revolutions as normal dynamics of patronal Presidentialism', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 39/3: 305–329; Ambrosio, T. (2007) 'Insulating Russia from a Colour Revolution: How the Kremlin Resists Regional Democratic Trends' *Democratization*, 14/2: 232–252.

[127] The Putin strategy is to divide Europe over missile defence. c.f. Stephens, P. (2007, April 12) 'Russia's new national security strategy: familiar themes, gaudy rhetoric' *Financial Times*; Galeotti, M. (2016, January) 'Russia's Strategy: looking scarier than you think', War on the Rocks.

[128] Lukyanov, F. (2012) 'Uncertain World: Putin the Realist, Medvedev the Liberal', [Online.] In: Sputnik International, 2012. Also, Barysch, K. (2007) 'Russia, realism and EU unity' Center for European Reform, 2007. Earlier, accusations of Russian meddling and using oil as a weapon of blackmail under Putin was made by both Vice President of the United States, Dick Cheney, and former Czech President Vaclav Havel, c.f. 'Russia is blackmailing Europe over energy, says Cheney. [Online.] In: *The Guardian* (2006).

[129] Mearsheimer's thesis is the first attempt to explain the variation of Russian behaviour from a theoretical perspective, from Putin's first two terms, to the current, more aggressive avatar. Mearsheimer (2014, September/October) first wrote this thesis in 'Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault', *Foreign Affairs*, 93/5: 1-12; and then again in a reply to Michael McFaul's rebuttal of his earlier piece, in a separate rejoinder titled "Moscow's Choice," *Foreign Affairs*, 93/6 (2014, November/December): 167-171.

Eastern Europe, and the Ukrainian government's tilt towards a more pro-Western foreign policy. Götz maintains that a combination of these three factors led Russia to act more assertively towards Ukraine. [130] Bukkvoll analyses and reaches a similar conclusion about Russian actions in Crimea, stating that from the Russian perspective it looked like the West exploited Russian weakness in the near abroad, and used popular uprisings as a means of war and all that contributed to Russian interests being threatened. [131] Russian analysts also mostly share this line of assessment of Russia geopolitically balancing the West. Lukyanov wrote in 2016, that Putin's foreign policy is based on flexibility and predicated on the fact that the US hegemony and unipolarity is over and Russia is ready to take back its place in a great power rivalry. [132]Arbatov shares the same assessment of Russian world view, stating that the collapse of the world order is taken as an inevitability in Russian policy circles, [133] as does Karaganov, who predicts that in future, there will be some sort of tactical alignment with China, when it comes to providing economic boost and security in the broader Eurasian region.[134]

Summary

As discussed above, on careful reading of the literature on Russian foreign policy, four distinct phases can be determined, which shows broad continuity. The period from Soviet disintegration to the current government of Putin's third term, Russia managed to traverse the different political fragmentations, weak geostrategic and military status, international systemic constraints, and economic swings and resultant contradictory pulls in charting a foreign policy. The first phase is from Yeltsin's first foreign policy speech in 1991 and lasts broadly until 1994. Russian foreign policy in this phase was consistently pro-western, and focused on economic development, political and economic liberalisation, and reforms, and oriented towards having a friendly relation with former adversaries in Europe and US. The second phase lasted from 1995 to 1999, around the start of the First Chechen war was waged, which resulted in some political differences with the West. It continued with Primakov's premiership, and

[130] Götz, E. (2015) 'It's geopolitics, stupid: explaining Russia's Ukraine policy', *Global Affairs*, 1:1, 3-10.

[131] Bukkvoll, T. (2016) 'Why Putin went to war: ideology, interests and decision-making in the Russian use of force in Crimea and Donbas', *Contemporary Politics.*

[132] Lukyanov, F. (2016) 'Putin's Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place' *Foreign Affairs*. 95:30.

[133] Arbatov, A. (2014, 24 September) 'Collapse of the World Order?' *Russia in Global Affairs*.

[134] Karaganov, S. (2016, 1 August) 'How the World Looks From the Russian Perspective' *Russia in Global Affairs*.

resulted in a more multipolar and pragmatic approach towards foreign policy and was parallel to widespread disillusionment within Russia with failed economic reforms, and hard-line pushback against decreasing pro-western factions in the Yeltsin government. However, even during this time, with all the rhetorical animosity, Russia acknowledged NATO and US hegemony, due to its own diminished military and relatively weak economic status. While there was a search for more pragmatic manoeuvring, overall, it did not affect much qualitative change in Russian behaviour, when it comes to NATO expansion, the Kosovo war and the colour revolutions.

The third phase of Russian foreign policy coincides with Putin's rise to power, and Russia's second Chechen war. Due to shared interests over the threat of Islamists and conflict in Central Asia and Caucasus, there was a tactical alignment with the United States and NATO which was solidified even further after September 11th attack on World Trade Center and resulted in intelligence cooperation during the campaign in Afghanistan. Ultimately, the fourth phase of Russian foreign policy, started around 2003, coinciding with the US invasion of Iraq. This is the final stage, which continues to this day. Differences over NATO expansion, colour revolutions in former Soviet and Eastern bloc countries, US/NATO interventionism in Iraq and Libya, influenced Russia to chart a more hard-balancing approach to foreign policy, with more traditional great power roles in near abroad. Russia in this phase, also was not shy to use overt and covert force, including hard power and interventions, in what Russia considered its traditional spheres of influence, regardless of how Russian economic strength was.

Current Russian assertive foreign policy also forces scholars to ponder if the world is indeed in a new Cold war. [135] Russian interventions in Syria and Georgia, its interference in Ukraine, and covert operations in the Baltics and Finland, is compelling evidence of Russia in a more traditional great power role, considerably more assertive and different from the first three phases discussed above.[136] While Russian foreign policy, always had a guiding component of national interest even at its most liberal phases, it has now eventually arguably reacquired a foreign policy based on hard power balancing.[137] The Russian foreign policy since the

[135] Legvold, R. (2014, July/August) 'Managing the New Cold War' *Foreign Affairs.*

[136] 'An evolving and assertive Russia; a future threat or opportunity for Europe and America?' Defence Academy of the United Kingdom available online at http://www.da.mod.uk/Publications/category/91/an-evolving-and-assertive-russia-a-future-threat-or-opportunity-for-europe-and-america-15705

[137] Bew, J. (2015, 15 December) 'The Syrian War and the return of great power politics', *The New Statesman.*

Georgian war had its shares of cooperation with the West, even an arguably failed attempt at rapprochement, but insofar they have been only tactical changes, nominal, rather than substantial.[138] It can be argued, that there is an observable common pattern is a short phase of cooperation like the first phase of Yeltsin/Kozyrev and immediately after 9/11, followed by longer phases of pragmatic power politics. The first phase of Atlanticism was followed by active seeking of multipolarity. The rapprochement and intense phase of cooperation immediately after World Trade Center attack was followed by an ongoing and active Great power balancing.

The analysis of Russian foreign policy also follows specific traditions and schools all of which provide valuable insights. The constructivist and liberal analysis of Russian foreign policy as mentioned above, focusses broadly on cultural and economic/domestic influences, and provide significant explanation with regards to Russian state behaviour. They both are also somewhat limited in their explanatory power. Considering the Constructivist analysis first, it provides valuable understanding on what might "influence" the ideas behind Russian state behaviour. It explains the notion of conceptual vacuums and role of ideas, the role of honour, identity and pride, and civilisational exceptionalism, and how it might influence Russia.[139] It however doesn't provide any measurable understanding on how much such ideas influence actual policy.[140] For example, a typical constructivist analysis of Russia would suggest that Russian civilisational pride and the resurgence in Orthodox Christian identity shapes Russian support for conservative forces and far right parties within Europe, but it then fails to explain the cooperation between Russia and the West during the same period of time, nor does it mention that Russia funds not just far right, but also far left groups within EU, as a means to destabilize Europe rather than to pursue a grand strategy based on a Christian conservative ideal. [141] A common such argument is that Russia is positioning itself as a cultural Christian conservative bastion and is promoting similar conservative forces across Europe. That, however, fails to

[138] Zygar, M. (2016, 9 December) 'The Russian Reset that never was' *Foreign Policy*.

[139] Lavrov, S. (2016)"Russia's Foreign Policy: Historical Background" for "Russia in Global Affairs", March 3, 2016

[140] Maitra, S. (2016, 6 April) 'The Deceptively Romantic Historical Musings of the Russian Foreign Minister', War on the Rocks, available online at http://warontherocks.com/2016/04/the-deceptively-romantic-historical-musings-of-the-russian-foreign-minister/

[141] Petro, N. (2015) 'Russia's Orthodox Soft Power' US Global Engagement, Carnegie Council report; Dal Santo, M. (2016) 'The real Trump-Putin connection' Lowy Institute.

explain that Russia is fundamentally supportive of any forces from any side of the political spectrum, regardless of conservatism or not, as long as those forces are opposed to EU and the liberal world order. The idea that Russia is culturally conservative and/or Putin and his regime is guided by cultural and civilisational exceptionalism, fails to explain the deviations of Putin's foreign policy and its continuing cooperation with the West when it comes to intelligence sharing and space research and non-proliferation and Iran and North Korea talks. [142]

Similarly, although it provides significantly more consistent analysis, liberal economic argument has limitations in explaining Russian aggressive behaviour, regardless of the strength of Russian economy.[143] Barring few alignments, like one over the Libyan intervention, it is observable that Russia has only grown increasingly more assertive, and willing to use hard power, especially in its sphere of influence, regardless of its declining and weakening economy.[144] The economic argument however might be helpful in explaining to a limit on why Russia might not have carried on an intervention in Ukraine and changed gear from direct intervention and annexation in Crimea to a more low tempered destabilisation. It might also help explain Russian limited or shifting strategic goals and achievement in Syria.[145] But overall Russian behaviour since 2003 as discussed above, and increasing will to use hard power, falls in line with traditional great power behaviour, as in great powers act as ruthlessly when it perceives its interests to be under threat, and regime type or economic condition does not matter as such when it comes to defending interest or spheres of influence. [146] In the last two years, Russia has adopted the official view that any uprising in any area which Russia perceives under its sphere of influence, including Syria and Ukraine, to be some sort of non-military warfare by the West. From viewing colour revolutions as an ideological threat to Russian domestic regime, Russian view has now changed to a position where any opposition, or intervention anywhere in Russian sphere is considered active Western interference with a geostrategic zero-

[142] Rovner, J. (2015, 14 September) 'Searching for strategy in Putin's Russia', 'Dealing with Putin's strategic incompetence', August 12, 2015, War on the Rocks.

[143] 'Vladimir Putin Just Wants to Be Friends' Exclusive Interview. 8 Sep 2016 Bloomberg Businessweek.

[144] Bew, J. (2015)'The Syrian War and the return of great power politics', 15 December *The New Statesman*; Legvold, R. (2014, July/August) op. cit. .

[145] Gvosdev, N. K. (2016) 'Is Russia Really Winning in Syria and Ukraine?' *The National Interest*; Ashford, E. (2016) 'Is Russia Really 'Winning'?' *The National Interest*.

[146] Ibid.

sum outlook. [147] Domestic stability explanation therefore does not explain Russian intervention in Syria.

It therefore leads to a next logical query. What then led or influenced to this Russian assertive foreign policy, and what explains it, if not economics, or ideas? The next chapter lays down a theoretical understanding of realism, as well as the basic assumptions of Balance of Threat theory, and subsequently test those assumptions vis-à-vis Russian behaviour to see if the actions match the dictates of theory.

[147] Nicolas, B. (2016) 'Russia's "militarization" of colour revolutions' *Policy Perspectives* 4/2.

Chapter 3: **Theoretical Framework**

The aim of this project is to analyse recent Russian behaviour from a theoretical framework as a great power, to seek and find if there is any predictable pattern in its behaviour. The approach is deductive, whereby an attempted explanation is provided on how the Russian behaviour is influenced by other external factors, and if there are any observable patterns to it which will in future help in formulating policy. The scope of this project is therefore narrow and case specific and neorealism is chosen as a preferred theoretical framework.

This chapter attempt to explore the intra-realist debates with regards to whether neorealism is or can be successfully used as a theory of foreign policy and illustrate why the theoretical framework of neorealism is chosen to demonstrate the behavioural pattern of contemporary Russian foreign policy. In short, what is realism in international relations, and why should one employ neorealism as a theory to understand great power behaviour, if it can even be done successfully. To understand if Russia acts within the confines of neorealism, as a realist great power, this chapter attempts to therefore clarify what realism as a theoretical framework entails, and touch upon the tenets of neorealism which specifically deal with great power behaviour, before introducing the Balance of Threat theory used for the purpose of empirical testing and case studies in the upcoming chapters.

In light of that, this chapter will be divided into parts, wherein first, I will briefly discuss, and touch upon the relevant tenets of neorealism and the theories within the school of neorealism which will be suitable for subsequent analysis and deal with the concern that the theory of neorealism, including its basic assertions are capable enough to perform as a broad theoretical framework and can be actually used as a theory of foreign policy. Realism is both a theoretical paradigm, as well as a method of enquiry. Realism, on the whole contains within itself different branches, and sub-theories, explaining specific behavioural patterns. The overall purpose of this thesis is to find if realism, specifically neorealism, in some ways, explain or help understand Russian foreign policy. For the purpose of this thesis, Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory is used, as my theory to explore Russian behaviour. The template followed in this chapter is similar to the ones Walt used in his own works on alliances and revolutions.

The assumptions and hypotheses set forth in this chapter hints at how a great power would behave facing the combination of factors, and how Russia might have behaved. In the previous chapter I highlighted how Russian balancing behaviour are observed in phases. To test that behaviour with the general hypotheses presented in this chapter, there is a need for cases and a body of evidence which will help determine if the theory indeed explains the phases and patterns in Russian foreign policy after Soviet collapse. I would then proceed to review briefly the logic of balancing in realism, as discussed in detail in the previous chapters, and then explain the different assumptions of balance of threat theory, how balance of threat works when mixed with external factors like revolution, and attempt to formulate some testable predictions. This will help understand why Russia balances against threats, and not powers per se. The chapter deals with testing the theory, some brief general hypotheses, followed by brief case specific predictions, details on why the cases were chosen, methodology and limitations. Given the subject matter and scope, this chapter is designed to be longer in length than the other chapters, as a detailed discussion of theory is necessary.

The debate over neorealism, is twofold. Neorealism, as derived from realism, is both a philosophical tradition, as well as a social science research programme, therefore could logically pose an infinite number of interpretations and debates. It is important to mention here, that even though Kenneth Waltz's theory of neorealism is the canonical baseline with or from which all structural realist concepts and sub-theories are derived, it is by no means considered complete and perfect, by either Waltz himself or other realists, and is both modified and complemented by several other theories, sub-theories, and doctrines, some of which are themselves part of ongoing scholarly debates. Neorealism as a philosophical tradition is therefore a mutating and evolving concept, and it does not fall within the scope and ambit of this project to attempt such a grand discussion on that, and no attempt will be made as such.

As mentioned above, it is imperative to remember, that the attempt here is more on theory testing, rather than theory building, and therefore the major focus in the upcoming chapters will be on testing Russian behaviour against the theories and more essentially the sub-concepts of neorealism, notably security dilemma and offense-defence theory, which are discussed here, as those concepts specifically deal with great power behaviour and can be tested against empirical evidence like policy papers, archived speeches, troop movements, which is the key intention of this project.

Russia is a great power, and realism dictates that great powers have the biggest impact on international politics. There is consensus that current great powers are categorised broadly on the basis of power dimension, spatial dimension, and status. [148] A great power is therefore assumed to be a country, among a set of countries, which possess more influence over other countries, and more effect on world politics and in International Relations.[149] Also categorised by Kenneth Waltz, who shed light on the characteristics of a great power by these five following criteria, namely population and territory; resource endowment; economic capability; political stability and competence; and military strength.[150] By all of the aforementioned indices, Russia qualifies as a great power. [151]

What is Neorealism?

Realism, as proposed by Hans Morgenthau, was predicated on some key assumptions, chief among which was the idea of balance of power.[152] Kenneth Waltz draws on traditional realists

[148] Danilovic, V. (2002) *When the Stakes Are High—Deterrence and Conflict among Major Powers* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. pg. 27, 255-28.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

[151] As recently as 2014, US President Barack Obama claimed that Russia is "at best" a regional power and not a great power, per se. While some may wonder if a great power is still not a global power but a regional power, it is discussed the reasons why Russia is granted as a great power, for the purpose of this project. (Further discussions which corroborate Russia's great power status may include, Nixey, J. [2015] 'Is Russia still a key world power?' Russia and Eurasia Programme head, Chatham House" BBC News 21 Dec 2015 and Trenin, D. [2014] 'Russia's great-power problem', *The National Interest*). There might be a cause of argument that Austro-Hungarian empire, by that logic, was not a great power, as it was powerful only within Europe. That argument is flawed. The fact that Austro Hungarian empire was influential inside Europe, which at that point of time included colonial powers which covered most of the globe, and those same powers could not afford to form any balancing coalition within Europe without keeping the Austro-Hungarian empire in mind, proves beyond doubt how much influence it wielded within the continent. Regardless of the spatial dimension, one can safely argue Austro-Hungarian empire was a great power. For further reading, see, Mead, W R 'The Seven Great Powers' (January 4, 2015) *The American Interest*. Also, Taylor, AJP (1954). *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* 1848–1918. The Oxford History of Modern Europe, OUP; *Diplomacy in a Changing World*. Ed. by Stephen D. Kertesz and M. A. Fitzsimons. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), and Iggers and von Moltke *In the Theory and Practice of History*, Bobbs-Merril (1973).

[152] First, Morgenthau regarded states as the key actors in the World. Secondly, that the natural state of international politics is anarchic, which lays emphasis on the lack of hierarchy of the system. Morgenthau acknowledges treaties and institutions but is sceptical of their overall power. Thirdly, states try to achieve and increase power. Fourth, this seeking of power states acts as organic beings, which is essentially a reflection of human nature. Fifth, in the pursuit of security or power, states usually act rationally. Sixth, states also use force, or intend to use force as an important tool of statehood. See, Morgenthau, H. J. (1978) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Fifth Edition, New York: Alfred A. Knopf. pg. 4-15.

like Morgenthau.[153] While Morgenthau was ambivalent about the possibility of developing a rationalist scientific theory of international politics, Waltz adopts for the first time, a workable, systemic, structural approach.[154] Waltz's theory is considered canonical if one utilizes it as a theoretical framework for a project which defines or establishes an explanatory behaviour of foreign policy, somewhat contrary to what even Waltz wanted at times. This framework has been the target of both different schools of realism, and even non-realists. Of all realist approaches, Waltz's neorealism is assuredly the most influential and certainly the most controversial, and undoubtedly the target and approach of most scholars. It is considered that Waltz's theory has achieved a "position of intellectual hegemony in the discipline".[155]

According to Schmidt, it 'established the basis of the neorealist school of thought and has since become one of the leading texts in the field'. [156] Donnelly mentions that it 'was for a decade the most influential theoretical work in the academic study of international relations'.[157] Ruggie argues that 'Rarely has a book so influenced a field of study', as does Brown who states that 'Theory' 'is, justly, the most influential book on International Relations theory.[158] Keohane states that the significance of Waltz's theory 'lies less in his initiation of a new line of theoretical inquiry or speculation than in his attempt to systematize political realism into a rigorous, deductive theory of international politics'. [159] Buzan, Jones and Little argue that Waltz's

---

[153] Waltz, KN, "Theory of International Politics", 1979, Chapter 1.

[154] Hans J. Morgenthau (1978) op. cit. (Neorealism adopts the basic tenets from classical realism, the anarchic nature and states being the primary actors. But classical realism is not the framework which is adopted for the project. For further detailed discussion on the tenets of classical realism, please refer, Gilpin, R. G. (1984) 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', *International Organization* 38/2 (Spring): 287-304.

[155] See Vasquez, J. & Elman, C. (eds.) (2002) *Realism and the balancing of power: A New Debate* Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall; Elman, C. & Elman, M. F. (eds.) (2003) *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* Cambridge: MIT Press.

[156] B Schmidt, "The political discourse of anarchy" 1998
http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~plam/irnotes07/Schmidt1998.pdf

[157] J Donnelly, Realism and international relations, 1998
http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam032/99053676.pdf

[158] Ruggie, J. G. (1998) *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization* New York: Routledge; Brown, C. (2009) *Understanding International Relations* London: Red Globe Press. pg. 41-2.

[159] Keohane, R. O. (1986) 'Realism, neorealism and the study of world politics', in Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and its Critics* New York: Columbia University Press. pg. 15.

development of 'the idea of a structural explanation for the logic of power politics' stimulated interest 'in the philosophical foundations of International Relations theory'. [160]

Neorealism assumes systemic approaches to study and determine state behaviour based on structures. The fundamental concepts of neorealism revolve around the concept of anarchy, structure, polarity and balancing behaviour and national interest.[161] Waltz informs that, anarchy does not necessarily mean chaos or disorder but rather an absence of hierarchy.[162] According to Waltz's theory of neorealism or structural realism, there is no overarching all imposing global authority that provides security and stability in the international system.[163] World politics is therefore lacking a structural hierarchical organisation as opposed to domestic politics, which is comparatively more hierarchical and centralised. This international system with its 'anarchic structure' has implications, as Waltz talks about the structures which can suddenly change as well, due to systemic changes, like the emergence of bigger powers, or revolutions.[164] In multipolarity, the chances of conflict increase, whereas in bipolarity the system is more stable. The reason is states are drawn to the strength of poles, just as during the Cold War, and that in turn maintains a relatively peaceful world. [165] Also, perception about the intention of the other pole is comparatively clear and easy to measure for strategic calculations and strategic communications, compared to a multipolar system, where it is much more difficult. In short, the system forces states, to take sides, just as they were forced to accept the new bipolarity during the Cold War. [166]

[160] Buzan, B., Jones, C., & Little, R. (1993) *The Logic of Anarchy: Neoliberalism to Structural Realism* New York: Columbia University Press.

[161] Waltz, K. N. (1979) op. cit.

[162] Waltz, Theory, pg. 91

[163] Ibid.

[164] Waltz, K. N. (2000) 'Structural realism after the Cold war' *International Security*, 25/1: 5–41

[165] Gaddis deals extensively on why bipolarity was the stable, for reasons like the American capitalism not being expansionist like Imperialism, the advent of nuclear weapons, Mutually Assured Destruction, and rules of Superpowers understanding the importance of communication. See, Gaddis, J. L. (1986) 'The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Post-war International System', *International Security*, 10/4: 99-142.

[166] Waltz, Theory, Chapter 3.

As a result of this anarchical system, every actor in this system is acting in its own interest, and "self-help" is the norm. Survival is the key objective in this system.[167] Nation states, and great powers, are therefore the primary unit or actors in this system, and they act in accordance with their interest. In an anarchic system, states are guided by their constant insecurity and notion of survival. International structure, rather than regime types therefore decide how states interact with each other.[168] Waltz's structural realist approach strives to cover a gap in the classical literature and helps in explaining why states behave broadly in similar ways despite their different forms of government and diverse political ideologies.[169]

Waltz's systemic theory and balance of power forms the bulk of his neorealist theory, and is further enriched by other scholars, concepts which form baselines and frameworks in the course of this project. Waltz suggests in an "anarchic world" the absence and presence of a government both guarantees violence, and that no human order is without violence. Waltz tries to explain that the structure of international politics influences and limits the cooperation between states, and structures also encourage certain behaviour and penalize others who do not conform. Waltz explains this rationale, that there are instances where states and powers ignore balance-of-power logic and act in non-strategic ways due to various internal, domestic, unit-level variables which is why it is difficult to predict individual state behaviour; however, when states do act irrationally, the system punishes them.[170] On the other hand, states that act rationally are usually rewarded for their smart behaviour by the system. Balance of power, therefore, explains such results and patterns, and leads researchers to believe and predict that states will engage in balancing, and strong tendency towards balancing will be more than bandwagoning between states. "States do not willingly place themselves in situations of increased dependence. In a

[167] Ibid, p. 93

[168] Mearsheimer, JJ. "Reckless States and Realism" International Relations June 2009 vol. 23 no. 2 241-256

[169] A further detailed discussion of this point is found in "The Fate of Nations: The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" by Michael Mandelbaum, where it is explained why "Two states that are similarly situated in the system but have different domestic orders will tend to pursue similar security policies." The behaviour of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War was therefore decided by more by the fact that each was a superpower in a bipolar structure than by the fact that one was democratic and the other Communist. Ideology mattered less, according to Mandelbaum and the system mattered more. Waltz himself contributed on this point, predicting the behaviour of Iran during the debate on whether they should be having a nuclear bomb, and how it might affect their state behaviour. Waltz's point was, the state behaviour won't change much, and Iran will, much like Mao's China, be a responsible stakeholder in the international community.

[170] Ibid.

self-help system, considerations of security subordinate economic gain to political interest" Waltz observed. [171]

The anarchic structure of the international system constrains and limits the behaviour of states, according to Waltz, and as a result, bipolarity, or multipolarity would always be produced by the system, which in itself would produce a tentative balance of power.[172] That might not last, due to instances of systemic changes due rise of domestic and unit level variables failures like for example rise of ultra-nationalism after the First World War, but eventually it would return to a balance guaranteed by a balance of power and deterrence factor, the reason being that the system will force the states to act in such ways.

Waltz and his systemic theory, therefore, relies on the Darwinian logic of the system, as the states which misbehave or act irrationally are punished. Waltz talks about 'the process of selection', which explains why 'those who conform to accepted and successful practices more often rise to the top', while those who do not 'fall by the wayside'. [173] Waltz claims that it does not matter whether states in the long run are either revisionist or status quo power, the international structure would push them to pursue policies that would result in a balance of power. [174] Waltz maintains for example, that states should not try to pursue hegemony, because it goes against the logic of rational behaviour in a systemic theory, the logic being, the moment one state will seek hegemony, and the other states will be forced to choose to balance against the rising hegemon. Waltz also argues, despite that, sometimes states do seek hegemony and end up being balanced by other states or being punished by the system, wherein states overreach and perish, Imperial Germany and Imperial Japan as well as Nazi Germany, being such examples of reckless great powers. According to Waltz, smart states should realize the folly of ambition and will avoid seeking absolute hegemony and will seek to gain an 'appropriate amount of power'. In the eventuality that states seek additional power, Waltz maintains that their more important goal remains to ensure that other states do not gain power at their expense. 'The first concern of states', he maintains, 'is not to maximize power, but to maintain their

[171] Waltz, K. N. (2008) *Realism and International Politics* London: Routledge.

[172] Freyberg-Inan, A. & Harrison, E., & Patrick, J. (eds.) (2009) *Rethinking Realism in International Relations* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. pg. 29-30.

[173] Waltz, *Reflections*, p. 330; Waltz, *Theory*, pg. 92, 118.

[174] Ibid.

positions in the system.'[175] Under the theoretical framework of realism, therefore, one can assume that states will always be concerned about their survival and would seek a favourable balance in the existing or altering balance of power.

Neorealism and state behaviour

Drawing from Waltz's baseline, neorealist literature guides us to some basic distilled predictions regarding state behaviour. States tend to balance. States prefer to prioritize relative gains, rather than seeking absolute gains. States prefer to be more aggressive when they perceive that offence is preferable to defence. Here I explain each of these assumptions, to portray a clearer picture of great power behaviour, operating under the confines of realism.

The first set of predictions is related to internal balancing within states. Anarchy in the system does not necessarily mean violence, but rather a system of self-help, however, anarchy limits cooperation between states. Waltz identifies two ways in which the structure limits cooperation. He states, "the condition of insecurity--at the least, the uncertainty of each about the other's future intentions and actions--works against their cooperation. A state worries about a division of possible gains that may favour other "more than itself." and "a state also worries lest it become dependent on others" through trade and/or cooperation, and therefore also chooses to limit its cooperation with other states. [176] He underscores that states do not willingly place themselves in situations of increased independence, since a self-help system, considerations of security subordinate economic gain to political interest. [177] The structure of the system forces states into this kind of behaviour, which in turn leads to states forming balances and balancing coalitions. Waltz draws three major conclusions with regards to balancing. States are unitary actors who seek their preservation. States seek to achieve this goal either through internal balancing (increasing economic and military strength) or external balancing (creating alliances) against rival states or peers. Finally, Waltz contrasts balancing and bandwagoning, wherein weaker states choose to ally with the stronger state. Waltz posits that "because power is a means not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions." [178] Waltz notes that the fundamental reason why the anarchic international system

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Waltz, *Theory*, pg. 105-7.
[178] Ibid. p. 126

restricts cooperation: insecurity and unequal gains; in the context of anarchy, each state is uncertain about the intentions and resolve of others and is afraid that the possible gains resulting from cooperation may favour other states more than itself, and thus lead it to dependence on others.

Stephen Walt adds on to this traditional balance of power theory. [179] According to him states will balance against power, to protect themselves, and states actually balance against threats and not just power alone.[180] "Balance of Threat" theory compliments and modifies the fundamental assumption of the balance of power theory, which is a core tenet of both classical and neorealist theory and predicts that states attempt to prevent a potential hegemon by balancing against it.[181] Bandwagoning on the other hand also happens, due to both defensive and offensive reasons, as exemplified by Mussolini's Italy and Stalin's Soviet Union, and Walt draws the inference that states can be attracted to strength, especially during times of tension and conflict. The more a state demonstrates its strength, the more likely other states which observe the strength are supposed to be joining it.

Walt's theory of Balance of Threat is used as a framework for this thesis. The baseline of this theory (which is tested in this thesis), is that states (and especially great powers) balance against threats, rather than against power alone. The four factors which affect this balancing behaviour are, aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capability, and offensive intentions.

---

[179] "[…] Realists believe that: (1) the state is the primary actor in world politics; (2) stares weigh options and make policy decisions in a more-or-less rational (3) security is the fundamental aim of states; and (4) power, especially military power, is the most important factor shaping international political life. Most Realists' argue that systemic forces (e.g., relative power) exert a greater influence on state than unit-level factors do, but no Realist maintains that unit-level factors exert no influence at all. In fact, Realists disagree on how much attention should be paid to or unit-level factors. […] Most importantly, Realism does not prescribe any particular strategy or national policy. Because Realists believe that the external environment heavily shapes the foreign policies of states, their policy prescriptions must rest on an assessment of the situation facing a given state at a particular point in time […]" (Walt, S. M. (1992) 'Alliances, Threats, and U.S. Grand Strategy: A Reply to Kaufmann and Labs' *Security Studies*, 1/3: 448–482.) as quoted in Bock, A. M. & Henneberg, I. (2013) 'Why balancing fails theoretical reflections on Stephan M. Walt's "Balance of Threat" Theory'.

[180] Walt, S. (1985) 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power' *International Security* 9: 3-43.

[181] As an empirical example of this logic of states allying with other state, preferably lesser powers to balance against bigger threats, is exemplified by England with France against Germany and Austrian empire (the rising hegemons) and United States rapprochement with China during the Sino-Soviet split. Also, see, Waltz (1979) pg. 118–121.

Aggregate power is the sum total of a state's power, including factors such as population, industrial and military capability, technological prowess, *et cetera* which adds on to a state's threat component. As power can be threatening as well as rewarding, aggregate power therefore can influence both balancing and bandwagoning. Since the ability of power projection also declines or increases depending on the distance, threat perceptions are also influenced based on proximate distance and the vicinity of the threat. When it comes to offensive power, states might simply realize that balancing is not an option. If the offensive power is rapidly increasing in the neighbourhood then bandwagoning is a viable option. As Walt states, "When offensive power permits rapid conquest, vulnerable states may see little hope in resisting. Balancing may seem unwise because one's allies may not be able to provide assistance quickly enough." [182]

Finally, perception is an important factor, as states that appear threatening influence other states to balance. Offensive intention therefore leads to balancing behaviour. Walt sums up his theory of alliance formations and balancing with the following three points; states prefer to form alliances to balance rather than bandwagon, ideology is usually a weaker cause of alliance formation than interests, and only interests form alliances, although aid reinforces alliances, but rarely creates them in the first place. [183] The reason balancing is more visible than bandwagoning behaviour is simply because states according to neorealist theory are interested in survival. Compared to that, in a bandwagoning world, states act in a much more competitive manner. Walt states that bandwagoning usually occur among weaker states, because they are "more vulnerable to pressure" and because their resources are inconsequential. Also, bandwagoning occurs when allies are unavailable and when leaders believe that potentially threatening states can be successfully appeased. That is because great powers try and appear both strong and dangerous to attract other smaller alliance partners, which results in smaller states allying with the strongest or the most threatening states, which logically result in intense international rivalries. Since states do not usually want, nor do that, it is Walt's theory that balancing behaviour is the norm. [184]

[182] Walt, S. (1985) 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power', *International Security* 9:3–43

[183] Ibid.

[184] Ibid.

Therefore, to summarize, the balancing behaviour of states that one can predict from alliance formations are distilled as follows. When there is a perceived existential threat, states usually align with other states to balance the threat, and the greater the threat, the greater the tendency to balance. More offensively oriented threats form more defensive coalitions against it, just as the perceived intentions of a state matters. If a perceived intention of a state is aggressive it results in more coalitions formed against it. Predictions on balancing and bandwagoning behaviour are these; Balancing is usually more common than bandwagoning, stronger states tend to balance against threats, whereas weaker states may balance or choose to bandwagon based on availability of alliance support, the vicinity of the threat, and the perceived aggressive intention of the threat. During wartime, it is also observed that states bandwagon with the side winning the war.

Often however, that leads to a Security Dilemma. [185] If a state is relatively strong, it could influence other states to build up its capabilities, which will in turn threaten the stronger nation, and will subsequently lead it to build up more capabilities. "If a nation is too strong, this can be provocative since most means of self-protection simultaneously menace others. On the other hand, if a nation is too weak, great dangers arise if an aggressor believes that the status quo powers are weak in capability or resolve. Thus, directly and indirectly, both strength and weakness can upset the balance of security in international relations."[186] For example, in a "Spiral Model" conflicts start when punishments are meted out with the expectation that it might reform or elicit better behaviour from the other power, which can also fail and elicit a more aggressive behaviour from the adversary. "Angered or frightened by the punishment, the other becomes more aggressive", thereby militarizing more or becoming more willing to use force to defend them. [187]In the "Deterrence model", on the other hand, a conflict may arise

[185] "A security dilemma broadly refers to a scenario wherein when two or more states each feel insecure in relation to other states, as a result, they are engaged in unintended provocations, which result in an escalation of the conflict" See Kanji, O. (2003) 'Security', in Burgess, G. & H. Burgess (eds.) *Beyond Intractability*. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado. Also, "A structural notion in which the self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs tend, regardless of intention, to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive and measures of others as potentially threatening" Herz, J. (1950) 'Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma', *World Politics* 2/2: 171–201, esp. at p. 157 The Dilemma is because no state desires the escalation, per Jervis, R. (1978) 'Cooperation under the security dilemma', *World Politics* 30/2: 167-74.; and Jervis, R (1978 [b]). *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* Princeton: Princeton University Press. pg. 58–113.

[186] Jervis, R. (1978 [2]) pg. 63.

[187] Ibid.

when appeasement influences the rival power to miscalculate, and it results in further threats and ultimately, a breakdown of deterrence. [188]

Finally, neorealists claim that power is a relative concept and that due to the anarchical nature of the international system any gain in power by one state is logically a threat to the other state. [189] Therefore, it is assumed that any potential exchange between states must exactly preserve the pre-existing balance of power (i.e., they focus on relative gains).[190] According to Robert Powell, the cost of fighting can be deduced by the offense defence balance. Powell assumes that states seek to maximize their economic welfare. Joseph Grieco also contends that the structure of the international system and the relative nature of power forces political leaders to view the world in relative terms. [191] The hypothesis is that all states and leaders therefore prefer relative gains. [192] Cooperation usually collapses in the model when the use of force is at

---

[188] Spiral model and deterrence model are both worthy explanations for conflict in defensive realism. Spiral model is used mostly in defensive realism, and deterrence model is more in line with offensive realism. The drawback of deterrence model is it assumes states are revisionist and power maximizing, and conflict happens when deterrence breaks down, whereas spiral model is more in line with a security maximizing role of a state. At this stage, I leave this discussion with a basic introduction of both the models, as it is not possible for me to claim Russia is a revisionist offensive realist state or a defensive realist state, which will only be clear with further enquiry and empirical evidence. For further detailed discussion on these models, please refer to Jervis, R. (1976) *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chapter 3.

[189] Rousseau, David L. Relative or Absolute Gains: Beliefs and Behavior in International Politics (It is accepted that cooperation is rare in an international system characterised by anarchy "Carr 1939; Morgenthau 1948; Waltz 1979; 4 Mearsheimer 1994/5") "Grieco (1988a, 1888b, 1990) has challenged the institutional theorists by claiming that they have not adopted all the central assumptions of realism. That is, state leaders will accept any accord that makes the state better off regardless of the gain achieved by any other state. However, power is by definition a relative concept (Dahl 1957). According to realists, any increase in power by the Soviet Union during the Cold War translated into a decrease in the power of the United States. Grieco argues that concern over relative gains greatly restricts the number of possible agreements because all gains must be distributed in a manner that exactly preserves the pre-existing balance of power. Realists assume that state leaders are primarily concerned with relative gains; liberal institutionalists claim that under many, but certainly not all circumstances, state leaders focus on absolute gains."

[190] Ibid.

[191] "According to realists, states worry that today's friend may be tomorrow's enemy in war, and fear that achievements of joint gains that advantage a friend in the present might produce a more dangerous potential foe in the future. As a result states must give serious attention to the gains of partners (Grieco 1988a, 118; also see Waltz 1979, 105)."

[192] "Powell (1991) argues that if the cost of using military force is low, concern over relative gains will be heightened. For example, in a world in which offensive technology dominates defensive technology, wars tend to be quick and cheap. Powell contends that leaders in this era become very sensitive to small shifts in relative power and therefore focus on relative gains. In contrast, in a defence dominant world the importance of relative

issue, as consistent with a structural realist order. However, given that the cost of war is sufficiently high states realize that it is foolish to attempt an absolute gain, and cooperation again becomes possible, which is in line with neoliberal institutionalism. [193]

Neorealist assumptions about state behaviour

To sum up, we get the following distilled set of assumptions and predictions about state behaviour from neorealism. The first assumption is states or powers interact with each other in an anarchic environment, which is a lack of hierarchy therefore with no authoritative overarching authority or 'international policeman'. The second primary assumption is that powers are self-protecting and the systemic rule they follow is one of self-help. Self-help in this sense means states or powers look and watch out for their own security and tend not to rely too much on other powers for their wellbeing, and state or power behaviour is mandated by what they perceive to be in their interest. The third assumption is that there is always an ever-present threat to survival for every state, due to systemic anarchy, and lack of the aforementioned overarching authority. The fourth assumption explains that even though states are presently the notable component of the system, neorealist theory is essentially group-centric. For example, a power could have been a kingdom, empire, states, or any other actors depending on the system in which their operating. It will not necessarily change the way the system behaves or constraints. Neorealists do not deny non state actors, as other variables; they simply do not consider them to be significant, considering their relative weakness to alter the system.

The predictions regarding state behaviour are, in neorealism, states decide and act according to what they perceive in their external environment. According to neorealism, states tend to balance rather than bandwagon, even though bandwagoning happens occasionally. In times of weakness, states might choose to bandwagon, but in times of relative strength, it is likely that a state will choose to balance. Bandwagoning occurs when allies are unavailable, but when

gains should diminish,". See Powell, R. (1991). 'Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory', *The American Political Science Review* 85/ 4: 1303-1320.

[193] This model gives us the relation between anarchy and cooperation, which are not mutually inconsistent. Rather, this model clarifies, that anarchy makes cooperation difficult due to these two reasons, firstly in a lack of hierarchy implementation of cooperation is difficult although not impossible, and secondly the system gives states options if they would want to use their relative gains for their own benefits, or to do harm on the adversary. Read, Powell, R. (1991) ibid.

there is someone to support materially or strategically, balancing is the norm. When a security dilemma gets intense, and when the states find preventive or pre-emptive wars more advantageous, offense takes priority. When a war is short, quicker, and decisive, wars are more common. States still, however, prefer relative gains, rather than absolute gains.

This gives a template to judge Russian behaviour. How much did Russians perceive NATO to be a threat after 9/11, and how much did it intend to bandwagon with NATO? What influenced the intention of Russia, and how much of it was relative gains, while dealing with its own Islamist problems in the Caucasus, how much of offence-defence theory influenced the Russian short war with Georgia and why did Russia invade Ukraine and how much was the strategic interests like a naval port in Crimea, defensive terrain in Georgia, bases, supply chains and markets, in both Ukraine and Georgia, are among the cases to be studied in light of the abovementioned assumptions.

Can Neorealism be employed as a theory of foreign policy?

The theoretical question on which the thesis hinges, is whether neorealism can even be a theory of foreign policy, and a legitimate theoretical framework for the purpose of judging the behaviour of a great power. The short, accepted answer by scholars is yes, although it has been a topic of considerable debate. Waltz, himself expressed his doubts on the viability of his theory being used as a testable theory of foreign policy. According to him, what he designed was a theory of international politics, rather than a theory of foreign policy. *Theory of International Politics*, presents a systemic theory, as discussed earlier in the beginning of this chapter, which effectively means it can predict broad systemic patterns in world politics, rather than be employed as a theory of foreign policy of individual states.

Waltz's scepticism was twofold. He tried to limit his theory to a systemic theory of international politics and said it can only act as a theory of foreign policy when added with unit level variables. Secondly, Waltz argued, that despite the disclaimers, structural theory is sometimes judged as a theory of foreign policy and found wanting. Put simply, Waltz claimed, his theory is a theory of international politics, which is a systemic theory, where states act, regardless of their regime types, domestic or other unit level variables, and there are broad patterns visible.[194] Waltz explained that the difference between the theory of international

[194] "The theory is based on assumptions about states: They are unitary actors with a single motive—the wish to survive. One of the main tasks of the theory is, then, to explain how variations in conditions external to states push or pull them in various directions. The theory explains why states similarly placed behave similarly despite

politics which he formulated, with a generic theory of foreign policy would be similar to the distinction between a theory of macroeconomics and any theory of finance and firms. While the macroeconomic theories will predict broad generic patterns in the global economic market, a theory of firms will predict how an individual firm will operate in such a scenario. The two are complementary, but not the same. However, upon further scrutiny, this claim about non-employability of neorealism as a theory of foreign policy, falls flat. Subsequent scholars including Walt, Fearon, Telhami and Elman discarded this non-employability argument.

Colin Elman states four objections to neorealism being used as a theory of foreign policy.[195] The objections are as follows; that as a result of the internal logic of neorealist arguments fails to produce a single behavioural prediction; due to the interference of unit level variables, a single systemic behavioural prediction cannot be achieved; the theory is Darwinian and evolutionary, and therefore cannot be used predictively; the variables are too poorly conceptualised, making behavioural predictions difficult.

Elman argues that international relations theories can make different type of predictions, irrespective of unit level variables, or the behaviours of all the units. So, the claim that a multipolar system will be less stable than a bipolar system, is a type of prediction, just as bandwagoning will lead to loss of autonomy is another type of prediction. Elman notes, that a neorealist theory can predict one, without predicting the other, for example, a neorealist theory can predict the outcome, without predicting the individual consequence. Simply put, in a situation wherein a security dilemma is increasing, a neorealist theory can predict, that an arms race will increase between two states, with or without predicting how an individual state in that situation will act, offensively or defensively. "While such a theory *can* also use predicted consequences as a basis for making behavioural predictions, it may be agnostic about which course of action the state will follow." To be deemed as a theory of foreign policy, a theory needs to make behavioural predictions.

---

their internal differences. The explanation of states' behaviour is found at the international, and not at the national, level. That is why the theory is called a theory of international politics. In contrast, a theory of foreign policy would explain why states similarly placed in a system behave in different ways," Waltz, K. N. (1996) 'International politics is not foreign policy', *Security Studies* 6/1.

[195] Elman notes that the acceptable condition of any theory of foreign policy states that it will be successful in making determinate predictions, for a dependent variable or variables which measure the behaviour of individual states, see Elman, C. (1996) 'Horses for Courses', *Security Studies* 6/1.

Elman states that although neorealism starts with a set of common assumptions, it might vary in secondary assumptions, and as a result the predictions might also vary. To simplify this statement, neorealists will agree that the system is anarchic, but might disagree on whether a state is revisionist, or a status quo power, and therefore employ different estimations. Consequently, it might predict different outcomes.[196] However, that does not mean the predictions are not valid. Elman discards the criticism stating that while secondary assumptions might lead to different predictions, neorealism is still a "big tent" theory, and therefore as long as the predictions are compatible with the core tenets of the theory they will be regarded and considered as valid predictions about foreign policy. The criticism of a single, individual neorealist theory failing to provide a single prediction of state behaviour is also dealt with. All neorealists assume that states seek primarily to survive, however, they differ as to what strategy to employ in order to survive. Therefore, offensive realists prescribe a strategy of maximizing power gains; and defensive realists argue that minimizing power loss is a more prudent option. However, Elman states that such logical ambiguity is a result of poor specification of variables. To put it simply, this criticism is not a criticism of employability of neorealism as a theory of foreign policy but rather of the ambiguity of different neorealist theories coming out with different predictions, based on different assumptions and variables. [197]

An example of this is when neorealists differ on state motivations; even when the general consensus is that states primary motivation is to survive in an anarchic system, how to achieve that survival and the strategies employed as such might differ between an offensive realist and defensive realist. As a result, different neorealist theories might generate different distinct predictions, about state behaviours and outcomes. Elman states that the criticism of neorealist theory using domestic variables and therefore not being a theory of foreign policy is also flawed. Neorealist scholars have used domestic level variables, they have produced probabilistic theories which exclude domestic level variables, and analysed policy adding some domestic level variable. To give an example, Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory itself

[196] Elman gives examples of Mearsheimer and Gilpin, both of whom consider States to be power maximisers, and revisionists with "prime objective throughout history of conquering territory", as compared to Waltz himself, who claims states are status quo powers, and rationally choose to balance, although they might also chaingang or buckpass. However, Waltz, and Stephen Walt, both say that in neorealism, balancing is the most dominant tendency.

