

**TYING DOWN THE GULLIVERS:  
TRIPARTITE STRATEGIC BALANCING IN UNIPOLAR INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMS**



**Alexander Volsky**

**University College, Oxford**

**This thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of D.Phil in  
International Relations in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the  
University of Oxford**

**Trinity Term 2013**

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation seeks to conceptualise and operationalise the concept of soft balancing in international relations by articulating a “theory of tripartite strategic balancing” which is applicable to both international and regional unipolar systems. It has a twofold purpose: one theoretical and the other empirical. First, it seeks to develop a theory of tripartite strategic balancing which encompasses three forms of strategic balancing: internal, external, and soft balancing. The second part seeks to test the theory’s utility in explaining international political outcomes in the post-Cold War international system. In particular, it seeks to ascertain whether and how “second-tier great powers” have strategically balanced against the United States on a global level since the end of the Cold War. The analyses will focus largely on the foreign policies of Russia and France – the chief soft balancers.

However, this dissertation also seeks to extend the concept of soft balancing into the regional level of analysis by examining whether and how minor-regional powers soft balance against regional unipolar leaders. For instance, it will examine whether and how the Russian Federation has been soft balanced against by states in the “European Near Abroad.” The analyses will focus primarily on the foreign policies of Poland – the chief soft balancer in the region. The dissertation will employ three in-depth case studies – the Kosovo Crisis (1999), the Iraqi wars (1991-2003), and the Georgia Crisis (2008) – to verify whether or not tripartite strategic balancing is actually occurring as the theory predicts. It will heavily rely on sources and interviews conducted during my time working at the United Nations Security Council and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These findings seek to contribute a more nuanced strand of thinking to the realist paradigm in international relations, and they offer practical implications for both US and Russian foreign policymaking.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION – THE PUZZLE OF THE MISSING BALANCE**

The present condition of international politics is unnatural.

- Kenneth N. Waltz, “Globalization and American Power”, 2000

America’s preponderance of power in the international system is unprecedented. Ever since the birth of the modern state system no other state has commanded such a margin of superiority in all the main dimensions of power: military, economic, political, technological, and cultural. These advantages are further compounded by America’s propitious geostrategic position. In short, the most appropriate description of the post-Cold War international system appears to be one of American unipolarity.<sup>1</sup>

Students of international relations have devoted much attention to how the United States should use its power during this historic moment. Less attention, however, has been devoted to how other great powers have responded to American unipolarity. One traditional response to a potential hegemon’s bid for mastery has been to combine against it in accordance with the dictates of balance of power theory.

Balance of power theory is one of the most elegant and time-honoured theories in international relations. It is also one of the most elusive.<sup>2</sup> In its simplest formulation, it predicts that a state will respond to an unbalanced situation by balancing against a preponderant power, and in the process, attempt to restore a previous equilibrium or usher in

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis adopts a definition of polarity which is derived from the logic of balance of power theory. Under this formulation, *unipolarity* is a system in which one state’s capabilities are so concentrated as to preclude the formation of a (hard) counterbalancing coalition against it. The third chapter will further explore this issue. For a discussion on American unipolarity see G. John Ikenberry, ed., *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005); William Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World”, *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 1, Summer 1999, pp. 5-41; and G. John Ikenberry, ed., *International Relations Theory and the Consequences of Unipolarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> For the elusiveness of the concept of the balance of power see Martin Wight, “The Balance of Power”, in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966) and Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978).

a new one. Traditional balance of power theory maintains that there are two types of balancing strategies: internal balancing, which occurs when a state converts its latent power (*i.e.* economic, technological, social, and natural resources) into military capabilities, and external balancing, which occurs when a state seeks to form military alliances against the preponderant power.<sup>3</sup> Taken together, these two types of balancing strategies constitute *hard balancing*.

A puzzle arises: if states do in fact operate as traditional balance of power theory suggests, and if the United States is more powerful today than any other state in modern history, then we should expect the other great powers in the international system to rush into each other's arms in an effort to counterbalance the United States. However, overt traditional hard balancing dynamics have been somewhat absent from the post-Cold War international system. The central security concern for many states in the post-Cold War era has often been how to keep the United States enmeshed in their regional security structures rather than how to balance against it. In fact, there is an argument made by some scholars that the United States has had an exceptional status in the annals of balance of power theory: it asserted that the only time the United States was ever balanced against in its history was by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> Another group of influential scholars have even questioned the analytical usefulness of the concept of the balance of power outside the European context, citing its difficulty in accounting for the rise of hegemonies in a variety of pre-modern and non-European state systems.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), pp. 117-123.

<sup>4</sup> Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States", *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 18; John M. Owen IV, "Transnational Liberalism and U.S. Primacy", *International Security*, vol. 26, no. 3, Winter 2001/2002, pp. 117-152; G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See William Wohlforth, Richard Little, Stuart Kaufman, David Kang, Charles Jones, Victoria Tin-Bor Hui, Arthur Eckstein, Daniel Deudney and William Brenner, "Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History", *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2007, pp. 155-185; and Stuart Kaufman, Richard Little, and William Wohlforth, eds., *The Balance of Power in World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

In fact, some optimists claim that realism in general, and balance of power theory in particular, has become a relic of the past, an anachronism in this “new age of international relations.”<sup>6</sup> The optimists claim that we have entered a new world era where balance of power politics, security competition, and war among the great powers has become obsolete.<sup>7</sup> Great powers no longer view themselves as military rivals but rather as members of an intentional community or friends in a Kantian zone of perpetual peace: cooperation, not competition, has become the defining feature of their relations. Furthermore, a large body of scholars maintains that war between democracies is theoretically unimaginable, and the champion of liberalism, Francis Fukuyama, even announced that the end of the Cold War ushered in “an end of history” itself.<sup>8</sup>

In sum, balance of power politics and security competition among the great powers is seen as an anachronism in this “new age of international relations.”<sup>9</sup> Balance of power theory has thus been relegated to a chapter in the history books. The purpose of this dissertation is to challenge this conventional wisdom by developing a more nuanced understanding of the balancing strategies that states employ under the conditions of global and regional unipolarity in the post-Cold War international system.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a sceptical account of the so-called “new age of international relations” see Adam Roberts, “A New Age in International Relations?”, *International Affairs*, vol. 63, no. 3, July 1991, pp. 509-525.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, see John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Michael Mandelbaum, “Is Major War Obsolete?”, *Survival*, vol. 40, no. 4, Winter 1998-1999, pp. 20-38; Jeffery W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, “Is Anybody Still a Realist?”, *International Security*, vol. 24, no. 2, Fall 1999, pp. 5-55; and Jonathan Levine, “The Crisis of Realism”, *The National Interest*, 5 April 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-crisis-realism-8310>.

<sup>8</sup> See Michael Brown et al., eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996); and Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”, *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18.