[197] "Christensen and Snyder, for example, solve the problem of Waltz's inability to determine whether chainganging or buckpassing will occur under multipolarity by. adding a variable from Jervis' theory of the ·security dilemma, namely perceptions of offensive or defensive advantage." (Elman, HFC, 96.)

uses variables like "offensive intention". Other scholars like Waltz himself have used probabilistic predictions to explain actions by a state. Elman also states that Waltz himself is ambiguous about whether his theory employs a rational choice, or is based on evolutionary Darwinian logic, but Waltz in his later part of scholarship depended heavily on rational choice, and draws heavily on statesmen, being "sensitive to cost", and thereby provides a platform of predictive behaviour. [198]

Stephen Walt adds that a theory, even when flawed is noted more when it has some form of foreign policy implication and has good prescriptive as well as predictive power. While maintaining that a theory primarily should be logically consistent and empirically valid, Walt mentions that a theory is also expected to rightly or wrongly have some form of explanatory power. A theory therefore is important as much as providing a causal connection, as well as explaining the said connection. Theories are therefore expected to provide patterns in perplexing phenomena. Walt exemplifies the theory of deterrence as one such theory, where it might seem counterintuitive to feel that a country might be safer if it can threaten a peer rival, but it is however proven to be so. Walt discards the notion that a theory needs to be perfect in predicting. He argues, 'thus, a compelling yet flawed explanation for great power war or genocide is likely to command a larger place in the field'. [199] Fearon also agrees to this point stating, 'But if a sparse and elegant theory manages to get some things mostly right, or often right, about some important dimensions of states' foreign policies, this is a major achievement in social science'. [200] Waltz's claim that a systemic theory cannot and is not a theory of foreign policy, was also disputed by Fearon. Fearon mentioned that any action that a structural theory seeks to explain, like balancing and bandwagoning, or the probability of a great power war, are either foreign policy choices and actions affecting foreign policy. Fearon argues, 'When we say, "a theory of X," we normally mean "a theory that explains the existence, occurrence, or

[198] "In much of his work it is unclear whether Waltz is relying on rationality, evolutionary selection or socialization. In the final analysis, however, Waltz appear to depend on assumptions of rational choice, asserting that statesmen are "sensitive to costs" and are likely to respond efficiently to changing international conditions and incentives. In any event, Waltz's ambiguity notwithstanding, the dominant reading of neorealism is that it employs a rationality assumption, not an evolutionary selection mechanism." (Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 108, 117, 118)

[199] Walt, SM (2005) 'The Relationship between theory and policy in IR' *Annual Review of Political Science*, pg. 23-48.

[200] Fearon, J. D. (1998) 'Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science*, pg. 289-313.

variation in X." In this natural sense, then, systemic and neorealist theories emphatically are theories of foreign policy.' Waltz argues that a systemic theory explains only political patterns, but as explained above, patterns lead to direct foreign policy choices and even when it is explaining tendencies and regularities; these are tendencies or regularities which result in direct foreign policy choices of states or their resulting effects. Therefore, even systemic theories have predictive value as theories of foreign policy, even when they are probabilistic and systemic in their predictions. Waltz's counter of Elman's thesis by stating systemic theories only explain how states behave in a systemic pattern is discarded by Fearon, who mentions that state behaviour is what falls under the core foreign policy assumptions, and therefore systemic theories are also foreign policy theories in its core sense. Telhami also states that even when structural realism is narrowly about outcomes in global aggregate behaviour, it is still a theory of foreign policy as it leads to predictions about the global behaviour of states. Neorealism explains the motives of states, and that in turn is what shapes its drive to attain security and relative power while pointing out the state's motives. These motives then give a backdrop of the state's foreign policy. According to Telhami, even by Waltz's own narrow standards, simple assumptions of state behaviour, like self-preservation can be inferred. These inferences highlight and predicts some directions to how a state might behave, for example, when they are threatened, they might balance, or when relative economic and military balance is altered, it might influence new alignments among states. Also, when poles, superpowers, affect smaller states, some general foreign policy predictions can be safely made as to how the smaller states might react, as well as the relation between the powers and the poles can also be safely analysed and predicted. [201]

All these are broadly foreign policy predictions, and in all these situations, it is observed neorealism is successfully used as a theory of foreign policy. Telhami states that the theories of international politics even when systemic, can give us valuable insights in understanding how foreign policy of a state works. [202] While structural realism is essentially a theory of structures and international outcomes it can be used for inferring state behaviour, because

[201] Telhami, S. (1990) *Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords* New York: Columbia University Press. pg. 33.

[202] "To say that neorealism is not, or does not provide, a theory of foreign policy does not mean that insights derived from it have no consequence for the study of foreign policy." Telhami S (2002) Kenneth Waltz, neorealism, and foreign policy. *Security Studies* 11(3): 158–170.

neorealism even in its systemic levels, explains the motives behind the behaviour of a particular state, which in turn helps us analyse the state's foreign policy. [203]

To sum it all up, the biggest difference between using neorealism as Waltz visualised it and using neorealism as a theory of foreign policy is that Waltz thought to use this as a theory of international politics, which will only predict broad patterns. Over time, the basic ideas of that theory got modified, with some realists like Stephen Van Evera and Robert Jervis adding domestic and other unit level theories to modify its predictive power, other neorealists like Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, forming and expanding the neorealist theories to a more exhaustive theory which deals with specific aspects of state behaviour, like balancing and alliance formations for example. Considering the basic tenets of neorealism are similar, they can subsequently make very different predictions, due to the fact that they employ a substantial number of secondary assumptions which covers a wide range and are occasionally incompatible. What appears to be an internal logical ambiguity, is essentially different predictive results, due to different secondary assumptions. The logical ambiguity can either be cured by recognizing or adding more variables. Christensen and Snyder added variables from Jervis's theory of a Security Dilemma to solve Waltz's inability to analyse the causation of chainganging or buckpassing in a multipolar order. Elman noted that the fact that there can be different predictions due to different variable assumption does not necessarily mean that the theory can make no prediction at all.

The accuracy of the prediction is not a debate here, the debate is if the theory of neorealism can be even used to predict state behaviour. Elman also states that firstly Waltz never practiced what he preached, himself making a number of specific foreign policy predictions. Secondly Waltz never critiqued other neorealists making such foreign policy predictions, notable examples being Stephen Walt, Barry Posen, and John Mearsheimer. [204]

Therefore, from the above discussion it can be argued that neorealism can be employed as a theory of foreign policy to analyse, determine, and predict both systemic patterns as well as individual state behaviour, and to prescribe policy in certain situations. The theory of neorealism, which Waltz solidified on the platform of classical realism, took the primary tenets of anarchy as a lack of hierarchy in the global order, and a systemic structural theory to explain

[203] Ibid.

[204] See, for example, Walt, SM. (2016, January) 'What would a Realist world look like?', *Foreign Policy*; and Mearsheimer, J. (2014) op. cit.

the international politics. It is however, also understood, that the same theory of international politics might be safely used as a theory of foreign policy as well. It gives us a structure and the systemic constraints that come along with it, thereby helping us infer what tentative state behaviour might happen, which is essentially a measure of that state's foreign policy. The theory also gives us various subsequent doctrines, with different set of variables, which also are used deductively to interpret and analyse various great power behaviours. While accepting the premise that there are unit level variables and domestic policy which might influence state behaviour, one can still safely reject the conclusion that the theory of neorealism is unsuitable to be employed as a theory of foreign policy and can be used to make both probabilistic and deterministic predictions based on individual cases. In fact, Waltz himself used it, in his last major analysis of the Iran Nuclear deal. [205] And I will attempt the same in this project when it comes to analysing recent Russian behaviour.

The logic of balancing

Thus far, this thesis outlined the basic tenets of realism as an international relations theory and argued that neorealism can be used as a testable theoretical framework to test foreign policy of a great power. This thesis rests on the organizing principle of balancing. In order to understand what that is, a brief explanation is necessary.

The logic of balancing is canonical and accepted in every school of Realism.[206] Hans Morgenthau explained that the simple logic of balance of power is to achieve equilibrium, which is not only inevitable but also essential as a stabilizing factor in international anarchy.[207] The periodic inability of achieving such equilibrium and balance in the international system is due to temporal conditions and peculiar factors, like hubris, miscalculations, and imperial overstretch, but over time, the equilibrium is achieved. The logic is predicated on the simple notion that the main actors, (empires, or modern nation states and great powers) seek to survive as independent entity, in the anarchical global system, and avoid becoming subservient to the will of an adversarial state or rival empires. Anarchy in turn, compels power consolidation, and often results in power imbalance and preponderance of an actor, or a coalition of actors. This

[205] Waltz, KN. (2012, July) 'Why Iran should get the bomb', *Foreign Affairs*.

[206] Morgenthau, H. J. (1978) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace.* (5th Ed.). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.; Gulick, E. V. (1955) *Europe's Classical Balance of Power: A Case History of the Theory and Practice of One of the Great Concepts of European Statecraft* New York: Norton. p 187-189.

[207]H Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, chap. 14; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, chap. 1;

in turn leads to weaker states to flock together or align with bigger powers for their security. The strategies of balancing involve external balancing and internal balancing. External balancing is primarily the formation of alliances as coalitions, but also threats, redistribution of resources and on rare occasions, preventive wars. Great powers which are secure and capable with a preponderance of power often resort to external balancing. Internal balancing is simply, build-up of military capabilities and the economic and industrial foundations of military strength and comes from a position of defence. [208] In simpler terms, the balance of power is an arrangement of affairs so that no state shall be in a position to have absolute dominance over others.[209] Michael Sheehan defined it as a system, which involves a particular distribution of power, within the system, that there's no single state or alliance which possess an overwhelming and preponderant amount of power.[210] Because hegemony is difficult to aspire, and even more difficult to achieve and continue, states, which are the primary actors in the international system, always find a way through alignments and alliances to balance the potential aggressor.[211]

The rising hegemon or coalition often seek to eliminate threats from weaker rivals. Threatened states in turn could adopt different balancing strategies, whether internal balancing or build-up of military strength and capability and stronger defence, or external balancing, that is aligning with a bigger power against common threats. Balance of power theorists suggest that the power preponderance of a single state or of a coalition of states is highly undesirable as it usually leads to aggressive behaviour and hegemonic aspirations.[212] By contrast, balance of power theorists suggest that peace is generally preserved when an equilibrium of power exists among great powers. [213]

[208] For further details on writings of what constitutes Balancing behaviour, please see Walt, S. (1990) *The Origins of Alliances* Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pg. 18-20.

[209] Gulick, p 60.

[210] "*The Balance of Power: History and Theory*" Michael J. Sheehan Taylor & Francis, 1996 - Political Science

[211] John J. Mearsheimer, "Reckless States and Realism," *International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (June 2009), pg. 241–256.

[212] See Walt, SM. (1990) Ibid.

[213] Ibid

Ideally in a balanced state, or equilibrium, no single state or coalition possesses overwhelming power and incentive to wage war, as the power parity in an equilibrium prevents the idea of a quick or limited war and victory. Weaker actors usually flock together against a potential hegemon, or rapidly militarize and re-arm, to dissuade a potential hegemon from aggressive action. In a system, where there is no universal hegemon and there are various powers, some actors play the part of a balancer, by hedging for a weak state against a rising and strong adversary. For example, Britain balanced against Napoleonic hegemony by supporting Austrian and Prussian duchies and balanced against Imperial Germany as well as Nazi Germany by backing France. Winston Churchill explained this logic by stating famously that for five hundred years British foreign policy was primarily focused on opposing the strongest and most dominating power in continental Europe and join weaker powers to oppose a military tyrant.[214] Similarly, during the Cold war, the United States exploited the Sino-Soviet rift. Henry Kissinger said it is always important to choose the weaker side in any balancing.[215] As mentioned by Stephen Walt, the logic behind this is simple and two-fold. States can never be sure of an adversary's intentions, so backing the stronger power could lead to the stronger power crushing the weaker one, and then turning on the balancer. Secondly, supporting the weaker state against a stronger rising threat implies future influence and say in the affairs of the weaker state.[216]

Neorealists developed the logic of balance of power further, as Kenneth Waltz said that balancing is a sensible behaviour as the victory of one coalition over another leaves weaker members of the winning coalition at the mercy of the stronger one.[217] Waltz predicted that states engage in balancing behaviour anyway, regardless of whether the balance is achieved. States according to Waltz are fixated on survival and stability, therefore it does not matter if the balance once achieved will be maintained, but what matters is states constantly will seek to balance and restore equilibrium. While Waltz maintains that states should not try to pursue hegemony, because it goes against the logic of rational behaviour in a systemic theory, the logic being, the moment one state will seek hegemony, and the other states will be forced to

[214] Churchill, W. (1948) *The Gathering Storm* (Vol. I) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. pg. 207.

[215] Kissinger, H. (1979) *White House Years* Boston: Little Brown and Company.

[216] Walt quotes Churchill and Kissinger, both advocating the support for the weaker of the powers in a triangular balancing. pg. 19, *Origin.*

[217] Waltz, '*Reflections*', p. 330; Waltz, *Theory*, pg. 92, 118

choose to balance against the rising hegemon. He also argues that despite that, sometimes states do seek hegemony and end up being balanced by other states or being punished by the system, overreaches and perishes, examples being Imperial Germany and Imperial Japan, as well as Nazi Germany. 'The first concern of states', he maintains, 'is not to maximize power, but to maintain their positions in the system.'[218] Of course, as mentioned above and earlier, balance of power often fails, due to various factors, hubris, or expansionism, or overstretch, but since the system is Darwinian, the aggressor is often balanced or in extreme circumstances, punished by rival coalitions.

In sum, a balance of power is a natural equilibrium, as the international system is one of anarchy, and power and actors who aspire for hegemony begs to be balanced. [219] The logical argument for Moscow would be to balance against powers, whenever it feels relatively inferior to a peer-rival, to ensure stability and equilibrium. If Moscow feels comparatively weaker compared to *any* rival power, great powers or alliance networks alike, Moscow would compulsively resort to either external or internal balancing. The balancing would be omnidirectional, and observable against any peer rival. Russia, according to this logic, would balance against China, United States, NATO, EU, or any power which seems to threaten Moscow's position in the balance of power.

The logic of balance of power provides us with the broad understanding of how states behave in an overarching system, even when it falls short in predicting or explaining specifics of foreign policy, or the variables which influence cooperative or competitive behaviour. Naturally, it does not help us with any particular set of predictions, regarding balancing behaviour. These simple hypotheses focus on the overarching threat of hegemony over the system. But by that logic, Moscow's balancing should be equally observable against both China, as well as the West. Second, states react to threats even when the threat is not from a potential hegemon, but also from aggressors and states which are deemed threatening. Simple balance of power hypothesis is therefore limited in its explanatory power, as it does not go into details with regards to whether states display balancing behaviour only the strongest power or against threats as well. In that regard, Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory, is a modification

[218] Ibid.

[219] Waltz, 'Why Iran should get the bomb' *Foreign Affairs*; Monteiro, N. P. (2011/ 2012) 'Unrest assured: Why unipolarity is not peaceful', *International Security* 36/3: 9–40.

to the balance of power logic explained above and gives a fuller picture and is therefore the theoretical framework employed to study the cases, in this thesis.

Balancing against Threats

Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory, which is used in this thesis, adheres to the basic realist assumption that states dwell in an international anarchy, which follows and assumes the primary realist tenet that there is no hierarchy in the international system and no central agency or institution to act as a global police force. [220] The ultimate aim of a state in such a system is survival and security. [221] States usually do not act aggressively and try to maximise power, but rather maximise security.[222] The distinction is important here, as Offensive realists argue that states maximise security by maximizing their relative power, whereas Defensive realists, including Walt, argues that states simply maximise security, or simply to maintain their position in the balance, or upholding the status quo. An offensive realist power would try and maximise its relative power and would take advantage of anarchy to increase its relative power. A defensive realist power would simply return to, or uphold the status quo, as long as it is satisfied with the threat perception. [223]

Foreign policy decisions, as a result, naturally rely upon the perceived threat environment. Balance of Threat theory here acts as a modification of the standard balance of power logic in realism. While the balance of power theory suggests that states balance against power, and therefore respond to changes in the distribution of capabilities, Walt suggests that the logic lacks an explanation in answering the question as to when states balance against their adversaries, and when states bandwagon with a stronger rival.[224] Facing a significant external threat, great powers choose to either "balance" or "bandwagon." Balancing is defined by Walt as allying with other powers against the greater threat, whereas bandwagoning refers to aligning with the source of danger. [225] Walt theorizes that balancing behaviour is much more

[220] Walt, SM. 'Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning', in Art, R. J. & Jervis, R. (eds.) (2003) *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, (6th ed.), New York: Longman. pg. 111.

[221] Waltz, *Theory*, pg. 67–73, 121–122.

[222] Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001) *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* New York: Norton.

[223] For a detailed discussion, see, Labs, E. J. (1997) 'Beyond victory: Offensive realism and the expansion of war aims', *Security Studies*, 6/4: 1–49.

[224] Walt, SM (2003) op. cit. pg. 111.

[225] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, Balancing Behavior. pg. 10

common than bandwagoning, simply because bandwagoning tends to reward the belligerent behaviour of great powers and leaves smaller powers at the mercy of the greater threat. Walt further states that powers are inclined to use force if they assume that others will be unlikely to balance against them. The conditions favouring either balancing or bandwagoning, are dimensions of threat, the availability of allies, and the security climate. Weaker states are more likely to bandwagon rather than balance. That is because weak states can do little to alter the hegemonic ambition of a greater threat and might choose to bandwagon. Stronger states, in contrast can take the risk of balancing. Secondly, Walt argues that states will choose to bandwagon more if there are no allies available.[226] If there are, they might pursue balancing behaviour. Finally, Walt argues that states balance more during peacetime when the survival of the nation is not at stake. In wartime, more bandwagoning behaviour is visible, especially among weaker states, as states sometimes take fewer risks and/or choose to tactically align with the winning and aggressor power.[227]

Unpacking the abovementioned hypotheses, gives us some key assumptions, and indicates some key behavioural patterns. Walt argues that states do not balance against power alone, but against threats, and the following key factors, aggregate power, geographical proximity, offensive military power, and offensive intentions, affect state behaviour. [228] Accordingly, states actually respond to perceived threats, which are a combination of different factors. First, "aggregate power", or the power to compel adversaries, which depends on the combination the state's total resources which include population, industrial and military capabilities, affect such perception. Walt suggests that the greater the aggregate power, the greater is the threat perceived by a peer rival. An example of how aggregate power shapes the foreign policy of a state is shown by Walt in the example of George Kennan and Walter Lipmann's suggestions, who defined what US grand strategy would be in the early days of Cold war.[229] According to Kennan and Lipmann, the aim of US grand strategy should be to continue that US aggregate power be superior to the total industrial resources of any peer rival in the entire Eurasian landmass. In practical terms, that means the US would ally against the state which was poised

[226] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, Balancing Behavior. pg. 32

[227] Ibid.

[228] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, Balancing Behavior. pg. 28-29

[229] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, Balancing Behavior. pg. 22-23.

to dominate Eurasia. Similarly, British grand strategy from Lord Castlereagh to Sir Edward Grey justified the concern for aggregate power across Europe and to intervene whenever that balance appears to be lost. [230]

Second, "geographic proximity". Walt states that the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away. [231] States are more threatened, if the threat originates nearby than faraway, especially if not separated by buffer states or high seas. Walt draws examples from British balancing against Germany and American interventions in Latin America.[232] Germany and Japan started growing to a great power and armament program around the same time, during the late 19th century, but the fact that British balancing behaviour was towards Germany and not Japan, was influenced by German proximity and perceived threat. Similarly, American interference in Latin America against Marxist regimes during the Cold war was influenced by a similar line of thinking. Geographic proximity influences threat perception. Alternatively, it also explains the phenomena of spheres of influences. Sometime when a small state feels threatened by a great power and expects no help from other great powers further away, it chooses to bandwagon rather than balance the threat, purely to survive, which results in the formation of a sphere of influence. [233]

Third, "offensive power", which is somewhat related to aggregate power, in the sense, if a state is more powerful it is supposed to invite a balancing alliance against it. Offensive power is, however, different from aggregate power. More specifically it means the ability to threaten the territorial integrity or sovereignty of a state at an acceptable cost. In simpler terms, the implication is that when a state views the threatening rival's offensive power to be overwhelming, there are chances of bandwagoning, otherwise states balance. For example, prior to the first world war, heavy German armament forced Britain to bolster her own naval fleet in an internal balancing action, whereas the same action forced other European powers to consider accommodating German potential hegemony, as resistance was seemingly futile.[234]

---

[230] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, Balancing Behavior. pg. 22-23.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Ibid.

[233] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, Balancing Behavior. pg. 24.

[234] Ibid.

This, Walt states is another reason why "spheres of influence" emerge, as great powers like buffer zones, and smaller weaker states usually bandwagon with a threatening neighbouring great power. [235]

Fourth, "offensive intention". The perception of intent greatly influences alliance choices. A powerful state with a benevolent intent might not be considered threatening, as Germany under Bismarck, maintained the necessary equilibrium.[236] However, after Bismarck, the continuous and increasing German aggressive intentions helped start the Triple Entente. If a state is believed from its actions as unusually aggressive, then the potential target state will seek to actively redress the threat intent, by balancing or bandwagoning actions. [237]Walt explains this by showing how the combination of aggregate power, geographic proximity and the perception of offensive intention caused Western European states to balance against Soviet Union but not United States.[238] Walt's theory therefore suggest that states are reactive and not assertive, and that states do not just balance against *powerful* states; rather, they balance against *threatening* states.

Walt further states some hypotheses with regards to state behaviour based on these assumptions, as simple state behavioural patterns can be deducted. Since states balance based on threats, naturally the greater the aggregate power, the greater the chance of a state to balance against the powerful state.[239] However, if a state is further away, as geographical proximity is a factor in the perception of power, states will likely balance more if the threatening power is nearer. A strong state will also likely balance against a near peer rival, which is superior, but depending on other factors. While states are attracted to strength which is why bandwagoning occurs, usually, the greater the perceived threat, the greater the chances that states will seek a balancing behaviour. [240]Walt states that balancing behaviour has historically been more common than bandwagoning behaviour. The reasoning for this is simple. In a bandwagoning world, the smaller power which seeks to bandwagon with the greater more threatening power,

[235] Ibid.

[236] Walt, Origin, pg. 24-25

[237] Ibid.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Walt, Origin, pg. 28-29

[240] Ibid.

will essentially have to depend on the well-meaning and mercy of the bigger power. Walt notes that both Napoleonic France and Nazi Germany underestimated and miscalculated the cost of aggression as they believed states will bandwagon to power alone, when states started to balance against them, due to their hegemonic intention.[241] Since states can never be sure of another great power's intention, they tend to balance more than bandwagon. Bandwagoning increases the chance of a power becoming more threatening. Because perceptions in the best circumstances are unreliable, balancing behaviour is more common. The second hypothesis is that the weaker the state, related to the strength of the peer rival, and the threatened aggressive intention, the more chances of a bandwagon than a balance. The reason is when the weaker state realizes that it will not be able to anything to affect the outcome, it chooses to bandwagon rather than balance. The interest of the weaker state lies in its immediate periphery. Third, states usually bandwagon when there are no available allies. This is not just a tautological statement. Walt explains that it indicates how states when they feel lonely in the international arena, and have no choice of any balancing alignment, tend to bandwagon with the bigger threatening power.[242] For example, the Shah of Persia bandwagoned with Russia as the British empire withdrew from Afghanistan. Finally, during peacetime, there is a tendency to balance. But during certain war, or imminent conflict, and when the outcome seems almost certain, there is a tendency to bandwagon more. During wartime, weaker states are tempted to defect and join the winning side. Bandwagoning occurs usually in those times. For example, both Romania and Bulgaria initially aligned with Nazi Germany, and then joined the Allies during the latter part of the war.

To summarize, the hypothesis of when states balance and when states bandwagon, Walt outlines the following.[243] In general form, in peacetime, states when they face a threatening power, tend to balance against that power. The greater the power of the threatening state, the faster the balancing behaviour and the greater the offensive capabilities and aggressive intentions, the more the chances of a balancing behaviour from rival powers. However, two significant changes occur, when the threatening state is a lot more powerful, the outcome of belligerence is predetermined, and when there are not many allies to tactically align with,

[241] Walt, Origin, pg. 27

[242] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, pg. 35-49.

[243] Walt, Origin pg. 32

bandwagoning behaviour might be the behaviour seen. Walt mentions that from these general hypotheses, we can conclude, that in general balancing behaviour is more common and more predictable and natural than bandwagoning behaviour.

Considering the abovementioned assumptions, logically Russia would balance against threats and not powers, and not bandwagon with threats. Russian threat perceptions would be dependent on aggregate power, and offensive capabilities, as well as perceived offensive intentions. The greater the perceived threat, the greater the balancing action observable. And if Russia is a defensive realist power, acting per Balance of Threat theory, then Moscow would act as a security maximiser. Moscow would take all necessary balancing actions, as long as the threat remains, and would resort to upholding the status quo, where Moscow is the dominant player in the balance. Lacking a perceived threat, or when the threat is neutralised according to Russia, Moscow would move back to a status quo position. Moscow would not take advantage and press on with any balancing or aggression as long as it is satisfied the perceived threat is neutralised.

External factors influencing threat perceptions

While we have an idea how states might or might not react while facing a threat, there are some other minor factors which influences state behaviour. Individually these factors are often not enough to tilt great power behaviour but combined with the threat posed by a rival power or alliance, these factors become important in predicting behavioural patterns. Walt highlights three factors, ideology, foreign aid, and transnational penetration, and the hypothesis for each, which are described below. [244]

Ideological solidarity is often considered to be one of the bases of alliance formations. Liberals especially think sharing political and cultural traits allows or compels states to align together. Democratic Peace Theory, or the fact that Liberal Democratic states usually do not clash or go to war with each other, is one key example of such line of argument. Walt admits that ideology is a factor, but states that it comes secondary to other more strategic interests, and it never forms a solid bond necessary for alliances.[245] While ideological solidarity is important in alliance and balancing behaviour, security considerations take precedence over ideological preferences, and often ideology-based alliances falter, when security interests differ. The Sino

[244] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, pg. 35-49.
[245] Walt, SM. Origin of Alliances, Part 1, Explaining Alliance Formations, pg. 37.

Soviet rift is one major example, when geostrategic and territorial interests in Asia prevailed over communist solidarity.[246] Walt postulates, that states will follow ideological preference as long as they are secure and not threatened, and when faced with danger will take whatever allies they get. [247] In sum, security considerations take precedence, over ideology, and ideological alliances survive longer when interests align.

Similarly, Walt explores foreign aid and transnational penetration as other minor factors that influence alliance behaviour.[248] It is regarded that foreign aid creates effective allies, because it communicates favourable intention, as well as evokes gratitude that the recipient is in debt of the donor. Walt states that while it is true, it is more complicated. The dependence of the recipient is a factor in establishing how much the alliance will be on solid grounds. For example, if the client state faces immediate threat and the donor state is secured, then the importance of the latter increases with the former. Similarly, Walt terms transnational penetration as a factor determining balancing behaviour. Transnational penetration can be either public officials with divided loyalties, or foreign lobbyists altering public perceptions, or foreign propaganda. Such penetration according to Walt is more effective against open societies than closed societies. Walt states that the greater one state's access to the political system of the other one, the greater the tendency of these two to ally.[249] Therefore, if there is more communication between two states the chances of rivalry decrease. Alternately, the more closed a state gets, the chances of alliance decreases and balancing increases. Penetration is also more effective when objectives are limited. [250]

Revolutions in the neighbourhood and heightened security competition

Finally, Walt utilizes his balance of threat theory to explain how revolutions affect the international system, and how it might lead to heightened security competition and increased threat perceptions. The reason why this is important to outline, is because it is a model of the

[246] Walt, Origin, pg. 36

[247] Walt, Origin, pg. 37

[248] Walt, Origin, pg. 46

[249] Ibid.

[250] Walt, SM. (1985) 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power', *International Security* 9/4: 3–43; Walt, SM. (1987). op. cit.

utilisation of balance of threat theory, as an explanatory theory of revolution, and will help us explore Russia's behaviour with regards to the colour revolutions in its neighbourhood. Walt uses the balance of threat theory and states that the foreign policy decision of a state is dependent on the perception of the external security environment of the state. [251] The level of threat is affected by the changing balance, as the incentive for a state to use force against its adversaries increases when the state is weak. In other words, weak states invite aggression. Walt states that revolutions are serious games which result in the shake-up of the whole system and the region. In two ways, revolution can shake up the security environment. First, as a result of a revolution, an aggressor state can might sense the weakness of the revolutionary state, and in turn choose to attack the state which was toppled by the revolution.[252] That is straightforward, and it usually results in territorial annexation and war. Second, when a power becomes concerned about a revolution in a neighbouring country, or its sphere of influence, or an allied state, it seeks to improve its own position, as it is concerned that a rival power will take advantage, either to obtain the spoils, or to prevent a rival power from staking out a claim. It results in a heightened security dilemma spiral, inviting powers which essentially have no stake in the fray. [253]

A revolution, in this case can mean a sudden shift in a regime, and the old ruling elite replaced by a new ruling elite, which could be either by violence or peaceful overthrow. Revolutions in the neighbourhood can cause major short-term disruptions, like a shift in the balance of power, international alignments, and inviting opportunities for other states to improve their position. A revolution changes the internal dynamics of a state, and leaves it weakened. Revolutionary elites are often poorly prepared to run a government, or manage diplomacy, and old regime members either flee, instigating reaction from abroad, or are purged.

Four changes occur in the system due to a revolution. First, a revolution brings to power a regime which is opposed mostly to the old regime, which results in states allied to the old regime becoming naturally suspicious and even antagonistic. Neighbouring states, and great powers, especially the ones allied to the old regime views the disruption and changes as potentially destabilizing and dangerous to their own interests and stability. Second, any further

[251] Walt, SM. Revolution and War Chapter 2, A theory of revolution of war, pg. 18

[252] Ibid.

[253] Walt, SM. (1992) Revolution and War. *World Politics* 44:321-368. Walt. SM.. (1996a) *Revolution and War* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

action of the revolutionary state exacerbates the security dynamic in the region. A revolutionary regime is unsure of the other state's intentions, and simply because it has no direct experience of dealing with such a situation, essentially acts or takes steps which exacerbates the situation. The revolutionary state also inevitably falls back and relies on ideology, thereby blaming every other allies of the old regime as naturally hostile to the new regime. Revolutionary regimes also harbour suspicion based on historical animosity, and the chances of small diplomatic disturbance leads to broader ramifications. Revolutionary regimes also assume the worst in other great powers and former states which were allies to the previous regime and interpret ambiguous or inconsistent policies as hostile. Third, the former allies of the previous regimes and adversarial great powers are also almost certainly sure to be ambiguous at this stage as they do not know how to respond to the revolutionary regime and or know their intention. The elites of both the revolutionary regime, as well as the deposed regime and the great powers exaggerate the threat emanating from the other side. The revolutionary regime tries to exploit the threat to rally for nationalist or ideological causes and justify harsh measures.

Finally, and most importantly, foreign powers contribute to the spiral of conflict and hostility. As revolutionary states emphasize on past injustices, foreign interference leads to a breakdown of communication and a negative spiral. Foreign powers also inevitably intervene the moment a new regime's domestic program is supposed to affect their interests. While revolutionary states are inherently weak and insecure, they try to portray strength within often aggressively, which affect the strategic interests of other powers. Revolutionary states also overreact to threat disproportionately, simultaneously acting overconfident and insecure, and giving mixed signals to rival powers. The revolutionary state feeling vulnerable often overreacts, which can encourage balancing behaviour, in different powers. Powers opposing the revolutionary regime might feel that the revolutionary state wants to expand, as they are weak, and the only means to expand is to export the revolution and encourage it in neighbouring states.

A revolution in the neighbourhood, therefore, creates the perfect situation to test a balance of threat theory, and creates the perfect conditions when a great power can feel threatened, without any active hostility from other powers. All the above-mentioned factors boil down to the fact that a great power watching a revolution unfold, is not sure of the intentions of the state where the revolution is happening, or other powers which might take advantage of the situation, thereby creating a perfect security dilemma. A revolution encourages all concerning parties to believe that the other presents a grave threat and alter the sense of reality and increase the perception of threat. Furthermore, these perceptions naturally encourage third parties to step in

or intervene, either to eliminate potential threats or to gain an upper hand over strategic regional rival. In simpler terms, a revolutionary state provides the ideal situation for a security dilemma.

Methodology

Determining causal influence is always difficult, especially in a time-barred project, where first-hand accounts are scarce especially when the subject of study is an authoritarian great power. The applicable methods are mostly mixed methods, which employ both process tracing, and case studies, with cross-process counterfactuals. Theoretical studies that this thesis draws upon, are remarkably light on their methodology section as well as data collection methods. That is because the security studies subfield of International Relations, under which this thesis belongs, are not historical projects, nor are they similar to other political science or history projects. They are more a hybrid of history and international relations, where studies mostly are drawn on established historical studies to derive theoretical assessments or refutations, or to find historical patterns of narratives, instead of in-depth area studies with primary sources. [254]

Neither Walt's book *The Origins of Alliances*, or his book on *Revolution and War* devotes too much time in discussing the data collection methods.[255] Jack Snyder's *Myths of Empire* uses process tracing but is also light on which documents it uses as data. In that regard, these works on which my thesis is based are light on their methodology part and are mostly broad brush. However, it is observed, that the authors rely on secondary sources such as established research papers, as well as a handful of primary source materials like archival methods for their studies.

There are serious and enduring epistemological and methodological differences between the various disciplines, and there are reasons why the traditions are different and have significant individual distinctions. E H Carr argued that construction of historical knowledge is in itself a social process, where various contexts are studied to produce one historical

[254] Consider the three major examples on this field, from the last few years, Shifrinson, JRI (2018) *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts* Ithaca: Cornell University Press; and Parent, J. & Macdonald, P. (2018) *Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, and Lascurettes, KM (2020) *Orders of Exclusion Great Powers and the Strategic Sources of Foundational Rules in International Relations*, OUP.

[255] Walt, "The Origins of Alliances" pg. 48-49; "Revolution and War" pg. 44-45; Snyder, "Myths of Empire" pg. 61.

knowledge.[256] Carr, for example, saw that historical knowledge in itself dilutes the understanding of interpretations, and rather present facts to be studied from various sources. Scholarship is then dependent on those facts. Historians are therefore fine process tracers and are proficient in sequencing events. Social scientists, especially in the security studies subfield, on the other hand derive connections within historical events.

Security Studies in International Relations therefore rely on historical events, to build narratives, and document observable patterns. Recent scholarly works demonstrate a similar methodology, of pattern recognition from various historical events, mostly for either theory building, or theory testing. They are also mostly reliant on case study methods. As Bennett and Elman wrote, qualitative case studies methods have considerable advantage in studying complex phenomena and finding patterns for theory testing purposes.[257] Most prominent studies involving war and great powers often involve various structural and agent-based variables, a lot of which rely on secondary sources and interpretations. A lot of those involve agents with strong incentives to bluff or deceive other actors. A case study therefore has characteristic strength in negating some of those issues with a combination of observational methods and interpretations based on established scholarly literature.

Case study method, in security studies subfield is therefore accepted with the caveat that the data will be reliant on accepted interpretations. [258] That should not raise questions on the validity of the project, simply because the project is a theoretical study, which relies on historical interpretations to make a theoretical case. The data by definition is assessed and corroborated alongside observable evidence. For example, if Russian troops move out of a region, or return to status quo ante, while there were opportunities to advance further, the inference from that can be clear, as a sign of Russian retrenchment, or at least a proof of Russian disengagement, or intentional pullback. Now, whether that is due to structural causes, or ideational causes is irrelevant, to the purpose of a thesis which seeks to understand an event in grand strategic terms. If again the Russian troops are pulled back, and that is corroborated with a desired intention in a military journal, or a statement by someone in the upper echelons of the

[256] Carr, E.H. (1961) *What is History?* London, Penguin

[257] Bennett, E., et al (2007, 2 February). 'Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield', *Comparative Political Studies* 40/2.

[258] Ibid

Russian military or civilian chain of command, then that can be considered further evidence in proving or disproving a hypothesis.

A challenge and criticism of such method is that it can lead to atheoretical and disjointed studies. However, as previous similar studies showed, there is a way to go around that problem. As Elman noted, combining cross-case and cross-time comparison can help a research design generate considerable inferential leverage. [259] That helps in time barred situations. For a single case, two different outcomes, coming from similar situations, can be studied, against one another, over a single time period, or across various time zones.

Stephen Walt's *Revolution and War* uses this research design, where Walt studied why states undergo a revolution, often after a war. Walt studied the foreign policies before and after they underwent revolutions, in turn to study how revolution affected foreign policy. Elaborating that individual case to a broader project, Walt compared across revolutionary states to see then which instances had similar reactions, and which did not, and what variables were present or absent. The study allowed Walt to have various comparisons, by studying three cases in details. Another such example is Randall Schweller's *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*, which studied balance of interests, in three different cases, across different timelines. All these studies replied on secondary literature as established historical analyses, to understand and elaborate on a more theoretical understanding of causality. As Elman et al argues, "*One example of conceptual development following from detailed knowledge of cases is how IR scholars have spent considerable effort debating the ways in which states generate military power and then how changes in relative power influence foreign policy choices and international political outcomes. Qualitative IR scholars, mainly political realists and their critics, have addressed various parts of this research. Collectively, these scholars have developed more complete theoretical accounts covering and connecting the ways in which states produce and react to power*." [260]

Case study methods are also conclusive, as various individual cases make up different parts of the study to form a conclusive whole, which would otherwise make no sense. Causation, is established through causal mechanisms in various hypotheses, none of which are similar, or

[259] Bennett, E., et al (2007, 2 February). 'Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield', *Comparative Political Studies* 40/2.

[260] Bennett, E., et al (2007, 2 February). 'Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield', *Comparative Political Studies* 40/2.

directly comparable. One case for example, can be a broad study across time, and the other case can be a detailed study of a place or region. Only taken together, they may allow analysts to draw conclusions about whether the analyses are adequately explanatory. Case study methods can be both inductive or deductive, for both theory building and theory testing. Case study methods in inductive research might have various cases, studied to find a single theory. Conversely, in a deductive study, such as this thesis, a theory is already in place, which is then tested alongside various cases, to see if the theory accurately explains the case.

Likewise, this thesis employs a positivist, qualitative and deductive approach of case study research. [261] Qualitative methods have been equally important in IR subfield as quantitative approaches, and every major program in the IR subfield has benefited from the application of case study methods. As Bennet and Elman notes, "Qualitative approaches, especially the intensive study of one or a few cases, allow for the development of differentiated and more closely focused concepts." [262]

The central data collecting approach employed in this thesis is qualitative. Case study methods rely heavily on comparative case studies of cases which are relatively similar, as a way of evaluating claims about causal processes. The two-sensible way of avoiding the allegation of selection bias is to firstly select cases that best serve the purpose of the inquiry, and second, to select cases which maximise the strength and number of tests for the theories and hypotheses. While in depth single case studies offer strong studies of single events, a more comparative method is applied in a systematic analysis of a small number of cases, to test competing hypotheses or theories. It also helps in a controlled, structured, and focused analysis, especially in the field of security studies. Theories, according to Walt and Mearsheimer, should mirror reality. [263] The ways of theory testing include covariation, and process tracing. [264] Covariation is where tests determine if the hypothesised cause is present, but also to see whether the

[261] Snyder, J. (1988) 'Science and Sovietology: Bridging the Methods Gap in Soviet Foreign Policy Studies', *World Politics*, 40/2: 169-193

[262] Bennett, E., et al. (2007) op. cit.

[263] Mearsheimer, J. J. & Walt S. M. (2013) 'Leaving Theory Behind: Why Simplistic Hypothesis Testing is Bad for International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 19/3: 427-457.

[264] Ibid.

outcome is different when the cause is absent. [265] In process tracing, the aim is to determine, if the predictions of the theory are applicable by checking if the causal mechanisms are similar to the manner it depicts. [266] Process tracing indicates that if A leads to B, there would be evidence from A to B, and it would be possible to collect and gather evidence from the cause to the effect. [267]

There is, however, data limitation when it comes to research on Russia, especially on Russian foreign policy.[268] While it is easier than Soviet times, archival research as well as process tracing is difficult, simply because archives and evidence are difficult to access. A scope and time limitation of PhD thesis also does not allow for a longer period of detailed process tracing. That said, process tracing will be used in parts, whenever necessary. Process tracing can involve both inductive and deductive study of events and sequences within a case, as Elman notes, and depending on the theory being tested, exploring intervening events within a case leads to finding if the theory is an accurate explanation of the case. [269]

Previous research which relies on testing balance of threat, like those mentioned above, are also somewhat light on methodology.[270] But those studies include secondary sources which already researched actions and particular state behaviours, with the theory. This thesis will mostly rely on secondary sources, of already research that is done on the cases I seek to explore. A key data source for this thesis is the collation and analysis of documents related to the Russian relations with Ukraine, Georgia, and NATO. These are already readily available secondary sources, including policy papers and their analysis, as well as research papers analysing specific phases which will be studied. Secondary source documents that are available in online archives will be studied. Primary sources like available online Kremlin archives, Russian defence doctrine papers and other white papers, will also be studied, when required

[265] Snyder, J. (1984/1985) 'Richness, Rigor, and Relevance in the Study of Soviet Foreign Policy', *International Security*, 9/3: 89-108; Snyder, J. (1988, January) op. cit. pg. 169-93.

[266] Mearsheimer, J. J. & Walt S. M. (2013) 'Leaving Theory Behind: Why Simplistic Hypothesis Testing is Bad for International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 19/3: 427-457.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Snyder, J. (1984/1985) pg. 89-108

[269] Bennett, Elman, et al. (2007) op cit.

[270] See, Salavatian et al. (2015) op cit.; and Henneberg, Plank, Bock, et al. (2014), op. cit.

per the need of the thesis. Documents such as newspaper articles, think tank reports and specific policy-focused scholarly literature will be thematically analysed. The thesis will employ a study of collected and archived analysis which aims to rigorously interpret a range of documentation to analyse the variables affecting the behaviour of Russia.

There are three potential methodological and conceptual barriers and limitations which I faced, and which I tried to neutralize, and the rest I justify here. None of them are opposed to the overall thesis findings and make this project invalid. But all of them need to be addressed.

While I have discussed the methodology, the one issue which stands out is the quality of evidence studied. For example, a statement by Vladimir Putin, or Sergei Lavrov might be targeted for domestic consumption or international consumption, it is difficult to understand the intention behind the rhetoric. No analyst or scholar can justify and guarantee that much objectivity. Overall, any historical analysis and research takes statements at face value, and considers them to be reliable, and to question intention behind each and every sentence of any political written or oral statement, will start discussions that will never be satisfactorily solved in this thesis, or lifetime. The reliability of a rhetoric is always therefore a cause of concern for any research project.

This thesis attempts to bypass that problem by relying on "observed" evidence. This is not an "area studies" project. Most of the evidence studied are secondary sources, which are then connected with news and other available resources to primarily infer, and then construct, a historical argument, which corroborates the theoretical questions at hand. For the most part of research, whether it is Russian balancing actions or lack thereof after a specific phase of NATO enlargement, or Russian military operational procedure in Georgia, or the details of the logistics and supply chains of Russian military in Eastern Ukraine, are based on observable evidence, news, secondary scholarship, and military literature, and any political rhetoric so much that it is even used, are only there to add extra weight to an argument. The central arguments of this thesis hang and falls on the question of Russian actions, and not political rhetoric or military literature, and from what has been studied so far, the conclusion will not change either way.

Second, this thesis might be accused of being Euro-centric. That is a fair point and acceptable argument. The question why China, for example, is not studied as a case, is discussed in details in this thesis. The simple reason is this. For the purpose of this thesis, two requirements needed to be fulfilled; one, a need for a state or alliance, which is considered a strategic threat in Moscow, and two, against whom Russia has displayed both aggressive balancing behaviour or

military aggression, as well as periods of cooperation and rapprochement. Ukraine and Georgia, as well as NATO falls under that category, as well as avoids selection bias, one being an institution and two nation states. China fails to meet those criteria.

The only other case, which could have supplemented or used instead of any of my cases, is Syria. While Syria itself was not considered a threat by Moscow, Russia nevertheless intervened in Syria, clearly feeling threatened from something, whether it was a worry of losing a warm water naval port in the Mediterranean, or the threat of another client state and friendly regime toppled, or the threat of jihadists originating from Russia. Those are valid lines of academic enquiry, and quite possibly supplement the findings of this research. That being said, this project can be called Euro-centric research. That does not diminish the value of this research, or its applicability in policy formulations in the Euro-Atlantic statecraft, given the retrenchment tendencies in the UK and the US, as well as the push for further fiscal and military consolidation of European Union, which will inevitably lead it to a potential competition with Russia. It also leaves option for further research, to replicate the findings in other parts of the globe, or with other great power. The thesis, while focused on a specific geographical region, still remains externally valid and generalizable.

Finally, this thesis does not claim to answer all theoretical questions. The intention of the thesis was to provide a theoretical understanding of Russian foreign policy, simply because no such attempt has been made, with multiple cases, over a given period of time, under different Russian regimes and leadership. At the time of writing this thesis, there are two conflicts Russia is involved in, in Syria, and Ukraine, with the United States reneging on INF treaty, and possibly the START treaty as well, there are protests going on in Moscow, and NATO is increasing funding under constant pressure from Washington DC.

Like Walt himself wrote in the opening of *The Origins of Alliances*, I am also primarily relying on secondary sources in investigating a theory rather than building one, and the assessment is based on the scholarship provided by the area specialists and military theorists. Within the time frame or this thesis, and limitations of durability, funding, and primary source research, I have tried as best as I could to provide a study which somewhat helps in answering certain broad theoretical questions and help formulate policy. The aim of this thesis is not to provide a definitive history of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, or even my own *magnum opus*, but rather to test a theory to see if Russia can be termed as a realist power, which in turn will help Western policy makers to decide and debate on a future grand strategy moving forward.