<sup>9</sup> As the realist John Mearsheimer recounts, the US President Clinton propagated this optimistic worldview throughout the 1990s. For instance, in 1992 he declared that “in a world where freedom, not tyranny, is on the march, the cynical calculus of pure power politics simply does not compute. It is ill-suited to a new era.” In 1997 he remarkably dismissed a charge that the expansion of NATO to former Warsaw Pact states would antagonise Russia as being based on the mistaken belief “that the great power territorial politics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will dominate this 21<sup>st</sup> century.” See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 360-361; William J. Clinton, “American Foreign Policy and the Democratic Ideal”, Campaign Speech, Pabst Theatre, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1 October 1992; and “In Clinton’s Words: ‘Building Lines of Partnership and Bridges to the Future’”, *The New York Times*, 10 July 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Global unipolarity specifies a condition in which one state commands an overwhelming preponderance of power vis-à-vis all of its international rivals in all the dimensions of power so as to preclude the formation of a

## 1.1 Hard Balancing Strategies: Internal and External Balancing

The theory and phenomenon of the balance of power have an ancient pedigree which predates the development of international relations as an academic discipline. The second chapter is devoted in part to exploring the evolution of the theory and the practice of the balance of power, but it is appropriate to briefly note that balance of power theory has been traditionally conceived as a two-pronged strategy of confronting a potential hegemon with either internal or external balancing, or both.

Traditional balance of power theory is predicated on the notion that states seek to survive as independent political entities in an anarchical international system. Since it is the strongest state that has the wherewithal to threaten each state individually – or perhaps the entire anarchical international system itself – states will employ balancing strategies to preserve their independence and/or to safeguard the anarchical nature of the international system.<sup>11</sup>

*Internal balancing* strategies consist of transforming a state's economic, technological, social, and natural resources into military capabilities which can be utilised during a military confrontation with an opponent. One pertinent historical example of internal balancing is the first of Stalin's several Five-Year Plans (1928-32). Stalin made his motivation for the rapid industrialisation of the Soviet Union abundantly clear during a speech to factory managers in 1931 in which he presciently proclaimed: "We are fifty or a

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(hard) counterbalancing coalition against it (for example, global American unipolarity after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991); regional unipolarity specifies a condition in which one state commands an overwhelming preponderance of power vis-à-vis its regional rivals so as to preclude the formation of a (hard) counterbalancing coalition against it in a defined geopolitical zone (for example, regional Russian unipolarity in its "European Near Abroad"). The "Near Abroad" is a term frequently used by Russian policymakers to describe several post-Communist states in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The "European Near Abroad" is discussed in detail in the sixth chapter.

<sup>11</sup> The term "anarchy" is used not to describe a state of lawlessness or chaos among states, but rather to denote a condition in which there is no authority higher than the sovereign state. For a thoughtful exposition on anarchy in international relations see Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 3rd edn. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance within ten years. Either we do it, or we shall go under.”<sup>12</sup> By 1931 it is conceivable that Stalin was referring to the Western Allies as much as he was to Germany when he uttered this statement, but nonetheless his internal balancing strategies eventually laid the foundations for the Soviet Union’s ultimate victory over Germany a decade later.

Internal balancing is thus the archetypal example of self-help in the international system. Kenneth Waltz argued that in a bipolar international system, internal balancing is the most effective balancing strategy available to the superpowers because it enables them to rely on their own capabilities rather than the capabilities of their allies. It is also more reliable and precise than external balancing because states are less likely to miscalculate their relative strengths than they are to miscalculate the strengths and relative capabilities of their allies and opposing coalitions.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, internal balancing is seen as the only feasible balancing strategy under bipolarity because other states can often only offer a superpower a modest increase in its capabilities.

However, there are always limits to how much extra capabilities a threatened state may marshal against a potential hegemon. In fact, John Mearsheimer argues that since states constantly seek to maximise their share of world power, states are “effectively engaged in internal balancing all the time.” This means that the marginal increase that any state may add to its defensive capabilities at any time will always be limited, and thus other avenues for balancing are often required.<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, under the conditions of unipolarity, clear signals of internal balancing by states will likely provoke the unwanted attention and wrath of the unipolar leader. Hence, states will often combine, or substitute, internal balancing strategies with other more nuanced balancing strategies.

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Stalin, “The Tasks of Business Executives”, *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), vol. 13, p.41.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 168.

<sup>14</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 156-157.

A more contemporary phenomenon which may be classified as a type of hard balancing is *asymmetric balancing*: this includes efforts by states to balance and contain threats from subnational actors such as terrorist groups. It also includes the flip side of the coin: efforts by subnational actors and their state sponsors to balance opponent states by employing asymmetric means such as terrorism.<sup>15</sup>

*External balancing* strategies consist of constructing formal war-fighting military alliances with other states which can subsequently be invoked in the event of a military confrontation with an opponent state. These war-fighting military alliances are usually contained in bilateral treaties which specify the conditions under which one state is obliged to militarily assist another state. They may be offensive or defensive in nature.

External balancing strategies usually involve sending clear signals to a potential aggressor or hegemon that the balancing states are committed to maintaining a particular distribution of power, even if it means going to war. In effect, it is like drawing a red line in the sand which the potential hegemon or aggressor cannot cross. The strategy of external balancing is important for two main reasons: it spreads the costs of checking a potential hegemon among two or more states, and it also increases the military and diplomatic wherewithal of the balancing coalition, which in turn increases the likelihood that deterrence will succeed.

One pertinent example, which is championed by realists as the ultimate vindication of the logic of the balance of power, is the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894, wherein ideological enemies Republican France and Tsarist Russia coalesced in accordance with the dictum “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” In particular, the conditions of the war-fighting military alliance specified that: “if France is attacked by Germany, or by Italy supported by Germany, Russia will employ all her available forces for an attack on Germany;

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<sup>15</sup> T.V. Paul, “Introduction”, in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

and if Russia is attacked by Germany, or by Austria supported by Germany, France will employ all her available forces for an attack on Germany.”<sup>16</sup> Collective security arrangements, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), may also be considered as manifestations of external balancing strategies. In NATO’s case, the most likely target of the external balancing coalition was the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe.

However, external balancing also has its drawbacks. It is often slow and inefficient: it requires the conscious coordination of the foreign and military policies of two or more states which could often harbour disparate and competing policy objectives. In practice, threatened states very often disagree over how the burden of defence should be distributed. This has proven to be a constant source of difficulty and ire between the United States and its allies in NATO which continually fail to spend the minimum required on defence expenditures (2.0 percent of GDP annually). Moreover, since states are ultimately self-interested, they may try to “buck-pass” the burdens among themselves. Most crucially, it can be ineffective under the conditions of unipolarity because it can incur the wrath of the unipolar leader. Consequently, states have forged more nuanced balancing strategies to adapt to these changing circumstances.

## 1.2 Soft Balancing Strategies

A third type of balancing strategy that states have at their disposal is soft balancing. What is soft balancing, how does it work, and who is most likely to employ it? *Soft balancing is undertaken by a state seeking to establish a more balanced system in a way which does not directly challenge a unipolar leader’s military preponderance but rather*

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<sup>16</sup> Franco-Russian Alliance Military Convention, 18 August 1892, World War One Document Archive, <http://www.gwpda.org/1914m/franruss.htm>.