That realism is not just a grand-theory of international relations, and that it can be used as a theory of foreign policy to study particular states and great powers, and there are theories within the framework of realism, which could be used to explore foreign policy behaviour of a state or a great power, has already been discussed in detail. I highlighted that I chose the theory of Balance of Threat to understand Russian phases of cooperative and antagonistic behaviour. Balance of threat was chosen because as discussed above, it gives a broader spectrum of causal variables, that includes structural factors like aggregate power, territorial integrity, industrial and military capabilities, which might constitute as threat to a country, as well as factors like offensive intention of a state or alliance.

Walt used his theory to study alliance formations and balancing behaviour in the Middle East, and came to the conclusion that nation-states balance against the most threatening state rather than the most powerful state. [271] The theory was further tested in other studies testing alliance behaviour and threat perceptions in Middle East.[272] Recently, Bock et al explored the Ukrainian crisis, which was at the time of the study still in its nascent state, through the lens of balance of threat. [273] In all these studies, two factors were explored, namely, the source and the intensity of the threat, and how it affects the behaviour of the state or great power. The reaction of the dependent variable was studied, and documents and policy briefs, as well speeches were used as evidence. I try to use that template for this thesis.

The theory explored above gives an idea of what might constitute a threat for a great power. The challenge is to distil the assumptions and form testable predictions to see if Russian behaviour attests to the theory, and to find suitable cases to explore the theory. The logic of balance of threat suggests that Russia balances against threats and not just other powers. So, the logical question that comes are, what then are perceivable threats for Russia, and if Russia reacts as per the theory suggests when the threats increase, and accordingly, when the threats

[271] Walt, SM. (1988) 'Testing theories of alliance formation: the case of Southwest Asia' *International Organization*, 42:275-316.

[272] See, Salvathan et al. (2015) 'Iran and Saudi Arabia: the dilemma of security, the balance of threat', *Journal of Scientific Research and Development* 2/2: 141-149; and Gause, F. (2003) 'Balancing what? Threat perception and alliance choice in the gulf,' *Security Studies* 13/2: 273-305

[273] Bock, A. M., Henneberg, I. & Plank, F. (2015) '"If you compress the spring, it will snap back hard": The Ukrainian crisis and the balance of threat theory', *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 70/1.

decrease? Second, when Russia does not react in the way, a great power is supposed to in the face of a threat, is that due to the absence of one or many causal variables stated in the theory?

These factors and assumptions combined can form, several independent, mutually enforceable mechanisms, and gives rise to several different hypotheses depending on the variables. Following Walt's theory, Russian foreign policy and behaviour would have some simple patterns that would be observable. To start with, the Russian state, regardless of regime type and era, might feel threatened by any power or coalition with overall greater aggregate power than Russia. That would include great powers, alliances, and coalitions. That threat perception would incrementally increase if the source of the threat moves closer to the Russian landmass and decrease if it moves away from the Russian landmass. That would ideally be reflected in Russian defensive behaviour, including defence doctrines, and force positioning. The threat perception would also increase if Russia perceived the source of the threat is having offensive power or remain low if Russia perceives it lacks offensive power. Therefore, logically Russian behaviour towards different states at the same time, might vary, even if they are both adversarial states; the one which displays offensive power would make Russia feel threatened more, than the other state which is investing on defensive power and weaponry. For example, at any given time, if two neighbouring state are engaged in an arms build-up, the one with more investment in offensive firepower would threaten Russia more. Russia might identify both states as sources of threat, however, be more antagonistic to one state and more cooperative or indifferent to the other state, depending on offensive power. Finally, Russian behaviour towards different states might vary depending on what it perceives as offensive intention. If Russia identifies that a great power or an alliance is having enormous offensive power as well as aggregate power, but no offensive intention, it might display different behaviour, than when it perceives the state or great power or coalition is displaying offensive intention. Similarly, if Russia perceives that the source of a potential threat is moving close to Russian landmass, but not displaying any offensive intention, Russia might not display balancing behaviour.

Similarly, combined with the above hypotheses, external factors would also influence Russian behaviour. If at a given time, Russia identifies two differing simultaneous sources of threat, but finds common ideological solidarity with one, then Russia will display bandwagoning or cooperative behaviour or tactically align with that source of threat, and balance against the other, greater source of threat, regardless of how powerful a potential threat that great power or coalition might be, with which Russia is bandwagoning. However, the bandwagoning or cooperative behaviour will only last as long as Russia's own security interest is not affected.

In other words, no amount of ideological similarity will guarantee a continuous cooperative behaviour if security considerations differ. For example, two states might have ideological similarity, like China and Soviet Union, but other security concerns, like territorial disputes or encroachment, will lead to aggressive behaviour. If Russia feels that a source of threat has offensive intention, and if Russia feels that there is a possibility of transnational penetration, that might lead to Russia to believe that any foreign propaganda is an attempt to destabilize Russian regime and is a threat to Russian interests.

Finally, a revolution or regime change in the neighbourhood, added with existing threats might lead to all-out war, or security dilemma and spiral. In any given situation, revolutions in neighbourhood raises the possibility of conflict or security dilemma spiral, and if that is added with other assumptions, then the chances of conflict increase. If Russia feels other powers or coalitions are taking advantage of the revolution in its neighbourhood, it might lead to balancing behaviour towards the other powers and coalitions. If Russia perceives that the coalition or power is advancing towards the Russian landmass, then balancing will increase. However, if offensive power and offensive intention are added to this volatile mix, then the chances of balancing behaviour might change to pre-empting a conflict. The greater perceived threat will be towards Russian territorial integrity, security, and strategic interests, as well as Russian economic interests, the higher the chances of Russia taking aggressive action. These are some of the simple testable hypotheses in general form that one might conclude from the earlier espoused theories.

When Russia faces a threat

Accordingly, as discussed above, the assumptions that we gather from the theory, helps us identify how Russia might behave. To begin with, there is aggregate power, which is a combination of state's total resources, which include population, industrial and military capabilities. Higher aggregate power in a peer rival, might alter the perception of threat, and might result in internal balancing and arms race or search for allies. If the theory is correct, the political debates within the dependent variable in such a situation is supposed to acknowledge the high or rising aggregate power in a rival state or alliance. There would be an acknowledgement of the need to internally balance against peer rivals.

Geographical proximity is the second variable, which claims that if a source of threat with extremely high aggregate power, is within a close geographical proximity of a state or great power, without any territorial buffer state or high seas in between, the threat perception rises.

There will be noticeable actions and policies undertaken in the behaviour of the state in question, whether it is internal balancing actions, like defensive actions like military expenditure, repositioning of armaments or weapons systems, or external balancing actions like cultivating alliances in buffer zones or both. A closer threat with increased or increasing aggregate power, will result in greater concern and elevated threat perception in a state or great power, which will influence its balancing or bandwagoning behaviour accordingly, and it will reflect in the policy decisions and speeches. The threat perception rises even more, if the aggregate power is also coupled with offensive power, that is the power to physically threaten the existence of the regime, government, infrastructures, economic and territorial integrity of the state. Historical animosity or ideology in this case could be important factors in deciding whether a power is or will be considered offensive by its rivals. In such a situation, we would see that there are urgent balancing actions that will take place. In Salavatian's study for example, the period highlighted was when Ahmedinejad was elected in Iran. [274]The immediate reactions were a revision of war doctrines in Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia tactically aligning with Israel against Iran.[275] There was observable evidence of this tacit cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia, against Iran. Likewise, I point out below, in the eventuality of Russia facing such a threat, there will be certain observable actions and policies in place. Most importantly, if a state believes that these factors are combined with offensive intent, that is the intention to harm state interests, either economically or strategically, that will imply the great power or state would think the source to be existential and would behave accordingly. While Walt claims all these factors are equally important, it is the offensive intention of a peer rival that matters the most for the dependent variable. [276]

Three external factors, combined with the above assumptions, also alter threat perceptions. Ideological solidarity can lead states to temporary tactical alignments, but security considerations usually trump over ideological preferences. Often ideology-based alliances falter, when security interests differ, alternatively, ideological differences do not stop alignments if there is a great threat in the horizon. In Hossein Salavatian's study of Iranian-Saudi balancing, for example, the ideological difference between Israel and Saudi Arabia didn't

[274] Salavatian et al. (2015) op. cit.

[275] Ibid.

[276] Henneberg, Plank, Bock, et al. (2014, 18 December) 'The Ukrainian crisis and the balance of threat theory', *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*.

stop them aligning together against the common threat, Iran, especially during the time when under Ahmadinejad Iran was promoting Shia militias in Iraq as well as concentrating on nuclear weapons development.[277] Likewise, in the case of Russia, as per theory, ideological differences or similarities, wouldn't have much influence, as long as other territorial, security or economic interests are in play. Open societies invite more transnational penetration than closed societies from their rival powers, and great powers feel threatened with more transnational penetration especially like foreign propaganda, which they think is detrimental to their stability. In Russia's case, if Russia's neighbour lean more towards NATO, it would result in Russian threat perceptions increasing, and the concern will reflect in Russian official records. Russian policy makers will be worried about Western penetration and propaganda in Russian society, and measures will be taken to counter it. There will be evidence of Russian actions, against what Russia might consider as agents of penetration. Finally, revolutions are key external events, which influence and heighten a security dilemma and threat perception of a neighbouring state or great power. In two different ways, again depending on other external factors, all else being equal, a revolution can straight away invite aggression from a neighbouring state or power, which was previously aligned to the toppled regime, or otherwise can instigate a prolong security dilemma and spiral of conflict and confrontation. The theory will be supported if there's heightened security competition between Russia and NATO, and it leads to a conflict, with the Russian *casus belli* indicating that Russian actions were taken to either pre-empt or prevent the perceived threat from growing. Alternatively, in a similar situation, if one of the factors that leads to increased threat perceptions listed above are absent, and that did not lead Russia to decide the situation to be threatening enough to warrant a conflict, that would support the theory as well.

Case selection

That leads us to a selection of cases to explore the theory. For this thesis, I chose to explore three cases, namely Russia-NATO relations, Russia-Ukraine relations, and Russian-Georgia relations, and analyse, for each case the different phases of cooperation and balancing. In each of these cases, I will study when Russia balanced against each of these actors, and when Russia cooperated. Then I will explore if the theory and the hypotheses presented in this chapter below, matches the evidence.

[277] Hossein Salavatian et al. (2015) op. cit.

The reason for choosing these particular cases are as follows. To test the hypotheses presented in this chapter, there was a need to find cases which would meet two qualifications. One, they should be regarded as strategic threats by Russia, whether it is an individual state or an alliance. Two, Russia must have displayed phases of both cooperative and antagonistic behaviours towards these threats in the last twenty years. Ukraine and Georgia are two countries, with which Russia displayed both cooperative and antagonistic behaviour. They are both considered part of Russia's traditional sphere of influence, and both underwent tumultuous colour revolutions where the old guard were toppled. Russia has also committed aggression and waged war against Georgia and dissected and annexed part of Ukraine and is currently engaged in active destabilisation of the region by means of proxy war. NATO on the other hand, is not a great power or a country, but an alliance led by great powers. The reason to choose NATO and not United States is simple. It avoids the question of selection bias. The theory of balance of threat suggests that a great power reacts to sources of threat, which could be either another great power as well as an alliance. While NATO is led by United States, it is a multinational alliance, and it has been expanding ever closer to Russian territory, which allows us to explore if Russian cooperation and antagonism towards NATO fulfils the assumptions mentioned above.

Which leaves us with China as the only other great power which could have been used as a case. Both United States and China are two predominant powers of the globe. Nonetheless, despite the Sino-Soviet history of competition and rivalry, Russia has not shown much antagonistic behaviour towards China in the last twenty years. That could be for several different reasons. Maybe Russia perceives Chinese offensive power is not targeted towards Russia, or that China lacks offensive intentions towards Russia. Maybe because Chinese foreign investment in Russia is paramount, or that Russia seeks tactical alignment with China as a counter-balance to United States, especially since the Iraq intervention which Russia considers is a sign of American global hegemonic aspirations. These are important questions to ponder for further research, nonetheless it leaves out China as a case to study further, given the scope of this thesis.

Each of these cases will consist of a chapter of this thesis. To distil the theory, Walt's theory suggests that states will balance against threat. In each of the cases, Russia should balance against threats. Walt's theory also suggests that the decrease in the perceived threat, due to a lack of any of the variables, or the neutralisation of the threat, would result in a return to status quo. Russia, accordingly, should therefore visibly display an instinct towards upholding, or

returning to status-quo. As John Mearsheimer pointed out, regardless of the intention of the West (NATO/US), ultimately "it is the Russians, not the West, who ultimately get to decide what counts as a threat to them." [278]

As per the general hypothesis, Russian relations with NATO is supposed to reflect Russian relative military inferiority, and that would reflect in Russian decision making and policies. According to Walt's theory, if Russian policy makers realised that they were weak and helpless with regards to NATO expansion in Central Europe, or NATO intervention in Kosovo, that would be reflected in Russian decision making. Being a comparatively weaker power, there could be two different possible reasons of muted Russian response in both the situations. Russia could either calculate, that NATO expansions in central Europe either did not involve offensive capabilities like positioning of permanent troops or weapons system which would threaten the balance of power and territorial integrity, or any offensive weapons on the part of NATO. Either way, Russian policy documents, speeches, public debates, and papers would reflect such concerns. Similar documents during Russian NATO cooperation both before and during the Afghanistan campaign would be studied to see, if Russian policy makers bandwagoned with NATO because Russian policy makers calculated that NATO forces did not have offensive intention in Russian neighbourhood. Incremental expansion of NATO towards East would result in incremental change in threat perceptions. If the difference in Russian behaviour in similar circumstances, can be explained by the absence of any assumption listed above, the theory will be supported.

Ukraine and Georgia will be studied separately. Russian relations with Georgia and Ukraine, before and after the colour revolutions will be studied, especially during the build-up to Georgian war, as well as the build-up of Ukrainian crisis which would reflect in Russian threat perceptions. Russian military doctrines as well as policy briefs would reflect that change in threat quotient. The theory will be considered supported, if during the build-up phase of both the crisis, there is evidence of Russian actions which might be considered as cultivation of alliance with the pre-revolutionary regimes. Similarly, the theory will be considered supported if Russia, fearful of post-revolutionary Georgia moving away towards NATO, therefore Russian intervention in Georgia could be either pre-emptive war, to stop Georgia's move towards NATO, or a strategic operation in creating a buffer zone in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Georgia and Ukraine are not great powers. By definition they are not supposed

[278] Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014) 'Why the Ukraine crisis is the West's fault. The liberal delusions that provoked Putin,' *Foreign Affairs* 93/5.

to post any strategic threat to Russia on their own. Per Walt's theory, therefore, Russia will only feel threatened if Georgia or Ukraine turns to be a source of threat. But both the countries can be considered sources of threat, if they align with adversarial great powers or alliances, if they have increasing offensive power or offensive intentions vis-à-vis Russia, or if and when there is a revolution which subverts the domestic order, topples the friendly regime, and invites adversarial powers as a counterbalance to Russia. These threats should reflect in Russian policy documents and public debates, as well as military doctrines.

To sum up, here are some hypotheses that are explored in light of the theory, in the following chapters.

1. Higher aggregate power in a perceived strategic threat will alter threat perception in Russia, and will lead to internal balancing like arms race, or external balancing, in alliance behaviour. That will reflect in the debates within Russian policy making circles as well as Russian actions.
2. Russian state, regardless of regime type and era, might feel threatened by any power or coalition with overall greater aggregate power than Russia. That would include great powers, alliances, and coalitions. Russia would balance against those threats.
3. The threat perception will incrementally increase, if the source of threat moves closure to Russian landmass and decrease if it moves away. The threat perception will also rise if offensive power increases and will decrease if offensive power is replaced by defensive powers. These changes will be acknowledged by Russian policy makers and there should be a record and reflection of that in debates and discussions.
4. A geographically closer threat with increased or increasing aggregate power, will result in greater concern and elevated threat perception in a state or great power, which will influence its balancing or bandwagoning behaviour accordingly. Russia's reaction to NATO expansion, will be explored, to see if the causal variables are present in the events of a forceful reaction, or one or more of them is absent in the instances of muted reaction.
5. Finally, any altered security dynamic which threatens Russia's privileged position in its neighbourhood, would result in Moscow's balancing behaviour, and even use of military force, in extreme. Alternatively, the perceived threat, when neutralised or balanced, would result in Moscow moving back to status quo. This would also prove

that Russia acts as a security maximiser, and not a power maximiser. Or in other words, Moscow is a status-quo and defensive realist power, and not a revanchist offensive realist power.

In sum, the thesis will seek to explore Russian reaction, and balancing to threats, in the following cases. If NATO expands, Russia will feel threatened. If it reacts per the theory, and if Russian balancing increases with each NATO expansion, then the theory is supported. Alternatively, if Russian reaction is muted, during phases of NATO expansion, in the absence of any causal variable, then the theory is supported. Likewise, Russia ideally should not ideally feel threatened and react to either Georgia or Ukraine. But if Russia reacts to the colour revolutions, or any Georgian or Ukrainian push towards further integration with NATO, then the theory is supported. Alternatively, if Russian reaction is muted, even in the scenario of Westward push by Ukraine and Georgia, in the absence of any causal variable, then the theory is supported. Exploring each of these cases individually would help us understand, if Russia behaves per the tenets of balance of threat, and therefore, acts as a classic Realist great-power.

Chapter 4: **Russian balancing against NATO**

The enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) since the collapse of the Soviet Union remained a major issue between Russia and the West. As recently as in 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin tied Russia's annexation of Crimea to NATO's expansion in former Soviet spheres of influence. [279] Neorealist theories dictate that Russian behaviour would be determined by structural forces, like military balance, power, territorial factors, more than values and ideology. Accordingly, Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory was chosen as a theoretical framework to test if Russia behaves as a realist great power. In the previous chapter, I highlighted a set of hypotheses.

First, higher aggregate power in states of alliances considered adversarial by Russia would cause Russia to perceive a higher level of threat. That would result in balancing behaviour by Russia, which could be either internal balancing like arms build-up, strategic changes, force positioning or alliance behaviour. Second, the Russian state regardless of regime type or era will feel threatened by any power or coalition with an overall aggregate power greater than Russia, a threat perception which will incrementally increase as the source of threat moves closer to Russia. Third, the threat perception of Russia will also rise if offensive capability or offensive intention of the adversarial coalition increases and will decrease if Russia perceives a lack of offensive capability or intention. The changes of such perception will be reflected in Russian policy debates, as well as speeches by political and military leaders. These set of hypotheses would be tested in three phases of NATO enlargement. The first phase, when central European countries, which were once part of Warsaw Pact, but not part of Soviet Union joined NATO. The second phase, when East European countries, as well as some former Soviet states, joined NATO and the final phase, when NATO decided to invite Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO. Russian reaction in each of these phases will be explored.

Balance of Threat theory implies Russian relation with NATO should reflect Russian relative military inferiority, which will be evident in strategy documents, as well as public speeches by military and political elites. Both Russian political and military elite, will be, by default opposed to NATO enlargement. If NATO expands, Russia will feel threatened. If it reacts as

[279] Ferguson, I. & Hast, S. (2018) 'Introduction: The Return of Spheres of Influence?', *Geopolitics*, 23/2: 277-284.

per theory, and if Russian balancing increases with each NATO expansion, then the theory is supported. Alternatively, if the Russian reaction is muted, during phases of NATO expansion, in the absence of any causal variable, then the theory is supported. The Russian reaction to NATO enlargement or NATO's capability would, therefore, follow the hypothesis in the following way. One, it will be reliant on the perceived source of a threat moving closer to Russia, and the Russian reaction would continue to be more and more aggressive with each phase of NATO enlargement. Two, the Russian reaction to NATO's increased offensive capability would result in increased aggressive posturing from the Russian side. Three, if Russia perceives NATO has an offensive intention, there would be balancing behaviour evident from the Russian side. Alternatively, if Russia does not act aggressively with each phase of expansion, there would be an absence of either offensive capability or perceived offensive intention from NATO's side. Either way, there would be documented evidence of Russian actions and justifications, in official political and military speeches and strategic literature. It is difficult to judge the behaviour or Russia in isolation, without understanding the whole strategic reality, which is why this study intends to use three separate cases to test the idea that Russia acts according to the dictates of the balance of threat theory. The picture will be clearer after exploring Russian behaviour with Ukraine and Georgia. This chapter provides one piece of the puzzle, the Russian reaction to NATO enlargement.

In this chapter, a brief history of NATO enlargement is given, key Russian interests are explored, followed by a detailed study of NATO enlargement in three phases. The section on the push for NATO enlargement helps in explaining the broad ideas and justifications behind NATO enlargement from the Western side, which in turn helps in further understanding Russian perception about the enlargement. Key differences of opinions, semantics and definitions also become prominent in this section, which forms the baseline of studying Russian reactions in the phases of NATO's enlargement, and the sources of Russian insecurity regarding NATO. In each phase of enlargement, the events would be explored briefly followed by Russian political reactions, military and political statements, relevant documents, and speeches to see if Russian behaviour is influenced as per the abovementioned hypotheses, followed by a summation. As mentioned in the previous chapters, this chapter itself is just one part of the three case studies explored in this dissertation, which together with the other cases, help us understand if Russia acts according to the dictates of Neorealism, and the theory of balance of threat.

The push for NATO enlargement

This section, charting the brief history of this period, between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first phase of NATO enlargement is important, as it gives a baseline to understand subsequent Russian understanding of the process. It also helps understand that the process of NATO enlargement, from the Western side, was an ideological as well as strategic choice, whereas from the Russian side, it was perceived as purely strategic and territorial expansion. It also highlights that the Russian perception of NATO expansion remains coloured, as it starts from what Russia perceives to be a betrayal, a territorial expansion, aimed at balancing Russia. This section also highlights why the words NATO expansion and enlargement are used interchangeably. From the western perspective, it was an enlargement, which was decided after careful debate and implied agency and choice to the Central and Eastern European states. From the Russian perspective, it was an expansion, for strategic and territorial reasons.

American debate over NATO

Russian opposition to NATO expansion had been a constant source of animosity, even when the intensity fluctuated. These tensions are more than policy disputes, as they reflect opposing worldviews. The Russian geopolitical perspective is different than the Western ideological lens or liberal internationalism and liberal institutionalism, and as a result Russia views NATO through the lens of a strategic adversary in European security.[280] As Dmitry Trenin wrote, the Russian view of Europe remains steeped in geopolitics and great power rivalry, even when the European lens changed to a more liberal internationalism. Russia's refuses to accept the continued hegemony of the US. And this is the key difference of Russia from other European powers. [281]

The western debate over NATO was highly contested. George F Kennan said in February 1997 that it was the "most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era." [282] The

[280] For more on Russian and Western differing viewpoints, see, Monaghan, A. 'The Ukraine crisis and NATO–Russia relations', *NATO Review*, 1 July 2014, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2014/russia-ukraine-natocrisis/Ukraine-crisis-NATO-Russia-relations/EN/index.htm, accessed 17 July 2015; Larrabee, S. (2010) 'Russia, Ukraine, and central Europe: the return of geopolitics', *Journal of International Affairs* 63/2: 33–52.

[281] Trenin, D. 'What kind of Russia should the West fear?', *Russia Direct* (11 January 2017), available at: http://carnegie.ru/2017/01/11/what-kind-of-russia-should-west-fear-pub-67658.

[282] 'NATO Expansion Would Be an Epic 'Fateful Error', *Los Angeles Times*, July 07, 1997.

warning was repeated in 2014 when John Mearsheimer debated the reaction of Russia and Russian annexation of Crimea as a direct response to NATO expansion in the East. [283] Scholarly opinion is divided on whether there was a no-expansion pledge from NATO, or whether it was a serious miscommunication and misinterpretation from both sides.[284] According to the latest declassified documents, there were a series of verbal assurances and pledges from the Western side to Mikhail Gorbachev.[285] The US Secretary of State James Baker's assured "not one inch eastward" to Gorbachev, on February 9, 1990, alongside other series of assurances. Baker went on to assure Gorbachev that Soviet territorial interests would be kept in mind, and if Gorbachev wanted then a united Germany would be outside NATO without any US troops present.[286] Assurances from Western leaders on NATO began on January 31, 1990, with West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher making clear that "that the changes in Eastern Europe and the German unification process must not lead to an 'impairment of Soviet security interests.'[287] And ruling out NATO 'expansion of its territory towards the east, i.e. moving it closer to the Soviet borders.' NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner stated that the alliance is not looking to any shift of balance or extending military borders to the east.[288] This pledge was repeated subsequently by Helmut Kohl, Margaret Thatcher, James Baker, Douglas Hurd, Francois Mitterrand, and George H W Bush. Margaret Thatcher said to Gorbachev in NATO's London summit in 1990, "We must find ways to give the Soviet Union confidence that its security would be assured…. CSCE could be an umbrella for all this, as well as being the forum which brought the Soviet Union fully into discussion about the future of Europe", a pledge repeated by President Bush, and subsequently by British

[283] Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014) op cit. pg. 1-12.

[284] Sarotte, M. E. (2019) op cit. pg. 7-41.

[285] 'NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard', Savranskaya, S. & Blanton, T. Dec 12, 2017, available at National Security Archive at George Washington University (http://nsarchive.gwu.edu) : https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early

[286] Oberdorfer, D. (1998) *From the Cold War to a new era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983–1991*, rev. ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. pg. 395.

[287] Genscher stated in a speech at the Tutzing Protestant Academy on 31 January 1990: "What NATO must do is state unequivocally that whatever happens in the Warsaw Pact there will be no expansion of NATO territory eastwards, that is to say closer to the borders of the Soviet Union," Szabo, S. F. (1992) *The Diplomacy of German Unification* New York: St. Martin's Press. pg. 58.

[288] Quote from Defense News, 29 April 1991, cited in Solomon, G. B. (1997) *The NATO Enlargement Debate, 1990–1997* Westport: Praeger. pg. 8.

PM John Major, who personally assured Gorbachev, as late as in March 1991, saying "We are not talking about the strengthening of NATO." Subsequently, when asked by Soviet defence minister Marshal Dmitri Yazov about East European leaders' interest in NATO membership, he repeated, "Nothing of the sort will happen." [289] In sum, during the final days of the Cold war, as well as the first few years after the Soviet collapse, Russia was under the impression that there was a Western pledge of no territorial enlargement of NATO towards Russian borders, which will alter the strategic balance in Europe.

European debate about NATO

In Europe, the debate about NATO expansion was mixed. The reunification of Germany was followed by relative calm, and questions about the future of NATO was not debated much in the US, during the last two years of the George H W Bush's presidency. The initial push came from the Central European countries, sceptical of Russia's influence, around June 1990.[290] Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia reached a joint strategy known as the Visegrad process, in response to Moscow's economic pressure to sign bilateral agreements of future security arrangements. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Yulii Kvitinskii proposed a backdoor arrangement, which pushed the Central Europeans to be under a Russian security umbrella, which was known as the Kvitinskii clause, and was thoroughly rejected by the Central Europeans countries, even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, highlighting Moscow's relative loss of coercive power.[291] By November 1990, the Soviet Press started to report that Hungary was willing to join NATO, and by early 1991, Moscow seemed resigned to the idea that all Visegrad countries share the goal of joining NATO and by April 1991, Izvestia proposed that Moscow might join NATO itself. By July 1991, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. NATO also offered Moscow to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), as US Secretary James Baker suggested that NAAC would be an important part of Russia's

[289] Savranskaya, S. & Blanton, T. (2017) op. cit.

[290] Marten, K. (2017) 'Reconsidering NATO Expansion: A Counterfactual Analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990's,' *European Journal of International Security* (November); Smith, J. (2008) 'The NATO-Russia Relationship: Defining Moment or Déja vu?' CSIS Report (November). Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

[291] Marten, K. (2017, November) 'Reconsidering NATO Expansion: A Counterfactual Analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990's', *European Journal of International Security*.

engagement with European security structures. From the Russian side, there were broad hints that Russia is willing to consider joining NATO as a long-term political goal.[292]

The push for enlargement

From the Western side, the first hint of NATO enlargement came with Secretary General Manfred Wörner's declaration in March 1992, that NATO's doors are open. NATO's enlargement policy was not a concerted effort initially, but organically developed throughout the early 1990s, and gained momentum under the Presidency of Bill Clinton, whose administration tied it to the changing grand strategy of the US. It was also a matter of serious debate within the US administration, the main driver of the expansion claim. While the Central and Eastern European states were wary of Russia and wanted to be under the security umbrella of NATO, they were rebuffed initially, for fear of Russian reaction. It was not until Bill Clinton's presidency; this idea was mulled seriously in Washington. [293] In April 1993, Clinton met Lech Walesa of Poland, Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia, and Arpad Goncz of Hungary who argued that NATO should expand. Clinton's foreign policy was predicated on the idea that peace is promoted with trade and free market, and democracies rarely go to war with each other, otherwise known as the democratic peace theory. [294] NATO expansion and the spread of liberal institutions was, therefore, a means to this policy.

The idea of expansion was vigorously debated within the alliance.[295] Primary arguments made for expansion were that it would help communist states transition to democracy, and enhance continent-wide security, and prevent a security vacuum in large swathes of territory and prevent the rise of ethno-nationalist harmful elements.[296] While superficially sympathetic to Russia,

[292] Ibid.

[293] Asmus, R. D., Kugler, R. L., & Larrabee, F. S. (1993) 'Building a new NATO', *Foreign Affairs*, 72/4. pg. 28–40.

[294] Brinkley, D. (1997) 'Democratic enlargement: the Clinton doctrine', *Foreign Policy*, 106: 110–27.

[295] Gordon, M. R. (1994) 'U.S. opposes move to rapidly expand NATO membership', (2 January, 1994) *New York Times*.

[296] See Asmus, R. D., Kugler, R. L., & Larrabee, F. S. (1993) 'Building a new NATO', *Foreign Affairs* 72/4, pg. 28–40; Kissinger, H. A. (1994) 'Expand NATO now' (19 December, 1994) *Washington Post* (19 December, 1994), p. A27; Talbott, S. (1995) 'Why NATO should grow'(10 August, 1995) *New York Review of Books*, pg. 27–30; Holbrooke, R. (1995) 'America, a European power', *Foreign Affairs* 74/2, pg. 38–51; Odom, W. E.

NATO expansion was primarily a security endeavour, and NATO was unwilling to let Russia have any say on the process. [297]

Further push for NATO expansion came from Germany, under German defence minister Volker Rühe. Rühe said that German stability would be threatened if its new eastern frontiers are not further moved east. [298] In the United States, NSC speechwriter Jeremy Rosner, leading the NATO Enlargement Ratification Office, alongside Secretary of State Madeleine Albright lobbied for Senate Approval for NATO's geographic expansion, and coined the term "enlargement" as opposed to a more aggressive sounding "expansion". [299] The idea was, however, a territorial expansion and spread of institutions and American support for democracy promotion, as opposed to a narrower Cold war era idea of Containment. [300]

The opposition to this Clintonian NATO expansion came from certain circles. The Pentagon was opposed to NATO expansion, and supported the Partnership for Peace, to allay Russian fears that would arise. Strobe Talbott, then adviser to the Secretary of State cautioned saying 'The key principle, as I see it, is this … An expanded NATO that excludes Russia will not serve to contain Russia's retrograde, expansionist impulses; quite the contrary, it will further provoke them.' [301] The idea that Russia would inevitably be provoked by territorial enlargement was also furthered in academic arguments. [302] Nevertheless, the Clinton

(1995, Spring) 'NATO's expansion: why the critics are wrong', *The National Interest*, pg. 38–49; Albright, M. (1997) 'Enlarging NATO: why bigger is better', *The Economist* (15 February), pg. 21–3; Brzezinski, Z. (1997) 'A geostrategy for Eurasia', *Foreign Affairs* 76/5, pg. 50–65.

[297] NATO, 'Study on NATO enlargement', 3 Sept. 1995, 2:27, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_ texts_24733.htm

[298] Grayson, G. W. (1999) *Strange Bedfellows: NATO Marches East* Landham: University Press of America.

[299] Brinkley, D. (1997, Spring) 'Democratic enlargement: the Clinton doctrine', *Foreign Policy*, 106, pg. 110–27.

[300] Asmus, Opening's NATO's Door, p. 253.

[301] Talbott, S. (2003) *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* New York: Random House, pg. 100–101.

[302] For more on opposition to NATO enlargement within United States, see, Brown, M. E. (1995) 'The flawed logic of NATO expansion', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 37/1, pg. 34-52; Reiter, D. (2001) 'Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy', *International Security*, 25/4: 41-67; Waltz, K. N. (2000) 'NATO expansion: A realist's view', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 21/2, pg. 23-38; Mearsheimer, J. J. (1994/1995) 'The False Promise of International Institutions,' *International Security*, 19/3, pg. 5-49; 3 May

administration was committed to expand NATO and democratic peace. [303] In January 1994, Clinton stated in a speech in Prague, that 'The question is no longer whether NATO will take on new members, but when and how.' [304] It was followed by Clinton's speech in Poland, calling PFP 'a first step toward expansion of NATO'. By 1995, the process was inevitable. [305] There are scholarly disagreements on this pledge on two accounts. One, the pledge was made to the Soviet Union, which disappeared and there were no similar promises whether written or verbal to Russia, and that promises are invalid as they are not codified in a treaty and is therefore not legally binding.[306] It was also stated that none of these pledges or promises were with regard to Central European countries specifically and only pertained to NATO troops in East Germany. [307] Second, there were no actual pledges, but conciliatory statements open to interpretation. [308] NATO's argument was that the central European states were free to choose their own alliances, a contingency that was not discussed during the German reunification talks. [309]

Russian perceptions of NATO's intentions

letter to Talbott published in Richard T. Davies, 'Should NATO grow? A dissent', *New York Review of Books* (21 September 1995).

[303] For a detailed study on the domestic push during the Clinton Presidency, read Marten, K. (2017) 'Reconsidering NATO expansion: a counterfactual analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990s', *European Journal of International Security*; and Sarotte, M. E. (2019) 'How to Enlarge NATO: The Debate inside the Clinton Administration, 1993–95' *International Security*, 44/1, pg. 7–41.

[304] Goldgeier, J. M. (1999) *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* Washington, DC: Brookings, pg. 57.

[305] Grayson, G. W. (1999) *Strange Bedfellows: NATO Marches East* Landham: University Press of America, pg. 46

[306] Rühle, M. (2014) 'NATO enlargement and Russia: discerning fact from fiction', *American Foreign Policy Interests* 36/4, pg. 235.

[307] Sarotte, M. E. (1989) *The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* Princeton: Princeton University Press, pg. 206–207.

[308] Kramer, M. (2009) 'The myth of no-NATO-enlargement pledge to Russia', *Washington Quarterly* 32/ 2, pg. 47–9.

[309] Rühle, M. 'NATO enlargement and Russia: myths and realities', *NATO Review*, 1 July 2014, http:// www.nato.int/docu/review/2014/Russia-Ukraine-Nato-crisis/Nato-enlargement-Russia/EN/index.htm, accessed 27 Jan. 2015.

There is significant evidence that Gorbachev went back to the Soviet Union during the final days of USSR, assuring his countrymen and hardliners that there would be no expansion of NATO.[310] That was one of the pledges on which the unification of Germany was agreed upon. Archival and documentary evidence charting the speeches and memos of Western and Soviet leaders during the time period shows that Western leaders considered and rejected the Central and Eastern European membership of NATO and were satisfied with only German unification. The documents also reinforce the claim by several Realist scholars as well as CIA Director Robert Gates's criticism of pressing ahead with an expansion of NATO eastward, during the mid to late Nineties, even when Russians were led to believe that the eventuality would never occur. The controversy regarding this issue subsequently rose several times when the Russian government regardless of regime or leader accused the West regarding NATO enlargement in 1997—1999, and again in 2001—2002 when NATO invited several countries to join, as well as in 2005 and in 2008. In September 2008, after Georgia and Ukraine were invited by NATO, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov insisted that in the 1990s the United States had ''made a commitment not to expand NATO'' and had ''repeatedly broken this commitment'' in the years since. It can be argued that there is some truth in that, and that this idea of "betrayal", colours Russian judgement of NATO.

Russian reaction to the first Phase of NATO enlargement

By December 1996, the North Atlantic Council meeting announced a summit in Madrid in July 1997, which decided to set the course for the Alliance to move towards the 21rst century, consolidating Euro Atlantic security. [311] On 10 December 1996 NATO invited Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to apply for membership at the Madrid summit. The first phase of the enlargement process was expected to take two years to complete, and by 1999 NATO was ready for new members. Because of its size and its geostrategic location, Central Europe was strategically valuable for NATO. [312]

[310] Savranskaya, S. & Blanton, T. (2017) op. cit.

[311] Final Communiqué, Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC), December 1996.

[312] Michta, A. A. (ed.) (1999) *America's new allies: Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic in NATO* Seattle: University of Washington Press, p. 45.

Russian reaction to NATO expansion is difficult to chart as they are also in phases. Initially, neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin felt threatened by the NATO alliance, as firstly, both these leaders were under the impression that NATO is not expanding territorially, and both wanted to work with NATO, under the impression that NATO could provide some strategic stability in Europe, and secondly, both were under no illusion that the former Warsaw pact countries were no longer under Moscow's direct command. A RAND Corporation study highlighted that Russia always considered the following five components to be its areas of interest. [313] They are defence of the territory, sphere of influence in near abroad, Russian status as a great power, Russian equal platform with other great powers, and sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. Russian strategic ideas are partly shaped by Russian history, lack of natural boundaries and buffers, consistent foreign invasion, and interference in Russian domestic affairs by other great powers. [314] The consensus in Russian foreign policy circles and elites is that NATO enlargement results in the diminishing security buffer between Russia and West and makes the defence of conclaves and strategic chokepoint like Kaliningrad difficult. [315] Russian defence minister Grachev, for example, did not see a NATO expansion in the horizon, and the Russian military doctrine in 1993 was designed to foster an era of "partnership and cooperation", even though it did mention any territorial enlargement of any alliance moving towards Russian borders as a potential military threat, in future, should it ever happen.[316] Since 1994, Atlanticists and liberals in the Western sense, have not acted as a unified political force within Russia. [317] The Russian ruling elite, as well as opposition, whether

[313] "Russian Views of the International Order" by Radin, A., & Reach, C. B. Rand Corporation research projects Document Number: RR-1826-OSD Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1826.html

[314] Kotkin, S. (2016) 'Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics: Putin Returns to Historical Patterns,' *Foreign Affairs*; see also Mankoff, J. (2009) *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pg. 3.

[315] Sergounin, A. A. (1997) 'Russian domestic debate on NATO enlargement: From Phobia to damage limitation', *European Security*, 6/4, pg. 55-71.

[316] 'The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation', edict 1833 of the President of the Russian Federation (2 November 1993), available at: {http://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/russia-mil-doc. html#polbase}

[317] For a detailed analysis, see "Russian Views of the International Order" by Andrew Radin, Clinton Bruce Reach, Rand Corporation research projects Document Number: RR-1826-OSD Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1826.html; also Sergounin, A. A. (1997) 'Russian domestic debate on NATO enlargement: From Phobia to damage limitation', *European Security*, 6/4, pg. 55-71. Russian election results in 2018 also corresponds the political approval ratings at http://www.levada.ru/en/. The liberals

communist or ultra-nationalist, were consistently sceptical of NATO enlargement, as were the Russian military elite. Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) in 1993 also referred to NATO as the "biggest military grouping in the world that possesses an enormous offensive potential."[318] As late as 1994, there was no expectation in Russia that NATO was going to expand. At the end of 1993, Kozyrev confirmed to Russian lawmakers that 'the greatest achievement of Russian foreign policy in 1993 was to prevent NATO's expansion eastward to our borders.' [319] There was a surprise in Moscow, with the launch of the NATO enlargement study in 1995, prompting Yeltsin to declare that the Cold war has been replaced with Cold peace. [320] The democrats in Russia felt betrayed and disappointed.[321] Public opinion also turned against further Atlanticism. [322]

Even though, neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin felt threatened by NATO, they both made it clear, that NATO expansion would be a constant source of animosity with the West. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin's comments in Belgium also mentioned the threat to Russian interests would be NATO's materiel and infrastructure in the former Soviet sphere. [323] Therefore, even before there were any official statements from the United States about NATO expansion to the east, any territorial enlargement of an old alliance in former Soviet sphere was regarded warily from Moscow, a sentiment that was openly conveyed to the West. [324] Yevgeny Primakov, at that

---

mentioned here are liberals as we know in the West, based on political ideology, and not the far-right party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, which is incidentally known as the Liberal democratic party of Russia.

[318] Adomeit, H. (2007) 'Inside or Outside? Russia's Policies Towards NATO,', Research Unit Russia/CIS, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, p. 6.

[319] Goldgeier, Not Whether but When, p. 57.

[320] Goldgeier, Not Whether but When, pg. 190–1; Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, p. 140; and Goldgeier, J. M. & McFaul, M. *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War* Washington, DC: Brookings, p. 184.

[321] Friedman, T. (1996) 'Sucked Into the Wrong Vacuum,' (14 July, 1996) *New York Times.*

[322] A poll by the newspaper, Moskovskiye Novosti, found that 51% of Russians viewed NATO expansion as a "serious threat" to Russia; only 14% disagreed. A poll by the respected Russian Centre for Public Opinion found a similar majority "unreservedly negative" on the proposed changes in the Alliance, see Caryl, C. 'Ivan O Public Speaks: No to NATO,' *US News and World Report*, 24 March 1997, p. 42.

[323] Zagorski, A. 'Russia and European institutions', in Baranovsky, V. (ed.), *Russia and Europe: The Emerging Security Agenda* Stockholm: SIPRI, p. 536.

[324] 'Primakov Report' by the Russian External Intelligence Service in autumn 1993, quoted in A. A. Sergounin, 'Russian domestic debate on NATO enlargement: from phobia to damage limitation', European Security 6: 4,

time the director of the Foreign Intelligence, said in November 1993 that material and territorial expansion of NATO is dangerous for Russian interests, as Russia will be compelled to redeploy troops to the West. [325]

The Russian military and political elite were somewhat cognizant of Russian relative material inferiority compared to the Western alliance, immediately after the Cold war and the resultant diminished stature. The addition of central European states only increased that gap in aggregate power. However, two concessions from NATO's side helped in allaying Russian fears. Russia participated in Partnership for Peace in exchange for special status within North Atlantic Council. The partnership for peace program meant that there was a visible reduction of force posturing from the Western side. NATO's new security doctrine resulted in substantial reduction of conventional as well as nuclear forces. [326] The forward presence of the United States was reduced from 325,000 to 100,000 troops, and European members cut their troops by more than 500,000. As Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were invited to NATO, the land sea and air units were reduced by 30-40 percent, and 35 percent at readiness level compared to 1990. Theatre level nuclear weapons were reduced by 80 percent. These reductions were clearly visible and denoted the lack of offensive power or offensive intention on NATO's part. [327] Despite the rhetoric, therefore there were conciliatory efforts from both sides.

The Russian foreign ministry's condition was that Moscow would agree to NATO enlargement in Central Europe, as long as there are "no deployments of nuclear weapons or allied combat forces on the territory of new member states", both conditions agreed by NATO. [328] Russian

---

Winter 1997, pg. 61–2; Elaine Sciolino, 'Yeltsin says NATO is trying to split the continent again', *New York Times,* 6 Dec. 1994.

[325] Yevgenii Primakov, 'Perspektivy Rasshireniia NATO i Interesy Rossii [Perspectives on NATO Expansion and the Interests of Russia]', Izvestiia (26 November 1993), cited in Maarten's "Reconsidering NATO expansion: A counterfactual…"

[326] The Transformation of NATO's Defence Posture, July 1997, available at , www.nato.int/docu/facts/ trans.htm

[327] Wallander, C. A. (2000) *Mortal Friends, Best Enemies: German-Russian Cooperation After the Cold War* Ithaca: Cornell University Press; and 'Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO After the Cold War' *International Organization* 54/4: 705-35.

[328] Whether NATO genuinely believed solution or just placated Russia is a matter of debate. US ambassador to Moscow, Jack Matlock, for example, said those promises are unsustainable. Valery N. Gorokhov and Dmitri Ye. Gorovtsov (1998) 'NATO Expansion: A View from the State Duma', *Demokratizatsiia,* 6/1, p. 71.

Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov also considered PFP to be damage limitation.[329] NATO's acceptance of Russian conditions happened around the same time when Russia was also invited to join the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia and to endorse the Dayton accords. [330] The "NATO Russia Founding Act," which was signed by both parties in May 1997, led to the creation of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC), which allowed Russia to establish a mission at NATO. Yeltsin, in return, officially accepted the first round of NATO enlargement, to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary as inevitable, while making it clear that the Russia has strong opposition to NATO expansion to the Baltic countries, or the former borders of the Soviet Union. This new 'red line' was repeated throughout the remaining years of Yeltsin's presidency.[331]

In sum, there were visible Russian rhetorical posturing that increased with NATO's eastward enlargement. But it could be argued that Russian reaction remained limited, due to a clear reduction of NATO's offensive capabilities, as well as perceived lack of clear offensive intention.

Russian reaction to the second phase of NATO enlargement

The second phase of NATO enlargement started with the joining of more central European members as well Baltic states which formed the Soviet Union, to their membership in 2004, one year after the Iraq invasion. The period also saw the Russian strategic calculus change after the Kosovo war, as well as a change in Russian leadership. Even though Russian military doctrines started to reflect the changing dynamics, the Russian leadership showed flexibility in aligning with NATO after Kosovo and after the September 11th terror attack.

Tensions between Russia and NATO escalated again during the conflict of Kosovo, and Russia warned in the first PJC meeting to caution against the unilateral use of force without authorisation from the United Nations. NATO ignored the warning, and the centrepiece of NATO's new relationship with Russia, the Permanent Joint Council, broke down during the

[329] Rühle, 'NATO enlargement and Russia: discerning fact from fiction', p. 237

[330] Smith, J. (2008) *The NATO-Russia Relationship: Defining Moment or Déjà vu?* CSIS Report, Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

[331] Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeny Gusarov made these comments at the 1999 Munich Security Conference. See Burns, R. 'Russia opposes more NATO expansion', *Associated Press*, 7 Feb. 1999.

war in Kosovo.[332] The war in Kosovo highlighted that NATO was not serious about Russian "consultation" nor was NATO unaware of Russia's diminished military clout.[333] Around the same time, another significant change happened, as NATO started to discuss the possibility of moving one of its headquarters in Rendsburg, Germany to northern Poland – a stated redline for Russia and something NATO explicitly promised not to do earlier.[334] The Russian Defence Minister, Igor Sergeev, in a trip to Rendsburg in 1998, warned that such a territorial move would lead to a military confrontation. [335] There was no military confrontation during the move, but Russia suspended ties with NATO and withdrew its representatives from NATO headquarters in March 1999. Russia did return to the NATO table for talks eventually within a few months, but with a clear interest that Russian troops remain part of peacekeeping in the Balkans. [336] By the end of 1999, Boris Yeltsin resigned, and Vladimir Putin was President.