*utilises non-military tools to constrain its most aggressive and unilateral military policies.*<sup>17</sup>

Soft balancing measures include diplomatic arrangements, international institutions, and economic statecraft, all of which may have a real effect on the military policies of a unipolar leader and raise the costs of using military power unilaterally. Diplomatic arrangements short of formal alliances, such as ententes or limited security understandings, may be established in an effort to balance against an aspiring hegemon or a preponderant power. States may also collaborate in regional or international institutions such as the UN, NATO, or the EU in an effort to stymie a unipolar leader's aggressive designs. Or they may engage in economic statecraft designed to punish a unipolar leader. For instance, they may erect protective tariffs or expand economic regionalism and enmesh regional states to the detriment of the unipolar leader. All of these measures might facilitate greater cooperation among the unipolar leader's rivals, and in the process, pave the road for hard balancing and an eventual return to multipolarity.

In the current international system, the chief protagonists of soft balancing are the so-called "second-tier great powers" which may possess the potential capabilities to form a balance of power coalition against the United States. These include states such as Russia, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, and the United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup> On a regional level, such as in the European Near Abroad, the chief soft balancers may include strategically important minor-ranked powers, such as Poland and Ukraine.

In short, soft balancing measures are the ropes with which the second-tier great powers try to *tie down Gulliver*. This is an appropriate metaphor because not only does it

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<sup>17</sup> This definition is a modification of Robert Pape's definition: soft balancing involves "actions that do not directly challenge US military preponderance but that use non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive unilateral US military policies." Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States", p. 10. It is interesting to note that the concept of soft balancing was developed in and about the US in the post-Cold War era; a subsidiary purpose of this dissertation is to indicate that the concept is a more general one which has a history outside of the US experience in the post-Cold War era. Please note that "unipolar leaders" may be conceived as the preponderant power within the international system as a whole or as the preponderant power within a regional sub-system such as the European Near Abroad.

<sup>18</sup> T.V. Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of US Primacy", *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 46.

illustrate the dual goal of soft balancing measures – to constrain the giant’s unilateral use of force and perhaps create a new distribution of power – but it also indicates the limitations of soft balancing measures because Gulliver was neither absolutely nor indefinitely constrained by the Lilliputians and their enmeshing ropes.

### **1.3 The Argument**

This thesis has a twofold purpose, one theoretical and the other empirical. The first (theoretical) purpose is to articulate a theory of tripartite strategic balancing in unipolar international (and regional) systems and to test its utility. “Utility” will be measured primarily by how well the theory explains international political outcomes among the unipolar leader and the second-tier great powers on the global level, or the unipolar regional leader and the minor-regional powers on a particular regional level.<sup>19</sup> This will be examined in the empirical chapters. The theory will also generate some testable propositions which can serve as the basis for theoretical predictions about the direction of future international political outcomes; however, predicting any social phenomenon (especially as complex and multi-layered as international relations) is notoriously difficult given the unpredictable nature of the human factor, and thus the theory will be judged primarily on its explanatory – rather than predictive – powers.

The second (empirical) purpose is sub-divided into two parts: first, to ascertain whether and how the United States has been strategically balanced against on an international (or global) level since the end of the Cold War; and secondly, to ascertain whether and how the Russian Federation has been strategically balanced against on a regional level in the European Near Abroad since the end of the Cold War. The American and Russian cases

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<sup>19</sup> The definition of unipolar leader and “second-tier great powers” is discussed in detail in the fourth chapter. Also, there is some degree of overlap between the two (theoretical and empirical) purposes in the sense that in order to test a theory, one must check to see if it stands up to empirical reality.

serve to illustrate the utility of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing in both global and regional unipolar systems.<sup>20</sup>

The argument proceeds in five steps. First, a potential solution to the “puzzle of the missing balancing” is offered by arguing that balance of power politics are re-emerging – not in the strictly traditional sense – but in the more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of balancing as a state strategy which encompasses internal, external, and the more subtle soft form of balancing.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, soft balancing is a useful amendment to realism and traditional balance of power theory, particularly when explaining state behaviour in the contemporary international system.

Second, the “politics of unipolarity” is introduced with particular emphasis on why the second-tier great powers have reason to fear American unipolarity and why Russia’s neighbours in the European Near Abroad are similarly apprehensive. On the one hand, American global unipolarity and Russian regional unipolarity generate fear because, under the conditions of international anarchy, each state must provide for its own security as best as it can, and if a conflict of interest emerges with the unipolar leader, the unipolar leader can use its superior power to impose its will with impunity.<sup>22</sup> This source of fear is strictly structurally driven. On the other hand, another source of fear is rooted in the perceived intentions of the unipolar leader. If the unipolar leader is perceived to harbour belligerent intentions – such as a doctrine of preventive war or a doctrine of protecting its citizens abroad – then fear of the unipolar leader is intensified. A particular state’s response to this fear may run the gamut of strategic balancing options: internal, external, and soft.

Third, the concept of soft balancing is operationalised and presented as the most prudent balancing strategy in a unipolar international system. It is the most prudent strategy

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<sup>20</sup> In other words, the empirical chapters serve to illustrate that the concept of the balance of power, and soft balancing in particular, is analytically useful in explaining great power relations in the post Cold War era.

<sup>21</sup> The theory of tripartite strategic balancing is thus a more “comprehensive” theory than the traditional Waltzian balance of power theory because it incorporates three rather than simply two balancing strategies.

<sup>22</sup> Walt, *Taming American Power*, p. 71.

because, by definition, hard balancing against the preponderant power is very difficult to sustain and is a dangerous and costly practice.<sup>23</sup> A systemic theory of tripartite strategic balancing is then articulated. The theory's assumptions are explicitly enumerated and a hypothesis is derived from the theory which predicts that: 1) in a unipolar system, the second-tier great powers (or the minor-regional powers in a unipolar regional system) will soft balance against the unipolar leader; and 2) this soft balancing dynamic will be intensified (potentially slipping into hard balancing) if the unipolar leader uses military force unilaterally and/or if it is perceived to harbour belligerent intentions.

The systemic theory has two independent variables (or units of analysis): distribution of capabilities (unipolarity) and the perceived intentions of the unipolar leader.<sup>24</sup> The dependent variable is the degree to which second-tier great powers or minor-regional powers soft balance against the preponderant power. In sum, in the current international system, the theory predicts soft balancing will occur against the United States irrespective of whether or not it is perceived to have belligerent or benign intentions; but at the same time, it also predicts that soft balancing tactics will be more widespread and pronounced if American structural preponderance is accompanied with belligerent intentions – such as a doctrine of preventive war. In this sense, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing may be conceived of as a nuanced structural theory.

Similarly, if the theory is applied to a contained geopolitical system, such the European Near Abroad, the theory predicts soft balancing against the regional hegemon irrespective of whether or not it is perceived to have belligerent or benign intentions; however, these soft balancing dynamics may be expected to intensify (perhaps even spilling

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<sup>23</sup> It is dangerous and costly because it might incur the wrath of the hegemon. This is why some scholars such as William Wohlforth believe that a balance of power arrangement is incapable of arising against a unipolar leader. See William Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World", *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 1, Summer 1999, pp. 5-41.

<sup>24</sup> Intentions are measured along a continuum from benign to belligerent. They are based on the extent to which a state is perceived to be following international law and acting multilaterally through the United Nations Security Council.

into hard balancing) if the regional hegemon uses military force unilaterally and/or is perceived to harbour belligerent intentions.

The theory's scope may apply to both the international system as a whole and to regional subsystems – such as the European Near Abroad – as long as the condition of unipolarity obtains. When the theory's level of analysis changes (*i.e.* from the international system to a regional system), the units of analysis change as well: *i.e.* a third independent variable, geographic proximity, is added into the equation in addition to the distribution of capabilities and perceived intentions. Since the security dynamics at the international level of analysis are determined primarily by the interactions of a unipolar leader and the second-tier great powers, the analysis will be focused largely on the foreign and military policies of a handful of great powers. On the other hand, since the security dynamics at the regional level of analysis may be influenced by minor-regional powers, the analysis will be broadened accordingly.

Fourth, three in-depth case studies – the Kosovo Crisis (1999), the Iraqi Crises (1991-2003), and the Georgia Crisis (2008) – are examined to verify whether or not strategic balancing is actually occurring as the theory predicts. Although the chapters will focus primarily on the great power relations immediately before, during, and after these three wars (when strategic balancing was at its apex), the chapters will also make reference to evidence of balancing behaviour before the eruption of hostilities. The first two cases are selected because they are both instances in which the United States has resorted to force in a manner that at least some great powers viewed as a unilateral and aggressive transgression of international law and order. The Kosovo case study focuses primarily on the US-led NATO airstrike against Serbia in March 1999 and the international reaction thereto. The Iraqi case study examines not only the US-led invasion of Iraq (2003) but also Operation Desert Strike (1996) and Operation Desert Fox (1998). This will enable the Iraqi case to elucidate exactly

how soft balancing has evolved since 1991, when there was no balancing, to 2003, when the Second Gulf War<sup>25</sup> coalition of 1991 fell apart. The Georgian case study has been selected because it was almost unanimously decried by every member of the United Nations Security Council as a violation of international law and order, and it formally marks the first time that the Russian Federation has used force across internationally-recognised boundaries since its inception.

Lastly, an evaluation is made of how well the empirical evidence derived from the case studies fits the theoretical expectations of the tripartite strategic balancing model. In short, the three empirical chapters will argue that the theory of tripartite strategic balancing illuminates important dimensions in the relations of great powers since the end of the Cold War, and that states have soft balanced against the United States and the Russian Federation in this period. It will become apparent that although internal and external balancing strategies played a role in the balancing dynamics between states, the concept of soft balancing is required to develop a more comprehensive picture of state practice in the post-Cold War era.

This third element is the key to unlocking an understanding of great power relations because it is the primary mode of balancing in unipolar international and regional systems. Other traditional accounts of balance of power theory do not incorporate this vital third element. Furthermore, it will also become apparent that soft balancing has been a response to both the United States' structural preponderance and its unilateral military policies, and that minor-regional powers in the European Near Abroad (such as Poland) have employed soft balancing techniques to challenge Russian regional hegemony. In general, it will become evident that: 1) the more unipolar the system is, the more likely it will be that soft balancing

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<sup>25</sup> It is commonplace for scholars to refer to the 1991 US-led war to oust Iraq from Kuwait as the First Gulf War and the 2003 US-led invasion to topple Saddam Hussein as the Second Gulf War. This is an American-centric misnomer. For the purposes of this thesis, the original "First Gulf War" occurred between the forces of Iran and Iraq in 1980-88. The operation to liberate Kuwait in 1991 is termed the "Second Gulf War" and the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq is termed the "Third Gulf War."

is the dominant type of balancing in the system; and 2) whereas second-tier great powers tend to focus their balancing efforts against the global unipolar leader, minor-regional powers restrict their balancing efforts to the regional unipolar leader. These findings have implications for both international relations theory and American and Russian foreign policy.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

The three methodologies employed in this thesis include case studies, process tracing, and interviewing. Stephen Van Evera explains that case studies are used “to see whether events unfold in the manner predicted and whether actions speak and act as the theory predicts.” Accordingly, the three case studies examined in this thesis have this purpose. Process tracing is a method used to determine how a decision-maker arrives at a particular decision. The ultimate hope is that the decision-maker’s motives in making a particular decision thereby become elucidated. Ideally, *for the purposes of soft balancing, it should be evident that when the decision-makers decide to employ soft balancing measures against a unipolar leader, their decisions are motivated by their commitment to multilateralism and/or multipolarity.*

Ascertaining motives in foreign policy analysis is extremely difficult because actions can be the result of an infinite number of motives, some of which are intangible (in a famous example, George W. Bush was purported to have a psychological need to oust Saddam Hussein because the Iraqi leader threatened to assassinate Bush’s father). One way to avoid this conundrum is to think of motives in terms of “stated purposes:” in this sense, a state may be said to be motivated to soft balance against a unipolar leader if its key decision-makers articulate such in their policy statements or treaties. As Van Evera notes: “evidence that a

given stimulus caused a given response can be sought in the sequence and structure of events and/or in the testimony of actors explaining why they acted as they did.”<sup>26</sup>

These testimonies include the public declarations and statements made by the key policymakers of the relevant countries before, during, and after the three wars under analysis. These declarations should draw a direct link between the employed balancing measures and a commitment to challenge unipolarity and/or promote multilateralism and multipolarity. For instance, one particularly appropriate example which would classify as evidence of soft balancing is when, in the middle of the diplomatic crisis over Iraq in February 2002, Putin announced:

We believe here in Russia, and as the French President Chirac believes – the future *edifice of world security must be based on a multipolar world*. This is the main thing that unites us. I am absolutely confident that the world will be predictable and stable only if it is multipolar.<sup>27</sup>

When decision-makers use the term “multilateralism” they signal their resolve to balance. When they use the term “multipolarity,” they signal their resolve to balance *a fortiori*. In fact, multilateralism and multipolarity are often de facto codewords for balancing. This is because when a decision-maker employs the term multilateralism or international law, this by definition seeks to tie up Gulliver with institutional ropes of various kinds. The strongest state in the system is the most adversely affected by calls for greater multilateralism or action in accordance with international law, because it is the state with the greatest capacity and willingness to pursue unilateral strategies. It has the most to lose, the weakest states have the most to gain.

The use of the word “multipolarity” is an even starker codeword for balancing. This is because when a decision-maker justifies a policy on the basis of “multipolarity” or

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 29, 64-67.

<sup>27</sup> “Interview Granted by President Vladimir Putin to France-3 Television”, Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, 9 February 2003, <http://www.geneva.mid.ru/press/03.html>. In this statement the term “multipolar world” is used as a proxy for soft balancing.

“hegemony” or “imperialism,” this directly expresses discontent with the current polarity of the international system, and signals his or her preference for a greater balance of power among the poles. The discussion on multilateralism and multipolarity will be further elaborated in the following chapters.