The Kosovo campaign triggered the debate within the Russian military and strategic planning community on NATO's hidden goals, and subsequently triggered Russian military doctrines to be adjusted reflecting its defence policies.[337] The first time since Cold war, Russian strategic planners had to deal with the scenario of NATO forces projecting power, within a weakened Russian territory, in the name of human rights.[338] Around the same time, right after NATO enlargement in Central Europe, the Russian military updated Russia's military doctrine, which focused on Russian economic inferiority, the gap in military capabilities, and the need of a multipolar world. Russia abandoned its no first use policy of nuclear weapons against an overwhelming conventional attack from a great power or alliance, in 1993. That was continued

[332] Trenin-Straussov, P. (1999) *The NATO–Russia Permanent Joint Council in 1997–1999: Anatomy of a Failure* Berlin: Berliner Informationszentrum für Transatlantische Sicherheit, pg. 1–8.

[333] Smith, J. (2008) op. cit.

[334] Ibid.

[335] Ibid.

[336] Frye, A. (20000 'The New NATO and Relations with Russia,' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 23/3, pg. 95.

[337] Antonenko, O. (1999–2000) 'Russia, NATO and European Security after Kosovo', *Survival*, 41/4, pg. 124–44.

[338] Arbatov, A. (2000) 'The Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine: Lessons Learned from Kosovo and Chechnya', Marshall Center Papers, no. 2 (George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch-Partenkirchen).

in this new document. [339] NATO on the other hand, maintained no change in its nuclear posture, reiterating no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons in new member states. [340]

Vladimir Putin was initially less hostile to the idea of NATO itself, even when Russian strategic doctrines continued to consider NATO a threat. He accepted that NATO enlargement agreed under Yeltsin was a fait accompli and at least publicly stated that he wanted to rebuild relations with NATO. In his meeting with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson, Putin stated that there is need to resume Russia-NATO contacts and compare the military doctrines and strategic concepts of Russia and NATO.[341] Putin continued with the mixed messages, saying he is willing to theoretically consider the possibility of being a member of NATO in future, in a BBC interview, while stating in a meeting with NATO in February 2001, he mentioned Russia is willing to coordinate with the US to form a European wide missile defence system, instead of a NATO missile defence in Europe and willing to send Russian experts to Brussels to discuss the possibility, explain Russian and American cooperation on technology and test public interest. [342] For the first time since the Kosovo crisis, Russia announced a full meeting with NATO, even when NATO was reticent about commenting on Russian membership. [343]

The September 11th attack in the United States changed the strategic dynamics of Europe. Russia was undergoing its own problems with the Chechen insurgency. Immediately after the attack, Putin said, 'If NATO takes on a different shade and is becoming a political organization ... we would reconsider our position with regard to such expansion, if we are to feel involved

[339] Draft Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation". Krasnaya Zvezda. Translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service. 1999-10-09. 1.1, pg. 3–4; Tomé, Luis José Rodrigues Leitão. 2000. 'Russia and NATO`s Enlargement.' Final Report for NATO Research Fellowship Programme 1998-2000.

[340] Hunter, R. (2003) 'NATO-Russia relations after 11 September' *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 3/3.

[341] "Acting President Vladimir Putin met with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson", Feb, 16, 2000, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/37942

[342] Smith, J. (2008) 'The NATO-Russia Relationship: Defining Moment or Déjà vu?' CSIS Report (November 14). Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies., also "President Vladimir Putin held negotiations with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson", Feb 20, 2001, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/40915

[343] Smith, J., Smith, M. A., & Timmins, G. (2001) 'Russia, NATO and the EU in an Era of Enlargement: Vulnerability or Opportunity?' *Geopolitics* 6/1: 80.

in such processes.'[344] Within two weeks of the attacks, Russia declared that it will assist the United States in operating out of central Asian airbases, typically used and operated by Russian air force and considered under Russian spheres of influence, as well as unilateral closure of espionage centre in Lourdes, Cuba and a naval base in Vietnam.[345] In December 2001, the United States unilaterally pulled out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which was simply called a mistake from the Russian side, but nothing else was done about it. [346]

There were significant changes on the side of NATO as well. The 11 September attacks changed NATO's own reasoning about enlargement from "democracy promotion" of the Clinton era to an alliance determined to pull efforts to tackle international terror. In the 2002 Prague summit, this new line was communicated by President George W. Bush, as he stated, "Expansion of NATO also brings many advantages to the alliance itself. Every new member contributes military capabilities that add to our common security. We see this already in Afghanistan—for forces from Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia and others have joined with 16 NATO allies to help defeat global terror."[347]

This reframing of NATO resulted in further cooperation and made NATO enlargement more palatable to Russia for the time being. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov confirmed Russian understanding of NATO's new position and said 'Russia no longer considers NATO enlargement to be a menace because the alliance has undergone a radical transformation from a cold war instrument to a defence against global terrorism and other 21st-century threats.'[348] When NATO planned to invite seven new countries to join the Alliance at its Prague summit in the fall of 2002, the position was repeated by Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov, regarding NATO expansion in the Baltics as Ivanov stated 'Russia is not planning to get overly

[344] Drozdiak, W. (2001) 'Putin eases stance on NATO expansion' (4 October, 2001) *Washington Post*, p. A1. See also Frank Csongos, 'Russia: Moscow's concern over NATO expansion easing', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 26 Oct. 2001, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1097816.html,

[345] Smith, J. (2008) op. cit.

[346] Ibid.

[347] George W. Bush, 'Remarks to the Atlantic student summit', Prague, Czech Republic, 20 Nov. 2002, http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/15317.htm,

[348] Summary of interview with Igor Ivanov: Michael Binyon, 'Kremlin enjoys the fruits of its foreign policy', *The Times*, 21 Nov. 2002, p. 16.

dramatic about the situation.'[349] During the Rome declaration of May 2002, Russian understanding was that NATO and Russia will act jointly and equally as a side of twenty, instead of the previously agreed 19+1 formula, and would focus on international terrorism and reaction to crises.[350]

As evident from the sequence of events, Russia was initially sceptical of NATO enlargement, in the second phase when for the first time, actual member states in the Baltic region which formed parts of the Soviet Union, were invited to be part of NATO. NATO hardware and outpost also moved east in a breach of a previously declared redline, and the Kosovo war was viewed in Russia as a direct attempt to claw away at the Russian sphere of influence. The Russian military elites also consistently saw NATO enlargement as a serious threat to Russian security and interests. Previously, in the 1990s, certain sections of Russian military viewed NATO enlargement as German expansion and continuation of German grand strategy in East Europe. [351] During the early 2000s, NATO enlargement started to be considered as an American plot to move inexorably eastward and a continuation of American hegemony. While NATO was not part of the Iraq war, it did not have any discernible difference in Russian military thinking, as evident from the statement in 2003, after the Iraq invasion, by Russian General Yuri Baluyevsky, who stated that the world needs to be multipolar, as otherwise it breeds instability. [352] The Russian political leadership's view of NATO showed greater flexibility. That could be attributed to a change in NATO's reframing of its cause of existence, focused more on counterinsurgency as well as fighting Islamic terrorism, something, just as Russia was facing a Chechen insurgency, the Russian perception of NATO's offensive intention underwent a change, which led to a temporary alignment of interests. The Rome

[349] Statement made on 19 July 2002. See Kramer, M. (2002, October) 'NATO, the Baltic states and Russia: a framework for sustainable enlargement', *International Affairs* 78/4, p. 748.

[350] 'Russia-NATO Summit President Vladimir Putin and leaders of 19 NATO countries signed the Rome Declaration "NATO- Russia Relations: A New Quality"', May 28, 2002, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/43121; "NATO-Russia relations after 11 September" Robert Hunter, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies Volume 3, 2003 - Issue 3

[351] Institute of Defence Studies 'Conceptual Guidelines of the Strategy of Counteracting Main External Threats to Security of the Russian Federation' published in *Segodnya*, 20 Oct. 1995.

[352] Yuri Baluyevsky, "Strategicheskaya Stabilnost' v Epokhu Globalizatsii [Strategic Stability in an Era of Globalization]," translated in Rossiya v Globalnoj Politike [Russia in Global Affairs], No. 4, November 28, 2003, cited in Rand website, in Radin, A., & Reach, C. (2017) *Russian Views of the International Order*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation.

declaration of 2002 further changed the relation between Russia and NATO as procedurally Russian administration gained the framework of NATO-Russia Council, and perceived that NATO's primary motivation shifted to counter-terrorism. While Russian military doctrine remains unchanged, the political speeches highlighted that Russia did not consider NATO a threat, but rather a partner against Islamic terrorism, in a changing global security scenario. Russia did not perceive any offensive intention and NATO's declared offensive capability did not increase. Russia's perception of threat, from NATO therefore remained neutral. NATO's declared force posture with no new weaponry in the new member states, added with NATO's focus on counterterrorism, led to Russia perceiving a distinct positive change in the NATO – Russia future.

Russian reaction to NATO invitation to Ukraine and Georgia

The third and final phase of NATO enlargement, is explored in this section, before relations with Russia broke down permanently, and Russia, for the first time, went to war with another sovereign state in Europe. After the second phase of NATO enlargement, in 2004, relations with Russia quickly broke down due to the animosity with the United States over the Iraq invasion, around the same time when colour revolutions rocked Russia's neighbourhood (discussed in separate chapters, on Ukraine and Georgia). This is also the time when Russian military doctrines changed, and Russian redlines on NATO's further territorial enlargement continued. Russian political statements and military doctrines reflected this change of perception.

When asked on further NATO membership plans regarding Ukraine and Georgia, Vladimir Putin said, Ukraine should take the plan independently but stated categorically that Russian position regarding territorial expansion remained unchanged, a hint at the Yeltsin era red line. [353] Russia maintained that the only way Russia would find further NATO expansion acceptable was if NATO transforms itself into a political organisation, which needless to mention NATO had no intention to. NATO meanwhile was transforming and enhancing its military capability as individual NATO members were preparing for a war in Iraq as part of the "coalition of the willing", something which Russia opposed earnestly, and joined forces with France and Germany to stop. During the war, NATO supported Poland with

[353] "Vladimir Putin joint press conference with NATO Secretary General George Robertson and Italian Prime Ministers Silvio Berlusconi" May 28, 2002, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/43122

communication and logistics, and on the request of Turkey, NATO took precautionary measures to install missile defences in Turkish territory, even when NATO was not taking part in the war as an organisation.[354] Russia continued to maintain that it has concerns in further NATO expansion including territorial and infrastructure and would change Russian military doctrines accordingly. [355] Asked specifically about Ukraine again, Russia repeated that Ukraine is free to choose its future, within EU, as long as it does not join NATO. [356]

As NATO continued with plans of another round of expansion, a territorial red line for Russia, NATO also began F-16 patrols over the Baltic sea and Baltic territory around 2004, a significant new development in offensive capabilities, infuriating Russia. Putin immediately demanded that any new NATO member state accede and ratify the Conventional Forces Treaty to avoid any sort of a "strategic grey area."[357] By the time there were massive transformations within Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004), which added on to Russian understanding that NATO is behind the crisis and is trying to encircle Russia and encroach even further. By this period it was also clear that the Russian intention (and Putin's dream) of a "transformation" of NATO into a political institution instead of a primarily military one, with Russia being an equal member was not going to be fulfilled anytime soon, and that was mainly because majority of NATO's members, especially the former Warsaw pact countries, who were disinclined to allow Russia any decision making powers. [358] NATO's focus on democracy promotion and nation-building in Iraq, corresponded with Western support of revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine.[359]

---

[354] NATO and the 2003 campaign against Iraq (Archived), Sep 1, 2015, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_51977.htm

[355] President Vladimir Putin talks with the Federal Chancellor of Germany Gerhard Schroeder, April 2, 2004 available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/30679

[356] Russia takes a negative view of NATO expansion December 10, 2004, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/32366 also Meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer April 8, 2004, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22413

[357] Hannes, A. 'Inside or Outside? Russia's Policies Towards NATO', Working Paper FG 5 2007, Research Unit Russia/CIS, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, January 1, 2007, p. 24.

[358] Ibid.

[359] NATO official documents repeatedly referred to democracy promotion, for example, efforts to "hasten the building of self-sustaining peace and democracy" in the Balkans, "strengthening democracy" in Ukraine, and that "NATO will enhance its efforts to contribute to the promotion of democracy" in Belarus. See, Statement on the situation in the Balkans, 2001.
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_18838.htm?selectedLocale=en; NATO-Ukraine Action Plan

Finally, in 2006, at Moscow State University, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, "we firmly raise questions about the transformation of NATO, the Alliance's plans for enlargement, the reconfiguration of the U.S. military presence in Europe, the deployment of elements of the American missile defence system here, and NATO's refusal to ratify the CFE treaty. The future of our relations largely depends on what direction the transformation in NATO will proceed in after the Riga Summit, and the extent to which the security interests of Russia are going to be considered."[360] The rhetoric from Moscow also was not just directed to NATO but also at Ukraine and Georgia. Lavrov further warned that any move from Ukraine or Georgia towards NATO would mark a "colossal geopolitical shift" for Russia. [361] The pitch continued to rise, with President Putin's Munich speech in 2007, where he said that 'I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust.'. [362] Same month, the US planned to talk with Poland and Czech Republic on placing missile defences, a significant permanent weapons system, which Russia considered a clear threat. [363] At NATO's Bucharest summit in 2008, Putin warned 'We view the appearance of a powerful military bloc on our borders ... as a direct threat to the security of our country." [364] Russian military generals started threatening war with Ukraine if NATO expands eastward. [365] In 2006, Russian military journal stated that it would

2005 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_21735.htm?selectedLocale=en; North Atlantic Council statement on NATO-Belarus relations 2006, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_22445.htm?selectedLocale=en.

[360] Smith, J. (2008) op cit.

[361] Walsh, N. P. (2006) 'Russia tells Ukraine to stay out of NATO' (7 June, 2006) *Guardian.*

[362] 'Remarks at the 43rd Munich Security Conference', Munich, 10 Feb. 2007, http://www. washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html. For a summary of western reactions to this speech, see Stephen Lee Myers, 'No Cold War, perhaps, but surely a lukewarm peace', New York Times, 18 Feb. 2007

[363] Smith, J. (2008) op cit.

[364] 'NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO': NATO, 'Bucharest summit declaration', 3 April 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, and 'Remarks by Russian President Vladimir Putin at NATO Bucharest summit press conference', 4 April 2008, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24903

[365] Smith, J. (2008) op cit.

be short-sighted for Russia to ignore the fact that NATO extension might be central to the ambition of the United States striving to achieve unipolarity.[366]

On August 2008, after Russia's war with Georgia, NATO's foreign ministers declared that Russia's military action had been disproportionate and that cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was suspended until further notice. Around the same time, NATO conducted an exercise in Georgia from 6 May until 1 June 2009, which was perceived in Russia as a clear indication of NATO's design on Russian borders. A 2009 essay from the journal Military Thought stated, "As previously, the Americans will continue actively to foist their values on the rest of the world relying on all the force and assets available to them", a charge repeated in 2010 after analysis of ongoing wars of choice by the United States. [367] It stated "The armed conflicts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have been a graphic demonstration of the United States' desire for a unipolar world and its determination to solve any problems by force, ignoring the opinion of the world community."[368] During the Arab Spring, the Russian military was certain that the instability and events in the Middle East were to promote American unipolarity.[369] In most of these cases, NATO is considered an arm of broader American grand strategy. Regardless of which it is, it is in all the cases, considered a threat to Russian security. At any rate, enlargement plan with Ukraine and Georgia were the final territorial red lines and completely unacceptable at any rate, and that was made clear from Russian side repeatedly. NATO continued to be ambivalent about it and offered Georgia and Ukraine a path to membership, suggesting that membership of NATO was not a matter of whether, but when. The NATO declaration stated that

> "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become

[366] Paderin, A. A. (2006) 'Policy and Military Strategy: A Unity Lesson', *Military Thought,* April 1, 2006–June 30, 2006, p. 23.

[367] Maruyev, A. Y. 'Russia and the U.S.A. in Confrontation: Military and Political Aspects', *Military Thought,* July 1, 2009–September 30, 2009, p. 3.

[368] Tashlykov, S. L. 'General and Particular Features of Present-Day Conflicts Involving the U.S. and Its Allies', *Military Thought,* July 1, 2010–September 30, 2010.

[369] Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po Opytu Sirii [According to the Experience of Syria]," Voennoe Promyshlennoe Kuryer [Military Industrial Courier], March 9, 2016, cited in Radin, A., & Reach, C. (2017). *Russian Views of the International Order*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation.

> members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP. Therefore, we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their MAP applications. We have asked Foreign Ministers to make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting. Foreign Ministers have the authority to decide on the MAP applications of Ukraine and Georgia." [370]

In August, Russia and Georgia went to war over South Ossetia. Dmitry Medvedev later stated that the war stopped NATO expansion. [371] Ever since the 2008 war, Russia came out with new military doctrines stating NATO expansion as the biggest threat and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu identified NATO expansion as one of the top three threats to Russia. [372] On 5 February 2010 President Dmitry Medvedev approved the Russian Federation's new updated Military Doctrine, which was being drafted since 2005, right after another phase of NATO expansion in 2004.[373] This text supplemented the Russian National Security Strategy of 2009. The most serious threat was the attempt to "to attribute global functions to NATO in breach of international legal norms" and the NATO infrastructure moving closer to Russian territory. "The deployment (build-up) of troop contingents of foreign states (groups of states) on the

[370] NATO, Bucharest Summit Declaration April 2008, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm

[371] Denis Dyomkin, 'Russia says Georgia war stopped NATO expansion', *Reuters*, 21 Nov. 2011, http://in.reuters. com/article/2011/11/21/idINIndia-60645720111121. For a broader discussion of Russian motives behind the war, see Roy Allison, 'Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to "coerce Georgia to peace"', *International Affairs* 84: 6, Nov. 2008, pg. 1145–71

[372] 'The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation', 5 Feb. 2010, http://carnegieendowment.org/ files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf, ; 'Russian Defense Minister sees terrorism, NATO expansion as main threats', *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, 9 Nov. 2013, http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-defense-terrorism-nato/25163293.html

[373] The Russian Federation's Military Doctrine, Robert Śmigielski, No. 28 (104) • February 18, 2010, 2010, PISM, also Text of report by Russian presidential website on 5 February ["The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation" approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on 5 February 2010]; Russia's national security strategy to 2020 (2010) Retrieved from: http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020

territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation and its allies and also in adjacent waters", the text mentioned and maintained that the way to solve the threat is a European security initiative and the changing of NATO into a political union. [374] A more recent revision of the military doctrine was published on 26 December 2014, also maintained the threats of NATO expansion as well as military infrastructure and large-scale military exercises and deployment and build-up of military contingents of foreign states or alliances, in the territories of the neighbouring states of Russia. [375] The Prompt Global Strike concept of NATO, was mentioned as a military danger, but within a context of interstate rivalries. With regards to NATO, "an abrupt exacerbation of the military-political situation in interstate relations", "a show of military force" through exercises in Russia's neighbourhood or "obstructing" state and military command and control, by means of a "global strike", were considered a threat.[376] Russian National Security Strategy, of December 2015, also cites NATO troop deployments, and induction of former Soviet-allied states as the top threat to Russian security, adding that NATO missile defence plans are destabilizing especially for Russia to protect its natural resource and maritime interests in the Arctic Sea. [377]

In sum, NATO's increased air patrols over the Baltics, and exercises with newer member states, as well as NATO's invitation to Georgia and Ukraine, after the colour revolutions, were considered by Russia as a significant change in the status quo. It was a proof of NATO's increasing offensive capability in the region, as well as signs of NATO's intention to move and encroach upon Russian spheres of influence and move towards Russian borders. Two significant changes happened in this phase. One, Russian politicians and military leaders were finally convinced that NATO had no intention to listen to any Russian concerns about any territorial red lines unless met with force or active deterrence. Two, Russian political leaders and military leaders were convinced that NATO's intentions were to exploit instability around

[374] The Russian Federation's Military Doctrine, Robert Śmigielski, No. 28 (104) • February 18, 2010, 2010 • © PISM, also Text of report by Russian presidential website on 5 February ["The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation" approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on 5 February 2010]

[375] Sinovets, P. & Renz, B. (2015, July) 'Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine and beyond: threat perceptions, capabilities and ambitions' Research Paper. Rome, IT: NATO Defense College, Research Division, p. 117 and Tomé, Luis José Rodrigues Leitão. 2000. "Russia and NATO`s Enlargement." Final Report for NATO Research Fellowship Programme 1998-2000.

[376] Putin, V. (2015, January 5). Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. Retrieved from http://www.scribd.com/doc/251695098/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine#scribd

[377] Putin, V. (2015, January 5). Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. Retrieved from http://www.scribd.com/doc/251695098/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine#scribd

Russian borders, and NATO's offensive capabilities would continue to increase. As a result, Russian political statements, as well as military literature and doctrines started to reflect this altered perception, which continues to this day.

Summary

In the previous chapters, the thesis hypothesised, that Russia would feel threatened with NATO moving eastward, and that threat perception will be constantly increasing with every single phase of expansion. However, there will be variation in Russian behaviour, towards NATO, depending on NATO's offensive capability and force posturing, as well as Russia's perception of NATO's offensive intentions.

From the evidence observed, the Russian military elite, as well as civilian leadership, were always opposed to NATO territorial enlargement, however, the prospect was not taken seriously in the initial days after Soviet collapse and was considered implausible even during the early years of the Yeltsin administration. NATO's first intention of enlargement resulted in Russian alarm, and Russia only agreed to NATO's expansion if two conditions were initially fulfilled, that there would be no new troops or offensive weapons system in the new member states. NATO agreed with the conditions, and Russia NATO partnership resulted in further alignment during the Dayton accords. The NATO Russia Founding act led to the creation of the permanent joint council and Moscow accepted NATO enlargement in central Europe.

During the build-up to NATO operations in Kosovo, NATO discussed the possibility of moving its headquarters from Germany to Poland, thereby moving allied troops in the territories of the newly joined nations. That happened around the same time, NATO intervened in Kosovo, and Russia intervened in Pristina airport, resulting in a long drawn cold peace between NATO and Russia which only thawed when Vladimir Putin became President. Putin perceived that a transformation of NATO from a strictly military alliance inexorably moving eastward to a political alliance, might treat Russia as an equal partner, and during the war on terror, that was materialised momentarily, with George W Bush reframing the alliance as an organisation determined to face global terror. That thaw gave way to another round of chill with NATO patrols over Baltics, and NATO plans of missile defence shields over central Europe. This flow of offensive capabilities eastward added with support for democracy promotion in parts of the globe, resulted in new Russian doctrines which reconsidered NATO as an enemy organisation determined to encircle Russia.

Each of the instances of NATO enlargement, resulted in a Russian reaction, even when the reaction was varied. Prior to 1993, before serious plans of enlargement were afoot, Russia felt threatened by the aggregate power of NATO as evident from the strategy documents and military doctrines, which were designed to foster an era of peace and cooperation but also noted Russia's relative weakness. Russian nuclear posture changed, and Russia discarded the Soviet Era No First Use policy, which had been a bulwark of Soviet nuclear posture, signalling Russian elite's acknowledgement of Russia's diminished relative power. When expansion was planned, Moscow's shock was palpable, and that resulted in Yeltsin declaring that a Cold peace has taken over a Cold war, as charted above. Russian Atlanticist policy also changed under Primakov during that time. However, the key factor that stopped Russian balancing behaviour wasn't Russian relative weakness. Russia is still at present, relatively weaker than NATO. It could be argued that Russian response was muted due to an agreement of non-deployment of combat troops or nuclear weapons on newer NATO territories. That agreement signified an absence of offensive intention on NATO's part, which reflected in the NATO-Russia founding act and Russia reactions remained relatively muted. Primakov's threat of redeployment of Russian troops in the West wasn't followed through, as lack of NATO's troops, hardware or permanent infrastructure in newer NATO countries signified absence of offensive capability build-up, and NATO-Russia founding act was perceived as lack of offensive intention from NATO's side. From NATO's enlargement in 1999, to NATO's enlargement in 2004, the ties between Russia and NATO continued to simmer.

The second phase of NATO enlargement happened during the time, Russia under Vladimir Putin was starting to move away from the West. As charted above, during President Putin's first few years, there was an evident desire for a rapprochement from the Russian side, especially during and after the 9/11 attacks, due to a combination of various factors. From the Western side, after President Bush's speech in 2002, NATO seemed like a political organisation to Russia, with Moscow as an equal partner. The reframing of NATO's purpose negated any perceivable offensive intention on NATO's part, as NATO seemed like an ally against the broader struggle against Islamic jihadism. However, after the actual expansion in 2004, events moved quickly in Europe. Other than the colour revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, which will be separately studied in the next chapters, there were NATO patrols in the Baltics, which was a territorial red line for Moscow. This marked a remarkable shift in NATO, which up until then nominally respected Russia's wishes. The post 9/11 unilateralism of the United States as well as a shift of balance of power with NATO, which resulted from NATO

firepower permanently over the territories that Russia considered under its direct sphere of influence. NATO offer of eventual membership to Ukraine and Georgia after the colour revolutions also was an unmistakable breach of a Russian red line and a sign of a source of a threat moving inexorably closer to Russian landmass. It could be argued that Russia perceived a change in both offensive capability and offensive intention on NATO's part, and that reflected in Russian military doctrines, as well as Russian political leadership, and led to the Munich security conference speech of 2007. By the time the next phase of expansion took place in Albania and Croatia, NATO Russia relation has broken down and there has already been a war in Europe between two nation states, over territory, for the first time since the Second world war. Russian military doctrines also changed by 2010, to reflect the new geopolitical reality.

All the aforementioned evidence demonstrates that Russia behaves per the theory of the balance of threat, when it comes to NATO's aggregate power, territorial proximity, offensive capabilities, and intentions. The behaviour of a great power is rarely explained by mono-causality, and therefore the next chapters would explore Russian relations to Ukraine and Georgia and test the theory further.

Chapter 5: **Russian balancing in Ukraine**

In the previous chapter, this thesis summarised, how the Russian reaction to different phases of NATO enlargement was predicated on Moscow's threat perception. According to the dictates of the Balance of Threat theory, Moscow was supposed to feel threatened by a growing military alliance, inexorably moving towards the Russian borders, what Moscow considered an encroachment on its own sphere of influence. The theory also explained why Moscow's threat perception might diminish, if any one of the variables were lacking, or absent, for example, if Russia did not perceive "offensive intention" on NATO's part, the threat perception would be reduced. Evidence observed illustrated that overall, Moscow follows the dictates of Balance of Threat, regarding NATO enlargement.

But what about other threats? In the last ten years, Moscow actively participated in two conflicts in the European theatre. The Russo-Georgian war in 2008, and the Russian annexation of Crimea and the ongoing civil war in Ukraine, help test the theory further. For example, if Moscow is a defensive realist power, it will not engage in continuous expansionism. Moscow will engage only in warfare when it seeks to offset some challenges and would return to status-quo once it feels the threat to be neutralised. Likewise, Moscow's strategic motivations would only be limited and structural, and related to material and military considerations, as opposed to ideological or imperial considerations. Finally, Moscow's reactions would be based on perceived threats, which Russia would seek to balance. This chapter on Ukraine and the following chapter on Georgia explores these predictions.

Russia considers Ukraine to be vitally important for geopolitical reasons.[378] A large borderland territory, Ukraine serves to protect Russia from potential military intervention by Western powers and is considered by Russia to be in its sphere of influence.[379] Ukraine shares borders with Poland and Romania and is the edge of the European Union and NATO frontiers and is a geopolitical buffer to Russia. Even the name Ukraine, which roughly translates to borderland, defines its geopolitical character.

[378] Ukraine: Background, Conflict with Russia, and U.S. Policy Updated April 29, 2020, Congressional Research Service

[379] For a historical overview of Ukrainian Russian relation, see Wilson, A. (2014) *Ukraine Crisis: what it means for the West* New Haven: Yale University Press; and Charap, S. & Colton, T. J. (2017) 'Everyone loses: The Ukraine crisis and the ruinous contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia', IISS, Routledge Security Studies.

Ukraine is considered a case study for the purpose of this thesis, for two reasons, as mentioned previously.[380] First, Ukraine, is a nation-state, compared to NATO which is an alliance. Balance of Threat theory dictates that Russia should balance against a threat, as opposed to power itself, then Russian reaction to the threats originating from Ukraine and NATO would be similar. Russia would display balancing behaviour if the threat increases and return to the status quo if the threat subsides or is offset by balancing action. The choice of NATO, Ukraine and Georgia, therefore, makes theory testing for the purposes of this thesis more robust. Second, Ukraine provides a case where a similar type of political situation and threat scenario, resulted in two different outcomes. The Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2003 resulted in a change in government and altered the scenario significantly, but unlike the Euromaidan protests of 2014, did not result in an actual conflict. The question is, why?

This chapter explores two sequences of events and seeks to explain the difference in Russian behaviour. As per general hypothesis, ideally, *caeteris paribus*, Russia should not feel threatened by Ukraine, given Russia's enormous superiority in aggregate power. Ukraine's pro-EU or pro-NATO tilt and as well as any revolution in the neighbourhood would, however, alter the security and strategic scenario and that would reflect in statements and speeches by politicians, as well as debates in the Russian military and civilian elite circles. But that still ideally would not be enough to go to war. Russian goal would be to balance, or in this case, presumably offset any Ukrainian move towards NATO or EU or any system or order in alignment with Western security interests, which are perceived as threatening to Russia. Moscow would only therefore actively seek conflict, if it either feels suddenly threatened by the security scenario on it border, in an eventuality, which perceived from the Russian lens, is existential to Russia's strategic position.

Put simply, Moscow would use military force, if it feels it is losing its privileged position in the balance and would try and offset it. If and when Moscow feels satisfied about neutralizing the said threat, it would revert back to a status quo position. Moscow would not, be imperial and continue on with expansion. In reality, Moscow's military aims would be limited in nature.

What can one observe here in this given scenario? If the theory is correct, and Russian reaction is dependent on aggregate power and offensive capabilities, Russia's perceived threat from Ukraine, would be material and would have an economic and military dimension, instead of just a simple perceived threat to regime stability. First, there would be a distinct material

[380] See, Chapter 3 of this thesis, in the section where case selection is discussed.

threat to Russian military capabilities and the loss of Ukraine, from the Russian sphere of influence, or Russian control over Ukrainian politics, region, and capabilities, should be considered an existential threat in Moscow. Russian reaction to the revolutions in both the phases would indicate the theory is supported; and alternatively, if Russian reaction is muted due to the lack of any causal variables, then the theory would be considered supported. If Moscow is satisfied that Ukraine's westward tilt is thwarted, and the situation falls back to the status-quo, then the theory would be supported. Likewise, if Ukraine's tilt towards NATO-EU security and economic structure is incremental, Russian actions to offset that move would be visible, and if need be violent.

To sum it up, Ukraine's move towards NATO/EU would be considered threatening by Russia and would be seen as an encroachment by NATO/EU from Moscow. There must be a distinct perceived material/strategic loss, which would be existential to Russia. Russian balancing action would continue for as long as those threats remain, and would cease, when from Moscow's perspective, the threat diminishes or is offset.

In this chapter, a brief background of Ukrainian and Russian strategic relation is followed by an exploration of two sequences of events, namely, Russian reaction to the colour revolution in Ukraine in 2003, and Russian reaction after the Euromaidan revolution. The evidence explored in this chapter suggests that Russia reacted in a similar fashion after both the sudden changes in the balance of power in the region. The loss of Ukraine to NATO and/or the EU, was considered a huge strategic loss, an existential threat to Russia's status as a great power in the European balance. The Russian balancing actions after 2003, reflected this urgency, but Russia did not resort to military action, as the original situation changed back to a status quo. The second time, however, the situation did not change back to a status quo, and Russia resorted to military action, which resulted in annexing Crimea, a region considered by Moscow of strategic value. Moscow's further interference was limited in regions where direct strategic interests were located. Either for lack of will, or capability, which is not clear, Russian actions demonstrate that it refused to occupy or annex the whole of Ukraine, and therefore throws open the question of whether Russia is an expansionist power or a reactive power. Evidence studied mostly rely on military journals and visible Russian actions, rather than political rhetoric, although sometimes they are used for corroboration.

Russian strategic motivations in Ukraine

Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there were two primary points of contention between Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine was left with one third of Soviet nuclear arsenal, the third largest in the world, as well as the means of production and designs of the weapons systems, including intercontinental ballistic missiles, heavy bombers as well as approximately 1700 warheads in Ukrainian territory.[381] Ukraine had physical, but not operational control of the weapons as they were dependent on Moscow's command and control system. [382] In 1992, Ukraine voluntarily agreed to remove over 3000 tactical nuclear weapons, and signed the Budapest Memorandum Agreement on security assurances, with the UK, the US, and Russia, as well as similar agreements with France and China to join the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. [383]Russia's guarantee of Ukraine's territorial integrity in return, in the 14 January 1994 Tripartite Agreement was a precondition to Ukraine's unilateral nuclear disarmament. [384] Nevertheless, Russia's military remained dependent on Ukrainian military-industrial strength, located mostly along eastern Ukraine, for manufacturing, and maintenance of the supply chains for the Russian military. [385]

The second and greater disagreement was about the future status of Crimea and Sevastopol.[386] Crimea as a region was administered by the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic since 1954. The city of Sevastopol was the base of the Black Sea Fleet. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Supreme Soviet of Russia voted to reclaim the city in 1993, claiming that the port was of strategic importance for the Russian black sea fleet. [387] The Russian Ukrainian summit on the status of Crimea was cancelled from Russian side several times due to a lack of

[381] Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014) op cit.; and 'The Soviet Nuclear Archipelago', *Arms Control Today*. 22/1: 24.

[382] Allison, G. (2012) 'What Happened to the Soviet Superpower's Nuclear Arsenal? Clues for the Nuclear Security Summit" Discussion Paper 2012-04, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School.

[383] For an overview, see, 'Budapest Memorandum at 25', Harvard-Belfer Center available at https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/budapest/BM25.pdf

[384] Mearsheimer, J. J. 'The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent' *Foreign Affairs,* 72/3: 50-66.

[385] Allison, R. (2014) 'Russian "deniable intervention" in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules', *International Affairs* 90/6.

[386] Sherr, J. (1997) 'Russia-Ukraine rapprochement?: The black sea fleet accords', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 39/3: 33-50.

[387] Ibid.

common grounds. Despite Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk's ruling in April 1992 nationalising the naval components Soviet infrastructure, the Sochi accord in 1995 highlighted division of the fleet. [388] The subsequent Ukrainian constitution declared that no permanent military base would be permitted on the territory of Ukraine, but allowed the use of existing military bases for temporary stationing and lease. The signing of three inter-governmental agreements on the Black Sea Fleet (BSF) on 28 May 1997 by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and then Ukrainian Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko resolved both the issues.[389] A joint Russian-Ukrainian Commission, co-chaired by Chernomyrdin and Lazarenko, agreed to establish a sub-commission on state borders, and in October the demarcation of the Sea of Azov was finalised.[390]

The Orange Revolution, and Russian reaction

Russian relations with Ukraine were more or less stable, up until the colour revolutions in the region. Several simultaneous developments changed the security dynamic of the region, some of which were discussed in the previous chapter. To briefly recap, NATO enlargements, the moving of hardware to former Warsaw pact countries, the intervention in Kosovo, and the war in Iraq frayed the relations between Russia and the West. Of that, the colour revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia two countries where Moscow had privileged interests, were the most important developments. The colour revolutions in both Ukraine, discussed in this chapter, and Georgia discussed in the next chapter, therefore, heightened the security dilemma in the region, at a time, when Russia was already opposed to what it considered American hegemonic tendencies and "hyperpower" after the Iraq invasion.

In 2004, Ukraine underwent a "peaceful revolution", also known as the Orange revolution in common parlance, after a fraudulent election. [391] The original election result immediately prior to the Orange revolution was renounced by the opposition, and the colour revolution took place

[388] Kuzio, T. (2007) 'Ukraine--Crimea--Russia : Triangle of Conflict'. Stuttgart :Ibidem-Verlag, pg. 206-207.

[389] Kuzio, T. (2007) *Ukraine--Crimea--Russia : Triangle of Conflict*.

[390] Felgenhauer, T. (1999) *Ukraine, Russia, and the Black Sea Fleet Accords*. Princeton: Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University.

[391] Kuzio, T. (2010) 'Nationalism, Identity and Civil Society in Ukraine: Understanding the Orange Revolution', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43: 285–96.

with the backing of domestic opposition, NGOs, as well as supportive statements from the EU and the US. [392] For example, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as Freedom House, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute helped fund the election monitoring by the European Network of Election Monitoring and were critical of the 2004 election. Other NGO's like George Soros's Renaissance Foundation, as well as Western embassies, and advisors of former President Bill Clinton, were in touch with the Yushchenko campaign in advisory and supportive positions. The new President Viktor Yushchenko committed to gaining membership in NATO, and accordingly, foreign minister Borys Tarasyuk stated that Ukraine is determined to start negotiation for joining NATO by 2008. [393] The Riga summit in 2006 ensured that Kiev's defence and security policy remained unchanged and irreversible towards an eventual course of joining NATO, a course, that was made clear by Russia to be seen as a threat to the national security. [394]

Russian balancing action to Orange Revolution

Moscow stated originally that Ukraine and Georgia are red lines and their joining of NATO could lead to a colossal shift in the European balance of power.[395] Russian reaction after the Orange revolution, reflected this acknowledgement of the shifting balance of power in the region.[396] In the previous chapter it was highlighted why the colour revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia made clear that the post-Soviet space right on the borders of Russia, which Russia still

[392] For more on the role of NGOs, backed by the EU and the West in general, and the backlash NGOs in Russia, read, Wilson, A. (2006) 'Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the role of the West' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19/1:21-32; and Oleinikova, O. (2017) 'Foreign funded NGOs in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine: Recent restrictions and implications', *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: an Interdisciplinary Journal*, 9/3: .96-105; Traynor, I (2005) 'US campaign behind the turmoil in Kiev' (26 November, 2005) *The Guardian*; 'Ministry of Economy: America did not finance Yushchenko's campaign', 30 December 2004, ,http://hotline.net.ua/content/view/9823/37/; US Department of State (2003) US government assistance to and cooperative activities with Eurasia'' https://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/37672.htm

[393] Snyder, T. & Ash, T. G. (2005) 'The Orange Revolution', *New York Review of Books*, 28 April.

[394] Riga Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Riga on 29 November 2006 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_37920.htm?selectedLocale=en; for an overview on Russian redlines from this period, see, T Sauer (2016) "The Origins of the Ukraine Crisis and the Need for Collective Security between Russia and the West" *Global Policy* 8:1, 82-91, and also see previous chapter on Russian concerns about Ukraine and Georgia joining NATO.

[395] For an overview, see Lazarević, D 'NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia: old wine in new bottles?', *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 9: 1, Winter 2009, pg. 45–6; and Sauer, T. (2017). The origins of the Ukraine crisis and the need for collective security between Russia and the West. *Global Policy*, 8, 82–91

[396] 'Russia general: Eastern Ukraine is Moscow's 'red line'' (9 August, 2015) *BBC World News*

considered to be an area of privileged interest was starting to move away from Russian orbit. Russia was not willing to lose Ukraine and Georgia to NATO and considered these two countries as regions of strategic interests between Russian borders and an ever-expanding NATO and EU.[397] Russia also viewed Ukraine as vital to national security interest not only due to Ukraine's location and historical ties with Russia, but also due to the Ukrainian supplies to the Russian military as well as Moscow's naval supremacy in the Black sea due to the Russian navy base of Sevastopol.[398] The closer NATO approaches to Russia, the more acute therefore the perceived threat is. When added to the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO the threat becomes existential from Russia's perspective. The question of Ukraine actually joining NATO was irrelevant from Russia's perspective, as logically Russia could not afford to lose the Ukrainian military supply chains, and its privileged position in the Black Sea, and the idea of Ukraine joining NATO was naturally an anathema to Russian policy makers, disconcerting enough to warrant a muscular response. [399]

The Orange revolution in Ukraine and Yushchenko's victory, accordingly, was a shock to the Kremlin.[400] Russian officials accused the United States and NATO were fomenting unrest in Ukraine and renewed efforts to pressure the government of Ukraine. Russian reaction to the installation of a pro-Western regime in Ukraine was a combination of both political and economic coercion. Russian political rhetoric got harsher every day. [401]

---

[397] 'NATO Debates on Georgia and Ukraine Add Clarity about Russia' (2008) *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 5, Issue 64

[398] 'Russia breaks military supplies contract with Ukraine' (30 March, 2018) *Kyivpost* https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/112-ua-russia-breaks-military-supplies-contract-ukraine.html; and 'Ukraine crisis: why Russia sees Crimea as its naval stronghold' 7 March 2014 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/07/ukraine-russia-crimea-naval-base-tatars-explainer

[399] Roy, A. (2014) op. cit.; and Sherr, J. (1997) op. cit. pg. 33-50.

[400] Kuzio, T. (2005) ' Russia still gets it wrong in Ukraine', *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 2/185; Lankina, Tomila V. and Watanabe, Kohei (2017) 'Russian Spring' or 'Spring betrayal'? The media as a mirror of Putin's evolving strategy in Ukraine. *Europe-Asia Studies*. pg. 1526- 1556.

[401] See, 'Putin still bitter over orange revolution', 2005 *The Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/06/russia.jonathansteele; "Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution' A victory for Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine would confirm the West's increasing influence there". The Atlantic December 2004, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/12/ukraines-orange-revolution/305157/; White, S. & McAllister, I. (2009) 'Rethinking the 'Orange Revolution', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 25/2-3: 227-254.

Politically, Russia was critical of what it considered Western meddling in Ukraine, through NGOs and civil society groups. [402] After the colour revolution in Ukraine, NGOs and civil society organisations were considered as Western agents attempting to destabilize the region, from Moscow. [403] The National Security Concept of 2000 highlighted that the main security threats to Russia included any weakening of Russian political or military influence, by strengthening of military unions or blocks and weakening of the integration process of the Commonwealth of Independent States. [404] For Russia, the possibility of Ukraine in NATO or EU's orbit would put Russian operations and control of its Black Sea fleet in jeopardy, and the Russian imperative was to stop the "conveyor belt" of Kiev moving towards NATO. [405]

Throughout this period Moscow hinted at red-lines and displeasure about the idea of Ukraine joining NATO. [406] Putin, for example, claimed that Ukraine's visa free movement in the European Union would create problems for Russian speaking people in Ukrainian territories with ties to Russia.[407] It was a broad hint that Russia was not ready to accept Ukraine as part of EU, and Russia sees Ukraine's joining of the EU as no different than joining NATO, and Russia judges it from a territorial perspective.

The displeasure about Ukraine's prospective turn towards the EU and NATO was across the top tier of Moscow's political elite. Russia's ambassador to Ukraine Viktor Chernomyrdin

---

[402] See, Wilson, A. (2006) 'Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the role of the West', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19/1: 21-32; and Oleinikova, O. (2017) 'Foreign funded NGOs in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine: Recent restrictions and implications', *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: an Interdisciplinary Journal,* 9/3: 96-105; Traynor, I. (2004) 'US campaign behind the turmoil in Kiev' (26 November, 2005) *The Guardian*; 'Ministry of Economy: America did not finance Yushchenko's campaign', 30 December 2004, ,http://hotline.net.ua/content/view/9823/37/; US Department of State (2003) US government assistance to and cooperative activities with Eurasia'' https://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/37672.htm

[403] Kuzio, T. (2004) 'NGOs and civil society under attack in Ukraine', *Ukrainian Weekly*, 18 July; and McFaul, M. (2004) '"Meddling" in Ukraine: democracy is not an American plot', *Washington Post*, p. 21

[404] Presidential Decree No. 24 of 10 January 2000. The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/589768; also, Trenin, Dmitri, Reading Russia Right, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Moscow, Special Edition 42, October 2005

[405] Trenin, D. (2006) 'The Post-Imperial Project' (15 February) *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*

[406] Ambrosio, T. (2007) 'Insulating Russia from a Colour Revolution: How the Kremlin Resists Regional Democratic Trends', *Democratization*, 14/2: 232-252.

[407] Ibid.

refused to accept that Ukraine has any separate identity. In various interviews around this time, Chernomyrdin, provocatively said that "Ukraine and Russia have never lived as two sovereign states. Ukraine has never been a sovereign government. Now we have to learn how to perceive her as such" and "Russia was always an independent state. Ukraine never was. There never was such a country."[408] In January 2006, Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Sergei Ivanov wrote in Wall Street Journal that Russia's top concern is the "stability of the internal situation in some members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the regions around them". [409]

US associated supporters of the Orange revolution included the Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Democratic Institute of the Democratic Party (NDI), and the International Republican Institute of the Republican Party (IRI) as well as NGOs like Freedom House and the Open Society Institute, which provided funding to activists during the colour revolutions, as well as assisted with training and PR. [410] Russian intelligence and Russian government increasingly started to view and referred to foreign NGOs as agents of the US and NATO and started to view all foreign organisation and efforts in security terms. [411] Moscow claimed that domestic actors in Ukraine also did not act alone, as they received funding and training from NGOs and organisations, and were trained in civil disobedience, as agents of the West. [412] The EU monitors were brought in during elections were

[408] Interviews cited in Fraser, D. 'Taking Ukraine seriously: Western and Russian responses to the orange revolution' in Schmidtke, O. & Yekelchyk, S. (eds.) Europe's *Last Frontier? Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine Between Russia and the European Union* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pg. 157–174.

[409] Ivanov, S. (2006) 'Russia must be Strong' (11 January) *Wall Street Journal*, p.A-14.

[410] Soltanifar, M. (2005) 'US—Russian Rivalry in the Caucasus: Towards a New Cold War?*'* *Global Dialogue* 7, no. 3/4: 11.; and Zielys, P. (2013) 'U.S. Security Interests and Democracy Assistance Programs in Georgia and Ukraine', *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 11/1: 177.

[411] The NGOs working in Ukraine were considered foreign agents meaning to destabilise the region and push Russia away from its sphere of influence, as discussed earlier in the chapter. How Russian politicians saw the US behind NGO activities, is detailed in 'America as the Mirror of Russian Phobias,' *Social Research* 72/4 (2005): 860, and Saari, S. (2009) 'European Democracy Promotion in Russia Before and After the "Colour" Revolutions', *Democratization* 16/4: 734-5; Wolchik, S. L. (2012) 'Putinism Under Siege: Can There Be a Color Revolution?' Journal of Democracy 23/3: 66; and Oleinikova, O. (2017) 'Foreign funded NGOs in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine: Recent restrictions and implications', *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: an Interdisciplinary Journal*, 9/3: 96-105.

[412] Trenin, D. (2006) 'The Post-Imperial Project' (15 February) *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*.

regarded with utmost scepticism in Moscow. [413]All these external supports were used by Russia to frame the Orange revolution as illegitimate Western-backed coup, and to drive out Russia from the Russian sphere of influence. [414]

Economically, Russian-Ukrainian relation after the Orange revolution was already marred by energy disputes, and Russia used energy prices as a weapon to coerce the new Ukrainian government. Added to the political rhetoric, Russian economic pressure on Ukraine started to increase. Ukraine had an unbalanced trade relationship with Russia, relying on Russian energy and on Russia as a key consumer of Ukrainian exports, whereas Russia could bypass Ukraine and still sell energy to Europe. After the Orange revolution there were major shifts in Russian energy policy towards Ukraine. [415] For example, Gazprom and energy companies controlled by Moscow, threatened to rescind their deals with Ukraine, and cut off Ukraine's energy supply unless Ukraine pays higher prices. Pricing disputes continued, until 2006, when Gazprom did cut off the energy supply to Ukraine, convincing Ukraine to bow to Russian pressure. The prices were discriminatory and arbitrary and the existing agreements, which established gas prices of $50 per 1000 cubic meters were increased to $230 per cubic meters. Russia also blocked the transit of Turkmen gas shipments to Ukraine. Russian energy companies also used their profits to purchase equity stakes in Ukraine increasing their control further of Ukrainian energy markets. The prices were not reduced until the Yanukovych government agreed to reduce the prices after a compromise with Russia in exchange for a 25-year extension on the lease to the naval base in Sevastopol. Russian government officials suggested that the energy prices were political rather than economic.[416] The 2003 Energy Strategy of the Russian

[413] Orlova. AV, "Foreign Agents," Sovereignty, and Political Pluralism: How the Russian Foreign Agents Law is Shaping Civil Society, *International Affairs* 382 (2019); 'New laws that cast NGOs as "foreign agents" illustrate the threat to academic collaboration in Russia' (11 September, 2012) LSE, available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/49570/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-New_laws_that_cast_NGOs_as_foreign_agents_illustrate_the_threat_to_academic_collaboration_in_Russia.pdf

[414] Wolchik, S. L. (2012) op cit. p.66.; and Lukyanov, F. (2005) op cit. p. 860

[415] 'Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020', (in Russian) *Minpromenergo Rosii*, September 2005, p.1, cited in Fraser, D. (2008) 'Taking Ukraine seriously: Western and Russian responses to the orange revolution' in Schmidtke, O., & Yekelchyk, S. (eds.) *Europe's Last Frontier? Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine between Russia and the European Union* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pg. 157–174.

[416] Pavlovsky, Gleb, Ukrainian Export of Spokes in Wheels, *Izvestiya*, Moscow, 24 January 2006 - #5, Action *Ukraine Report #649*, Washington, 27 January 2006, Iliaronov, Zarakhovich, Yuri, Q&A: Putin's Critical Adviser, *Time.com*, New York, 31 December, 2005 - #18, *Johnson's Russia List #1*, Washington, 1 January 2006, cited in Fraser 2008.

Federation to 2020 stated that the country's fuel and energy complex is "an instrument for the conduct of internal and external policy. The role of a country in world energy markets largely determines its geopolitical influence." [417] During the peak of the gas crisis, Russia for the first time threatened about annexing Crimea. When the Yushchenko government warned that Ukraine will be forced to revise the treaty on rent of the Sevastopol, the Russian defence minister stated that it might lead to the revocation of the 1997 Ukrainian-Russian friendship treaty which recognised the 1954 boundaries, including Crimea to be a part of modern Ukraine. [418] Simultaneously, Russia started funding and advising Yanukovych's election campaign. [419]

In December 2005, Russia Ukraine energy dispute ended with the termination of gas deliveries by Gazprom. [420] The two sides carried on negotiation so that Ukraine continues to get a subsidised price in exchange for a low transit fee. Putin reminded in 2006 that "over the last 15 years Russia subsidised the Ukrainian economy by a sum that amounted to $3 to 5 billion each year," and "each year we raised the issue of whether we should change to the European regime for determining prices". [421] In December 2008, Russia turned off the energy deliveries to Ukraine, and the entire Ukraine, as well as East Europe, suffered without gas. Ukraine was undergoing domestic divisions and Putin in his capacity as the PM of Russia negotiated directly with Ukrainian PM Yulia Tymoshenko, who was running for Presidency and wanted a détente with Russia.[422] In January 2009, a new ten-year contract and energy deals were signed. The rhetoric from Russia, however, continued to be harsh, and in 2009, Russia denounced Ukraine for pursuing anti-Russian policies by supporting Georgia during the 2008 war as well as

[417] 'Energy Strategy…' Ibid.

[418] Ivanov, S. (2006) 'Russia must be Strong' (11 January 2006) *Wall Street Journal*.

[419] Sinikukka, S. (2009) 'European Democracy Promotion in Russia Before and After the "Colour" Revolutions', *Democratization* 16/4: 734-5.

[420] Stulberg, A. N. (2015) 'Out of gas?: Russia, Ukraine, Europe, and the changing geopolitics of natural gas', *Problems Post Communism* 62/2: 112e30

[421] Tsygankov, A. (2015) 'Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: the Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy', *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31/4.

[422] Dragneva, R. and Wolczuk, K. (2016, June) 'Between Dependence and Integration: Ukraine's Relations with Russia' *Europe-Asia Studies* 64/4, p. 678-698.

interfering in the movements of the Black Sea fleet in and out of Sevastopol.[423] Ukraine's constant attempt for membership of NATO was also repeatedly taken up by Russia, and by August 2008, it looked like the plans for further NATO expansion were stalled, as Russia continued to criticize OSCE/NATO to create a security system in Europe which attempts to create new lines of division between nations with a common history. Russian use of oil and gas as a weapon and the terms of the settlement of the gas crisis damaged the Yushchenko government, whose party took third place in the 2006 elections. By late 2006, Russia's favourite candidate, Ukrainian PM Yanukovych was negotiating a settlement more in line with Moscow's demands. [424]

To sum up, the Russian reaction to the victory of Yushchenko in Ukraine was severe. Moscow considered the shift of Ukraine towards the West to be a geostrategic calamity and felt threatened by the EU and NATO move eastward. It crossed a long-held red line. Moscow also blamed the Orange revolution as a Western-backed coup and considered NGOs and other civil society movements as western agents, funded and trained by NATO, the US and EU to destabilize Russian spheres of influence and eventually push Russia out of it.[425] Ukraine's relation with Russia destabilised so rapidly following the Orange revolution, that almost half of the Ukrainian population believed that there could be a war with Russia. After Orange revolution, Moscow adopted an antagonistic approach towards Yushchenko's presidency. In 2008, Kiev protested Russian distribution of passports to Ukrainian citizens by the Russian consulate in Simferopol, around the same time Russia was in a war with Georgia to "protect Russian citizens." [426]

From the Russian side, the main animosity was against the Ukrainian government's political support of Georgia, and rhetoric against the Black Sea fleet, which Russia considered as vital to force projection. Ukraine's position that there is no alternative to join NATO and NATO's Bucharest summit in 2008 which welcomed Ukraine and Georgian aspiration to NATO membership was another red line. Russian nationalist think-tanks, which reflect the position of

[423] Pifer, S. (2009) 'Ukraine's Geopolitical Choice' *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 50/4.
[424] Fraser, D. (2008) op cit.

[425] SIPRI The Military Balance Volume 120, 2020 - Issue 1 (2020). Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia. *The Military Balance*: Vol. 120, No. 1, pg. 166-219

[426] Kuzio, T. (2008) 'Russian intelligence seeks to destabilize Crimea', (1 October) *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 5: 188, 1 Oct. 2008, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/archives/2008

Russian political and military elite, openly started to sound war drums over Crimea. [427] It might be likely that the plan for an annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol was already developed by the Russian general staff, in the event Kiev joins NATO and Moscow was on the verge of losing Black Sea Fleet port. The rhetoric was certainly moving in that direction.

But, the aggression was however unnecessary as Yanukovych won. [428] While the economic pressure on Ukraine coupled with the rift among the leaders of the Orange revolution, which started almost immediately after the election in December 2004 and continued. Yulia Tymoshenko's tenure as a Prime Minister lasted until September 2005, and in March 2006 the Orange revolution coalition collapsed as the pro-Moscow Party of Regions, led by Viktor Yanukovych won. In contrast to the 2004 election, where Russia openly supported Yanukovych, in 2010 Russian advisors worked behind the scenes to promote his candidacy. Moscow was relieved with the outcome, as Yanukovych made improvement of ties with Russia his main theme and was strongly opposed to Ukraine's membership of NATO, in support of a neutral, non-bloc status and in April 2010, in exchange for a reduced price on Russian gas, agreed to extend the lease for the Sevastopol naval base, for the next 25 years. Yanukovych also reversed Ukraine's previous position on opposing Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. [429]

Euromaidan, and Russian reaction

[427] 'Medvedev gets caught telling the truth', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 22 Nov. 2011, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/24399004.html, 47 Poll carried out by the Institute of Strategic Studies, UNIAN news agency, Kiev, 1 Sept. 2008, BBC Mon KVU 010908 mk/dz, 48 President Viktor Yushchenko, interview in Ekho, Baku, 14 Nov. 2008, pg. 1, 2, BBC Mon TCU KVU 171108 fm/vr, 5 Kanal TV, Kiev, 9 Sept. 2008, BBC Mon KVU EU1 EuroPol 090908 yk/ak, 49 Bucharest Summit Declaration, 3 April 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, 50 Taras Kuzio, 'Russian intelligence seeks to destabilize Crimea', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 5: 188, 1 Oct. 2008, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/archives/2008, 51 Mustafa Dzhemilyev, interview in Ukrainian newspaper Kontrakty, 20 Sept. 2008, pg. 12–14, BBC Mon KVU 300908 gk/dk, 52 Pavel Felgenhauer, 'Russian military weakness could delay conflict with Ukraine', Eurasia Daily Monitor 6: 156, 13 Aug. 2009, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/archives/2008, Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine 1271 International Affairs 90: 6, 2014

[428] Dmitri Trenin, 'Ukraine and the new divide', 30 July 2014, p. 3, 54 Speech and discussion with students in Kiev, 18 May 2010, Also 'Non-bloc status covers Ukraine's shift to Russian-vector orientation', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7: 99, 21 May 2010,

[429] Fraser, D. (2008) op cit.

Russia returned to status-quo behaviour and overt hostility decreased, as the threat of Ukraine rapidly moving towards NATO-EU security architecture was stalled. For example, despite Ukraine's declared neutrality, Yanukovych's reversal of previous Orange revolution position made Russia assume that Ukraine is on the course to join Russia led Eurasian order and CSTO. In 2010, reflecting that, President Medvedev noted that 'Life does change, and if Ukraine decides to join the CSTO in the future, we would be happy to open the door for you, and welcome you into our ranks.'[430] Earlier, in May 2009, the launch of the Eastern Partnership by the EU was considered a geopolitical challenge to the further integration of CIS states, by Russia. [431] Russian characterisation of the EU's geopolitical agenda was no different than NATO or the West in general. [432] But relations improved in 2010 following a change of government, as the two sides agreed to extend the lease on Russia's Black Sea fleet for the next 25 years in exchange for a reduced gas price, and in 2011 Russia proposed the formation of a new Eurasian union, attempting to solidify a Russian sphere of influence in the face of renewed NATO and EU push eastward. Russia formed the Customs Union in 2010, including Belarus and Kazakhstan and formally invited Ukraine to join in 2011, with another offer of reduced gas prices. The Union became operative in 2012, and Putin pledged Ukraine another $15 Billion in aid. [433] Since his election in 2010, Yanukovych had blocked Ukrainian bid towards further NATO accession, and in 2013 signalled Ukrainian moves towards the Russian led customs union, and Russian offers of Customs Union membership in place of EU's Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement seemed final. At the EU summit in Vilnius, the Ukrainian President announced his decision to postpone the Association agreement with the EU. By 2014, the relation between the Russian government and Ukrainian government seemed positive, even when Russian rhetoric continued to accuse NATO and EU. [434]

---

[430] Socor, V. 'Non-Bloc Status Covers Ukraine's Shift to Russian-Vector Orientation' *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7/99.

[431] Kragh, M. & Åsberg, S. (2017) 'Russia's strategy for influence through public diplomacy and active measures: the Swedish case', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 5 January 2017.

[432] Allison, R. 'Russian "deniable" intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules', *International Affairs* 90/6: 1259.

[433] Dragneva, R. & Wolczuk, K. (2016, June) 'Between Dependence and Integration: Ukraine's Relations with Russia' *Europe-Asia Studies* 64/4: 678-698.

[434] For a detailed assessment of the customs union, see Dragneva, R. & Wolczuk, K. (eds.) (2013) *Eurasian Economic Integration: Law, Policy and Politics* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Around this stage, the Ukrainian opposition, critical of the direction their country is taking, and diplomatically supported by the EU and the US, started to protest in and around Kiev. Ukraine slid into lawlessness, as Western support for the protesters increased. [435] Yanukovych refused to accept the opposition's demand, and the EU brokered agreement collapsed in February 2014 and Yanukovych fled to East Ukraine and then to Russia. The Ukrainian uprising happened in and around the Sochi Olympics, and the strategic situation rapidly reversed in the region as Ukrainian President Yanukovych fled Kiev.

Russian balancing action to Euromaidan

From the Russian side, this was considered an "unconstitutional coup" in Kiev, which changed the strategic situation of the region and established new rules on the ground.[436] Russian worry of Ukraine joining the EU had an economic dimension, as Ukraine with 45 million people was an important market of Russian exporters.[437] Any association agreement would hamper Russian exports as Russian products do not match the safety standards of the European Union. But the primary concern was geopolitical.[438] The association agreement also included clauses which would integrate Ukraine to the EU's common security and defence policy, which reinforced Moscow's idea that the EU is not just a political union, but an extension of NATO ambitions in the East. The European Union was considered a great power in the making, influencing the geopolitics of Russian sphere of influence, and pushing Russia out.

By 2009, Russia was warning against EU influencing and destabilizing Ukraine. Sergei Lavrov stated that "We [the Russians] are accused of having spheres of influence. But what is the Eastern Partnership, if not an attempt to extend the EU's sphere of influence". [439] Konstantin Kosachev, the chairman of the Russian parliament's foreign policy committee, described the EU as an emerging "hyper-power, which, like a gigantic whirlpool, is slowly but surely sucking

[435] Trenin, D. (2006) op cit.
[436] Putin on Ukraine crisis: 'It is an unconstitutional coup' BBC News 04 Mar 2014

[437] Allison R. (2014) op cit.

[438] Götz, E. (2015) 'It's geopolitics, stupid: Explaining Russia's Ukraine policy', *Global Affairs* 1/1: 3-10.

[439] Pop, V. (2009, March 21). EU expanding its 'sphere of influence,' Russia says. EU Observer. Retrieved from https://euobserver. com/foreign/27827

in our neighbours". [440] By August 2013, senior Russian presidential advisers were warning that Ukraine should not cede sovereignty to the EU and should join Russia led customs union, and if Ukraine joins the EU, Russia consider Ukraine as a strategic threat. [441] Moscow simultaneously launched a trade war against Ukraine in 2013, whereby Russia restricted the import of Ukrainian goods while offering a generous package of economic and financial assistance on the condition that Yanukovych complied with Russian demands and turned down the association agreement. Russia also pledged US$15 Billion in low-interest loans and discount on natural gas. Yanukovych rejected the agreement with the EU a few days before the "Eastern Partnership" summit in Vilnius at the end of November 2013.[442] After three months of violent protests rioting and mass demonstrations, President Yanukovych was toppled in February and fled to Russia. The new leadership in Kiev made it clear that Ukraine's future lies in the West and Ukraine is determined to sign the EU association agreement.[443] With the rise of Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Moscow was certain that Crimea was going out of hand and Russia would lose the base for the Black Sea fleet. A pro-Western government in the doorstep of Russia, determined to join with the EU and NATO along with Russian loss of Baltic naval base was unacceptable to the Russian military and political elite. Within days, Crimea was annexed

[440] Torbakov, I. (2004, November 11). Moscow policymakers complain about lack of trust between Russia and EU. Eurasia Daily Monitor. Retrieved from http://www. jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news %5D=27138&no_cache=1

[441] The existence of such contingency plans (though not the time they were formulated) is suggested by Dmitri Trenin, 'Ukraine and the new divide', 30 July 2014, p. 3, http://carnegie.ru/2014/07/30/ukraine-and-the-newdivide/hln1, accessed 18 Oct. 2014. 54 Speech and discussion with students in Kiev, 18 May 2010, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/202, accessed 22 October 2014. See also 'Non-bloc status covers Ukraine's shift to Russian-vector orientation', Eurasia Daily Monitor 7: 99, 21 May 2010, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/archives/2010, accessed 15 June 2014. 55 For an assessment of schools of Russian thinking on the issue, see Alexander Sergunin, 'Russian views on the Ukrainian crisis: from confrontation to damage limitation', in Thomas Flichy de la Neuville, ed., Ukraine: regards sur une crise (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2014), pg. 59–68; for a full Russian analysis of the interaction of Russian, Ukrainian and EU relations, see Yakub Koreyba, Problemy Yevropeyskoy politiki v otnosheniyakh mezhdu Rossiey i Ukrainoy [Problems in European policy in the relations between Russia and Ukraine] (Moscow: Aspekt, 2014). 56 Interview with Sergei Glazyev, an adviser to Putin on regional trade, on *Rossiya 24 TV* channel, 27 Aug. 2013, *Johnson's Russia List* 2013: 158, 28 Aug. 2013, http://www.russialist.org/archives/index-archive.php, and Roy Allison, *International Affairs* 90: 6, 2014

[442] Allison, R (2014) op cit. p. 1259.

[443] Ibid.

by Russian soldiers without insignia. They were Russian soldiers as identified by the hardware they used, although at that time, it was denied from Moscow.

In the six weeks following the Euromaidan revolution, Crimea was annexed, while continuously being denied by Russia that Russian soldiers were involved.[444] After the annexation of Crimea, Russia demanded that Kiev initiate new constitutional changes that guarantee the protection of Russian speakers and decentralised leadership of the region. Russia also amassed over 30,000 troops on Ukraine's border and retracted the energy discount and financial aid for Kiev. In April 2014 however, Putin stated that Russian servicemen backed the Crimean self-defence forces, and stated that Russia created conditions, "with the help of special armed groups for the expression of the will of the people in Crimea and Sevastopol". [445] Regarding the conflict that broke out in parts of Eastern Ukraine, Putin continued to initially deny that there were any Russian forces or instructors in South-Eastern Ukraine. Later, however, with the scale of Russian intervention, weapons, hardware and mercenaries involved, it was clear that Russia intervened in the conflict. [446] Putin further argued that the Russian troops in Crimea and the Black Sea Fleet face a direct threat to their security and appealed to the Russian Federation Council to allow the use of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine referring to the threat of Russian military forces. On March, Putin referred to the declarations of Kiev about Ukraine joining NATO would mean that NATO's navy would be right in the city of Russia's military glory and threaten the whole of Southern Russia. He said Russia would be practically ousted from the Black Sea, ending up with a diminished coastline of only 450 kilometers. In June, the Russian president stated that the "anti-constitutional coup" in Ukraine would mean EU and NATO infrastructure directly towards the Russian border and that must be stopped at any cost. [447] Russian defence minister Sergei

[444] For details on Russian role and timeline in the Crimean annexation, see Haukkala, H. (2015) 'From Cooperative to Contested Europe? The Conflict in Ukraine as a Culmination of a Long-Term Crisis in EU–Russia Relations', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 23/11: 25-40; MacFarlane, N. and Menon, A. (2014) 'The EU and Ukraine', *Survival* 56/3: 95–101; and Interview of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to ITAR-TASS, September 10. http://www.
mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/D8C4DD75D09C784844257D5000374F29

[445] *Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It* by Anders Aslund, Reviewed by Robert Legvold, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2015.

[446] Putin reveals secrets of Russia's Crimea takeover plot, BBC News March 9 2015

[447] Address by Putin, 18 March 2014; Direct Line interview with Putin, 17 April 2014; Putin's interview with Radio Europe 1 and TF1 TV channel, 4 June 2014.

Shoigu also stated that the danger of seizure of the Russian military infrastructure by extremist organisations in Crimea required tightened security at Russian military facilities in Crimea.[448] The political rhetoric emanating from Moscow was solely directed at EU and the US. For example, Putin on the eve of the Crimean referendum said, "And with Ukraine, our Western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear [sic] and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally." [449] Similarly, the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said, "Brussels told Ukraine to choose between the West and Russia. Everybody knows the root causes of the crisis: we were not being listened to, Kiev was forced into signing arrangements with the European Union, which had been drafted behind the scene and, as it eventually turned out, were undermining Ukraine's obligations on the CIS free trade area. When Viktor Yanukovich took a pause for a closer look at the situation, the Euromaidan protests were staged. Then there followed the burning tires, the first casualties and an escalation of the conflict." [450] The swiftness of the takeover suggested that the contingency plans had been in place for a while.

Analysis of Russian balancing

So, why did Russia get involved in a conflict after 2014 and not after 2003? According to Balance of Threat theory, and the hypotheses listed above, Russian aggression would occur in the situation when Moscow is under the impression that its independent standing as a great power is threatened due to either loss of control over the buffer region which it considers under sphere of influence, or when Moscow appears to understand that its military balance is under threat or both simultaneously. Alternatively, if Moscow regains control over the region without resorting to conflict, then the status quo would be maintained. The most plausible explanation for the Russian intervention in Ukraine in 2011, is therefore rooted in security relations and relative power which establishes that Russia intervened in Ukraine to establish a

[448] Annual special Direct Line interview with Putin, broadcast on many TV channels and radio stations, 17 April 2014, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/7034, accessed 22 Oct. 2014. 3 Interview with Radio Europe 1 and TF1 TV channel, 4 June 2014, Russian presidential website, 4 June 2014, and BBC Monitoring Online, at http://www.bbc.monitoringonline.com (henceforth BBC), Mon Alert FS1 FsuPol EU1 EuroPol hb, accessed 7 June 2014. 4 'Ukrainians dig trenches to halt Russian invaders', *The Times*, 1 Sept. 2014, p. 28; 'Russian tanks force Ukrainian retreat', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 Sept. 2014, p. 14. 'Vladimir Putin submitted appeal to the Federation Council', 1 March 2014, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6751, accessed 18 Oct. 2014. 22 Statement at emergency meeting of the board of the Russian Defence Ministry, 4 April 2014, *Interfax news agency*, Moscow, 4 April 2014, BBC Mon FS1 MCU 040414 nm, accessed 10 April 2014

[449] Putin, Vladimir. 2014. Address by President of the Russian Federation. Moscow: The Kremlin, March 18. http:// eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889

[450] 2014. Interview of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to ITAR-TASS, September 10. http://www. mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/D8C4DD75D09C784844257D5000374F29

geopolitical fault line between West and Russia. To achieve this aim, of stopping Ukraine falling in Western orbit, Russia need not always resort to offensive action. The key issue since 1991 is that Ukraine is considered vital for Russian interests and without a pro-Russian, or at least neutral Ukraine, Russian status as a great power is questionable. Russia not only will lose its biggest territorial buffer, but also major resources vital for national security, as well as a privileged position in post-soviet economic space. While Russia could not force Ukraine to join a pro-Russian security order, it can make Ukraine toxic for NATO and EU, and deny its Westward move. Ukraine's integration into Western structures would shift the strategic balance in Europe, ending any Russian hope of a sphere of influence and a buffer zone, as well as a neo-Soviet hegemony composed of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

The history between Russia and Ukraine suggests a pattern. Whenever there is a distinct possibility that Ukraine would join the Western security arrangement, whether, through the EU or NATO, Russia ratcheted up the pressure. Both during the 2003 Orange revolution and the 2014 Euromaidan revolution, this pattern was followed. The difference is the scale of Russian aggression. Foreign policy analysis is rarely monocausal, and while it is difficult to understand and theorise Russian reaction without a complete picture after studying all the cases for the purpose of the thesis, analysing Russian reaction vis-à-vis Ukraine suggests two alternative possibilities. Chaos in Ukraine would be considered a ploy by the rival alliance or power centre to push Moscow from its sphere of influence. As Walt suggested, discussed in detail in chapter 3, that a revolution in the neighbourhood is viewed by a great power as a chaos where rival powers try to take advantage, to push the dominant power out of its sphere of influence. If Russia acts per balance of threat theory, then as mentioned above, Russian considerations would be primarily material, economic and military. The perceived threats in Moscow would be related to a Russian independent existence as a great power, and the loss of Ukraine would be existential to Russia's standing in European security scenario. The alternative scenario is that Russia fears that if Ukraine is destabilised, the effect would spread to Russian neighbours, and eventually to Moscow. The cause of threat, therefore, would be a threat to regime stability, and not a threat to Russian standing as a great power due to a decrease in aggregate power and military capabilities.

It is evident in the case of Ukraine, that Russia considered Ukraine to slip away from Moscow's orbit. In the first instance, economic pressure and internal collapse of the revolutionary regime of Yushchenko meant that Russia did not have to resort to using overt or covert force. In the second instance, the threat was much more serious, and rapid, leaving Russia no option other

than using force to create a fait accompli in the region, as well as stall Ukraine's permanent shift to the Western orbit.

To use Zbigniew Brezinski's terminology, without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.[451] While that might be a bit too rhetorically far-fetched, it is true that if Russia controls Ukraine, even as a satellite, it will continue to have access to an enormous territorial buffer, a market for Russian products, as well as strategic resources, and access to Black Sea. [452] Russian actions in Ukraine, in both after the Orange revolution and after Euromaidan, has been therefore one of strategic denial. Great powers, whether defensive realist, of offensive realist, according to realism, do not give up their privileged position in the balance on their own.

The Russian military heavily resources dependent on Ukraine. Prior to the annexation of Crimea, Ukrainian firms produced over 3000 components and armament systems, for the Russian military, including the components for manufacture as well as maintenance of the primary Russian nuclear deterrence, the RM-36 (NATO designation SS-18 Satan) intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) designed by the Yuzhnoye Design Bureau and manufactured by the Yuzhmash industrial complex in Dnipropetrovsk.[453] According to the Russian deputy PM Dmitry Rogozin, Russia is incapable of acquiring such products anywhere else. [454] Ukraine also produced the guidance systems for the SS-25 mobile missile launchers and SS-19 silo-based strategic missiles in eastern parts of Ukraine, in Kharkiv. [455]

Likewise, the Russian navy is mostly built and maintained in Ukraine. [456] The Mykolaiv oblast was the key shipbuilding centre since the Soviet times, and continues to produce parts for

[451] See Brzezinski, Z. (1997) *The Grand Chessboard* New York: Basic Books, p. 46.

[452] Friedman, G. (2008, September) 'Geopolitical Diary: The Medvedev Doctrine', *Stratfor*.

[453] Rogozin, D. (2013, 17/12) Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Military-Industrial Commission, Russian Federation. "Echo of Moscow" Radio interview transcript, cited in Johannesson, J. (2017) ' Russia's war with Ukraine is to acquire military industrial capability and human resources' *Journal of International Studies*, 10/4: 63-71.

[454] Ibid

[455] Simha, R. (2014). Satan scare: Why the US is going ballistic over a Russian missile. . Retrieved from http://in.rbth.com/blogs/2014/05/23/satan_scare_why_the_us_is_going_ballistic_over_a_russian_missile_35461

[456] Lugar, R. (2005). Lugar and Obama Urge Destruction of Conventional Weapons Stockpiles. Retrieved from http://www.fas.org/asmp/campaigns/MANPADS/2005/LugarObama.htm

Russian navy's capital ships including its flagship, the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov. [457] Eastern Ukraine and black sea coast, therefore, remains crucial for Russian naval deterrence. The Russian air force uses air to air missiles produced in Eastern Ukraine, and maintenance of the hydraulic system for Russian fighters like Su-34 is also done in Eastern Ukraine. Russian transport used jet engines made by Antonov factory in Ukraine. Almost all Russian modern tank components are built in the Kharkiv Locomotive Factory. Ukraine's military-industrial complex is almost entirely located in Southern and Eastern Ukraine, due to logistical and trade reasons, and is now currently the scene of heavy rebel activity. Critical Ukrainian components and their servicing make up for up to 80% of Russia's strategic missiles forces, and without Eastern Ukraine, Russian nuclear deterrence, and naval forces collapse. [458] It is also no coincidence that the heavy fighting around the city of Kramatorsk is over the control of the NKMZ industrial complex, which produces hardware like mining equipment, steel mills, etc for the Russian military. The Russian control of Crimea, for example, added 13 Ukrainian defence companies and 18 defence companies located between Donetsk and Luhansk are also under de facto Russian control. These are of invaluable importance to the Russian plan of massive military rearmament, and Russian independence deterrence depends on the maintenance of these supply and logistics chain.[459]

The gains to the Russian military after the annexation of Crimea were historic and substantial in terms of strategic capabilities and potential. Russian annexation of Crimea and acquisition of assets created a new fait accompli and resolved the issue of uncertainty about Russian basing rights. The April 2010 ratification of the quarter-century lease of Sevastopol was conditional to whoever was in power in Kiev, and after Euromaidan, Russia could not be sure of the intention of a new Ukrainian government and a revision of the lease terms or rights. Moscow was not happy about the constraints about the type of crafts and treaty terms which prevented

[457] See, Tolip. (2007). Admiral Kuznetsov the only aircraft carrier in the Russian Navy. Retrieved from http://www.militaryheat.com/39/admiral-kuznetsov-aircraft-carrier-russian-navy/ and Committee, D. (2014). Defence-Committee - Third Report: Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two-NATO. Retrieved from: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmdfence/358/35802.htm

[458] See, McLees, A., & Rumer, E. (2014). Saving Ukraine's Defense Industry. . Retrieved from http://carnegie.ru/publications/?lang=en&fa=56282 and Jennings, G. (2015). Russian An-140 production halted by Ukrainian sanctions. . London - IHS Jane's Defence Weekly

[459] Jennings, G. (2015). Russian An-140 production halted by Ukrainian sanctions. . London - IHS Jane's Defence Weekly; Berzins, J. (2014). 'Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy'. Policy Paper, p. 2

any expansion of the numbers of the Black Sea fleet and was in continuous legal conflict with the wordings of the Ukrainian constitution, which prohibits foreign bases. All those constraints were essentially swept away. [460]

Russian control, retaining and scuttling of the Ukrainian fleet, meant that Russia eclipsed Turkey as the biggest naval power of the region. Russia captured and interned most of Ukraine's twenty-five warships as well as upgraded its Black sea fleet.[461] Russia also took possession of Ukrainian naval bases of Novoozerne and Myrnyi (Donuzlav Lake), Saky, Balaklava and a marine infantry base at Feodosiya, alongside Sevastopol. The Russian possession of Sevastopol also stopped all payments and recurring expenditure from Russia to Ukraine, an enormous amount of fund which was free to be used in military rearmament programs.[462] A few days before Yanukovych fled to Russia, former Russian general staff Yuri Baluyevsky stated that Russia should urgently reinforce and expand the Black Sea fleet, and take advantage of the general situation. While there is no direct evidence of Russian military planning channelling this specific idea, in March 2014, the deputy Russian defence minister Yuri Borisov echoed the same logic asserting that the military infrastructure of Crimea was being developed to demonstrate to the whole world of Russian aspirations and capabilities. Shortly after Crimean annexation, by September, Russian forces were being deployed in self-sufficient groups under the Russian southern military district providing military reinforcement and restoration of the Black sea fleet, upgrading naval weapons in Feodosiya, reactivating a dormant submarine base in Sevastopol, and establishing long-range bombers in Soviet-era bases in Gvardeyskiy, Kacha, Saky and Belbak. The Russian air force's strategic aviation division meant solely to deter NATO forces was planning new patrol routes as Russian territorial waters expanded. The Russian troop reinforcement plans included new coastal defence and artillery units, as well as naval exercises of attacking NATO warship detachments in nearby seas. The Russian annexation of Crimea also resulted in the Kerch strait being under the full control of Moscow, and the Russian dominion over Ukrainian continental

[460] Sutyagin, I., Clarke, M., & Eyal, J. (2014). Ukraine Crisis: The Strategic Importance of Slavyansk https://rusi.org/commentary/ukraine-crisis-strategic-importance-slavyansk;

[461] Johannesson, J. (2017) 'Russia's war with Ukraine is to acquire military industrial capability and human resources'. *Journal of International Studies*, 10/4: 63-71.

[462] Johannesson, J. (2017) ' Russia's war with Ukraine is to acquire military industrial capability and human resources' *Journal of International Studies*, 10/4: 63-71.

shelf and exclusive economic zone and hydrocarbon resources. The strategic significance of Crimea to the Russian military elite were enormous and the annexation of Crimea was influenced by broader strategic considerations to enhance Russian military powers abroad. Russian forces in Crimea were to be easily available to project force in east and south of Ukraine, in greater Odessa or a land bridge to Transnistria. The Russian airborne troop chief echoed the same planning that Crimea increases combat potential and force projection capabilities outside theatre far beyond Russia, similar to what defence minister Shoigu said about Russian military presence in key parts of the globe.

The Russian hostility towards the Orange revolution and the confirmation of Viktor Yushchenko as Ukrainian president, through large-scale street protests backed up by NGOs and civil societies, was wholly unexpected in Moscow. It led to the belief in that the Western powers and rivals use competition around election process and use measures to interfere in foreign states to align those states to Western policy. In a way, Russia viewed the Orange revolution and subsequently other colour revolutions as a form of a hybrid war, which arguably shaped the Russian strategic thinking.

This idea that a foreign-funded "revolution" is a means of statecraft, was embedded in Russian geopolitical worldview. For example, Vladimir Putin continued to claim that the Orange revolution was to "push the necessary candidate through at presidential elections" …making a mockery of the constitution.[463] He repeated the same criticism, in February 2014, stating that the only difference between Orange revolution of 2003-04 and Euromaidan in 2014 was that this time, "they have thrown in an organised and well-equipped army of militants". In between, this idea that any similar people's overthrow of governments, whether in Europe or in the Middle East are essentially Western policy where "standards are imposed on other nations" leading to chaos, violence and upheaval. Russia itself faced protests in urban centres between December 2011 and May 2012, with thousands protesting against vote rigging, which resulted in Russian military elites warning against threats to CSTO states and Russian spheres of influence posed by colour revolution, whereby "socio-economic and political problems of individual states are used by outside forces under "democratization slogans". Russian deputy defence minister Anatoly Antonov warned that Russia is closely watching attempts targeting Russia's nearest neighbours, because in essence they are directed against Russian interests.

[463] Allison, R. 'Russian (2014) op cit.; E. Götz (2015) 'It's geopolitics, stupid: Explaining Russia's Ukraine policy' *Global Affairs*, 1/1: 3-10.

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu was more direct and said that these upheavals are increasingly "devised in accordance with rules of warfare".

Alternative theories about Russian balancing

The alternative scenario is the conventional wisdom in foreign policy circles. [464] To sum up, scholars insist that Russia is governed by a handful of cronies and the Russian regime is inherently fearful of major protests and considers any such protests in the neighbourhood as a threat. Stoner suggests that this aggressive posture at any change in the neighbourhood is inherently driven by a desire to remain stable internally because the Russian regime needs the occasional boost of nationalistic prestige. McFaul suggests that the Russian regime did not suddenly grow aggressive as a response to American and NATO expansion and the Ukrainian move towards the EU, but rather when Putin and cronies came under attack for the first time after the 2011 elections, with smart Russian youth protesting against stagnation on the streets of Moscow.

This alternative understanding of Russian reactions being contingent to regime stability at home lacks explanatory power, because of two reasons. One, Putin's popularity at home, were never in serious doubt. [465] There is no evidence that a hundred thousand protesters in Moscow (maximum), without a single unified opposition would shake Vladimir Putin, who consistently enjoyed overwhelming support and approval ratings, measured by the most independent of pollsters in Russia. Second, the idea that Russian regime is threatened by unstable neighbourhood because it fears for its own security is not supported because of Russian varied behaviour. Russian reactions to revolutions are not similar.[466]

[464] See, McFaul, M. (2007, September) 'Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution' *International Security*; Stoner, K., & McFaul, M. (2015) op cit.; Marten, K. (2015) 'Putin's choices: explaining Russian foreign policy and intervention in Ukraine,' *The Washington Quarterly*, 38/2: 189–204; Lo, B. (2015) *Russia and the new world disorder* Washington and London: Brookings Institution Press and Chatham House.

[465] See, Levada-Center, "Indexes, http://www.levada.ru/en/?s=putin+popularity and President Putin: The Russian perspective Pew Research Center June 2017 http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/06/20/president-putin-russian-perspective/

[466] Way, L.A. (2018, May 17) 'Why Didn't Putin Interfere in Armenia's Velvet Revolution?' *Foreign Affairs*; Connolly, R. 'Russia's New State Armament Programme Implications for the Russian Armed Forces and Military Capabilities to 2027' 10th May 2018, Chatham House; 'Death of Novorossia: Why Kremlin Abandoned Ukraine Separatist Project' (May 25, 2015) *Moscow Times*.

For example, recently in Armenia, there was no Russian aggressive action, as a reaction to a regime change after a colour revolution. The Russian aggression in Ukraine, after Euromaidan also similarly remained subdued and relegated in the east and did not spread to the western parts of Ukraine. One line of reasoning might be that the Russian elite were fearful that their grip in power might slide, and their regime stability will be hampered, if there are successful revolutions in the neighbourhood. That is a plausible counterargument, that Russian reactions both during the Orange revolution and during Euromaidan were due to domestic considerations, but that argument has scant evidence to support it. Russia has internal problems and dissent, but none of them serious enough to threaten Putin's hold. For example, Putin's approval ratings were extremely high before the Ukrainian intervention, and continue to remain high, as latest elections show. Putin hardly needs to improve his domestic standing. By 2013, the Kremlin was confident of a conservative majority, which remained steady, after it studied social reaction during the Anti-Magnitsky act, trial of Pussy Riot band, and Russian laws against NGOs. Putin and Russian regime realised that their ratings remained steady, a confidence that was evident as Putin pardoned 20000 prisoners, the members of Pussy Riot, as well as long-term critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Many of those who were charged during the Russian protests in 2012, were also released and Russian Olympic hosting also boosted Putin's standing. There is no robust evidence that the Russian government's aggressive actions are therefore directed at domestic audience, either as a diversionary war, or due to concerns about regime stability.

There is also another line of reasoning, which claims that Russian actions in Ukraine are determined by ideology. The theory behind this is that Russia is waging an ideological war, and reclaiming the territory of Novorossiya, based on ideas of Eurasianism, or conservatism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. [467] A simple test of the hypothesis is the rise and fall of the rhetoric of the now discredited Novorossiya project. It was arguably used to justify Moscow's actions in Ukraine and mobilize the Russians to rally around the flag. The project was discarded and stopped arguably due to the strategic objectives were achieved. [468] Had it been an

[467] For more on this, see, *Russia's Orthodox Soft Power* March 23, 2015, Nicolai N. Petro, Canegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs; Whitmore, B., Vladimir Putin, Conservative Icon, December 20, 2013, *The Atlantic; Janssen, T.* "Why do European conservatives love the Russian president?" 26 December 2014, *VoxEurope;* The Prophet of the New Russian Empire *The Montréal Review*, 2009; Fisher, M. 'One of Russia's looniest far-right ideologues endorses Donald Trump', March 1, 2016; Clover, C. (2016) *Black Wind, White Snow The Rise of Russia's New Nationalism* New Haven: Yale University Press.

[468] 'Death of Novorossia: Why Kremlin Abandoned Ukraine Separatist Project' (May 25, 2015) *Moscow Times*.

ideological war, it would have carried on and spread to other parts of Ukraine. It did not, and the Novorossiya rhetoric was quietly dropped after a while in Moscow.

The primary driver for Russian actions, therefore, seems to be structural, influenced by geopolitical and strategic considerations. The aim as evident was to maintain Russian control over naval bases, and the military industrial centres in Ukraine. While there is no archival evidence which will be available anytime soon, the public discussions, statements in the Russian military and political circles, and the pace of annexation of Crimea suggest that the contingency plan was already in place for a while. After the annexation of Crimea, and Moscow's rapid confirmation to upgrade the existing bases on the peninsula as well as the drafted plans to add new ships to the existing Fleet, Russia has extended control over the entirety of Black sea, specifically in the strategically important chokepoints like the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov. Added to that, it was a message to Kiev as well as Brussels and Washington DC that there will be costs, including territorial loss and violence if Russian interests are ignored.

Chapter 6**: Russian balancing in Georgia**

Georgia, like Ukraine, is considered to be of vital strategic importance to Moscow. Georgia is a vital supply line of Russian energy to the European heartland, and an important trade route for Russian exports. Georgia is also strategically significant, due to its proximity to the restive Caucasus region, and a source of instability in Chechnya, a cause of permanent concern in Russian strategic circles. [469] Russia also historically considered itself to be the net security provider of the region, and Georgia, alongside Ukraine, is considered in the Russian post-Soviet traditional sphere of influence, and a redline that Moscow does not want NATO to cross. [470]

Georgia is selected as a case study for the purpose of this thesis, for two reasons. First, like Ukraine, Georgia is a nation state with which Russia engaged in a conflict recently. And it is not an alliance like NATO, and therefore, strengthens the evidence of Russian behaviour per balance of threat theory. Simply put, if Russia genuinely balances against threat, the Russian reaction would be similar, with regard to Georgia, as with Ukraine and NATO; Russia would display balancing behaviour if the threat increases, regardless of Georgia's actual size, or capability. Alternatively, Russia would return to status quo, once it perceives any threat is reduced, or neutralised. The addition of Georgia as a case study, makes the theory testing for the purpose of this thesis, more robust, and gives a strong Euro-centric background to the overall study, which can be further tested, or replicated in future research, should a similar situation arise in Europe. Given that Europe (including EU/NATO) is arguably facing a renewed Russian factor in its strategic calculations, this would provide some policy relevance as well.

Second, Georgia is important for theoretical testing for the purpose of this thesis, because 2008 Russo-Georgian war was the first instance where Russian troops went to combat in a full-scale war in the European theatre, crossing the threshold of suboptimal and covert conflict, to open, declared, full-spectrum warfare. It was the first time Moscow threatened, at least rhetorically,

[469] "Resolving conflicts in the Caucasus', *Strategic Comments*, 3/7: 1-2; Nichol, J. 'Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments', Congressional Research Service, 2010.

[470] Mearsheimer, J. (2014) 'Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin' *Foreign Affairs* 93.

to occupy the capital city of another sovereign state, and for the first time, crossed over from the controversial breakaway provinces to undisputed Georgian mainland. It was also, the only conflict, in Europe, where Russia was a party, and it had a fixed beginning and end date and a declared ceasefire. It broke the unwritten post-cold war norm of European politics, where Russia was expected to be intensely hostile at times, but never powerful enough to actually react militarily, at least within the European continent. While the conflict by covert Russian troops in Ukraine continues to be more militarily intense, Georgia preceded it, and along with the Munich Security conference speech by Vladimir Putin in 2007 marked the end of the ambiguity about Russia as a problematic but relatively balanced power, to an adversarial power and changed the strategic scenario of Europe.

The case study of Georgia therefore serves an additional purpose. It not only corroborates the hypothesis of Russian balancing against increased threat established in the previous chapter, it also bolsters the claim that Russia is a status-quo power. That, is the purpose of this chapter, not just supporting the previous chapter on Ukraine about Russian overall balancing action, but also illuminating a theoretical question. This chapter works as a section complementing the previous two chapters, and explores Russian expansionism, or lack thereof, and attempts to debate on whether Russia acts according to the dictates of offensive realism and power maximising. The Georgian war of 2008, compared to more balancing actions against NATO, and covert war with Ukraine, with a fixed start and end date, and return to relative strategic status quo, provides a rebuttal to the argument that Russia is simply an expansionist power.

Structurally similar to the previous chapter, this chapter also explores two sequence of events. But given the historical nature, the design of this chapter's narrative is slightly different than the previous one. First, as per general hypothesis, Russia should not perceive any threat from Georgia, and would be satisfied with the status quo of the post-Cold war role of the net security provider of the region. That would change and Russia would react militarily, if according to balance of threat theory, Russia perceives a sudden change of strategic reality, including Georgia shifting towards a rival alliance which is encroaching upon traditional Russian sphere, or increasing Georgian belligerence, almost all of which would result in Russian strategic loss. Any such manoeuvre from Tbilisi would be interpreted by Moscow as a build-up of offensive capability, or offensive intention on Georgia's part, which would alter the security and strategic scenario. Direct Russian actions to offset that would be visible, and a return to status quo would be only visible if Russia is confident that Georgia poses no further threat to Russian strategic interests anymore. Russia would therefore actively engage in conflict to offset Georgian

overtures towards NATO and EU, or any sudden systemic change in the order or alignments of the region.

Second, if Russia is a power maximiser, it would act in a way consistent with expansionism. If Russia is not a power maximiser, it would be content as long as its security and strategic interests of the region, and the balance of power remains broadly in Moscow's favour. In the former case, Russian military operations would be contingent to other occupation forces, and follow or attempt to follow through a process of forcible regime change. In the latter case, Russian operations would cease after a time, and show a narrower strategic approach and would be limited in nature. If Russia is a security maximiser and defensive realist power, the aims of Russian actions would be limited. If not, Russia would act as a power maximiser and offensive realist power.