A potential limitation of this type of methodology, which is common in all the social sciences, is that policymakers can conceal (or mislead others regarding) the true motives of their decisions. This is especially the case when the true motives (*i.e.* balancing against the hegemon) can incur significant costs on their political careers or the national interests of their states. It can needlessly incur the wrath of the hegemon. For instance, in many countries – especially in nominal US allies – it may often be diplomatically inappropriate to couch one’s motives as “challenging or balancing the United States in order to promote multilateralism and multipolarity.” It is arguably much easier and less controversial to explain away actions on a case-by-case basis or as the byproduct of some domestic or personal imperatives. In fact Shivshankar Menon, India’s current National Security Advisor, reveals that “balance of power thinking is very much alive in international policy circles today: people think in terms of balancing and balances of power, but it is politically incorrect and inappropriate to state these things to the media.”<sup>28</sup> In this sense, we may be especially confident than when a policymaker actually publicly explains his or her decision on the basis of a desire to promote multilateralism or multipolarity, then the evidence in favour of soft balancing in that particular instance is especially strong.

A second way of approaching this methodological dilemma is that although sometimes policymakers are not willing to classify their opposition in such stark terms (if at all), it is nonetheless possible to ascertain their motives through the general foreign policy objectives reflected in a variety of public statements, foreign policy documents, and

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Shivshankar Menon, National Security Advisor of India, Prime Minister’s Office, New Delhi, 27 September 2012.

international treaties. For instance, arguably the guiding star of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation – *i.e.* the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020 – tellingly declares:

In order to ensure national security, the Russian Federation, as well as achieving the basic priorities of national security, *concentrates its efforts and resources* on the following priorities of stable development:...strategic stability and equitable strategic partnership, on the basis of Russia's active participation *in the development of the multipolar model of the international system.*<sup>29</sup>

Although this could be interpreted as the overarching theme and objective of Russia's foreign policy, informing all of its foreign policy decisions, it is certainly a weaker indication of a balancing motive on behalf of the policymakers than direct statements. However, if these guiding policy documents were not included, then we would miss some of the more subtle balancing tactics that are being employed against the unipolar leader.

Another potential pitfall of this methodology may be the flip side of the same coin: policymakers may be committed to multilateralism and multipolarity only as rhetorical devices to placate their domestic audiences. It is also potentially problematic because policymakers may not want to publicly classify their opposition to US or Russian policies in these terms because they might incur the wrath of the hegemon. One way to overcome this methodological issue is to examine not only what policymakers say, but also what they do, at institutions such as the UN and NATO. While discourse is important, in the final analysis international relations is the study of actions rather than of intentions.

A final, and arguably most successful, way to confront these methodological issues is to employ the third methodology adopted in this dissertation: interviewing officials regarding the policies in question. I had the opportunity to conduct interviews with numerous high-level officials from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs during my time working in the Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy Planning – internally known as the “brain of the

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<sup>29</sup> National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020, Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, 12 May 2009, <http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020>.

Foreign Ministry.” This experience provided an invaluable source of information for the final chapter on soft balancing against Russia.

I also had the special opportunity to interview leading policymakers in India including the twelfth Indian Prime Minister (1997-1998) and Foreign Minister (1989-90; 1996-98), a former Indian Ambassador to Russia (1998-2001), and the current National Security Advisor. These interviews were very important for the purposes of this dissertation because New Delhi consistently served as the favourite location where Russian leaders such as Primakov and Putin proclaimed notions of a “strategic triangle” of Russia, China, and India to act as a counterbalance to the United States. I interviewed officials who were directly involved in these negotiations.

Finally, I also had the opportunity to conduct interviews with various officials from France, Georgia, Iraq, and Russia, and international officials at NATO, the OSCE, and the UN Security Council. In particular, during my work at the UN Security Council, I had the opportunity to attend the emergency Security Council meetings on the 2008 August War between Russia and Georgia.<sup>30</sup> The UN Security Council was a very important venue where diplomacy was largely a continuation of the war by other means. These interviews and experiences will attempt to ameliorate the above methodological issues.

A final word is in order about the fine details of the definition of soft balancing<sup>31</sup> offered in this dissertation. It will become apparent that the definition offered is most readily applicable to moments of crises. While it is true that it is easiest to see evidence of soft balancing in practice during crises, there is nonetheless nothing in principle which prevents

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<sup>30</sup> Although most of the minutes from Security Council meetings are recorded and are available to the public, I had the opportunity to attend the closed emergency Security Council sessions and negotiations in the Consultations Room (where the majority of negotiations take place) during the August War while I served as an intern in the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch of the Department of Political Affairs in 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Soft balancing is undertaken by a state seeking to establish a more balanced system in a way which does not directly challenge a unipolar leader’s military preponderance but rather utilises non-military tools to constrain its most aggressive and unilateral military policies.

soft balancing from occurring prior to crises, as the first independent variable suggests. For instance, states could employ soft balancing tactics in a pre-emptive or preventive manner, when they have good reason to suspect that a hegemon will adopt threatening unilateral military policies in the future. States may also soft balance after moments of crises, since past events and historical analogies play a powerful role in shaping decision-makers' mindsets. Nevertheless, as the second independent variable suggests, it is the case that soft balancing should be at its most prominent and easiest to detect during moments of crises, and this explains in part why the dissertation is largely structured along the three recent crises in Kosovo, Iraq, and Georgia.

In a similar vein, it is apparent that the definition also specifies unilateral "military" policies. Once again, soft balancing should be most prominent and easiest to detect when a hegemon actually uses military force beyond its borders. This also justifies the case-based approach to the study of the subject. However, the use of force is not an everyday occurrence in international relations, and it usually follows periods of intense strategic competition and posturing among rivals. Soft balancing should be expected to occur during these periods of strategic competition and posturing, but it will be harder to detect. For instance, the decision to employ the oil and gas weapon as a means to increase a state's dependency or undermine its domestic regime is an example of an intense strategic competition between rivals. Even though the tanks may not be rolling in, the decision does have military implications, and it may be expected to raise some soft balancing countermeasures. Manifestations of this are apparent in chapters seven and eight.

In sum, in Walt's seminal work on *The Origins of Alliances*, he outlines three strategies to test hypotheses. The first strategy is to measure covariance: *i.e.* does the dependent variable (in this case, the level of soft – and perhaps hard – balancing in the international system) co-vary with the independent variables (in this case, distribution of

capabilities and perceived intentions)? The second strategy is to rely on direct evidence, where available, such as personal testimonies or policy statements of particular decision-makers at relevant moments. The third strategy is to “ask the experts” – *i.e.* compare the judgements of international relations scholars, historians, regional specialists, think-tanks, and foreign policy analysts.<sup>32</sup> All three of these strategies are employed in this dissertation on strategic balancing.

The first strategy is of limited use when multiple independent variables all combine to contribute to the same outcome. This makes it difficult to adjudicate between the different – and sometimes competing – explanations of international political outcomes and balancing behaviours. For instance, international political outcomes could be the byproduct of either one or all of the following factors: the balancing impetus, economic considerations, domestic constraints, ideological affinities, electoral politics, etc. In a quantitative data set, this limitation could be rectified by simply controlling for each variable. However, there is no easy way of doing this with primarily qualitative data. The best way to cope with this limitation is to apply the second strategy – examine elite testimonies and policy statements and declarations – but even these must be approached with caution as they may be influenced by a policymaker’s instrumental motives. As Walt explains, relying on expert accounts in the third strategy should also be approached with care because they can reflect the analyst’s biases.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, although none of these strategies is completely reliable on its own, if they are employed together they provide a more satisfactory set of tests to determine whether and how soft balancing occurs in the post-Cold War international system.

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 147-48.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

## 1.5 Observable Indicators of Hard and Soft Balancing

If balancing strategies are in fact being employed in the international system since the end of the Cold War, then there should be some observable indications of them. This study examines the public statements and declarations made by the key policymakers in Russia, China, France, Germany, and India – the chief protagonists of soft balancing – in relation to the United States’ unipolar position in general, and its unilateral use of force in Kosovo and Iraq in particular. It also analyses important documents such as the 2000 Russian National Security Concept, which was formulated in the wake of the Kosovo intervention, and stresses the importance of multipolarity (and reaffirms Russia’s commitment to establishing it), and the 2001 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter, which is explicitly intended to foster a “fair and rational international order.”<sup>34</sup> In addition, this study examines the public statements and national security strategies of relevant minor-regional powers – most notably Poland – which have been the chief protagonists of strategic balancing against Russia in the European Near Abroad.

More specifically, this thesis will employ four general indicators of soft balancing: 1) territorial non-complicity, 2) entangling diplomacy (often through institutional enmeshing), 3) economic strengthening, and 4) signals of resolve to balance.<sup>35</sup> As Pape explains, superior states often require access to the territories of third parties to project their military power in distant theatres of strategic interest. Denying access to this territory may reduce the superior state’s prospects for military victory, raise the operational costs of military engagement, and

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<sup>34</sup> It is important to note that one limitation of this thesis is that it is restricted to open source documents: given the sensitivity and recent nature of the case studies many important documents which may better attest to a state’s “motives” or “stated purposes” remain classified.

<sup>35</sup> These indicators are derived from Pape, “Soft Balancing against the United States”, pp. 36-37. In particular, Pape terms the first indicator as “territorial denial.” Although “territorial non-complicity” may seem no less awkward of a term, it is preferable to “territorial denial” because the latter term might conjure images of one state denying territory to another enemy state during combat operations between the two states; whereas the former terms suggests that state A is not willing to serve as an accomplice to state B by permitting state B to use state A’s territory for various strategic objectives.

perhaps even deter the unipolar leader from initiating military engagement in the first place. States may also use international institutions such as the UN Security Council and ad hoc diplomatic manoeuvres to frustrate and delay a unipolar leader's plans for war. Since economic power serves as the foundation of military might, second-tier great powers may use economic statecraft against the interests of the unipolar leader by, for instance, creating regional trade-blocs which exclude it. Finally, states may signal a resolve to balance against a unipolar leader through their policy declarations and official statements. The three case studies of Kosovo, Iraq, and Georgia will be examined with an eye to these four indicators of soft balancing.

This study will also employ three indicators for internal balancing: 1) quantitative and qualitative military augmentation (this includes both size of armies, size of defence spending, and investment in new military technologies); 2) military transfers to/from a unipolar leader's opponents; and 3) support for non-state actors, such as terrorists or guerilla fighters, which confront the unipolar leader. The indicator for external balancing will be formal war-fighting military alliances, as articulated in bilateral and multilateral treaties or membership of automatic collective security organisations, such as NATO.

## **1.6 Structure of Chapters**

The second chapter is devoted to surveying the balancing literature and its limitations. The principal contributions to the soft balancing literature have been made by Robert A. Pape, T.V. Paul, and Stephen M. Walt. This chapter also examines the history of the concept of soft balancing and potential cases of soft balancing before the post-Cold War era. The third chapter contains the theoretical core of the argument. It articulates the several balancing strategies that states have at their disposal and it attempts to construct a systemic *theory of*

*tripartite strategic balancing* incorporating raw power and intentions. The fourth and fifth chapters present the empirical case studies of the US-led interventions in Kosovo and Iraq, respectively.

The sixth chapter adapts the theory of tripartite strategic balancing into the regional level of analysis and introduces the region of the European Near Abroad. The seventh chapter describes Russia's hegemonisation of the European Near Abroad, and the eighth chapter discusses the region's reaction to it, with particular reference to the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. The concluding chapter summarises the argument, enumerates the analytical strengths and weaknesses of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing, and explores its numerous theoretical and practical implications.

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW – THE HISTORY OF THE BALANCE OF  
POWER AND SOFT BALANCING, AS CONCEPTS AND AS PHENOMENA**

It is never right to help a power acquire a predominance that will render it irresistible.  
- Polybius, *The Histories*

A number of questions and implications arise from Robert Pape's definition of soft balancing as "actions that do not directly challenge US military preponderance but that use non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive unilateral US military policies."<sup>36</sup> First, it is evident that the concept of soft balancing is closely connected to the concept of the balance of power. Pape's definition also raises the question as to whether the phenomenon of soft balancing preceded the development of the concept itself, similar to the way in which the phenomenon of hard balancing preceded the development of balance of power theory. Pape's definition is also inextricably intertwined with the United States and, by extension, unipolar international systems. This raises the question of whether soft balancing is a more general phenomenon – applicable outside the context of American unipolarity – and whether soft balancing may exist (or historically has existed) in other international systems. Whether the concept of soft balancing can apply to regional subsystems, such as the European Near Abroad, is another question which merits attention.

This chapter addresses these issues through an examination of balance of power theory, and it places particular emphasis on the concept of soft balancing, which is an offshoot of the concept of the balance of power. The chapter is divided into four sections which have four corresponding purposes. The first section provides a brief account of the development of the concept and phenomenon of the balance of power in order to distinguish it from the concept of soft balancing. It indicates that the phenomenon of balance of power

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<sup>36</sup> Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States", *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 10.

politics preceded the development of the concept or the theory of the balance of power. Second, and closely related, the chapter presents some historical cases of “activities akin to soft balancing” in the international system before the end of the Cold War.<sup>37</sup> It is noteworthy that these cases of soft balancing occurred in multipolar systems. This section may be viewed as a continuation of the first section insofar as it examines how activities akin to soft balancing have often existed concomitantly with hard balancing. In other words, where there is hard balancing among states there is often a closely associated soft balancing – hard and soft balancing often march side-by-side. This dynamic has been overlooked by scholars who employ the concept of soft balancing. As with the concept of the balance of power, it will also become apparent that *the practice* of soft balancing preceded the development of *the concept* of soft balancing. Third, the chapter presents an overview of the development of the concept of soft balancing by analysing the first article to employ the term by Robert A. Pape. The fourth and final section is devoted to surveying the soft balancing literature and its limitations.