In this chapter, a brief history of Russo-Georgian relations is discussed followed by a brief discussion about Russian strategic interests in Georgia. That leads to the next part of the chapter, where the causes of the build-up to the war are discussed. Evidence of Russian perceptions of Georgian intention and offensive capability build-up, as well as the change in the geostrategic scenario which led to the war of 2008 is discussed with evidence to show what altered the Russian reaction, and strategic restraint and led the two countries to war. The final part of the chapter illustrates why Russia did not act as an expansionist power and why Russian reactions were contingent to security maximizing role.

Historical backdrop of the current conflict

The conflict between Moscow and Tbilisi traces its roots back to April 1989, when Soviet tanks put down demonstrations, leading to Georgia being the first Soviet republic to secede. [471] In the following sporadic conflict between Georgian central government and the South Ossetian autonomous oblast, the Georgians continuously claimed that South Ossetia was receiving financial, material and military support from North Ossetia, which was part of the Russian Federation. In June, 1992, for example, the Russian Supreme Soviet warned of intervention, and annexation of South Ossetia, to stop Georgian attacks on Ossetian civilians. Russia mediated Sochi Agreement in 1992, established a frozen conflict, with Joint Control

[471] Asmus, R. D. (ed.) (2006) *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea* Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund.

Commission and combined patrols of Russian, Ossetian and Georgian forces. Georgia allowed Russia to keep four military bases in the region, as well as allowed the use of Georgian airspace for Russian air force during the first Chechen war. [472]

Tskhinvali was controlled by the Ossetian separatists with no Georgian writ, and Georgia never viewed Russian peacekeepers as impartial. [473] Throughout the 1990s, Georgian authorities were ambivalent towards the breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, oscillating between promise of a peaceful negotiated settlement and autonomy, and military threats, whenever the overtures were rejected. [474] While there were no direct and official military action from either side, proxy forces often exchanged fires, most notably in 1998, and 2001.[475] In 1998, guerrilla groups supported by the Georgian government attacked Abkhazian positions, and in 2001 a proxy war was led by the Chechen rebels under Ruslan Gelayev, under tacit support of the Georgian government. None of the proxy conflicts featured any active participation of Georgian or Russian forces. Throughout the 1990s, Moscow was relatively powerless to change the status quo on the ground, as well as occupied with its own conflicts, most notably in Chechnya. [476]

Russian strategic interests in Georgia

Why is Georgia, considered so important to Russia, and why was Russia willing to go to war, in Georgia and not some other countries? The discussion is incomplete without an understanding of the strategic importance of Georgia to Russia. Russian interest in Georgia was strategic as well as political. Strategically, Russia sought to maintain military facilities as well as keep Georgia a part of the CIS, to continue a Russian post-soviet sphere of

[472] Allison, R. (2008) op cit.

[473] Fall, B. (2006, July) 'Conflict in the South Caucasus', *Asian Affairs* 37/2.

[474] Indans, I. 2007. 'Relations of Georgia and Russia: Developments and Future Prospects'. *Baltic Security & Defence Review*, 9: 131–49.

[475] Kakachia, K. K. (2010, Summer) 'Between Russian Assertiveness and Insecurity: Georgia's Political Challenges and Prospect after the Conflict', *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 7/26 (Summer 2010), p. 87-104; Nodia, G. 'Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia', Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper, Winter 1997-1998.

[476] Fall, B. (2006, July) 'Conflict in the South Caucasus', *Asian Affairs* 37/2.

influence.[477] The Russian government considered Georgia to be a bulwark of stability against periodic instability in Transcaucasus. [478] Instability and the Chechen uprising have influenced the Russian decision-making process, as successive Russian governments have consistently argued that Russia needs a "friendly" Georgia.[479] However, a section of the Russian military was always willing to dismember Georgia until 1993. With Georgian overtures towards Russia a period of stability ensued, with Russia establishing bases in Batumi, Alkhalkalai and Gidauta, with airborne and infantry troops presenting a lever of political influence over Georgian foreign policy, in exchange for Russia's implicit support to Georgian government as a net security provider in the region in the face of an Abkhazian separatism and other instability. The Russian government at this stage, and much through the 1990s were opposed to any separatism in the region, fearful that it might bolster separatist movement within Russia. [480]

The Russian immediate foreign policy was focused on localizing conflicts, and isolating unstable elements preventing them from spill over and affect Russia's ongoing conflict, and second, preventing a power vacuum in the region. [481] Russian parliamentary statements highlighted this line, stating that the immediate priority of Russia is "to stop the bloodshed in Abkhazia, not to allow the spirit of aggression and war to spread to the North Caucasus." [482] Chechnya in particular was a stimulus behind Russian strategic thinking, as the

[477] See, Pallin, C. V. & Westerlund, F. (2009) 'Russia's war in Georgia: lessons and consequences, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20/2: 400-424; Bouchet, N. (2016) 'Russia's "Militarization" of Colour Revolutions, *Policy Perspectives*, 4/2: 1-4; 'The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars', *Central Asian Survey*, 28/2: 155–170; Asmus, R. D (ed.) (2006) *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea* Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund.

[478] Radzkhovsky, L. (2004) 'The Caucasian Knot: Georgiphobia' *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 4.

[479] Indans, I. (2007) 'Relations of Georgia and Russia: Developments and Future Prospects'. *Baltic Security & Defence Review*, 9: 131–49.

[480] Lynch, D. (2000) *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: the Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan* Basingstoke: Macmillan, pg. 84 - 131.

[481] 'Russian Policy in the Sphere of National Security: Internal Threats to Stability and Order,' May 1995, and Colonel-General Anatoly Kulikov's report to the conference on 'Non-Traditional Operations with the Use of Armed Force', held at the Centre for Political and International Studies (Moscow), May 1995.

[482] Report on Duma hearings for details on 14th Army equipment, V. Ermolin, Krasnaya Zvezda, 25 May 1995, p. 3. According to the OSCE, 214 Notes and References to Chapter 5 13RPS-NOTES(189-236) 7/9/99 8:26 AM Page 214 there are 'enough weapons in the TransDniestr region to equip a 150 000 to 200 000 strong army', cited in J. Chin, (1996), p. 113, cited in Lynch, D. p. 133.

speaker of the Council of Federation Vladimir Shumeiko declared that the Russian position on Abkhazia is changing, and Russia is unlikely to accept an Abkhaz independence, as that might lead to other forms of separatism. [483]

While superficially, the Russian foreign policy establishment and the military had operational differences, the overall strategic and political objectives were remarkably similar. For example, the MFA was focused on political fait accompli, by placing Russian troops and "peacekeepers" in Georgia as a means of leveraging Russian interests, while the Russian defence ministry was focused on defining the strategic interests first and rejected any deployment without clear coordination. But both, rejected a creation of a separate independent Abkhazia, facing Russia's own separatism, as well as viewed the Georgian situation to secure Russian territorial interests. [484] For example, in 1993, General Pavel Grachev, the Russian Defence Minister, stated "I will only say that this is a strategically important area for the Russian army. We have certain strategic interests here and must take every measure to ensure that our troops remain: otherwise, we will lose the Black Sea." [485]

Accordingly, Russia and Georgia signed CIS initial documents, economic charter, and Collective Security Treaty, aimed at institutionalizing Georgia's part in a Russia dominated security balance in the region.[486] Part of that included Russian control of the port of Poti, and Bombara airfield, as well as three military airbases, "peacekeeping battalions" drawn from mostly Russian troops already inside Georgia, as well as talks between Russia and Georgia on developing common air defence systems. [487] Shevardnadze faced with an insurgency, agreed to lease military bases and ports to Russia, and were in turn guaranteed safety by Russia. Russian Black Sea Fleet marines retook Poti, and supported Georgian troops in countering the

[483] Lynch, D. (2000) *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: the Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan* Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 142.

[484] Knight, A. (1996) op cit. p. 146.

[485] Itar-Tass, 30 April 1995, SU/2292, G/6. At a Security Council meeting on 13 July 1994, Grachev argued that 'a state cannot have two armies' calling for MoD control of the Border Troops, cited in Dov Lynch.

[486] Itar-Tass, 26 July 1993, SU/1753, C3/1

[487] Dov Lynch cites presidential decree on 'The Strategic Course of Russia towards the Member States of the CIS', on 14 September 1995, Diplomatichesky Vestnik, October 1995, pg. 3–6; Mark Webber (1997) CIS *Integration Trends: Russia and the Former Soviet South* London: Former Soviet South Project, Royal Institute of International Affairs.

insurgency, as the Russian government noted that a united Georgia is in Russian interest, as disintegrated Georgia would instigate copycat insurgencies. [488]

Russian force were not peacekeepers in the classical sense of the term, and their positioning was purely for geopolitical purposes.[489] There were little coordination between Russian forces and United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, and the lack of any UN oversight on the Russian forces was accepted as a part of the process, by both the UN Envoy Eduard Brunner, who stated that Russia wouldn't permit any control or interference over troops, as well as from the Russian side, with Colonel-General Kondratyev echoing a similar sentiment, declaring Russian troops to be free and Russian force presence being an agreement and CIS operation. [490]

Since Vladimir Putin became president, in 2000, a change of strategy, and the restoration of Russia's power were evident in the region. [491] As discussed in previous chapters, the Russian economy improved around the same time, powered by oil and gas prices, as did rapid Russian military rearmament. In a similar fashion to Ukraine, and broadly Europe, Russian oil and gas were used as weapons of coercion in Georgia as well, as a sign of a new Russian assertiveness. Gazprom, Russian gas monopoly, doubled the price for Georgia from $110 a thousand cubic meters, to $230, the highest for any former Soviet Republics, as a response to the Rose revolution, while banning Georgian mineral water and wine. Georgians perceived these acts as political. But overall, tensions between Moscow and Tbilisi were minimal from 1992 to 2004. [492]

Rose Revolution and Russian reaction

In November 2003, Mikhail Saakashvili stormed the Parliament with his followers, and a subsequent peaceful revolution brought down the post-Soviet era leadership of President Eduard Shevardnadze. The revolution followed generic unrest in the region and was quickly

[488] Lynch, D. Russia's Strategic Partnership with Europe, 1 Jun 2004, *Washington Quarterly*. 27, 2.

[489] Allison, R. 'Peacekeeping in the Soviet Successor States', *Chaillot Papers* (Institute for Security Studies of WEU, 1994).

[490] Davis, M. T. Maj. (1993) 'Russia's Peacemaking Operations: An Issue of National Security?' SHAPE: Central and Eastern European Defence Studies; Dov Lynch, 141.

[491] Bondareva, Y. 'Georgia: forward line in the Greater Middle East," *Russian Analytica* (September 2004).

[492] Collins G (2017) 'Russia's Use of the "Energy Weapon" in Europe. Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, Houston, Issue brief; also, Bondareva, Y. 'Georgia: forward line in the Greater Middle East', *Russian Analytica* (September 2004).

followed by the Orange revolution in Ukraine discussed in the previous chapter. Denounced by Moscow, worried about the changing balance of the region, this was a part of a few movements led by young Euro-oriented liberal leaders who were opposed to status-quo. The shifts after the Rose revolution and the lead up to the war presents evidence to explore the first puzzle. The change in the Georgian behaviour led Russia to believe that the threat to its strategic stability is increasing, with increased Georgian offensive capability, and offensive intention. That in turn led Russia to a balancing behaviour, and eventually, with Georgian intervention in the breakaway provinces, to war. After the short war, with the strategic stability restored, and the perceived threat from Georgia neutralised, Russia returned to its previous status quo posture.

The major geopolitical shifts in the region, however, were already in motion, and started in 1997, when Georgian government concluded to construct oil pipelines, as a measure of strategic independence, which completed in 1998 provided an alternative to Russian proposals of transporting oil via Russia. [493] Georgian discussions with Ukraine and Azerbaijan on "strategic partnerships" also blunted Russian policy towards CIS states. [494] Simultaneously, Georgian conciliatory policies, towards the EU and NATO were anathema to the Russian political and military elite. [495] EU countries were heavily dependent on Russian energy, and energy as a part of negotiating strategy was an essential component of the Russian external security policy.

Georgian and Russian relations started to fray around the same time a new government was established in Georgia after the Rose revolution, and Georgia's rebuffing of Russian desires to privatise and monopolise oil transport via Gazprom. [496] As a counter measure, a number of states and organisations started to make efforts to end Russia's monopoly, on the transport of

[493] Vicken C. (2009, June) 'The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars', *Central Asian Survey*, 28/2; and Aron, L. (2008, November) 'The Georgia Watershed', *Russian Outlook* Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute.

[494] Krastev, N. "GUAM Brings Frozen Conflicts To World Stage", *RFE/RL*, 2006; For history, of Ukraine, Georgia cooperation against CIS, see, Ciobanu, C. (2007) 'Political Economy of "Frozen Conflicts" in ex-Soviet States', paper submitted to Virginia Social Science Association.

[495] Indans, I. (2007) 'Relations of Georgia and Russia: Developments and Future Prospects' *Baltic Security & Defence Review*, 9: 131–49.

[496] Asmus, R. D. (ed.) (2006) *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea* Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund.

energy supplies in the region, by creating alternative pipelines and routes, which included the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines between Georgia and Turkey, a NATO member, as well as the Nabucco gas pipeline between the EU, Georgia and Turkey. [497] This development required a change in the Russian security posture, as stability in the Caucasus was a vital requirement, for uninterrupted transport of Caspian oil and gas and the Caspian Sea region contains around 4-6 percent of the world oil and gas reserves. The Russian armed forces were the net security provider in the region, and that includes the task of protecting the energy sources and offshore platforms, as well as CIS initiated anti-terror efforts. With the development of the new pipelines, and with the involvement of Turkey and the EU, Russian strategic monopoly was threatened, as it would have been NATO's duty according to new arrangement to secure the BTC pipeline, from Turkey. Simultaneously, Georgian interest in the United States training Georgian troops tasked with the protection of pipelines, changed the dynamic of the region. [498]

Russian balancing action

The Russian reaction to these changes corroborates and follows the theory in two ways as discussed below. First, with the increase of Georgian belligerence, it was interpreted in Russia as an increase in offensive intention. Second, Georgian actions, and military and infrastructure build-up, as well as Georgian overt moves to shift away from Moscow towards the EU and NATO was interpreted in Russia as an immediate increase in aggressive power and the source of threat moving closer to the Russian strategic interests. [499]

Tensions started to increase with the election of President Saakashvili in 2004, who promptly committed his country to NATO and the EU, as well as the US led war in Iraq and Afghanistan, while proclaiming publicly, that his government was committed to restore central writ on Georgia's "lost territories".[500] These rapid changes happened, similar to the ones that happened

[497] Indans, I. (2007) 'Relations of Georgia and Russia: Developments and Future Prospects' *Baltic Security & Defence Review*, 9: 131–49.

[498] Kuimova, A. and Wezeman, S. T., 'Georgia and Black Sea security', SIPRI 2018.

[499] For an overview, see, Nikitina, Y. (2014) 'The "Color Revolutions" and "Arab Spring" in Russian Official Discourse' *Connections* 14/1: 87-104.

[500] Corso, M. (2007) 'Military base construction fuels Georgian –South Ossetian tensions' *Eurasianet*, 27 March; 'President of Georgia visits NATO', Apr 2004 https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/04-april/e0407a.htm

in Ukraine, discussed in details in the previous chapter, around the same time when Moscow's tensions with the US and the European Union started to rise, over the Iraq war and democracy promotion, as well as the colour revolutions in the Russian "sphere of influence", an outcome that was watched with alarm, from Moscow. [501] Georgia's Rose Revolution ushered in a new government, which was promptly embraced by the US, and the EU. [502] In turn, the new Saakashvili government, started a slow orientation towards the Euro-Atlantic security structure, including a desire to be a member of both the European Union and NATO, and also simultaneously started to distance itself from Moscow centric economic organisations. Georgia was also hailed by both the EU and the US, as a beacon of democracy compared to Russia which was considered corrupt. [503] The 2006 Freedom House report for example, ranked Georgia above Russia in seven of eight indicators of political rights and civil liberties. [504] The Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index also ranked Georgia as transparent compared to Russia. [505]

The Georgian government, under Saakashvili was also comparatively more assertive than the revolutionary regime in Ukraine. In 2006, Tbilisi arrested four Russian military intelligence officers in Georgia for espionage, prompting Russia to close all air, sea and land transport links to Georgia and deploy armoured forces in the border of South Ossetia.[506] Saakashvili was clear about his dual attempt of changing the status quo and balance of power that existed in the region since the Georgian secession from the Soviet Union, one by moving his propelling his country towards the EU and NATO, and two by building strategic infrastructure, with an aim to eventually retake control of the breakaway rebel provinces.

[501] Finkel, E. (2012) 'Russia and the colour revolutions' *Democratization* 19/1.

[502] Bouchet, N (2016) 'Russia's "Militarization" of Colour Revolutions, *Policy Perspectives*, 4/2: 1-4.

[503] Delcour, L. & Wolczuk, K. (2015) 'Spoiler or facilitator of democratization?: Russia's role in Georgia and Ukraine', *Democratization,* 22/3: 459-478.

[504] Fortin, J. (2010) 'A Tool to Evaluate State Capacity in Post-communist Countries, 1989–2006' *European Journal of Political Research* 49/5: 654–686.

[505] 'Freedom in the World Report. Methodology Section', Freedom House Website, 2013; Transparency International Corruption Index – Country Profile Georgia https://www.transparency.org/country/GEO

[506] 'Putin fury at Georgia "terrorism"' The BBC News, October 1, 2006; Russia Imposes Sanctions on Georgia, audio stream of report by BBC reporter Matthew Collin at National Public Radio.

Or in theoretical terms, Saakashvili proceeded on a course of "internal balancing". For example, while opening a highway, he commented, "This is a historic day because for the first time in Georgia, in our history, a modern, high-quality, world-standard motorway is being built that will link Tbilisi and Tskhinvali in 2008 ... During the first term of our presidency, my presidency, I am planning to complete Tbilisi-Tskhinvali highway and during the second term finally to complete the Tbilisi-Sukhumi motorway. So, now I declare the construction of the Tbilisi-Tskhinvali-Sukhumi motorway open. Today is 15 March 2006. In 2008, we will travel to Tskhinvali by this road, and in 2010, or at the beginning of 2011 at the latest, this road will take us to Sukhumi…"; rhetoric that was duly noted in Moscow.[507]

As discussed previously in the Ukraine chapter, around the same time Ukraine was undergoing rapid changes, the Rose revolution in Georgia also was a transformation which changed the Russian strategic dynamic. The revolutionary changes in Georgia were a dual project which attempted to modernize Georgia, and orient it towards the EU and NATO security architecture, as well as bring about forces territorial reunification. In President Saakashvili's own words in 2006, it was a historic opportunity to join Tbilisi with Tskhinvalli and Sukhumi, with the construction of modern highways. [508] While Saakashvili was noted for his bombastic personality, his pronouncements added to the confusion. [509]

Alongside, Saakashvili rapidly transformed the Georgian military, established two modern brigade level bases in Senaki, near Abkhazia, and Gori, near South Ossetia. Georgian military budget dramatically rose from USD 50 million in 2003, to USD 600 million in 2007, and almost USD 1 billion in 2008. [510] This increase, from US$50 Million during the Rose revolution, to US$1 Billion by 2008, was with official justification being that the defence budget increase is

[507] Cheterian, V. 'The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars', *Central Asian Survey*, 28/2.

[508] Asmus, R. D. (ed.) (2006) *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea* Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund.

[509] Cheterian, V. Ibid.

[510] Basilaia, E. (2007) 'Defence Ministry likely to receive one quarter of state budget'(May 3) *The Messenger*; Cheterian, V. (2008) *War and peace in the Caucasus, Russia's troubled frontier* New York: Hurst/ Columbia University Press.

needed to upgrade Georgian military to NATO standards. [511] US training programs were undertaken and Israeli weaponry, usually used for Anti-Access/Area Denial, including drones, anti-air systems, and military helicopters were procured for that purpose. [512] The Georgian government was frank about the increase of the defence budget, and the official explanation was to upgrade Georgian military to NATO standard, as a pathway to future intended membership with the Western alliance. [513]

Georgian procurement of large scale weapons, including battle tanks, artillery, Israeli drones and anti-air systems, American military helicopters, as well as Georgian collaboration with the US in training programs, resulted in a massive security dilemma, with the addition of offensive capability in Georgian forces changing the dynamic of the region.[514] The Georgian policy towards the breakaway provinces changed to a more assertive and belligerent posturing, with sporadic incursions by Georgian forces into breakaway territories. [515] Geopolitical changes started taking place as well, in May 2004, right after Saakashvili took power, there was massive military pressure and build up, on Abkhazian border, which lasted till July when sever clashes between Georgian and South Ossetian forces took place with dozens of casualties. For example, in May 2004, a few months after the Rose revolution, Georgian troops forced a rebel leader to leave Adjara, an autonomous province. [516] Meanwhile Saakashvili administration pushed for alternative governments, and in 2006, Georgian troops raided Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia to remove a local rebel. The Georgian government also pushed for an 'alternative government' in South Ossetia under Dmitri Sanakoev, in an open attempt to stir up the dormant province and

[511] Basilaia, E. (2007) Ibid. Also Birch, J. (1999) 'Ossetiya – land of uncertain frontiers and manipulative elites' *Central Asian Survey*, 18/4: 501–534; Cheterian, V. (2008) *War and peace in the Caucasus, Russia's Troubled Frontier*. New York: Hurst/ Columbia University Press.

[512] Corso, M. (2007) 'Military base construction fuels Georgian –South Ossetian tensions' *Eurasianet*, 27 March.

[513] Cheterian, V., 2007. Georgia's arms race. *Open Democracy*, 4 July

[514] 'Georgia-Russia crisis, implications and US response', Senate Armed Services Committee. Testimony of Eric S. Edelman, 10 September 2008. Also, see, Kucera, J. (2011, May) 'Georgia's Dangerous Quest for American Weapons', *The Atlantic*; Schachtman, N. 'How Israel Trained and Equipped Georgia's Army', Aug 2008, *WIRED*.

[515] Samokhvalov, V. (2005, Autumn) 'Colored revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia: Repercussions for the system of international relations in the Black Sea region' *Perceptions*, pg. 99-111.

[516] Peuch, J.-C. (2004) 'Georgia: Having Secured Adjara, Tbilisi Turns To Abkhazia With An Eye On Russia', *RFE/RL*

push toward reunification, against the Moscow-sponsored government of Eduard Kokoity.[517] In 2006, Georgian troops entered the Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia, during a joint military-police operation to remove a rebel leader, and a pro-Georgian Abkhazian government in exile was established there.[518] Georgia also arrested four Russian army officers on spying charges. These were clear signals from Georgia that the intention was to not just replace rebels, but to unite Georgia as well as work towards integration with the EU and NATO. [519] A number of modern military bases were established during this period, especially two strategic ones, in Senaki, a chokepoint near Abkhazia and in Gori, near South Ossetia, with each brigade having capacity of 3000 soldiers. [520]

Moscow's reactions reflected the changed calculus.[521] Earlier in 2006, in face of renewed Georgian assertiveness, Russian President Putin warned there could be a "bloodbath" in its breakaway regions, as the issue is not limited between Russian peacekeepers already present and Georgia, but that it was an issue which included South Ossetia and Abkhazia. He added "To our regret and fear, it is heading for a bloodbath. Georgia wants to resolve the disputes with military action." Arrest of Russian officers prompted Putin to comment that the "initiative to worsen relations originated not from Russia." [522] Former defence minister Sergey Ivanov accused NATO of propping up Georgia and warned against Georgian inadequate actions against Russian personnel.[523] Russia also recalled ambassador from Georgia. [524] Chairman of the State Duma committee on the CIS, Andrei Kokoshin accused NATO of pulling Georgia to

[517] 'Georgia's South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly', Crisis Group Europe Report N°183, 7 June 2007; Coppieters, B. (2007) 'The EU and Georgia: Time Perspectives in Conflict Resolution', EUISS Occasional Paper No. 70, December, EUISS, Paris.

[518] "Georgia Vows To Crush Kodori Gorge Militia" - 26 Jul 2006 *RFE/RL* and "Georgia: Extent Of 'Victory' In Kodori Offensive Unclear", August 1, 2006 *RFE/RL*

[519] 'Georgia arrests Russian officers for spying and surrounds army HQ', (28 September, 2006) *The Guardian;* and 'Georgia orders Russia 'spies' held (September 29, 2006), *CNN*.

[520] Coppieters, B. (2007) 'The EU and Georgia: Time Perspectives in Conflict Resolution', EUISS Occasional Paper No. 70, December, EUISS, Paris; Cheterian, V. (2009, June) 'The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars', *Central Asian Survey,* 28/2.

[521] Allison, R (2008) op cit..

[522] 'Putin warns Georgia of "bloodbath"' (October 22 2006) AFP.

[523] NATO, EU Urge Calm In Russia-Georgia Row, September 29, 2006 RFE/RL; Russia's Nato arms claim turns up heat in Georgia dispute, *Financial Times,* 29 Sep 2006.

[524] Russia recalls ambassador from Georgia, *The Guardian* 28 September 2006.

its orbit as a means of pushing Russia out of its sphere of influence. In his statements to the State Duma, Kokoshin mentioned that Russia has "more than enough political, economic, and socio-cultural reasons to be negative about admission of these countries to NATO. Our military-strategic concerns are also growing."[525] Russia started to view the Rose revolution as a coup orchestrated by the EU and NATO, with the single strategic aim of encouraging Georgia to be belligerent towards Moscow, and destabilise Russia's strategic sphere. [526]

Evidence therefore suggests that Georgia's Rose Revolution and the rapid westward shift fuelled a political and strategic counter reaction from Russia. Especially, declared Georgian desire and actions and the orientation towards embracing Euro-Atlantic security as well as economic structures, and desire to substitute Russia's troops as the net security provider of the region, were perceived as an emerging and sudden threat, and the pace of development blindsided the Russian strategic community. [527] Economic steps were also taken from Moscow to delegitimise the new Georgian government. In 2006, imports of Georgian wine and mineral waters, the two leading exports to Russia was banned, on the ground that they failed Russian health standards.[528] Same year in October, as a retaliation of the arrest of four Russian officers in charge of spying, the Russian government introduced broader sanctions, suspended all transport and postal service links, and re-launched visa checks, and background information gathering of ethnic Georgians, as well as roundup and deportation of any ethnic Georgians

[525] Cheterian, V. (2009, June) 'The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars', *Central Asian Survey*, 28/2.

[526] "Ivanov: Georgia May Use Force Against S.Ossetia, Abkhazia". 26/10/2006 *Civil.ge archives*. Also, 'Russia calls NATO plans "colossal" shift', (7 Jun 2006) *The New York Times*. For a detailed study on Russian red lines about Georgia and Ukraine, see, Narochnitskaya, N. 'Caucasian Wars as an Instrument of Geopolitics', *Russian Analytica* (September 2004).

[527] Asmus, R. (2010) op cit.; and Cornell, S. E. & Starr, S. F. (2008) op cit.

[528] 'A Russian "Wine Blockade" Against Georgia and Moldova' (6 April 2006) *The New York Times*; 'First wine, now Russia bans Georgia's water" (5 May 2006) *The Guardian*.

from a number of Russian cities. [529] As with Ukraine after the Orange revolution, Gazprom doubled the price of gas export to Georgia in November 2006. [530]

Political pressure from Moscow included Russian governments increasingly overtly supporting unrecognised separatist regimes in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[531] By 2006, the Russian state duma expressed its support for the independence aspirations of the breakaway provinces, under Russian peacekeepers.[532] In February 2007, in one of the strongest threats, Russia's ambassador in Tbilisi, Vyacheslav Kovalenko, publicly warned Georgia to adopt a status of political and military neutrality, which was in effect a threat implying that Georgia stands to lose political control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia unless it desisted from its efforts to join NATO.[533] Simultaneously, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov declared the prospect of Ukraine and Georgia joining NATO to be "unacceptable" to Moscow, and in a speech in March that year to the Russian Duma, Lavrov for the first time referred to Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria as "republics".[534] Soon after, Russian official documents started referring to the leaders of the provinces as Presidents. [535] The evidence of Russian military preparedness is tricky and provides conflicting narratives. By all accounts, Russian military was prepared for a war, but was not anticipating a Georgian attack. For example, Russian 58th Army movement towards Georgian border, and in South Ossetia demonstrates a level of readiness that could be construed as an eventual preparation for a full-scale war, by the Russian leadership. In May 2008, Russian troops were deployed to repair rail networks that

[529] Newnham, R. E. (2015, July) 'Georgia on my mind? Russian sanctions and the end of the "Rose Revolution"' *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 6/2; Chivers, C. J. (2006) 'Georgia Reopens Old Gas Line to Ease Post-Blast Shortage' (24 January, 2006) *The New York Times*.

[530] Yenikeyeff, S. M. (2008b) 'The Georgia-Russia Standoff and the Future of Caspian and Central Asian Energy Supplies', Oxford Institute for Energy Studies; 'Russia Blamed for "Gas Sabotage"' BBC News, January 22, 2006

[531] Asmus, R. (2010) op cit.

[532] O'Loughlin, J., Kolossov, V. & Toal, G. (2011) 'Inside Abkhazia: Survey of Attitudes in a DeFacto State', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 27/1: 1-36.

[533] Tsygankov, A. P. & Tarver-Wahlquist, M. (2009, October) 'Duelling Honors: Power, Identity and the Russia–Georgia Divide' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5/4: 307-326.

[534] 'Russia army vows steps if Georgia and Ukraine join NATO' (11 Apr 2008), Reuters; and 'Georgia Is Warned by Russia Against Plans to Join NATO', (7 Jun 2008) *The New York Times*.

[535] Cheterian, V. (2009, June) 'The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars', *Central Asian Survey*, 28/2.

would be in future utilised for rapid logistics and troop transport.[536] In April 2008, Moscow deployed additional two thousand troops in Abkhazia as peacekeepers. Russia's North Caucasus Military district was in a state of full operational readiness and around 8000 troops were stationed there to conduct exercises between July and August.[537] There were also reports that Russia was transporting air defence components and rocket systems to Abkhazia all through spring.[538] Repeated Russian provocations were part of a coercive strategy, including sending three thousand Russian troops to Abkhazia, shooting down of a Georgian drone, and in a pointed signal, violation of Georgian airspace by Russian jets before the visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.[539] The most important signal, as well as potential war preparation was the Kavkaz-2008 military exercise, in July 2008 a month before the war, meant to prepare Russian forces to launch a quick intervention and assist Russian peacekeeping troops in South Ossetia, from a Georgian attack.[540] The exercises also came immediately after the joint US-Georgian war games 'Immediate Response – 2008'.[541]

Separatists in Ossetia and Abkhazia were also preparing themselves for an inevitable conflict with Georgia. [542] Russia also started to distribute Russian passports to a large population of South Ossetians, and a Russian citizen who was resident of Moscow, was elected the President of South Ossetia.[543] Moscow controlled all the security personnel in the South Ossetian

[536] 'Russia sends 300 troops to Abkhazia', (1 June 2008) *The New York Times*; 1 Jun 2008,; 2008 Georgia Russia Conflict Fast Facts – CNN

[537] Asmus, R. (2010) op cit.

[538] 'The Russian Military and the Georgia War', Strategic Studies Institute, Report, 7 Jun 2011; and Nichol, J. 'Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments', Congressional Research Service, 2010.

[539] Pallin, C. V. & Westerlund, F. (2009) 'Russia's war in Georgia: lessons and consequences', *Small Wars Insurgencies* 20/2, pg. 400-424; 'Georgia-Russia Tension Escalates Over Downed Drone', *New York Times,* 22 Apr 2008.

[540] 'Provocation, Deception, Entrapment: The Russo-Georgian Five-Day War', Report, March 2009, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.

[541] Toal, G. (2008) 'Russia's Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War over South Ossetia', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 49/6: 670-705; 'Analyzing the Russian Way of War', Modern War Institute - West Point, ACB assessment report, 20 March 2018

[542] Felgenhauer, P. (2007) 'Russia and Georgia still teetering on brink of war', *Eurasia Daily Monitor,* 4/184.

[543] "Kokoity Says South Ossetia Will Become Part Of Russia", September 2008, *RFE/RL*; Natoli, K. (2010) 'Weaponizing Nationality: An Analysis of Russia's Passport Policy in Georgia,' *Boston University International Law Journal* 28/22: 389–417.

administration which was seen from Georgia as a de-facto annexation by Russia. This spiral was accentuated by the direction by a Russian presidential decree in April 2008 which established direct official Russian relations with the South Ossetian and Abkhaz authorities.[544] In NATO Bucharest summit in 2008, North Atlantic Council while rejecting the membership action plans for Georgia and Ukraine, agreed that eventually, both "will become members of NATO" and stated that "therefore we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level." [545]

Situation deteriorated rapidly in August, as Georgian positions were targeted sporadically by Ossetian militias, leading to Georgia accusing Russia of being complicit in allowing Ossetian mercenaries and transport military hardware through the strategic Roki tunnel.[546] Russia, in turn accused Georgia of massive build-up of troops and armour, as a preparation for war. On 7th of August, Georgian troops started shelling Ossetian position, which led to open combat between Georgian forces and Russian peacekeepers.[547] It was beyond doubt, the first shots of this conflict were fired from the Georgian side, and led to a massive, and disproportionate retaliation from Russia, which resulted in Georgian defeat in a short punitive war. [548]

In sum, the combined Georgian actions, and a reaction from Moscow, corroborates the theory. The new Georgian government after the Rose revolution categorically started to move Tbilisi away from Moscow towards a more Western alliance and economic and security structure. Georgian military build-up, import of offensive weapons capability, training with Western, and especially American troops, and Saakashvili's rhetorical belligerence resulted in a rapid decline of strategic balance in the region. Georgian arrest of Russian spies, infrastructure build-up towards breakaway provinces, as well as sporadic acts of aggression resulted in Moscow's

---

[544] Asmus, R. (2010) op cit.; and Cornell, S. E., and Starr, S. F. (eds.) (2009) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia.* Armonk: M.E. Sharpe; and Indans, I. (2007) 'Relations of Georgia and Russia: Developments and Future Prospects'. *Baltic Security & Defence Review*, 9: 131–49.

[545] NATO - Official text: Bucharest Summit Declaration, Bucharest on 3 April 2008. 03 Apr. 2008 https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm

[546] Cheterian, V. (2009, June) 'The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars', *Central Asian Survey*, 28/ 2: 159–162.

[547] "Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia" report, Council of the European Union, September 2009.

[548] Walker, S. (2008) 'Georgia launches offensive in South Ossetia', (8 August) *The Independent*.

military build-up and preparation for an eventual conflict. When Georgian forces attacked the rebel provinces, which included Russian troops, Moscow reacted overwhelmingly to restore the balance.

After the invasion: Russia as a status-quo power

The second theoretical puzzle is whether Russia acted as an expansionist power, or a security maximiser. Current literature on the Georgian war is silent on this theoretical question. Evidence explored suggest that Russia was thoroughly unprepared for the eventual conflict, even though it had inclination that the situation might lead to conflict. Second, the Russian forces lacked the capability to occupy Georgia. Third, the Russian leadership chose to act as a status quo power, and took the advantage of withdrawing, once the perceived strategic threat was neutralised, and the strategic balance was restored.

While it is accepted that Georgia was the side that initiated the actual conflict, the counter narratives suggest that Russia forced Georgian hand, by continued provocations.[549] Miscalculation from the Georgian side about Western military assistance also resulted in further adventurism.[550] However, the Russian military preparedness, operational process, and endgame also sheds light on Russian strategic aims, which in turn answers some key theoretical questions. The Russian military preparedness, during the build-up to the war, as discussed above, indicated that there was a certain sense of impending conflict among the Russian military and foreign policy circles. Despite the preparedness the timing of the conflict took Russia by surprise. All evidence suggest that Russia was not actually ready for the conflict to start, when it did, and the suddenness of Georgian assault was unexpected in Moscow. Evidence also suggests that the Russian military never intended to occupy Georgia. [551]

[549] Allison, R. (2008) 'Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to 'coerce Georgia to peace' *International Affairs* 84/6: 1145–1171.

[550] 'Provocation, Deception, Entrapment: The Russo-Georgian Five Day War', Report, March 2009, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.

[551] For an overview of Russian performance, see, Cohen, A. & Hamilton R. E. (2011) op cit.; and also, Thomas T. L. (2009) 'The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises its Five-Day War in South Ossetia', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 22/1: 31-67.

On August 7th, 2008, after weeks of tensions, Georgian military launched an assault on the South Ossetian units. The Russian senior officers were simply unavailable at the time of the assault during the popular August vacation period, signifying a lack of anticipation, and indeed operational planning. The then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was attending the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, when the first shots were fired, and the Russian news reported that the defence minister Serdyukov was unavailable for comment for over ten hours after hostilities began, as he was vacationing on the Black Sea coast.[552] The senior officer corps were on leave, which were then subsequently cancelled and revoked. The retired head of the Defence ministry's Main Operations Directorate, had to be brought back under special intervention from the political leaders. [553]

The Russian military chain of command also experienced unforeseen anomalies, which were evident from Russian operations. While the 58th Army was prepositioned, the 102nd Army brigade and the armour corps, and artilleries, and systems which are needed for a ground invasion, were not available for over a day, which suggested lack of strategic forethought, or unpreparedness.[554] The unavailability of the senior political leadership suggests that there was a lack of intelligence about Georgia's offensive intentions. Likewise, it was not a case of strategic deception, as that would not entail the senior leadership rushing back to Moscow, including Vladimir Putin, who had to cut short his Beijing trip. There were also discrepancies in the Russian force posture which suggests a lack of coordination, as well as planning.

The argument that Russia was not prepared for an expansionist war, is bolstered by evidence. The Russian counter-attack included a mix of offensive and defensive assets, which indicates a confusion among the Russian military ranks regarding the purpose of the force. The offensive force included Russian Tu-22 Backfire bombers and Su-24s Fencer and Su-27 Flanker attack aircrafts, which were expected to be part of any invasion force and simultaneously conducted raids over Gori, Rustavi, and near the capital Tbilisi. [555] The lack of support systems, and the

[552] 'Vladimir Putin vows Russia will retaliate against Georgia', *Telegraph*, 8 August, 2008; and Ellison, B. J. (2011) 'Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War', *Demokratizatsiya*, pg. 343–366.

[553] Ellison, Brian J. (2011) Ibid.

[554] Chivers, C.J. & Barry, E. (2008) 'Georgia Claims on Russia War Called Into Question", (6 November) *The New York Times*.

[555] 'Russia Lost Seven Aircraft to Georgian Air Defense System', *Izvestiya.Ru*, September 12, 2008

heavy loss of Russian aircrafts as well as inability to operationalize air dominance was also visible. Bombing, and artillery fire especially with missile systems like SS-21 Tochka, which are primarily used as defensive weapons, was concentrated not just in military centres or as a strategy of invasion, but on areas close to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipelines, which were not related to Georgian forces, and were out of operational zones and indicated a punitive intention instead of establishing deterrence or continuing invasion. [556] There were no actions from the Russian Navy, which is unusual for an invading force or troop movements, other than the Black Sea Fleet hurriedly organised to blockade the coast of Poti and Sukhumi.[557] The Russian military strategy was primarily defensive and punitive, and included setting up buffer zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which were already under de facto a Russian control, rather than rapid thrusts into enemy territory. Crippling Russian bombing on Georgian command and control also indicated a punitive nature of the war. [558]

Simultaneously, there is extensive evidence of intelligence and coordination failure, suggesting a lack of planning. The Russian army units lacked basic kits, and the interoperability of radios between army and air force, unusual for an invading force.[559] Russian officers had to use the satellite phones of embedded journalists to report to headquarters. [560] The Russian forces were seen to use outdated Soviet maps, and bombing targets and air fields which were operationally dormant and out of use, instead of new important bases. [561] For example, the newly established military base at Gori, only suffered damages from ground troops, and no attack from the Russian air force. The massive clumsy Soviet style column formations, moving slowly, and relying of heft instead of speed, also showed lack of newer methods and strategies, and an army

[556] Nichol, J. 'Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implication for U.S. Interests," CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, August 13, 2008, p. 6.

[557] Ibid.; also see Shchedrov, O. & Golovnina, M. 'Russian navy arrives at Georgia sea border-media', Reuters, August 10, 2008.

[558] Ellison, B. J. (2011) 'Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War', *Demokratizatsiya*, pg. 343–366.

[559] Kofman, M. (2018) op cit.; Giles, K. (2016) *Russia's "New" Tools for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power* London: Royal Institute of International Affairs—Chatham House. P. 2.

[560] Karagiannis, E. (2014) 'The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared: Military Performance, Legitimacy and Goals' *Contemporary Security Policy* Volume 35/3.

[561] McDermott, R. N. (2009, Spring) 'Russia's Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgia War,' pg. 70.

completely ill prepared to face what it considered ostensibly a growing enemy, and facing enormous casualty rate.[562] While that maybe co-incidental, due to Russian slow-paced military reforms, it somewhat makes the existence of a plan doubtful.[563] There was a complete lack of senior officer leadership during the entirety of the conflict, which resulted in the Russian armour and tanks entering battle unprepared. It led to General Makarov argue that Russia had to hurriedly handpick "colonels and generals from all over Russia". [564] Likewise, Sergei Skokov the Chief of Staff during the First Chechen war, compared the unpreparedness of the Georgian war, saying, "[during the 'problem in the North Caucasus'] there was not a single command and control organization, formation or military unit that had been prepared and was ready that instant to begin to accomplish its missions… the same again occurred in Georgia."[565]

Discrepancy with rhetoric: Evidence from operations

Moscow consistently maintained that the Georgian war was defensive and retaliatory, and in response to Georgia's "treacherous and massive attack" on the rebel provinces, and on the locally deployed Russian peacekeeping contingent, and therefore is an act of war forced upon Russia which it did not desire. [566] Tbilisi maintained that the Georgian government's hand was forced by a Russian troop build-up and Georgia did not anticipate such massive Russian military counterattack, and miscalculated the Russian resolve. But that claim is debatable, as Georgia was repeatedly warned by the United States to not provoke Russia into a war.[567] Russian counter-argument was that the "illegal use of force by Georgia" against

[562] Kofman, M. (2018, 4 September) 'Russian Performance in the Russo-Georgian War Revisited', *War on the Rocks*.

[563] Athena Bryce-Rogers, "Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 21, no. 3 (July 2013): 339–68.

[564] Ibid.

[565] Ellison, Brian J. (2011) 'Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War,' *Demokratizatsiya*, Elliott School of International Affairs, pg. 343–366; Bryce-Rogers, A. (2013) 'Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War,' *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 21/3: 339–68

[566] Allison, R. (2008) 'Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to "coerce Georgia to peace" *International Affairs* 84/6: 1145–1171

[567] Asmus, R. A (2010) *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West* New York: Palgrave and Macmillan.

Russian troops violated international norms and was an act of war against the Russian Federation, and justified self-defence under international law.[568] The justification of the war from the Russian side, was two-fold. Initially, the Russian President Medvedev stated that Russia has a right of self-defence against Georgia's attacks on Russian troops, which were "gross violations, of the mandates that the international community gave Russia in the peace process".[569] The 58th army was called a reinforcement to the Russian peacekeeping contingent. As the war went on, the peacekeeping argument also morphed, and Moscow declared that Russian operations are "peace coercion" operations, to neutralize enemy assaults.[570] Medvedev also asserted that 'nobody is questioning the principle of territorial integrity' in international law, but that 'the question is one of a specific situation in a specific country'.[571] Over time, the Russian narrative changed and mirrored western narrative of stopping "genocide" and took a humanitarian character. Russian leaders, including Putin and Lavrov termed the military operations as to prevent violations of international humanitarian laws, similar to the NATO rationale for intervening in the Balkans. Lavrov argued that Russian laws made it "unavoidable for Russia to exercise the responsibility to protect." [572] Lavrov stated, 'Russia will not allow the death of its compatriots to go unpunished … the life and dignity of our citizens, wherever they are, will be protected' a statement echoed by Russia's NATO envoy, 'the issue of using military force to protect our citizens is a matter of principle', albeit 'within the framework of the humanitarian aim of saving peoples'. [573] While recognising South Ossetia and Abkhazia,

[568] See, Putin's remarks: 'What did you want us to do? … when an aggressor comes into your territory, you need to punch him in the face—an aggressor needs to be punished'. Meeting with members of the Valdai Club, Sochi, as reported by Bridget Kendall, 11 Sept. 2008, *BBC*; 'we are seeing elements of a kind of genocide against the Ossetian people': meeting between Medvedev and Putin, 10 Aug. 2008, *Mid.RU*. See also Medvedev's interview with the BBC, 26 Aug. 2008, http://www.mid.ru, and comments by Mikhail Margelov, chairman of the Russian Federation Council's International Affairs Committee, 'Isolating Russia will not be possible'

[569] Dmitry Medvedev made a statement on the situation in South Ossetia August 8, 2008 en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/1043

[570] Lavrov in press conference, 12 Aug. 2008; and Medvedev in meeting with leaders of parliamentary factions of the State Duma, 11 Aug. 2008, cited in Allison. during the 63rd Session of the UN General Assembly, 27 Sept. 2008,

[571] Allison, R. (2008) 'Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to "coerce Georgia to peace"' *International Affairs* 84/6: 1145–1171.

[572] Ibid.

[573] Ibid.

the Russian top leadership maintained that 'every state has the duty to refrain from any forcible action which deprives peoples of their right to self-determination and freedom and independence."

But Russian actions did not reflect the bombastic rhetoric, and suggested that regime change or occupation of Georgia was not a plan, and that Russia was either satisfied by the objective of dividing Georgia, or deterred by the withering military losses. Even with the extreme lack of coordination, and lack of an integrated combat plan, the large Russian contingents eventually managed to overpower their rival forces. Russian tactic changed as the war went on, with the deployment of motor-rifle divisions and heavy armour and troops from beyond the North Caucasus Military District. The 76th Air Assault Division was brought from Leningrad Military District and was airlifted in a hurried fashion signifying that the exact timing of the intervention was not according to Moscow's choosing. There was no visible concentration of armoured and airborne forces prior to the commencement of hostilities. While Russia had forces ready for an eventual hostility in Abkhazia, a terrain of choice for Russian military command for a short punitive campaign, with the Georgian retaliation, Moscow had to spread the operational theatre of war, to South Ossetia. An important evidence consistent with the scenario was the mission conducted by Russian railroad troops during the June-July 2008 repair of strategic railway to Abkhazia, to move armour in case of a conflict. Similar actions were not evident in case of South Ossetia.