## 2.1 The Development of the Concept and Phenomenon of the Balance of Power

The concept of soft balancing is an offshoot of the concept of the balance of power. Martin Wight, an early proponent of the English School of international relations, succinctly explains the balance of power in its simplest terms with a metaphor:

Let there be three powers, of which the first attacks the second. The third power cannot afford to see the second so decisively crushed that it becomes threatened itself; therefore if it is far-sighted it throws its weight into the lighter scale of the balance by supporting the second power. This is the balance of power at its simplest.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> I use the term “activities akin to soft balancing” in distinction to the more rigorous term “soft balancing” (as defined earlier on page 13). The former term is used loosely to denote economic and diplomatic tools short of formal alliances which may be used to balance against a potential hegemon.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Wight, “The Balance of Power”, in *Power Politics* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995), p. 169.

This example neatly typifies the British understanding of the balance of power as integrally connected to the idea of a “balancer.” In contrast, the American scholar and father of neorealism, Kenneth Waltz, offers a more “socially scientific” (but equally simplistic) exposition of the balance of power: “balance-of-power politics prevail whenever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive.”<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that various conceptualisations of the term have been offered at different times and places, Jack Levy explains that the concept has one common core meaning: “that hegemonies do not form in multistate systems because perceived threats of hegemony over the system generate balancing behaviour by other leading states in the system.”<sup>40</sup>

Many scholars have traced the provenance of the term to antiquity. For instance, the Greek historian Thucydides, championed by many as the father of classical realism, writes in an oft-cited passage that what made the Peloponnesian War inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear that this generated in Sparta.<sup>41</sup> In doing so, however, Thucydides was not articulating a theory of the balance of power but rather documenting its practical application among the Greek city-states. In a similar vein Plato, in his last and longest dialogue *The Laws*, observed that “every state is, by law of nature, engaged perpetually in an informal war with every other state.”<sup>42</sup> This remarkably proto-Hobbesian language lends credence to Alfred North Whitehead’s famous quip that all of Western philosophy is but a footnote to Plato.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, Polybius – another Greek historian and contemporary of the Punic Wars – documented a sympathetic account of how Hiero, the ruler of Syracuse, jettisoned his

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<sup>39</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), p. 121.

<sup>40</sup> Jack Levy, “What do Great Powers Balance Against and When?”, in T.V. Paul, T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 49.

<sup>42</sup> Plato, *The Laws*, trans. R.G. Bury (London: Heinemann, 1926), p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Free Press, 1979), p. 39.

alliance with Rome at a decisive moment and lent his support to Carthage as a means to curb Roman predominance in the Mediterranean.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, David Hume, in a classical essay on the balance of power, asserted that “in all the policies of Greece, the anxiety with regard to the balance of power is apparent, and is expressly pointed out to us, even by the ancient historians.” Hume claimed that the league formed by Sparta against Athens had been created “entirely owing to this principle” and that when Thebes and Sparta were later in contention, the Athenians always “threw themselves into the lighter scale and endeavoured to preserve the balance.”<sup>45</sup> It is important to note that these ancient historians did not articulate a theory of the balance of power – they merely documented its practical application among the Greek city-states. In short, the empirical phenomenon of the balance of power preceded the development of the concept or theory of the balance of power.

The period of the European Renaissance also provides some examples of balance of power politics. For example, the Italian historian Francesco Guicciardini, in his *History of Italy*, argued that Florence pursued a balance of power strategy: when Milan, under the Sforzas, seemed dominant, Florence allied with Venice against it; after 1551, when Venice appeared strongest on the Italian peninsula, Florence then joined forces with Milan – its former enemy – against Venice.<sup>46</sup> The Renaissance political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli is sometimes viewed as the founder of balance of power theory. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli counsels that

a prince must beware never to associate with someone more powerful than himself so as to attack others, except when necessity presses... For when you win, you are left his prisoner, and princes should avoid as much as they can being at the discretion of others. The Venetians accompanied France against the duke in Milan, and they could have avoided being in that company – from which their ruin resulted.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Polybius, *The Histories*, trans. W.R. Paton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), Book I, Chapter 83.

<sup>45</sup> David Hume, “The Balance of Power”, in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary* (London: 1741), p. 339; and Evan Luard, *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815* (London: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd., 1992), p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, trans. S. Alexander (New York: 1969).

<sup>47</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 2nd edn., trans. Harvey Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 90.

Although Machiavelli cautioned against what contemporary scholars of international relations term bandwagoning, he did not articulate a comprehensive theory of the balance of power, but rather provided statesmen or princes with various precepts by which to attain and retain political power.

The sixteenth century witnessed more examples of balance of power politics. In arguably the most vivid display of the balance of power, Henry VIII of England presented himself as the true embodiment of the principle when he appeared at the Field of the Cloth of Gold wearing a banner inscribed with the device *Cui adhaereo prae est* – “the one that I join will prevail.”<sup>48</sup> Henry and his minister Wolsey are generally credited with pursuing a deliberate balance of power strategy between Francis I of France and Charles V of Spain. The earliest known use of the phrase “balance of power” in English was in the dedication of a book to Henry’s successor, Queen Elizabeth, in 1579: “God hath put into your hands the balance of power and justice, to appease and counterpoise at your will the actions and counsels of all the Christian kingdoms of your time.”<sup>49</sup>

It was only in the era after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, however, that Europe entered into its golden age of the balance of power. The phrase balance of power came to signify two things: first, a *policy* of balancing against another power to prevent its preponderance; and second, in Vattel’s words, “a state of affairs [*i.e. equilibrium*] such that no one power is in a position where it is preponderant and can lay down the law to others.”<sup>50</sup> It is also during this period that Thomas Hobbes, in a much celebrated statement in his *Leviathan*, provided a further sophistication that balancing behaviour occurred not only during times of war, but in perpetuity:

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<sup>48</sup> Herbert Butterfield, “The Balance of Power”, in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 138.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p. 176

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 3rd edn. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 97, 312.

Hereby it is manifest that, during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man. For 'war' consisteth not in battle only or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known...For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain but in an inclination thereto of many days together, so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary... [and] in all times kings and persons of sovereign authority [*i.e.* states], because of their independency [*i.e.* sovereignty], are in continual jealousies and *in the state and posture of gladiators*, having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another, that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns, upon the frontiers of their kingdoms, and continual spies upon their neighbours: which is a posture of war.<sup>51</sup>

It is of no coincidence that the European states-system was also formed in this period.

Herbert Butterfield explains that the development of the European states-system and the balance of power were closely related: he argues that while there were some vague and fleeting references to the concept in earlier eras, it was only with the development of the European states-system in the seventeenth century that a mechanistic version of the balance of power developed widespread currency and its precepts became less riddled with ambiguities.<sup>52</sup> Hence, although no comprehensive and systematic balance of power theory would be developed until the twentieth century,<sup>53</sup> by the middle of the seventeenth century European statesmen understood the concept in concrete terms and strove to apply its principles.