The start of the war saw Russian forces mirroring ancient Soviet strategies of massing and overwhelming numbers, and movement in one column which faced overwhelming casualties for a great power in a battle with a relative smaller power. [574] Russian air campaign involved over three hundred combat aircrafts, but the campaign was unable to achieve air dominance even on the day the war ended, as Georgian anti-air operations were not subdued.[575] Russian troops managed to rapidly disperse over swathes of undisputed Georgian territories, and the conflict was not localised in just South Ossetia and Abkhazia. One can surmise that this was necessary as Russia had no option of clear dominance over Georgian forces but had to isolate and spread them in order to rely on numbers. Russia accordingly transferred over nine thousand

[574] Ellison, B. J. (2011) 'Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War', *Demokratizatsiya*, Elliott School of International Affairs. pg. 343–366

[575] Allison, R. (2008) 'Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to "coerce Georgia to peace' *International Affairs* 84/6: 1145–1171.

troops to Abkhazia to recapture the upper Kodori valley from Georgian control alongside massive artillery and aerial bombardment in other parts of the conflict to keep Georgian forces occupied and dispossessing them of the means to concentrate defences. Russian mechanised troops opened up new fronts in undisputed UN security zone, opening up new fronts.[576] The towns of Zugdid and Georgian military base in Senaki, established under Saakashvili were occupied, and the main roads and railways were taken under control. The Black Sea port of Poti was captured denying Georgia the means for any sea-based mobilisation. During the duration of the war, Russia fielded around forty thousand troops compared to around twelve thousand Georgian troops, and relied on numbers and weight to achieve theatre dominance and overwhelm a relatively smaller opponent.[577] Russian artillery and aircraft assaults were also massive, and unspecified, compared to more precision strikes that are practiced by her Western counterparts. With no Western assistance, or force movements, or support, by the end of a week, even with operational problems, Russia was in the driving seat of the conflict, with more or less complete control of the strategic chokepoints, ports and rail routes, which are potentially useful for an invasion force.

The Russian operation was officially declared to be over, on the 12th of August, after six days of full spectrum conflict as a six-point ceasefire was agreed under the mediation of French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Russian President Medvedev, which was also signed by Georgian leader Saakashvili after rapid negotiations spearheaded by France.[578] The Russian president Medvedev declared that "objectives" were achieved. Moscow insisted that Russia is within rights to take "extra security measures" to deter future threats, which are open to broad interpretations. The Russian foreign minister Lavrov suggested that Russia is within its rights to 'determine just which areas of Georgia must be demilitarised and placed under control'. [579] Accordingly, Russian forces were seen to patrol the military bases, ports and towns of Gori, Senaki and Poti, and Russian units took control of registering and securing surrendered

[576] Allison, R. (2008) Ibid.; Ellison, B. J. (2011) 'Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War', *Demokratizatsiya*, Elliott School of International Affairs. pg. 343–366; and Cohen, A. & Hamilton, R. E. (2011) *The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications* US Army Strategic Studies Institute.

[577] Cohen, A. & Hamilton, R. E. (2011) 'The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications', US Army Strategic Studies Institute; Bryce-Rogers, A. 'Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War,' *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 21/3: 339–68.

[578] Allison, R. (2008) 'Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to "coerce Georgia to peace" *International Affairs* 84/ 6: 1145–1171

[579] Ibid.

weapons and hardware. The ceasefire entailed Russian role as a peacekeeper and net security provider of the region, and accordingly, formation of "security zones", in essence buffer zones between disputed territories and undisputed Georgia was unilaterally and arbitrarily determined by Moscow. The buffer zones of security were not concentrated on South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but in practice was all over central Georgia, including the roads and highways connected under Saakashvili between the Eastern and Western parts of the country.

The Russian military established observation posts both inside and bordering South Ossetian administrative zone, which were only dismantled after EU negotiations started, for the Russian troops to withdraw to the positions prior to the commencement of the conflict. The Russian ministry of defence stated that the operation which was to enforce peace, "as a means to promote Russian security interests and protect Russian troops" was completed successfully. The approval for the operation from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation was only sought after the conflict was over, thereby marking the unilateralism which Moscow perceives is the norm after Kosovo. The Russian military intelligence continued to claim that US instructors were directing and coordinating mercenaries from Ukraine and Georgia, without giving any proof, as well as noted that the US forces were continuing to arm and train Georgia forces. Moscow also accused the United States of sending military hardware, in the name of humanitarian aid, and calling for an arms embargo.

Russian narrow aim of restoring a strategic balance

In sum, here are the key findings from the chapter summarised. The geopolitical significance of the war was enormous, and substantially answers the two questions. First, the Russian lead up to the war, the conduct of the conflict, the mopping up operations and neutralizing threats and falling back to a position of status quo corroborates the theory of the balance of threat. On the second question, while direct evidence is scant, one can infer, from the Russian retrenchment after the conflict, that Russia was not either capable, or willing to occupy Georgia, or instigate a regime change. Whatever that may point at, it does not make Russia an expansionist power.

The result of the conflict was that Georgia emerged as a thoroughly vanquished and diminished state, with its military forces completely routed, and reputation tarnished. The Rose revolution success story was of political reform and democracy was already under strain with Saakashvili's domestic agenda, and was shattered after the war, which was blamed on Georgia

by the EU as it was technically Georgia who started the conflict, which resulted in a blow to the reliability of a Western ally, to its economy and earned the country a reputation of volatility.[580] Georgia lost billions of dollars of investment, military and civilian infrastructure, deterrence potential from American training, and military equipment. [581]The Rose Revolution led to a centralised decision making, which led to minimal checks and balances over the executive, giving a way out for Saakashvili's belligerence, which led to an ill-thought-out military campaign, against the wishes of his Western allies, without any deliberation, prudence or consultation.

That served the main purpose for Moscow. As per the dictates of Balance of Threat, Moscow's chief goal was to ensure the upholding of the status-quo, where Russia had a favourable position in the regional balance. The war was a Russian strategic victory. The Russian troops remained in both the breakaway provinces, after the ceasefire and Moscow unilaterally recognised the independence of the provinces soon after, citing the Kosovo precedent. The primary military objectives were all achieved. The war ended Georgia's nominal sovereignty over the provinces which Russia consistently considered as of immense strategic significance, and resulted in Russia re-establishing itself as the primary power broker and net security provider in the region.

Second, Russia's primary fear was NATO expansion in Moscow's sphere of influence in the post-soviet space.[582] As mentioned in the previous chapters Russia has long declared Georgia and Ukraine to be the redlines for NATO enlargement, and turning Georgia into a permanent simmering conflict zone entailed that Georgia's accession to NATO was indefinitely forestalled. Georgia's reputation as a volatile government, which is prone to conflict also meant that EU and NATO countries were sceptical of adding Georgia to the alliance. [583]Russia thereby managed to achieve a balance of power and parity and the stability of a cold conflict zone. Previously, it was considered a matter of time both Georgia and Ukraine would someday be a part of the Atlantic alliance, as put forth by the NATO membership action plan of 2008. While NATO members publicly stated that they intend to see Georgia as a member, there were

[580] 'Georgia started war with Russia: EU-backed report', *Reuters*, Sept 30, 2009.

[581] Lesova, P. (8 August 2008). "Fitch lowers Georgia's debt ratings to B+". *MarketWatch*.

[582] See, 'Russia to Fund Abkhazian Military Modernization Amid Growing Tensions' *Reuters*, Sep. 23, 2019.

[583] Facts about the 2008 war in Georgia *Reuters* Factbox, August 2009.

many private reservations about further ties with Georgia risking a potential conflict with Russia. The conflict served a strategic purpose of making NATO unlikely to be interested in a country with a frozen conflict.[584] While Russia's military was overall successful, it demonstrated flaws in operation, and showcased deep rooted problems in every single domain and provided the impetus long term reforms. A massive long-term rearmament was started under Medvedev, with the Russian forces particularly focusing on command and control breakdown and force mobilisation in the south Ossetian conflict and accounted for 27 percent increase in defence in 2009, a year after the war.

The Russian offensive was rhetorically justified as a "peace creation" operation, rather than UN mandated peace keeping, and it is unlikely Russia ever intended to completely defeat the Georgian forces, or change the regime. The Russian force concentration as discussed above was insufficient. The Russian military was unprepared for a full-scale invasion, and conducted all operations with minimal force, and then scrambled to deploy additional troops picked and chosen from different parts of the country on an ad hoc basis. The seizure of Tbilisi and occupation of Georgia was never on the cards partly one can assume because it wasn't planned, and partly Russia was not capable of a long term occupation force, as the Russian economy went on a severe and crippling downturn. Russians did not anticipate the ongoing global financial collapse as well, and the Russian economy was already slowing since July 2008, and there was increasing capital flight, due to the war.

The ousting of Saakashvili and regime change was therefore not a primary objective, and Moscow settled for strategic restraint, condemnation of Georgia and status quo. [585]This solved a few problems. Russia sought to create a new fait accompli, and attained its objective of stopping Georgia's new revolutionary regime from turning Westward. Unresolved geostrategic issues and frozen conflict was enough for Russia to stop Georgia's ascension to the EU and NATO both, and neither of those organisations were willing to offer any security guarantee to a volatile threat. Militarisation of the regions forced a new "fact on the ground" and removed the ambiguity of the Russian peacekeeping forces, while forcing the breakaway provinces to a

[584] 'NATO unlikely to grant Georgia step to membership: diplomats', *Reuters*, June 20, 2014.

[585] Frankel, R. Putin Goes Gangsta, November 2008, *Foreign Policy* available at https://foreignpolicy.com/2008/11/13/putin-goes-gangsta/; Vladimir Putin 'wanted to hang Georgian President Saakashvili by the balls' *The Times*, London, November 2008, available at https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/vladimir-putin-wanted-to-hang-georgian-president-saakashvili-by-the-balls-mbz2p0mjjlz

dependency on Russia. As Medvedev stated, there are regions in which Russia has a privileged interest and are home to countries which shares special historical relations. [586]This terming of the region in civilisational terms betrays a narrow realpolitik which was achieved with a divided NATO over Georgia.

In sum, the Russian foreign policy and military use of force in Georgia suggest that Russia was satisfied to carve out its privileged position in the region and use force to uphold the status-quo. Second, Russia was not interested to occupy Georgia, and followed the dictates of Balance of Threat, and retreated back once the perceived threat was neutralised.

[586] 'Medvedev on Russia's interests' *The Economist*, September 2008.

Chapter 7: **The sources of Russian balancing**

The task of summarizing findings of a theoretical project attempting to explore the foreign policy of a great power is daunting, even more so, if the great power in question is secretive, and if the events studied for evidence are fluid and ongoing. It is also futile to claim that any single theory of international relations can provide a complete interpretation, as foreign policy is rarely monocausal. However, patterns emerge, and the purpose of any theory is to simplify complex phenomena.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the current literature and conventional wisdom about the Russian foreign policy in Europe and balancing behaviour is heavily tilted towards liberal democratic theories focusing on domestic politics of Russia, regime stability, diversionary war, with some constructivist theories which focuses on great power honour and ideology like Christian conservatism. There were no broad, overarching, long term, strategic analysis which considered the theoretical questions, and tried to explain that.

However, an IR theory is as good as its explanatory power, and there were instances where the conventional wisdom fell short. Russia displays no mindless expansionism in every theatre everywhere, and the idea that any and all NATO expansion leads Moscow to aggressive balancing behaviour fails to explain why Russia chose conflict over Ukraine and Georgia, and not in Montenegro, the Baltics, or Macedonia. What considerations tilted the Russian decision in Ukraine and Georgia? It is not explained satisfactorily in current academic literature. Likewise, the idea that the Russian military aggression is predicated on Vladimir Putin's declining domestic popularity also never sought to explain the timing of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, and Georgia with Putin's popularity was sky high both the times, according to neutral polls taken by independent pollsters like Levada. The theory that Moscow uses diversionary war to polish over domestic economic fragility, also never explains the difference of 2008 and 2014, in the former case when Russia was economically sound and experiencing a phase of boom, to the latter case, when Russia was reeling. And finally, the constructivist theories of national pride, honour, Orthodox-Christian imperialism also severely lacks explanatory power. First, these frameworks are arbitrary. Second, it never explains what stops Russian militarism, or alternatively, what explains Russian return to status quo after every instance of military aggression. To give one recent example, if the Russian aggression of Ukraine was prompted by the idea of establishing Novorossiya, an imperial entity in line with

Russian historical regional hegemony, Moscow would not logically stop expanding. In reality, Russia's military aggression was limited in scope, nature and territorial depth. The rhetoric of Novorossiya was quietly dropped after a few months, in the media.

In that context, the theoretical framework of my thesis has a better explanatory power, in understanding the discrepancies of the post-Soviet Russian foreign policy and military aggression in Europe. The aim of this thesis was not to provide an overarching theory of Russian foreign policy. That is beyond the limited scope or capability of one single PhD dissertation. Rather, this thesis aimed at testing a realist theory, within the broad realist framework. This dissertation attempted to explore Russian foreign policy and military aggression, especially the Russian balancing behaviour in Europe, in light of Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory. The objective of that was simple. While Realism is a philosophical framework as well as research design, there are various realist IR theories within the broad framework, which are used to measure or understand various aspects of state behaviour and foreign policy.

In this dissertation, the attempt was made to study Russian recorded military actions, balancing behaviour, and official rhetoric, to match the independent variables. Accordingly, the theory predicts a specific set of behavioural patterns. For example, aggregate power in a rival state or institution, that is the combination of total industrial and military resources would alter the perception of a state and higher or growing aggregate power would result in internal balancing, arms race, and search for allies. The political debates should have subsequently reflected those considerations and acknowledge the need to balance. Geographical proximity would also alter the regional balance, and threat perceptions, in the sense, if a perceived threat moves closer the threat perception would rise, and noticeable actions like repositioning weapons system, cultivating alliances, or increased military expenditure would be observed. Finally, if a state believed that these factors are combined with offensive power and weapons systems, and offensive intentions, and if the state believes that actions are existential, they would take actions, economic and strategic, to offset that threat and balance.

To sum up, here are the broad theoretical predictions which were explored.

1. Higher aggregate power in a perceived strategic threat alters threat perception in Russia, and subsequently leads to internal balancing like arms race, or external

balancing, observable in alliance behaviour. That will reflect in the debates within Russian policy making circles as well as Russian actions.

2. The Russian state, regardless of regime type and era, will feel threatened by any power or coalition with overall greater aggregate power than Russia. That would include great powers, alliances, and coalitions.

3. The threat perception will incrementally increase if the source of threat moves closure to the Russian landmass and decrease if it moves away. The threat perception will also rise if offensive power increases, and will decrease if offensive power is replaced by defensive powers. These changes will be acknowledged by the Russian policy makers and there should be a record and reflection of that in debates and discussions.

4. A geographically closer threat with increased or increasing aggregate power, will result in greater concern and elevated threat perception in a state or great power, which will influence its balancing or bandwagoning behaviour accordingly. The Russia's reaction to the NATO expansion, was explored to see if the causal variables are present in the events of a forceful reaction, or one or more of them is absent in the instances of muted reaction.

5. Finally, any altered security dynamic which threatens Russia's privileged position in its neighbourhood, would result in Moscow's balancing behaviour, and even use of military force, *in extremis*. Alternatively, the perceived threat, when neutralised or balanced, would result in Moscow moving back to status quo. This would also prove that Russia acts as a security maximiser, and not a power maximiser. Or in other words, Moscow is a status-quo and defensive realist power, and not a revanchist offensive realist power.

The predictions from the theories were drawn accordingly and suggests a few key considerations. Higher aggregate power in a rival would always lead to internal balancing, arms race and altered threat perceptions, and the Russian state regardless of regime type and era would feel threatened by any power and coalition with overall higher aggregate power and that would include any great power, nation state or alliances. Any threat perception would incrementally increase if a threat was considered encroaching upon Russian strategic interests and would decrease if it was considered moving away. The threat perception would also increase if offensive power in a rival is increasing and would decrease if offensive power is

replaced by defensive power. Perceived and observable offensive intention or rhetoric would increase the threat perception in Moscow, regardless of actual power or capability in a rival state. All of these would be reflected in the Russian political decision making, and balancing actions would commence, for as long as the threat remains, and would subside when the threat is considered diminished. All of these assumptions, accordingly, lead to observable actions. In Russia's case, if Russia's neighbours lean towards NATO and the EU, it would be considered by Moscow as an increasing threat, whereupon a rival institution or power is slowly encroaching towards the Russian sphere of influence and threatening Moscow's strategic interests, like naval ports, defence supply chains, defensible terrains, military bases, economic and export interests, etc., and accordingly Russia would take every action to offset that threat. Any instability in Moscow's neighbourhood which will have Western support would be considered as Western measures, propaganda and penetration, and the threat perceptions will rise. All else being equal, these will be reflected in Russian actions, and Russian balancing actions would increase or subside depending on the perception of the centre or threat moving towards the Russian landmass.

So, what should have been the observable actions on Moscow's part? Ukraine's move towards a security infrastructure with NATO or the EU, would be considered a threat by Russia and would be in turn considered an encroachment of a rival power in Moscow's neighbourhood, which would destabilise local balance of power. There would be a distinct observable threat to material or strategic loss, which would be existential to Russia's aggregate power and great power status. Russia would undertake every balancing action to offset those losses, for as long as the threat remains, and would only cease, when from Moscow's perspective those losses diminished. Likewise, Georgia's shift towards a rival alliance would result in balancing action from Russia, and any belligerence from Tbilisi would be considered offensive intention that alters the security scenario and balance of the region, and would result in direct action from Moscow, for as long as the threat remains. Russia would only return to status quo when the threat is perceived from Moscow to be over and the order of alignment of the region unchanged.

In simple theoretical terms the findings should reflect these assumptions, Russia should attempt to balance any threat, and should act as a realist power. Alternatively, Russian return to any status quo whenever the perception of threat declines or is offset by the Russian balancing action, would emphatically suggest that Russia is a defensive realist power and security maximiser. If Russia is a power maximiser, it would act in a way consistent to unstoppable expansionism. If Russia is a security maximiser, it would be content as long as Russia's security

interests remain unaltered, and the regional balance of power remain in Moscow's favour. In the former case, any Russian military operation would be contingent with occupation forces and would continue, or follow a pattern contingent with regime change operations. In the latter case, the Russian military actions would cease after a time, and would show more narrow strategic restraint, and would be overall limited in nature, only meant to restore a balance or offset a direct threat to interests.

That in itself is one of the key theoretical contributions from this study, and provide future guidance for the purposes of formulating policy and grand strategy.

In all the cases observed, detailed in earlier chapters and summarised below, Russia behaved like a realist power. It weakened countries on the borderlands, and ensured that the Russian relative power, remains higher compared to her neighbours. Moscow ensured that the advance and enlargement of the EU and NATO is pushed back, and what it considers encroachment by hostile powers in Moscow's sphere of influence is stopped. Russia balanced whenever the threat was sudden and moved back to status quo when the threats were neutralised. Russia also defended its supply chains, naval ports, military, and material interests in the regions where Russia already had a foothold. It carved out strategically defensible terrains, and created a *fait accompli*, even at the risk of changing the rules of post-war European order. It undertook extreme punitive actions against smaller powers which dared to act independent, but also moved back to status quo, when the threat of those smaller powers moving towards a hostile security infrastructure subsided. Most importantly, Moscow knew when and where to stop, in the middle of a conflict, preferring frozen conflict zones and leverage points, and did not, from evidence observed so far, engage in mindless continuous imperial expansion.

Here is a summary of the key findings from each case studied.

Russian reaction to NATO enlargement

The Russian reaction to different phases of NATO enlargement was treated as evidence to test balance of threat theory. If the theory is correct, then any source of aggregate power, (institutional, alliances or states/great powers) moving closer towards Russian borders would trigger a heightening threat perception. Closer geographic proximity might heighten the threat perception in itself, but might or might not trigger a balancing reaction; but the threat perception would heighten even more if the offensive capabilities of the source of threat would increase.

If, however, Moscow is satisfied that there is no offensive capability or intention, there would unlikely be any military reaction. Likewise, if Moscow is satisfied that there is a lack of offensive intention then the threat perception would not increase, and no balancing action would take place.

From the evidence observed, it can be argued, that NATO's eastward enlargement was considered threatening by Russia, but the reactions to different phases of NATO enlargement showed variations, depending in turn on NATO's offensive capability, and force posturing, as well as Russia's perception of NATO's offensive intentions. Moscow military and civilian elite were always opposed to NATO's enlargement, and NATO's first intended enlargement resulted in Russian alarm. Moscow however agreed on two conditions, that the enlargement of NATO would not result in new troops or offensive weapon systems in new member states. This was agreed between NATO and Russia and resulted in the NATO-Russia foundation act, which in turn led to permanent joint council as Moscow allowed theoretical expansion of Western power towards its former sphere of influence in Central Europe.

Each phase of NATO enlargement resulted in varied Russian reactions. Prior to 1993, Moscow's relative weakness was demonstrated in strategy doctrines which reflected Russia's changed nuclear posture, as well as elite acknowledgement of Russia's diminished status. The Soviet era No-First-Use policy was discarded when the NATO expansion was planned, signifying a heightened threat perception of a threat moving closer to Russian borders. But otherwise, Moscow's reaction was muted, due to the absence of actual movement of NATO hardware east of Germany, as well as the agreement mentioned above, which demonstrated an absence of offensive intention on NATO's part. Without any NATO troop, hardware, or permanent infrastructure in newer NATO countries, the actual balance of power did not shift in Europe and signified lack of offensive intention as well as offensive capabilities on NATO's part, and NATO-Russia foundation pact ensured that the lack of offensive intention, on either side was institutionalised. During the build-up to Kosovo, NATO openly discussed moving headquarters from Germany to Poland, signifying the first time an intention to move infrastructure. Russian reaction changed immediately, when NATO intervened in Kosovo, and Moscow sent paratroopers to Pristina airport to secure Russian strategic interests.

The September 11th terror attacks helped form new temporary alignment between Moscow and Washington, and the temporary transformation of NATO as a front against Islamic terrorism from a military alliance strictly focused on Europe, changed the perception in Russia. The

subsequent War on Terror and President George W Bush's speech dubbing NATO as a political alliance or democracies instead of a purely military alliance, signified even lesser offensive intention on NATO's part towards Moscow, and resulted in diminished threat perception in Moscow. However, that thaw was momentary, as NATO patrols over Baltics, and NATO plans for missile defence shields all over central Europe demonstrated a new offensive capability as well as shifting geographical proximity of threat towards Moscow. That, added with Washington's support for democracy promotion, and steady flow of offensive capabilities eastward, under the Bush administration resulted in renewed scepticism in Moscow about Western intentions of encircling Russia. Moscow's strategic doctrines reflected this change, and the Russian military elite as well as political elite, started to reconsider NATO as an enemy organisation.

A more permanent break came with NATO's second phase of enlargement, as Russia under President Putin started to move away from post 9/11 rapprochement with the West. While the conflict over Iraq resulted in Russia finding itself rhetorically aligned with France and Germany against Britain and the United States, a more permanent disruption happened with Western support of colour revolutions in former Soviet countries, as well as the NATO enlargement in 2004. It also marked a change in NATO posture, as up until then NATO was at least nominally respectful of Russian aspirations as a great power. Post 9/11 American unilateralism, a permanent move of NATO firepower in the post-Soviet territories, a permanent shift of NATO hardware in the former Warsaw pact countries, and permanent and regular movement of assets over the Baltics close to the Russian military installations, signified a complete change of the balance of power in the region, and crossed a long determined territorial red line for Moscow. NATO's offer of individual partnership action plan to Ukraine and Georgia after the colour revolutions, two countries which hosted Russian troops was another complete breach of Russian red line, and signified a source of existential threat moving inexorably towards Moscow. The rapid change of both offensive capability and perceived offensive intention on NATO's part, reflected in Moscow's military doctrines, as well as political leadership and led to Vladimir Putin's infamous outburst in the Munich Security Conference of 2007. By the time the next phase of NATO enlargement took place in Albania and Croatia, Russian-Western relations were broken beyond repair and a war over territory in Europe, for the first time since WWII had already taken place. The Russian military doctrines in 2010, also finally reflected this new geopolitical reality, a position that has continued changed since.

All the aforementioned evidence demonstrates that Russia behaves per the theory of the balance of threat, when it comes to NATO's aggregate power, territorial proximity, offensive capabilities and intentions. The Russian behaviour is in accordance with any realist power, which follows the dictates of balance of threat. The Russian threat perception rises with every phase of NATO enlargement, which from the Russian perspective is simply territorial expansion of a hostile entity. Each phase and movement towards the Russian border consolidate a Russian fear of encirclement by a hostile power. However, the Russian balancing action is dependent on offensive capabilities and perceived offensive intentions. Russia does not balance simply with any and every NATO enlargement, but only when the enlargement is accompanied with increased offensive power. Shifting of NATO hardware, platforms and bases are causes of concern for Russia with heightened risk perception, as well as the lack of offensive intention results in Moscow returning to status quo position. And finally, the Russian redlines about NATO enlargement in Ukraine and Georgia are strictly dependent on strategic and military interests and not some arbitrary ideological determinants. The behaviour of a great power is rarely explained by mono-causality, but the Russian behaviour with regards to NATO expansion gives us a solid groundwork on balance of threat theory, which is further corroborated in the cases of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine and Georgia.

Russian balancing in Ukraine

The evidence observed from Moscow's belligerence with Ukraine suggest realist motives as well, and is in accordance to the balance of threat theory. The history between Russia and Ukraine suggests a pattern of Russian escalation, whenever there was a possibility that Ukraine was moving away from Russia's sphere to join the security infrastructure of either NATO or EU, both in this case indistinguishable from Moscow's perspective. The difference between 2004 and 2014 is therefore in the scale of Russian reaction. It was evident that in the case of Ukraine, the primary worry from Russia's side was Kiev slipping away. In both the instances, Moscow adopted a balancing behaviour, in the first instance, economic pressure and internal collapse of the revolutionary regime in Ukraine resulted in Moscow backing off and status-quo returning. In the second instance, the pace of the change was much more serious, and the threat was rapid, leaving Russia no option other than using force to defend strategic interests as well as force a fait accompli in the region.

Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a serious player in the European balance, as Ukraine provides Russia with defensible territorial buffer, a gigantic market for Russian products, strategic resources and supply chains which are not replicable and are existential for Russian forces, and access to Black Sea and navy port. Of course, with Russian nuclear weapons it would still remain a great power, but that is irrelevant in this context, as firstly, great powers do not like giving up their own power and strategic interests without any push-back, and second, Russia has more to lose in Ukraine than the West. Russian actions in Ukraine both after Orange revolution and the Euromaidan has therefore been one of strategic denial. In material terms, the gains to the Russian military after the annexation of Crimea, was historic in terms of capabilities and future potential. Crimea was a potential problem for Russia, and Moscow was never happy with legal constraints with leasing such a hugely strategic piece of real-estate, and those constraints were swept away with land annexation by force and a permanent base of the Black Sea Fleet, Russia's primary European naval power projection force. Moscow now controls the region as the biggest naval power after the capture and interning of over twenty-five Ukrainian vessels, making it the larger power compared to the nearest NATO rival, Turkey, while stopping all future lease payments to Kiev, a hefty amount of funds, to be potentially used for rearmament.

Second, the Russian balancing action also highlighted a limited approach focused on strategic needs, instead of ideological expansion, both after the Orange revolution as well as after the Euromaidan and the resultant civil war. In the early days immediately after the Orange revolution, Russia deftly used energy resources to coerce the fledgling revolutionary government in Ukraine, and the rhetoric continued to be harsh. But Russia also kept diplomatic channels open with the local opposition, including pro-Russian politicians whom Moscow even supported during the election season. Moscow moved back to status-quo position promptly after the victory of Yanukovych. Likewise, after the civil war started, and Moscow rhetorically promoted the Novorossiya project, in reality, Russian-supported military actions were all localised conflicts, only in regions where Russia had direct strategic interests and supply chains located. For example, evidence studied suggest, very strongly, that Russian backed forces were concentrated in the regions in the Eastern parts of Ukraine, specifically those parts which produce hardware and mining products for the Russian military, and any ideological terms like the Novorossiya project were quietly dropped after a time.

In short, there were no evidence of Moscow trying to spread the conflict in other parts of Ukraine, once it was satisfied that Crimea was annexed, the Naval port was in Moscow's hand

permanently, and the supply lines for Russian armed forces are intact. While military decision making of Russia is opaque, there is strong ground to infer a logical restraint, that demonstrates a status-quo power. The key difference between 2004, and 2014 and the reason that Moscow went all the way to a conflict, might be therefore attributed to the pace of change, as after the Orange revolution, due to the dysfunction of the revolutionary regime, the threat of Kiev moving towards EU/NATO was not heightened as much as after Euromaidan, with the flight of Pro-Russian Yanukovych. But even in the latter case, once the strategic interests were safeguarded, Moscow pulled back instead of pushing forward with any more territorial expansion.

The events of 2014 were catastrophic for Ukraine, with the economy shrinking by 20% in two years and over a hundred thousand internally displaced persons across Ukraine, compared to Crimea, which under Russian annexation is experiencing around 4 billion USD investment per year. Ukraine's neighbours are also concerned with a conflict in the neighbourhood as well as worried about refugees, and both NATO and the EU have given up on the ascension of Ukraine for the near foreseeable future. This highlighted two lines of thinking. One, that the Russian government was aware of the relative inferiority both in aggregate power as well as allies, and the annexation of Crimea and the de facto control over Eastern Ukraine was a single largest increase in relative power in favour of Moscow. Two, by the simmering civil war, and proxy forces under Moscow's command, as well as being a party to the Minsk accords, Moscow can control the tempo of fighting and that is purely used as a bargaining chip for Russia's requirements. In fact, the Minsk protocol prevents a complete end of the hostilities, and thereby perpetuates the status quo, which is the desired outcome from Moscow, given Russia's weakness. Kiev remains at a crossroad, without any help from NATO or the EU, dependent on Moscow, still for most supplies, while Russia retains control of the Black sea, a naval base, and enormous military infrastructure and hardware in the east of Ukraine. The simmering hostility itself makes Moscow the winner.

The primary drivers of Russian actions were therefore material and strategic, the aim was to maintain Russian control over naval bases, and the military industrial centres. While archival evidence is inaccessible, the pace of annexation suggest a well-planned operation and the existence of such plans in advance. Moscow's rapid transformation of Crimea attests to a contingency plan as well. With added ships to its fleet Russia now has extended control over strategic chokepoints, in Kerch Strait, and the Sea of Azov, as recent skirmishes also prove. The balance of power in the Black sea region remains in Moscow's favour, and the simmering

conflict in the east, acts as a constant message to Brussels and Washington that there are costs when Russian interests are ignored.

Russian balancing in Georgia

While the evidence from the NATO and Ukraine case studies provides some direct corroboration of the balance of threat theory, the evidence from Georgia is more important, as this was the first instance of a declared war by Russia with a fixed end date, and the Russian approach to war not only provides one of the strongest evidence for the balance of threat theory, but also, the Russian limited military action provides a strong empirical refutation to the claims of Russian mindless militarism. In short, it is the evidence of Russian military aggression from Georgia, when studied in broader grand-strategic context, that provides the strongest confirmation of Russia acting as a status quo power, with limited martial capabilities and intentions, prone to act only when confronted with perceived threats to strategic interests. Russia, in reality, is afraid to lose its great power status, and losing Georgia and Ukraine to the EU or NATO, would essentially relegate Russia to a second-tier player with no stake at the balance of power in Europe.

Evidence of the Russian war in Georgia, suggests that one, Russia was thoroughly unprepared for any eventual conflict; two that the Russian forces lacked the overall capability of occupying entire Georgian land, and three, the Russian leadership had no inclination to do so. It is Georgia, which provides the overall corroboration of the Russian status-quo behaviour, and balancing against threat that was evident and inferred from Russian conduct against NATO and Ukraine. The theoretical significance of the war is enormous, and substantially answers two key questions; Russian lead up to the war, the conduct during the conflict and operation after the cessation of hostilities and neutralizing remaining threats before falling back to a status quo position corroborate the fundamentals of defensive realism and the balance of threat theory, and Russia being a status quo power. Second point, which is a final evidence to the inferences drawn from other case studies, this being the only case with a declared conflict and fixed start and end dates, while direct evidence of the Russian decision making process remain inaccessible, from the Russian retrenchment after the conflict, it can be inferred that Russia is either incapable or unwilling to occupy Georgia, or instigate a regime change. Whatever that might point at, it does not make Russia an expansionist power determined to change the balance of power of the region, much less aspire to be a regional hegemon.

The Russian actions in Georgia did not reflect any bombastic rhetoric, and pointed at the lack of a plan for regime change, and retrenchment from Moscow's side, the moment Russia was satisfied about achieving of strategic objectives, the objectives being retaining a Russian foothold and military presence in defensible terrain, having proxy regions for the Russian troops, and deterring future Georgian (and western) adventurism. The lack of coordination of Russian forces were only offset by a Soviet style mass movement and heavy reliance on overwhelming manpower even with withering losses. As the hostilities ceased, the Russian forces were ordered for clean-up operations which entailed every Georgian military infrastructure, in the occupied territories, captured during the war. The Russian government directives also led to the Russian units registering and interning surrendered weapons and platforms. The ceasefire essentially handed Russia the de facto control of the territories and buffer zones.

The primary drivers of the Russian aggression in 2008 was strategic, and Georgia a potential candidate for NATO came out vanquished, divided and diminished in power, its military forces routed, and reputation shattered as a belligerent. The political agenda of domestic reforms that started immediately after the Rose revolution was shattered and stopped after the war, as Georgia's belligerence and unnecessary war was a huge blow to its reliability as an ally and resulted in draining resources and aid and military investment, as well as the resultant shattered military infrastructures and hardware and American provided equipment. The Russian strategic victory was manifold, including control of breakaway provinces, which ended Georgia's sovereign writ over these regions which Russia considered of immense strategic importance, where it already had troop present, which Moscow feared losing. Russia also established itself as a primary power broker and net security provider of the region, including the energy and oil pipelines.

But more importantly, the Georgia war ended one of Russia's long-standing fear of NATO expansion in its borders. Russian redlines in Georgia, similar to Ukraine, was against NATO enlargement, which would have resulted in a new security architecture. By turning Georgia's provinces in a permanent frozen conflict, Russia indefinitely forestalled Georgia's accession to NATO. Georgia's own belligerence at pre-empting the conflict after Moscow's provocation meant that the EU and NATO countries were sceptical in adding Georgia to the alliance. Moscow, thereby managed to achieve a balance of power and parity and the stability of a cold conflict zone. As tertiary benefits the conflict added to Russian experience of fighting a modern war, and showcased deep rooted problems in the Russian military operational process, and

resulted in a massive long term rearmament plan, especially focused on the command and control breakdown noticed during the operational phases of the conflict.

There was no evidence of Moscow's plan, capability or will of a regime change operation or plans to oust Saakashvili, and as was expected from a status quo power, Moscow demonstrated strategic restraint, condemnation of Georgia and retrenchment. The Russian offensive, which was rhetorical justified as a "peace creation" operation, rather than a UN mandated peacekeeping, which gave Moscow legal leeway to frame and shape the operation as it wished, however, was never intended to defeat Georgia or change the regime. The Russian force concentration was insufficient, military unprepared, and operational procedures displaying a punitive, rather than and territorial interest. The Russian economy was also severely crippled and facing a downturn due to the 2008 global financial collapse. But the Russian objective of creating a new *fait accompli*, of stopping Georgia's revolutionary regime from joining any NATO/EU security structure, from stopping any loss of strategic territory which would result in the alteration of the balance of power of the region, an objective, was betrayed by Dmitry Medvedev when he bluntly stated, that there are regions in which Russia has a privileged interest. Everything else was simply rhetorical.

Is Russia a realist great-power?

Can Russian behaviour, balancing actions, and military aggression in Europe be explained by a framework of realism? Or in simpler terms, can Russian behaviour be attributed to realist logic, and is Russia behaving like a realist power in Europe? The answer would seem to be a cautious, yes. More specifically, Russia acts per the dictates of "balance of threat", and thus, appears to be a defensive realist power, one which is cautious about strategic balance, willing to resort to force to defend established material, geographical and military interests, and willing to fall back to status-quo when the perceived threats are neutralised. It is also not evident that Russian policymakers are under any impression that they can be an expansionist and hegemonic power even if they so desire, and repeatedly Russia's actual observed military and balancing actions have shown this disconnect from the usual bombastic rhetoric from the political class.

What can one conclude form the Russian behaviour in Europe? Neorealism dictates that structural and material interests dictate the foreign policy of a great power. Material and military power determine states' balancing behaviour, and the threat of loss provokes them to

aggression. The Russian understanding of geopolitics has always been one of vulnerability. As John Mearsheimer wrote, the perceptions of threat are often decided by geography. A great power which never had natural defensible borders or terrain or sea, and one which has constantly faced invasion from the Mongols in 12th century, Lithuania and Poland and Sweden between 13th and 17th century, to Napoleon Bonaparte, the Kaiser, and Hitler in modern ages, is wary of being surrounded or invaded by other powers. The Cold War era containment, that was designed to limit Soviet power, resulted in an alliance structure opposed to Russian hard power and hegemonic domination in Europe. With Soviet Union collapse, however, initially the Russians were Atlanticist, but with every phase of NATO enlargement, the Russians started to perceive a direct threat to their national interest. Moscow was acutely aware of its diminished position, and the ever-diminishing buffer zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

The understanding of a diminished strategic position is evident in the Russian military and political rhetoric and literature, as well as foreign policy. The desire to form or ensure new buffer zones were ever present, and the formation and creation of institutions like the Confederation of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the Eurasian Economic Union are testament to that grand strategy. Countries, in which Moscow already had strategic presence after the collapse of the Soviet Union were therefore vitally important to Russia's aggregate power in Europe. Put simply, to use the terminology of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Russia ceases to be a European great power with the loss of eastern Europe, especially Ukraine and Georgia.

On the other hand, Russia lacks the power and capability of the Soviet Union to conquer the majority of Eastern Europe. The strategy of Moscow therefore reflects one of weakening and dividing, to prevent further loss of power in the region. In short, Russia's fundamental aim appears to be the prevention of Ukraine and Georgia from joining any Western security architecture, which would in one swift move decouple Moscow's supply chains, buffer zones, as well as naval ports and military bases in Europe. Unwilling to risk any military intervention, and occupation, Moscow's favoured strategy therefore seems to be either punitive deterrence (Georgia) and frozen conflict and proxy wars (Ukraine). This further demonstrates the lack of capability and intention of Russia being an expansionist power. While Russia's intention towards Ukraine and Georgia is undoubtedly hostile, it is still guided by a narrow strategic realism. Russia understands that losing Georgia and Ukraine would result in Russia being a non-actor in European balance of power. Moscow has so far taken every possible action to neutralize that scenario. Moscow has also not attempted any continued expansion westward,

like the Soviet Union in the 1940s. However, one might judge Russia ideologically, a power maximising expansionist it is not.

In Georgia, Russia ensured its privileged position is maintained, through the "peacekeepers" that were already posted there since the early nineties. That was in itself the status quo to Russia, as that provided defensible terrain, a buffer zone, easy control over Georgia's economic and political decision making, as well as a stake in Georgia's market. When Saakashvili decided to restore Georgian sovereignty over the breakaway provinces, Russia used the excuse of being the peacekeeper, as well as protecting Russian lives, to invade Georgia. In reality, it was a simple measure to stall the change of power, as Russia controls these statelets and are perhaps in process of annexing their regions, as well as armed militias into regular army. Ukraine saw similar tactics, if not the same. Crimea already had the Russian forces and the Russian troops staged a putsch, and a controversial plebiscite, to take control of the region over which it already had control and which it feared was changing hands. In both the cases, Russia supplied arms to the separatist forces.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia had Russian speaking populations and Russia intervened militarily on their behalf and justified the intervention rhetorically as a way of securing human rights for the Russian speaking people outside Russia, and also as a continuation of its historic peacekeeping role. Russia of course did not mention the Russian speaking people in the Baltics, given that the Baltic countries are under NATO protection. Likewise, in Ukraine, the Russian speaking population in rebel territories like Donetsk and Luhansk, prompted Russian intervention, and Russian diplomacy heavily used the human rights tropes. In both the instances of Georgia and Ukraine, the interventions came at a time when the either the move towards a Western security architecture seemed irreversible, or there has been a direct change of relative power and the conflict has already started. In the former case, observed in Ukraine, Moscow realised that unless they act fast, all is lost. In the latter case in Georgia, the conflict was initiated by the Georgian side. Both the interventions fall squarely with Putin's redlines, about the unacceptability of Ukraine and Georgia falling into a Western sphere of influence. Russia lacks sufficient allies to balance against NATO. The actions were therefore aimed at securing the relative power advantage and denying strategic losses. Crimean annexation, and simmering war in Eastern Ukraine keeps the supply chains and buffer zones in Russian hand, while denying Ukraine a permanent move towards the West. Despite the bombastic rhetoric about continual human rights violation of the Russian speaking people in the near abroad, and talks of Novorossiya in Russian media, nothing in the evidence explored suggest that the Russian

military and political elite was ever interested in absorbing Ukraine and Georgia. The continued low-cost conflict is far more conductive for Russian strategic aims, than the risk of a full-scale territorial conquest, as well as the resulting insurgency and civil war. At this point, due to frozen conflicts neither Kiev nor Tbilisi can join NATO or the EU, nor are the NATO and the EU countries interested in any such enlargement. The Russian Black Sea Fleet is the strongest and secured in the region, and the breakaway and rebel provinces in both Ukraine and Georgia are ruled by Russian satellites.

As mentioned previously, Realism of every school, states that the world order is anarchic. There is no overarching authority, and each nation-state is responsible for its security, and more importantly survival. To ensure survival, states undertake balancing and bandwagoning. Among neo-realists, offensive realists state that states pursue power maximizing, as maximum power determines maximum security. Defensive realists argue that states prefer security maximizing, as survival is the key, and unless external factors are involved, states are satisfied with security. In that regard, having a favourable relative power in a balance of power leads states to feel more secured. To manage threats, and ensure maximum security, therefore a great power tries to improve the relative power position alongside a prospective adversary. Nearly every single realist theory and sub-theoretical framework accepts this logic. Power difference is of course not zero sum and to be in a favourable position in the balance, increase of one's power is as effective, as decreasing the opponent's power, or defending and gaining on any sudden prospective loss of power. If a country is relatively weak, and without allies to depend on, it seeks to increase power through external actions. External balancing is more important for certain great powers than internal balancing.

From every observable evidence, in the last few chapters summed up here, one can say that Kremlin, regardless of administration broadly follows the dictates of realism. It is a realist power, in the sense, Moscow's foreign policy and strategy clearly follow realist predictions. Moscow slowly has attempted to rebuild its security buffer, after the heady days of early nineties. With every phase of NATO enlargement, the idea that Russia is in a hostile relation with the West has returned. Russian troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are now entrenched far more strongly that they were in the late nineties. In Ukraine, Russia controls Crimea, and in lieu of that, is the largest naval power in the Black sea. There are Russian controlled proxies in eastern Ukraine, which are de-facto under a Russian control. Neither Ukraine or Georgia is anytime joining NATO or EU, and Russian trade is secure, as is Russian access to markets, and Russian position as a net security provider. Diplomatically, Russia is the arbiter of the Minsk

accords, in the sense, Moscow controls the militias in Eastern Ukraine which can raise up the tempo of the simmering conflict, and used that as a pressure point against Ukraine. Russia is also the co-sponsor of the Geneva talks about the recognition of the breakaway Georgian provinces. From Russian perspective, NATO, the US, the EU, all are hostile power centres, and the difference in interests are timeless. From Russian perspective, it is therefore only logical to have buffer zones, and increase or be in an advantageous relative power position compared to its adversaries. In reality, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Crimea are all Russian provinces, either de facto or de jure. Russian "peace keepers" in the breakaway provinces, as well as troops in Crimean peninsula serve under Russian colours and Russian insignia. The proxy rebel groups in Eastern Ukraine are also essentially under Russian control. Russia stopped NATO enlargement in these regions and any movement from these countries towards the EU. The Russian troops are now based as close as 25 KM from Tbilisi and the Russian proxy militias, mere miles from Kiev. As long as this status quo holds, Moscow is the real winner in the European balance.

To sum up the findings, one only need to quote the Russian Federation's Security Strategy, which states, "The strengthening of Russia is taking place against a backdrop of new threats to national security that are of a multifarious and interconnected nature. The Russian Federation's implementation of an independent foreign and domestic policy is giving rise to opposition from the United States and its allies, who are seeking to retain their dominance in world affairs." Highlighting the threats, Moscow makes it clear that "the build-up of the military potential of NATO and the endowment of it with global functions pursued in violation of the norms of international law, the galvanization of the bloc countries' military activity, the further expansion of the alliance, and the location of its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders are creating a threat to national security." [587]

"What is to be done?"

Given that this dissertation is a theory testing project, which aims to provide policy-makers in understanding the Russian foreign policy from a theoretical perspective, the conclusion hangs

[587] Vladimir Putin, "On the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy," Presidential Edict 683, December 31, 2015, http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf (accessed July 11, 2017), cited in Heritage Foundation Europe Threats. https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessing-threats-us-vital-interests/europe

or falls on the question of policy relevance. This thesis therefore attempts to conclude by charting a prospective way forward. So far, it is observed that Western, and especially American analysis of Russia falls under a simple binary. For liberal internationalists and neo-conservatives, Russia under Vladimir Putin resembles Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, with a revisionist agenda and expansionist aim in European continent. The evidence suggests that could not be further from the truth. Some realist analysis on the other hand, puts all the blame on the West, especially, on the NATO expansion. While that is partly true, that does not point to much. For example, if one follows John Mearsheimer's theory that states seek to maximise power, it neither explains why Russia displayed limited aims in Europe, nor does it posit why would the United States logically seek to limit its influence and give up hegemony in Europe. More to the point, Mearsheimer's own policy prescription does not say much about the future course of action, rather attempts an autopsy of the causes of the Ukraine crisis, which is important, but incomplete.

By every measurable index, the Western policy on Russia has failed. Russia is nowhere close to be a liberal democratic great power aligned with Western values and part of a responsible global family. In the United States, across three decades it was hoped that Moscow would either be fully defeated and be a fellow democracy, or there would be a regime change (or even a colour revolution, so to speak) due to the inherent contradictions within the regime, and anyone other than Vladimir Putin would come and change Russian grand strategy and re-orient it towards the west. This was especially visible during the brief period when Obama administration hoped to have a rapprochement with Dmitry Medvedev.

Unfortunately, Russia is not a liberal democracy, even when it is a democracy, and even with demographic decline it is still a major power in the world stage. Despite President Obama's jab that Russia is a declining power, and John Kerry's taunt that this is not the time to do 19th century politics, Moscow has demonstrated that it packs enough punch. While facing crushing diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions, Moscow has pushed back against western interests most notably in Ukraine and Georgia, and even when it is beyond the scope of this thesis, at the time of writing this conclusion, in Syria. Moscow has also challenged and pushed the level of deterrence blatantly in cyberspace. The bottom line is that Russia is not a power to be defeated, or won over, and to hope for the collapse of the Russian regime is unrealistic. Hope, to paraphrase Thucydides, is an expensive commodity, and is no substitute for policy.

So, what conclusions can we draw from the evidence explored? I suggest there are two dimensions to it, the political and the military aspect. Consider the political dimension first. Moscow's balancing behaviour, against NATO, and Moscow's definition of its own strategic interests are timeless and not linked to any particular regime. In fact, there's remarkable similarity that can be observed and was observed under Yeltsin's final terms, Putin's first term, Medvedev's Presidency and Putin's second term. That calls into question the assertion prevalent in liberal analyses, that the Russian regime type shapes Moscow's foreign policy. In reality, Moscow's foreign policy is determined by strategic interests and falls squarely within centuries of Russian strategic thought, and enjoys overwhelming support among the Russian military and political elite. It is unlikely that that would change, in the unlikely event of a liberal democratic president in Moscow. One, Yeltsin had a liberal phase. And two, Medvedev, was nominally a liberal President, compared to Putin. Even Putin in his first term was solidly pro-American, for a variety of reasons. None of that lasted, and Moscow fell back to a balancing mode, whenever it felt its core strategic interests threatened, which included control over defensible terrain, threat of loss of naval ports, and threat of loss in regional balance of power.

It is therefore imperative to understand that one, any future policy towards Russia would need to recognize the cause of Russian-Western hostility, and the cause is not the Russian regime in Moscow. Kremlin's undemocratic politics is not responsible for the Russian balancing behaviour, and military aggression, and regime type is simply irrelevant in broader Russian grand strategy. Two, the problems between NATO, the EU, the US and Russia are not ideological, nor are they because of Putin. They are geopolitical, and neither regime change, nor a new President, from a different political party would change these problems, and in reality, Putin is still a beacon of stability in Russia. There is no guarantee that Russia would radically turn into Lichtenstein, after Putin. Put simply, the major power interests of Moscow, would remain, and any policy would need to accommodate those interests.

What can one understand from the study undertaken? Russia's interests include a buffer zone, with defensible terrain, out of logical fear of being encircled by an alliance which Russia considers militarily superior. Russian interests include advance infantry troop positioning, in regions which Russia has occupied ever since the collapse of the USSR, a privileged stake at the markets for Russian exports, a steady supply chain and logistics for the Russian military forces, and naval ports which guarantees the continuation of Russia being a great power. In

short, Russian interests are strategic, material and military, and not ideological. That in turn leads to a logical conclusion. The chances of a rapprochement, or engagement with Russia is possible if these interests are kept in mind. Moscow must be engaged through a balance of cooperation and competition, and the room to manoeuvre where interests are opposed must be dealt with in tandem with interests that run parallel or align. To take an example, Russia's concerns, with regards to Ukraine and Georgia should be understood, and a neutral Ukraine and Georgia guaranteed instead of an inexorable push for those countries to join NATO and the EU and Western trade and security architecture. This is not a call to completely halt any further attempt to expand NATO, but a careful recalculation of regions where NATO can enlarge without affecting direct Russian military and strategic interests. In return, there might be areas of further cooperation, with regards to space research, WMD proliferation, and intelligence sharing, as was evident during the short phase of cooperation immediately after 9/11. Likewise, any further attempt to promote democracy and NGO activities in Russia or throwing weight and support behind the opposition to Putin, or even supporting the spread of liberal institutions and liberal values in the Russian immediate neighbourhood, might stoke rather than subside Russian paranoia about covert push for regime change and colour revolution in Moscow. It is prudent to remember that the framework from Russian perspective is strictly strategic.

In sum, the political policy proposal of this dissertation points out to two points. One, Russia has a specific set of interests, which are geopolitical and not ideological or contingent to the regime in Moscow, and which needs to be safeguarded and guaranteed, as well as kept in consideration during any policy formulation. Two, there are potential areas of rapprochement and engagement where interests overlap, which needs to be calculated. Russia is an adversarial power, but not a power determined to change the status quo. The Russian aggression is predicated on what it perceives to be the established balance of power, and there are no evidence of any further expansionist aims in mainland Europe. That, in itself points to a power with whom there could be engagement based on common interests.

The second issue is with the Russian military threat. The Russian military suffers from massive disadvantages. The manpower of the Russian military is dwarfed by the NATO forces. The Russian military also lacks in almost all domains of traditional power, speed, range, and technological advancement. The Russian force structure is not like the Soviet Union, and Russia lacks both the capability and global ambition or ideological aspiration. However, the Russian forces when improvised during operations and were able to demonstrate conventional

capabilities, that were sufficient in tactical and operational levels of warfare. While the overwhelming understanding in the Russian political and military circle is that Russia is qualitatively inferior to NATO, the Russian military has shown appetite for conflict against smaller adversaries, as a broader show of force and deterrence against what it considers NATO intentions and designs in Moscow's sphere.

Russia clearly considers NATO enlargement a threat, and does not differentiate between the EU, NATO and the United States and is worried about NATO troops and armour next to the Russian borders. The Russian intention of safeguarding its own sphere of influence naturally leads to clash of interests in countries like Georgia and Ukraine which have expressed desires to join Euro-Atlantic institutions. With Russia's return and rearmament, the expansion of the EU and enlargement of NATO, and erosion of a buffer zone, chances of conflict has increased, even though, there's no evidence of active American support to come into the defence of Ukraine and Georgia and risk a conflict with Russia.

The chances of a ground war with Russia is however, thin. It is unlikely, Moscow is planning such a war, or has any intention in initiating a war of that scale, given its narrow security interests, goals, strategy, and evident capability. Moscow is also constrained by geography, demographics, economy, technology, industrial efficiency, and manpower. Moscow, has also not faced any concerted push back, and as per war simulation reports, Russia is infinitely inferior to NATO ground troops. This remains a dilemma for both NATO and the Russian forces. While the Russian force concentration in its near abroad is higher compared to NATO, and according to estimates Russia can conquer the Baltics within matter of weeks, before NATO even fully steps in, it is unlikely given that Moscow shows no intention of expansionism. The Russian military literature, and as well as elite class also points out that Moscow will not be able to prevail in a full-scale conventional war with NATO, without resorting to nuclear weapons. However, recent years have demonstrated that Moscow can easily salami-slice regions and enclaves, of countries which are still not part of NATO, which favours its regional balance, and creates a new fait-accompli. And NATO or the US is helpless in preventing that.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Newspaper and News Reports

Binyon, M. (2002). "Kremlin enjoys the fruits of its foreign policy," The Times, 21 November.

Burns, R. (1999). "Russia opposes more NATO expansion," Associated Press, 7 February.

Caryl, C. (1997). "Ivan O public speaks: no to NATO," US News and World Report, 24 March, pg. 42.

Drozdiak, W. (2001). "Putin eases stance on NATO expansion," Washington Post, 4 October, pg. A1.

Dyomkin, D. (2011). "Russia says Georgia war stopped NATO expansion," Reuters, 21 November.

Friedman, T. (1996). "Sucked into the wrong vacuum," New York Times, 14 July.

Galeotti, M. (2016). "Russia's new national security strategy: Familiar themes, gaudy rhetoric," War on the Rocks (January).

Gault, M. (2016). "Podcast: is the Syrian war partly an ad for Russia's arms industry?" Reuters Blog (February).

Gerasimov, V. (2016). "Po Opytu Sirii [According to the Experience of Syria]," Voennoe Promyshlennoe Kuryer [Military Indistrual Courier], 9 March.

Gordon, M. R. (1994). "U. S. opposes move to rapidly expand NATO membership," New York Times, 2 January.

Kuzio, T. (2004). "NGOs and civil society under attack in Ukraine," Ukrainian Weekly, 18 July.

Kuzio, T. (2005a). "Russia still gets it wrong in Ukraine," Eurasian Daily Monitor, 5 October.

Kuzio, T. (2005b). "Ukraine asks Russia to begin preparations for withdrawing Black Sea fleet," Eurasia Daily Monitor, 20 April.

Kuzio, T. (2008). "Russian intelligence seeks to destabilize Crimea," Eurasia Daily Monitor, 1 October.

Martin, S. (1997). "Beyond the G8, Yeltsin sees his country in the EU," Irish Times, 24 March.

Myers, S. L. and Schmitt, E. (2015). “Russian military uses Syria as proving ground, and West takes notice,” New York Times (October).

Myers, S. L. (2007). “No Cold War, perhaps, but surely a lukewarm peace,” New York Times, 18 February.

“NATO expansion would be an epic ‘fateful error’,” Los Angeles Times, 7 July 1997.

‘NATO Debates on Georgia and Ukraine Add Clarity about Russia’ (2008) Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume 5, Issue 64

Nixey, J. (2016). “Is Russia Still a Key World Player?” BBC News, 15 December.

'Russia general: Eastern Ukraine is Moscow's 'red line'' (9 August, 2015) BBC World News

Pavlovsky, G. (2006). “Ukrainian export of spokes in wheels,” Izvestiya, 24 January.

Primakov, Y. (1993). “Perspektivy Raashireniia NATO i Interesy Rossii,” [Perspectives on NATO Expansion and the Interests of Russia] Izvestiia, 26 November.

“Russia affair with Turkey has been blossoming for decades – why has it taken the West so long to pay attention?” Independent, 5 August 2019.

“Russia breaks military supplies contract with Ukraine,” Kyivpost, 30 March.

Stephens, P. (2007). “The Putin strategy is to divide Europe over missile defence,” Financial Times, 12 April.

Traynor, I. (2004). “US campaign behind the turmoil in Kiev,” The Guardian, 26 November.

Walsh, N. P. (2006). “Russia tells Ukraine to stay out of NATO,” The Guardian, 7 June.

Zhluktenko, V. (2005). “Pundit says Putin’s remarks on Ukraine counterproductive,” Den, 13 April (BBC Monitoring Service).

Zorin, V. (2006). “Why we don’t like Ukraine,” Kommersant, 25 January.

Governmental and Congressional Reports

Bernard A. Gelb, “Russian Oil and Gas Challenges,” CRS Report for Congress, RL33212, January 3, 2006, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/58988.pdf

Budapest Memorandum at 25, Harvard-Belfer Center, available at https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/budapest/BM25.pdf

"Acting President Vladimir Putin met with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson", February, 16, 2000, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/37942

'The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation', edict 1833 of the President of the Russian Federation (2 November 1993), available at: http://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/russia-mil-doc.html

Blanton, T. and Savranskaya, S. "NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard," Dec 12, 2017, available at National Security Archive at George Washington University (http://nsarchive.gwu.edu) : https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early

George W. Bush, 'Remarks to the Atlantic student summit', Prague, Czech Republic, 20 November 2002, http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/15317.html

Csongos, F. 'Russia: Moscow's concern over NATO expansion easing', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 26 October, 2001, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1097816.html.

Donnelly, J. Realism and international relations. http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam032/99053676.pdf

Gaddy, C. and Ickes, B. (2010). "Russia After the Global Financial Crisis," http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/articles/2010/5/ussia%20financial%20crisis%20gaddy/05_russia_financial_crisis_gaddy.pdf

Garratt, M. D. (2015). "An Evolving and Assertive Russia: A Future Threat or Opportunity for Europe and America?", accessible at http://www.da.mod.uk/Publications/category/91/an-evolving-and-assertive-russia-a-future-threat-or-opportunity-for-europe-and-america-15705.

Larsson, R. L. "Nord Stream, Sweden, and Baltic Sea Security," FOI-R–2251–SE, March 2007, http://www.foi.se/upload/ussia/reports/foir2251.pdf

"Medvedev gets caught telling the truth," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 22 November 2011, http://www.rferl. org/articleprintview/24399004.html

'The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation', 5 February 2010, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf

"The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation" approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on 5 February 2010]; Russia's national security strategy to 2020 (2010) Retrieved from: http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020

'Ministry of Economy: America did not finance Yushchenko's campaign', 30 December 2004, http://hotline.net.ua/content/view/9823/37/

Moments in U.S. Diplomatic History Yeltsin Under Siege — The October 1993 Constitutional Crisis – published by Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, available online at http://adst.org/2014/10/yeltsin-under-siege-the-october-1993-constitutional-crisis/

Monaghan, A. 'The Ukraine crisis and NATO– Russia relations', NATO Review, 1 July 2014, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2014/russia-ukraine-natocrisis/Ukraine-crisis-NATO-Russia-relations/EN/index.htm, accessed 17 July 2015.

"The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation," Presidential Decree No. 24 of 10 January 2000. http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/589768;

NATO and the 2003 campaign against Iraq (Archived), Sep 1, 2015, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_51977.htm

NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard | National Security Archive, available at https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early#.Wi_f82RB8R0.twitter

NATO, 'Study on NATO enlargement', 3 September 1995, ch. 2., C.27, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_ texts_24733.htm

'NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO': NATO, 'Bucharest summit declaration', 3 April 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm

Ndefo, E. O. et al., "Russia: A Critical Evaluation of Its Natural Gas Resources," Energy Tribune, February 13, 2007, http://www.energytribune.com/articles.cfm?aid=379.

"President Vladimir Putin held negotiations with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson", Feb 20, 2001, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/40915

President Vladimir Putin talks with the Federal Chancellor of Germany Gerhard Schroeder, April 2, 2004 available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/30679

"Vladimir Putin joint press conference with NATO Secretary General George Robertson and Italian Prime Ministers Silvio Berlusconi" May 28, 2002, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/43122

Radin, A. and Reach, C. B. "Russian Views of the International Order" by Andrew Radin, Clinton Bruce Reach, Rand Corporation research projects Document Number: RR-1826-OSD Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1826.html

'Remarks by Russian President Vladimir Putin at NATO Bucharest summit press conference', 4 April 2008, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24903

Rühle, M. 'NATO enlargement and Russia: myths and realities', NATO Review, 1 July 2014, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2014/Russia-Ukraine-Nato-crisis/Nato-enlargement-Russia/EN/index.htm, accessed 27 January 2015.

Russia takes a negative view of NATO expansion December 10, 2004, available at en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/32366

'Russian Defense Minister sees terrorism, NATO expansion as main threats', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 9 November 2013, http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-defense-terrorism-nato/25163293.html

Schmidt, B, The political discourse of anarchy http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~plam/irnotes07/Schmidt1998.pdf

Shlapak, D. A. (2016). Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics" Michael Johnson Rand Corp Wargaming 2016 Research Report https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1253

The Transformation of NATO's Defence Posture, July 1997, available at www.nato.int/docu/facts/trans.htm

The Military Balance Volume 120, 2020 - Issue 1 (2020). Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia. The Military Balance: Vol. 120, No. 1, pg. 166-219

Trenin, D. "What Kind of Russia Should the West Fear?" Russia Direct (11 January 2017), available at: {http://carnegie.ru/2017/01/11/what-kind-of-russia-should-west-fear-pub-67658

"US government assistance to and cooperative activities with Eurasia,'' US Department of State, https://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/37672.htm

Ukraine: Background, Conflict with Russia, and U.S. Policy Updated April 29, 2020, Congressional Research Service

'We Are Smarter, Stronger and More Determined' – Interview with Sergey Karaganov, Der Spiegel, July 13, 2016 https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-putin-foreign-policy-advisor-sergey-karaganov-a-1102629.html

Speeches, Interviews, Public Statements, and Transcripts

Inaugural Speech by President Boris Yeltsin of the Republic of Russia, Foreign Policy Bulletin 2.1 (1991).

Vladimir Putin Munich Conference Speech 2007 available at https://www.securityconference.de/en/about/munich-moments/a-breeze-of-cold-war/

Vladimir Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation," 18 March 2014, at http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/6889.

"Vladimir Putin just wants to be friends," Exclusive interview, Bloomberg Businessweek, 8 September, 2016.

Secondary Sources

Books and Monographs

Arbatov, G. (1992). The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics. New York: Times Books.

Asmus, R. (Ed.). (2006). Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea. Washington, D.C.: German Marshall Fund.

Asmus, R. (2010). A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West. New York: Palgrave and Macmillan.

Baev, P. K. (2008). Russian Energy Policy and Military Power: Putin's Quest for Greatness. London: Routledge.

Brzezinski, Z. (1997). The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives. New York: Basic Books.

Brown, C. (2001). Understanding International Relations. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.

Bugajski, J. (2004). Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism. Westport, CT & London: Praeger.

Buzan, B., Jones, C., and Little, R. (1993). The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism. New York: Columbia University Press.

Checkel, J. T. (1997). Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Cheterian, V. (2008). War and Peace in the Caucasus, Russia's Troubled Frontier. New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press.

Clover, C. (2016). Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia's New Nationalism. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Clunan, A. C. (2009) The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests Johns Hopkins University Press.

Cohen, A. and Hamilton, R. E. (2011). The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications. Monograph. US Army Strategic Studies Institute.

Cornell, S. E. and Starr, S. F. (Eds.). (2009). The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Curtis, G. E. (Ed.). (1996). Russia: A Country Study. Washington, D.C.: GPO for the Library of Congress.

Danilovic, V. (2002). When Stakes Are High: Deterrence and Conflict Among Major Powers. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Dawisha, K. and Parrott, B. (1994). Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Haas, M. (2011). Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century: Putin, Medvedev and Beyond. London: Routledge.

Deutsch, K. W. (1957). Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Dragneva, R. and Wolczuk, K. (Eds.) (2013). Eurasian Economic Integration: Law, Policy and Politics. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Elman, C. and Elman, M. F. (Eds.). (2003). Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Freyberg-Inan, A., Harrison, E. and James, P. (Eds.). (2009). Rethinking Realism in International Relations. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Goldgeier, J. M. (1999). Not Whether but When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Goldgeier, J. M. and McFaul, M. (2003). Power and Purpose: U. S. Policy Toward Russia After the Cold War. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

Goldman, M. I. (2008). Petrostate: Putin, Power, and the New Russia. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grayson, G. W. (1999). Strange Bedfellows: NATO Marches East. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Gulick, E. V. (1955). Europe's Classical Balance of Power: A Case History of the Theory and Practice of One of the Great Concepts of European Statecraft. New York: Norton.

Hopf, T. (Ed.). (1999). Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Hopf, T. (2002). Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies: Moscow, 1955 and 1999. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Jervis, R. (1976). Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Keohane, R. O. (Ed.). (1986). Neorealism and its Critics. New York: Columbia University Press.

Knight, A. (1996). Spies Without Cloaks: The KGB's Successors. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Koreyba, Y. (2014). Problemy Yevropeyskoy Politiki v Otnosheniyakh Mezhdu Rossiey i Ukrainoy [Problems in European Policy in the Relations Between Russia and Ukraine]. Moscow: Aspekt.

Lo, B. (2008). Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy. London: Chatham House.

Lo, B. (2015). Russia and the New World Disorder. Washington and London: Brookings Institution Press/Chatham House.

Lucas, E. (2009). The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces Both Russia and the West. London: Bloomsbury.

Lynch, D. (2000). Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Case of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

MacDonald, P. K. and Parent, J. M. (2018). Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Malcolm, N., Pravda, A., Allison, R., and Light, M. (1996). Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mankoff, J. (2009). Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

McFaul, M. (2018). From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia. (1st ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). Tragedy of Great Power Politics. New York: Norton.

Michta, A. A. (Ed.). (1999). America's New Allies: Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic in NATO. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Morgenthau, H. J. (1978). Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace. (5th Ed.). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Motyl, A. J., Ruble, B. A., and Shevtsova, L. (Eds.). (2005). Russia's Engagement With the West: Transformation and Integration in the Twenty-First Century. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Neuville, T. F. de la. (2014). Ukraine: Regards sur une Crise. Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme.

Oberdorfer, D. (1998). From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991. (Rev. Ed.). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.

Oldberg, I. (2010). Russia's Great Power Strategy Under Putin and Medvedev. Research Monograph, Swedish Institute of International Affairs.

Prizel, I. (1998). National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationialism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosefielde, S. (2005). Russia in the 21st Century: The Prodigal Superpower. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ruggie, J. G. (1998). Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization. London: Routledge.

Sarotte, M. E. (2009). 1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Shibley, T. (1990). Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords. New York: Columbia University Press.

Shifrinson, J. R. I. (2018). Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Snyder, T. (2018). The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America. New York: Tim Duggan Books.

Solomon, G. B. (1998). The NATO Enlargement Debate, 1990-1997. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Sutela, P. (2013). The Political Economy of Putin's Russia. London: Routledge.

Szabo, S. F. (1992). The Diplomacy of German Unification. New York: St. Martin's.

Thorun, C. (2009). Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct Towards the West. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tsygankov, A. P. (2010). Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Tsygankov, A. P. (2012). Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor in International Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wallander, C. A. (Ed.). (1996). The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War. New York: Westview.

Wallander, C. A. (1999). Mortal Friends, Best Enemies: German-Russian Cooperation After the Cold War. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Walt, S. M. (1987). The Origins of Alliances. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Walt, S. M. (1996). Revolution and War. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Waltz, K. N. (1979). Theory of International Politics. New York: Random House.

Waltz, K. N. (2008). Realism and International Politics. New York: Routledge.

Webber, M. (1997). CIS Integration Trends: Russia and the Former Soviet South. London: FSP, Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Articles, Chapters, Reviews, Opinion Pieces, and Working Papers

Albright, M. (1997). "Enlarging NATO: Why Bigger is Better," The Economist (15 February): 21-23.

Allison, G. (2012). "What Happened to the Soviet Superpower's Nuclear Arsenal? Clues for the Nuclear Security Summit," Discussion Paper 2012-14, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School.

Allison, R. (2008). "Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace'," International Affairs 84.6: 1145-71.

Allison, R. (2014). "Russian 'Deniable Intervention' in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," International Affairs 90.6 (November).

Ambrosio, T. (2007). "Insulating Russia from a Colour Revolution: How the Kremlin Resists Regional Democratic Trends," Democratization 14.2: 232-52.

Antonenko, O. (1999-2000). "Russia, NATO and European Security After Kosovo," Survival: Global Politics and Strategy 41.4 (Winter): 124-44.

Applebaum, A. (2013). "Putinism: The Ideology," Strategic Updates, LSE Ideas.

Arbatov, A. (1993). "Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives," International Security 18.2: 5-43.

Arbatov, A. (2000). "The Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine: Lessons Learned from Kosovo and Chechnya," Marshall Center Papers, 2. George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

Arbatov, A. (2014). "Collapse of the World Order?" Russia in Global Affairs (September).

Aron, L. (2008). "The Georgia Watershed," Russian Outlook, American Enterprise Institute.

Aron, L. (2016). “Statement Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on US Policy Toward Putin’s Russia: ‘Drivers of Putin’s Foreign Policy,” American Enterprise Institute publication (June).

Åsberg, S. and Kragh, M. (2017). “Russia’s Strategy for Influence Through Public Diplomacy and Active Measures: The Swedish Case,” Journal of Strategic Studies (5 January).

Asmus, R. D., Kugler, R. L., and Larrabee, F. S. (1993). “Building a New NATO,” Foreign Affairs 72.4 (September-October): 28-40.

Baranovsky, V. (2000). “Russia: A Part of Europe or Apart from Europe?” International Affairs 76.3: 443-58.

Bennett, E. et al. “Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield,” Comparative Political Studies 40.2 (February)

Berryman, J. (2012). “Geopolitics and Russian Foreign Policy,” International Politics 49.4: 530-44.

Berzins, J. (2014). “Russia’s New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy,” Policy Paper 2.

Bew, J. (2015). “The Syrian War and the Return of Great Power Politics,” The New Statesman, 15 December.

Birch, J. (1999). “Ossetiya – Land of Uncertain Frontiers and Manipulative Elites,” Central Asian Survey 18.4: 501-34.

Bock, A. M., Henneberg, I., Plank, F. et al. (2014). “The Ukrainian Crisis and the Balance of Threat Theory,” International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis. 70.1 (December).

Bondareva, Y. (2004). “Georgia: Forward Line in the Greater Middle East,” Russian Analytica (September).

Bonsor, N. (1996). “Partnership with Russia in Europe: New Challenges for the EU-Russia Partnership,” Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 8th Roundtable of the Partnership with Russia 141.5.

Boston, S. and Massicot, D. (2018). “The Russian Way of Warfare,” Rand Corporation study.

Bouchet, N. (2016). “Russia’s ‘Militarization’ of Colour Revolutions,” Policy Perspectives 4.2: 1-4.

Brinkley, D. (1997). “Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine,” Foreign Policy 106 (Spring): 110-27.

Brown, M. E. (1995). “The Flawed Logic of NATO Expansion,” Survival: Global Politics and Strategy 37.1: 34-52.

Bryce-Rogers, A. (2013). “Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War,” Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization 21.3 (July): 339-68.

Brzezinski, Z. (1997). “A Geostrategy for Eurasia,” Foreign Affairs 76 (September/October): 50-65.

Bukkvoll, T. (2016). “Why Putin Went to War: Ideology, Interests and Decision-Making in the Russian Use of Force in Crimea and Donbas,” Contemporary Politics 22.3.

Cheterian, V. (2009). “The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars,” Central Asian Survey 28.2 (June).

Christensen, T. J. and Snyder, J. (1990). “Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity,” International Organization 4.2 (Spring): 137-68.

Ciobanu, C. (2007). “Political Economy of ‘Frozen Conflicts’ in Ex-Soviet States,” Paper submitted to the Virginia Social Science Association.

Cohen, A. (2007). “Domestic Factors Driving Russia’s Foreign Policy,” The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder #2084 on Russia and Eurasia. (November).

Collins, G. (2017). “Russia’s Use of the ‘Energy Weapon’ in Europe,” Baker Institute for Public Policy, Houston, Issue Brief.

Coppieters, B. (2007). “The EU and Georgia: Time and Perspectives in Conflict Resolution,” EUISS Occasional Paper No. 70 (December).

Davies, R. T. (1995). “Should NATO Grow? A Dissent,” New York Review of Books (September).

Dragneva, R. and Wolczuk, K. (2016). “Between Dependence and Integration: Ukraine’s Relations with Russia,” Europe-Asia Studies 64.4 (June): 678-98.

Donaldson, R. H. (2000). “Boris Yeltsin’s Foreign Policy Legacy,” Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law 7.2: 285-326.

Ellison, B. J. (2011). “Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War,” Demokratizatsiya, Elliot School of International Affairs: 343-66.

Fall, B. (2006). “Conflict in the South Caucasus,” Asian Affairs 37.2 (July)

Fearon, J. D. (1998). “Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations,” Annual Review of Political Science 1.1 (June): 289-313.

Feklyunina, V. (2008). “Battle for Perceptions: Projecting Russia in the West,” Europe-Asia Studies 60: 605-29.

Felgenhauer, P. (2016). “Budgetary Fight in Moscow Sends US-Russian Relations into Deep Crisis,” Eurasia Daily Monitor 13.161.

Ferguson, I. & Hast, S. (2018) “Introduction: The Return of Spheres of Influence?,” Geopolitics, 23:2, 277-284

Finkel, E. and Brudny, Y. M. (2012). "Russia and the Colour Revolutions," Democratization 19.1.

Fortin, J. (2010). "A Tool to Evaluate State Capacity in Post-Communist Countries, 1989-2006," European Journal of Political Research 49.5: 654-86.

Fraser, D. (2008). "Taking Ukraine Seriously: Western and Russian Responses to the Orange Revolution," in Schmidtke, O., Yekelchyk, S. (Eds.), Europe's Last Frontier? Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine Between Russia and the European Union. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pg. 157-74.

Frye, A. (2000). "The New NATO and Relations with Russia," Journal of Strategic Studies 23.3 (September).

Fukuyama, F. (1989). "The End of History?" The National Interest 16 (Summer): 3-18.

Fukuyama, F. (1991). "Liberal Democracy as a Global Phenomenon," Political Science & Politics 24.4: 659-64.

Gause, F. (2003). "Balancing What? Threat Perception and Alliance Choice in the Gulf," Security Studies 13.2: 273-305.

Gorokhov, V. N. and Gorovtsov, D. Y. (1998). "NATO Expansion: A View from the State Duma," Demokratizatsiia 6.1 (Winter).

Götz, K. E. (2015). "It's Geopolitics, Stupid: Explaining Russia's Ukraine Policy," Global Affairs 1: 3-10.

Gramer, R. and Johnson, K. (2019). "Who Lost Turkey?" Foreign Policy Magazine (July).

Hale, H. E. (2006). "Democracy or Autocracy on the March? The Colored Revolutions as Normal Dynamics of Patronal Presidentialism," Communist and Post-Communist Studies 39.3: 305-29.

Hannes, A. (2007). "Inside or Outside? Russia's Policies Towards NATO," Working Paper FG 5, Research Unit, Russia/CIS, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (January).

Haukkala, H. (2008). "The European Union as a Regional Normative Hegemon: The Case of European Neighbourhood Policy," Europe-Asia Studies 60: 1601-22.

Haukkala, H. (2015). "From Cooperative to Contested Europe? The Conflict in the Ukraine as a Culmination of a Long-Term Crisis in EU-Russia Relations," Journal of Contemporary European Studies 23.1: 95-101.

Headley, J. (2003). "Russia and NATO Forge Closer Ties," New Zealand International Review 28.5: 7-11.

Headley, J. (2005). "War on Terror or Pretext for Power? Putin, Chechnya, and the 'Terrorist International'" Australasian Journal of Human Security 1.2: 13-35.

Herz, J. (1950). "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," World Politics 2.2: 171-201.

Hill, F. (2004). “Energy Empire: Oil, Gas and Russia’s Revival,” Report for the Foreign Policy Centre, London, UK.

Hillion, C. (1998). “Partnership and Cooperation Agreements Between the EU and the New Independent States of the Ex-Soviet Union,” European Foreign Affairs Review 3.3: 399-420.

Holbrooke, R. (1995). “America, A European Power,” Foreign Affairs 74.2 (March-April): 38-51.

Hopf, T. (2002). “Identity, Legitimacy, and the Use of Military Force: Russia’s Great Power Identities and Military Intervention in Abkhazia,” Review of International Studies 31.1 (Spring): 225-43.

Hunter, R. (2003). “NATO-Russia Relations After 11 September,” Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 3.3.

Indans, I. (2007). “Relations of Georgia and Russia: Developments and Future Prospects,” Baltic Security & Defence Review 9: 131-49.

Isakova, I. (2005). “Russian Governance in the Twenty-first Century,” Cass Contemporary Studies.

Ivanov, S. (2006). “Russia Must Be Strong,” Wall Street Journal, 11 January.

Jennings, G. (2015). “Russian An-140 Production Halted by Ukrainian Sanctions,” Jane’s Defence Weekly

Johannesson, J. (2017). “Russia’s War with Ukraine is Acquire Military Industrial Capability and Human Resources,” Journal of International Studies 10.4: 63-71.

Kakachia, K. K. (2010). “Between Russian Assertiveness and Insecurity: Georgia’s Political Challenges and Prospect after the Conflict,” Uluslararası İlişkiler 7.26 (Summer): 87-104.

Karaganov, S. (2016). “How the World Looks from the Russian Perspective,” Russia in Global Affairs (August).

Karagiannis, E. (2014). “The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared: Military Performance, Legitimacy and Goals,” Contemporary Security Policy 35.3 (September).

Kissinger, H. (1994). “Expand NATO Now,” Washington Post, 19 December. A27

Kissinger, H. (2018). “How the Enlightenment Ends,” The Atlantic (June).

Kofman, M. (2016). “The Russian Navy’s Great Mediterranean Show of Force,” The National Interest (October).

Kofman, M. (2018) “Russian Performance in the Russo-Georgian War Revisited,” War on the Rocks. (September).

Kolossov, V., O’Loughlin, J. and Toal, G. (2011). “Inside Abkhazia: Survey of Attitudes in a De Facto State,” Post-Soviet Affairs 27.1: 1-36.

Kraczmarski, M. (2014). “Domestic Politics and Russian Foreign Policy,” Russian Analytical Digest 154 (July).

Kramer, M. (2002). “NATO, the Baltic States and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement,” International Affairs 78 (October).

Kramer, M. (2009). “The Myth of No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia,” Washington Quarterly 32.2 (April): 47-9.

Krauthammer, C. (1990). “The Unipolar Moment,” Foreign Affairs 70.1: 23-33.

Kubicek, P. (1999). “Russian Foreign Policy and the West,” Political Science Quarterly 114.4: 547-68.

Kucera, J. (2011). “Georgia’s Dangerous Quest for American Weapons,” The Atlantic (May).

Kuzio, T. (2010). “Nationalism, Identity and Civil Society in Ukraine: Understanding the Orange Revolution,” Communist and Post-Communist Studies 43: 285-96.

Labs, E. J. (1997). “Beyond victory: Offensive realism and the expansion of war aims.” Security Studies, 6(4), 1–49.

Lankina, Tomila V. and Watanabe, Kohei (2017) ‘Russian Spring’ or ‘Spring betrayal’? The media as a mirror of Putin’s evolving strategy in Ukraine. Europe-Asia Studies. pg. 1526- 1556.

Lanoszka, A. (2016). “Russian Hybrid Warfare and Extended Deterrence in Eastern Europe,” International Affairs 92.1 (January): 175-95.

Lapidus, G. W. (2007). “Between Assertiveness and Insecurity: Russian Elite Attitudes and the Russian-Georgian Crisis,” Post-Soviet Affairs 23.2 (April-June).

Larrabee, F. S. (2010). “Russia, Ukraine, and Central Europe: The Return of Geopolitics,” Journal of International Affairs 63.2 (Spring-Summer): 33-52.

Lazarević, D ‘NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia: old wine in new bottles?’, Connections: The Quarterly Journal 9: 1, Winter 2009, pg. 45–6

Legvold, R. (2015). “Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It,” (Review). Foreign Affairs (November-December).

Light, M. (1996). “Foreign Policy Thinking,” in Malcolm, N., Pravda A. Allison, R. and Light, M. (Eds.). Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pg. 35-8.

Logan, D. (2017). “Turkey and the West: Whatever Went Wrong?” British Academy Review 29 (January).

Lucian, A. W. (2018). “Why Didn’t Putin Interfere in Armenia’s Velvet Revolution?” Foreign Affairs (May).

Lukyanov, F. (2005). “America as the Mirror of Russian Phobias,” Social Research 72.4.

Lukyanov, F. (2016). “Putin’s Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia’s Rightful Place,” Foreign Affairs 30.

Lynch, A. A. C. (2001). “The Realism of Russia’s Foreign Policy,” Europe-Asia Studies 53.1: 37-41.

Maitra, S. (2016). “The Deceptively Romantic Historical Musings of the Russian Foreign Minister,” War on the Rocks (6 April).

Marten, K. (2015). “Putin’s Choices: Explaining Russian Foreign Policy and Intervention in Ukraine,” The Washington Quarterly 38.2: 189-204.

Marten, K. (2017). “Reconsidering NATO Expansion: A Counterfactual Analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990’s,” European Journal of International Security (November).

Maruyev, A. Y. (2009). “Russia and the U.S.A. in Confrontation: Military and Political Aspects,” Military Thought (July-September).

McDermott, R. N. (2009). “Russia’s Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgia War,” Parameters (Spring):

MacFarlane, N. and Menon, A. (2014). “The EU and Ukraine,” Survival: Global Politics and Strategy 56.3: 95-101.

McFaul, M. (1997). “A Precarious Peace: Domestic Politics in the Making of Russian Foreign Policy,” International Security 22: 5-35.

McFaul, M. (1999). “Russia’s Many Foreign Policies,” Demokratizatsiya 7 (Summer): 393-412.

McFaul, M. (2001). “Russia’s Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin,” Slavic Review 62.1.

McFaul, M. (2004). “‘Meddling’ in Ukraine: democracy is not an American plot,” Washington Post,

McFaul, M. (2007). “Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution,” International Security 32.2 (September).

McFaul, M. and Stoner, K. (2015). “Who Lost Russia (This Time)?” The Washington Quarterly 38.2: 167-87.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (1993). “The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent,” Foreign Affairs (Summer).

Mearsheimer, J. J. (1994/1995). “The False Promise of International Institutions,” International Security 19.3 (Winter): 5-49.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2009). “Reckless States and Realism,” International Relations 23.2 (June): 241-56.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin,” Foreign Affairs.

Mearsheimer, J. J. and Walt, S. M. (2013). “Leaving Theory Behind: Why Simplistic Hypothesis Testing is Bad for International Relations,” European Journal of International Relations 19.3: 427-57.

Newnham, R. E. (2015). “Georgia on My Mind? Russian Sanctions and the End of the ‘Rose Revolution’” Journal of Eurasian Studies 6.2 (July).

Nichols, T. (2014). “Russia’s Leader is Neither a Realist Nor a Nationalist,” The Federalist (September).

Norris, R. S. (1992). “The Soviet Nuclear Archipelago,” Arms Control Today 22.1.

Odom, W. E. (1995). “NATO’s Expansion: Why the Critics are Wrong,” The National Interest (Spring): 38-49.

Oleinikova, O. (2017). “Foreign Funded NGOs in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine: Recent Restrictions and Implications,” Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 9.3: 96-105.

Paderin, A. A. (2006). “Policy and Military Strategy: A Unity Lesson,” Military Thought (April-June).

Paliy, A. (2006). “Our Answer to Chernomyrdin,” (Russian language), Ukrainska Pravda, 20 February.

Petro, N. (2015). “Russia’s Orthodox Soft Power,” US Global Engagement, Carnegie Council Report (March).

Piontkovsky, A. (2006). “East or West? Russia’s Identity Crisis in Foreign Policy,” Foreign Policy Centre, London.

Powell, R. (1991). “Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory,” The American Political Science Review 85.4 (December): 1303-320.

Reiter, D. (2001). “Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy,” International Security 25.4: 41-67.

Renz, B. and Sinovets, P. (2015). “Russia’s 2014 Military Doctrine and Beyond: Threat Perceptions, Capabilities, and Ambitions,” Research Paper, NATO Defense College, Rome.

Royner, J. (2015a). “Dealing With Putin’s Strategic Incompetence,” War on the Rocks (12 August).

Rovner, J. (2015b). “Searching for Strategy in Putin’s Russia,” War on the Rocks (14 September).

Rühle, M. (2014). “NATO Enlargement and Russia: Discerning Fact from Fiction,” American Foreign Policy Interests 36.4.

Rumer, E. B. and Wallander, C. A. (2003). “Russia: Power in Weakness?” The Washington Quarterly 27.1: 57-73.

Sakwa, R. (2008a). “New Cold War or Twenty Years’ Crisis? Russia and International Politics,” International Affairs 2: 241-67.

Sakwa, R. (2008b). “Putin and the Oligarchs,” New Political Economy 13.

Salvathan et al. (2015). “Iran and Saudi Arabia: The Dilemma of Security, the Balance of Threat,” Journal of Scientific Research and Development 2.2: 141-49.

Samokhvalov, V. (2005). “Colored Revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia: Repercussions for the System of International Relations in the Black Sea Region,” Perceptions (August): 99-111.

Sarotte, M. E. (2019). “How to Enlarge NATO: The Debate Inside the Clinton Administration, 1993-1995,” International Security 44.1 (Summer): 7-41.

Sauer, T. (2017). The origins of the Ukraine crisis and the need for collective security between Russia and the West. Global Policy, 8, 82–91

Schachtman, N. (2008). “How Israel Trained and Equipped Georgia’s Army,” Wired (August).

Sergounin, A. A. “Russian domestic debate on NATO enlargement: from phobia to damage limitation,” European Security 6.4 (Winter).

Sherr, J. (1997). “Russian-Ukraine Rapprochement?: The Black Sea Fleet Accords,” Survival: Global Politics and Strategy 39.3.

Shevtsova, L. (2003). “Putin’s Russia”. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Shevtsova, L. (2014a). “The Maidan and Beyond: The Russia Factor,” Journal of Democracy 25 (July): 74-82.

Shevtsova, L. (2014b). “The Ukraine Crisis: Falling into Putin’s Trap,” American Interest (March).

Shevtsova, L. (2015). “The Authoritarian Resurgence: ‘Forward to the Past’ in Russia,” Journal of Democracy (April).

Sinikukka, S. (2009). “European Democracy Promotion in Russia Before and After the ‘Colour’ Revolutions,” Democratization 16.4: 734-5.

Smith, G. (1999). “The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism,” Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 24.4: 481-94.

Smith, J. (2008). “The NATO-Russia Relationship: Defining Moment or Déja vu?” CSIS Report (November). Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Smith, J., Smith, M. A., and Timmins, G. (2001). “Russia, NATO and the EU in the Era of Enlargement: Vulnerability or Opportunity?” Geopolitics 6.1 (Summer).

Snyder, J. (1984-1985). “Richness, Rigor, and Relevance in the Study of Soviet Foreign Policy,” International Security 9.3 (Winter): 89-108.

Snyder, J. (1988). “Science and Sovietology: Bridging the Methods Gap in Soviet Foreign Policy Studies,” World Politics 40.2 (January): 169-93.

Snyder, T. and Ash, T. G. (2005). “The Orange Revolution,” New York Review of Books, 28 April.

Soltanifar, M. (2005). “US-Russian Rivalry in the Caucasus: Towards a New Cold War?” Global Dialogue 7.3/4.

Stent, A. E. (2008). “Restoration and Revolution in Putin’s Foreign Policy,” Europe-Asia Studies 60.6 (August).

Stulberg, A. N. (2015). “Out of Gas?: Russia, Ukraine, Europe, and the Changing Geopolitics of Natural Gas,” Problems Post-Communism 62.2.

Talbott, S. (1995). “Why NATO Should Grow,” New York Review of Books (August): 27-30.

Tarver-Wahlquist, M. and Tsygankov, A. P. (2009). “Duelling Honors: Power, Identity and the Russia-Georgia Divide,” Foreign Policy Analysis 5.4 (October): 307-26.

Tashlykov, S. L. (2010). “General and Particular Features of Present-Day Conflicts Involving the U. S. and Its Allies,” Military Thought (July-September).

Telbami, S. (2002). “Kenneth Waltz, Neorealism, and Foreign Policy,” Security Studies 11.3: 158-70.

Thomas, T. L. (2009). “The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises its Five-Day War in South Ossetia,” Journal of Slavic Military Studies 22.1: 31-67.

Toal, G. (2008). “Russia’s Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics of the August 2008 War Over South Ossetia,” Eurasian Geography and Economics 49.6: 670-705.

Tomé, L. J. R. L. (2000). “Russia and NATO’s Enlargement,” Final Report, NATO Fellowship Programme, 1998-2000.

Trenin, D. (2006a). “The Post-Imperial Project,” Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 15 February.

Trenin, D. (2006b). “Russia Leaves the West,” Foreign Affairs 85.4: 87-96.

Trenin-Straussov, P. (1999). “The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council in 1997-1999: Anatomy of a Failure,” Berlin: Berliner Informationszentrum für Transatlantische Sicherheit. pg. 1-8.

Tsygankov, A. P. (2007). “Finding a Civilizational Idea: ‘West,’ ‘Eurasia,’ and ‘Euro-East’ in Russia’s Foreign Policy,” Geopolitics 12.3: 375-99.

Tsygankov, A. P. (2012). “Change and Continuity in Russia’s Foreign Policy,” Russian Analytical Digest 109: 9-11.

Tsygankov, A. P. (2015). “Vladimir Putin’s Last Stand: The Sources of Russia’s Ukraine Policy,” Post-Soviet Affairs 31.

Umland, A. (2016). “Russia’s strategy: Look scarier than you are,” National Interest (January).

Van Evera, S. (1990). “Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War,” International Security 15.3: 7-57.

Wallander, C. A. (2000). “Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO After the Cold War,” International Organization 54.4:705-35.

Walt, S. M. (1988). “Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia,” International Organization 42: 275-316.

Walt, S. M. (1992). “Revolution and War,” World Politics 44: 321-68.

Walt, S. M. (2003). “Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning,” in Art, R. J. and Jervis, R. (Eds.). International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues. (6th Ed.). New York: Longman.

Walt, S. M. (2005). “The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in IR,” Annual Review of Political Science. pg. 23-48.

Walt, S. M. (2011/2012). “Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity is Not Peaceful,” International Security 36.3: 9-40.

Waltz, K. N. (2000). “NATO Expansion: A Realist’s View,” Contemporary Security Policy 21.2: 23-38.

Waltz, K. N. (2012). “Why Iran Should Get the Bomb,” Foreign Affairs (July).

Wilson, A. (2006). “Ukraine’s Orange Revolution, NGOs and the Role of the West,” Cambridge Review of International Affairs 19.1: 21-32.

Wolchik, S. L. (2012). “Putinism Under Siege: Can There Be a Color Revolution?” Journal of Democracy 23.3.

Yenikeyeff, S. M. (2008). “The Georgian-Russia Standoff and the Future of Caspian and Central Asian Energy Supplies,” Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.

Zielys, P. (2013). “U.S. Security Interests and Democracy Assistance Programs in Georgia and Ukraine,” Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 11.1.

Zygar, M. (2016). “The Russian Reset that Never Was,” Foreign Policy (December).