Prior to the Peace of Westphalia religion had been a factor which limited the pursuit of cold and calculated balance of power policies: Catholic and Protestant states often felt obliged to support their co-religionists irrespective of the logic of the balance of power. However, as the historian Evan Luard explains, after the Thirty Years War "religion ceased to count for much in determining the policy of states, and so ceased to inhibit the pursuit of balance of power policies." A new fluidity of alliance formation was readily discernible. For

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. E.M. Curley, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), Chapter XIII, Of the Natural Conditional of Mankind as Concerning Their Felicity and Misery.

<sup>52</sup> Herbert Butterfield, "The Balance of Power", p. 139.

<sup>53</sup> See for example Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 7th edn. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005) and Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

instance, Luard states that “during the twenty-year struggle between England and the United Provinces from 1652 to 1674, France gave her support first to one side and then to the other.”<sup>54</sup> This pattern continued throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Furthermore, maintaining the balance of power (as *equilibrium*) in Europe was a remarkably consistent goal of English foreign policy since 1648. Wight explains that this traditional goal finds its “expression in the preamble to the annual Mutiny Act, which from 1727 down to 1867 (with one or two lapses) described the function of the British army as the “preservation of the balance of power in Europe.”<sup>55</sup> Winston Churchill articulately explained England’s traditional role as the balancer in Europe with these words:

For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating power on the Continent...It would have been easy...and tempting to join with the stronger and share the fruits of the conquest. However, we always took the harder course, joined with the less strong powers...and thus defeated the Continental military tyrant whoever he was.<sup>56</sup>

Using even more animated language, he famously wrote “if Hitler invaded Hell, I should at least make a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons.”<sup>57</sup> This statement captures the quintessence of Britain’s historic role as the guardian of the balance of power in Europe.

Another pattern which arose in the seventeenth century and continued to some degree up to the twentieth century was a tendency for European powers to balance against France. Grand coalitions were formed against Louis XIV and Revolutionary and Napoleonic France with the explicit aim of restoring a balance of power in Europe.<sup>58</sup> For instance, the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, which formally ended the War of Spanish Succession – and therewith the threat to unify the French and Spanish thrones – declared as its object the establishment of a

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<sup>54</sup> Luard, *The Balance of Power*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>55</sup> Wight, *Power Politics*, p. 172.

<sup>56</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, vol 1: The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1959), pp. 207-208.

<sup>57</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, vol 3: The Grand Alliance* (London: Cassell, 1959), p. 370.

<sup>58</sup> Ludwig Dehio, *The Precarious Balance: The Politics of Power in Europe 1494-1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), chapters II and III.

“balance of power” in Europe – the first official mention of the term in a treaty. The First Treaty of Paris in 1814 struck a similar chord seeking to “establish a real and permanent balance of power in Europe.”<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, in *The Balance of Power in World History* an influential group of scholars challenge the notion that states have often pursued balancing strategies throughout history, and they suggest that most of the examples provided by proponents of this notion are confined to the European experience. For instance, Richard Little provides an insightful critique of the role of the balance of power in the Greek city-state system. He argues that although both Sparta (with the Hellenic League of 40 city-states) and Athens (with the Delian League of around 150 city-states) exhibited internal and external balancing behaviour in an (ultimately successful) attempt to thwart Persia’s invasion of Greece, the balancing coalition subsequently collapsed, even though Persia’s hegemony of the Greater Near East continued. In particular, he argues that “once it is regarded as part of the larger Near Eastern system during its phase of Persian hegemony,” the history of the Greek city-state system does not follow the logic of balance of power theories because the Greek city-states fought each other rather than balance against Persian hegemony.<sup>60</sup>

One possible way to avoid this uncomfortable conundrum is to adopt the more nuanced balance-of-threat approach to the issue: one reason why Sparta and Athens ceased their balancing against the hegemon-aspiring Persian Empire was due to geographical proximity and threat perceptions. In particular, once the Persian Empire was soundly defeated at the battle of Marathon, the heroics at Thermopylae, and the naval campaign in Salamis, the Athenian-led Delian League was gradually converted into a de facto Athenian

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<sup>59</sup> Luard, *The Balance of Power*, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> See William Wohlforth, Richard Little, Stuart Kaufman, David Kang, Charles Jones, Victoria Tin-Bor Hui, Arthur Eckstein, Daniel Deudney and William Brenner, “Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History”, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2007, pp. 155-158; and Richard Little, “The Greek City States in the Fifth Century BCE: Persia and the Balance of Power”, in Stuart Kaufman, Richard Little, and William Wohlforth, eds., *The Balance of Power in World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 47-70.

Empire. Therefore, in the eyes of the city-states which comprised the Peloponnesian League (led by Sparta), the threat from Persia had subsided, and a closer, potentially more menacing threat from Athens was forming. This also explains why Sparta accepted gold from their recently vanquished enemy across the Bosphorus to fund its balancing efforts against Athens' bid for mastery of the Greek world. Nonetheless, the authors of *The Balance of Power in World History* make a cogent case for why balancing behaviour has often failed to prevent hegemonies throughout world history, especially in non-European contexts.

In sum, it seems that balance of power politics may be as old as recorded history itself. Ancient and Renaissance philosophers and historians such as Thucydides and Machiavelli had documented numerous examples of balance of power dynamics at work in the competitions of their respective city-states, but no comprehensive theory of the balance of power had been articulated. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the European states-system entered into a golden era of the balance of power, in which states deliberately pursued balancing strategies against rising hegemonies, and although a more widespread and concrete understanding of the concept of the balance of power (as a *policy* and as a state of *equilibrium*) developed among statesmen and international lawyers, a comprehensive and systematic theory was not articulated until the twentieth century. This suggests that the balance of power was around long before it was articulated as such. The same is true with regard to the concept of soft balancing.

## **2.2 Historical Precedents of “Activities Akin to Soft Balancing”**

The concept of soft balancing is uniquely appropriate to unipolar systems in the sense that it is the only prudent balancing strategy available to states which want to avoid the wrath of the hegemon. Nevertheless, in a way, it is a new concept describing an old phenomenon

which has also occurred in the multipolar systems of the past. There are numerous historical parallels of “activities akin to soft balancing” which merit a closer examination than has been offered in the current literature on soft balancing.

States have often resorted to non-military means – diplomatic and economic – to challenge regional hegemons. They are especially likely to do so when a major war is in the offing. In other words, one is likely to find evidence of soft balancing measures being employed wherever one finds evidence of hard balancing. For instance, during the seventeenth century William III of the Dutch Republic undertook a diplomatic initiative to soft balance against French hegemony by pre-empting the issue of Spanish succession. With the death of the Spanish King Charles II imminent, William set out to garner support among the European states for a partition plan of the Spanish realms which envisaged Spain proper and its American colonies being ceded to the elector of Bavaria, while Louis’ heir was to receive Spanish Naples, Sicily, and northern Italy. While Louis seriously contemplated the Dutch initiative, Charles II forced his hand by writing a will which specified that the entire Spanish inheritance would pass on to Louis’ grandson on the condition that it remained undivided.<sup>61</sup> Louis chose to accept Charles’ will and the War for Spanish Succession ensued. William’s initial soft balancing measures, then, ultimately failed and he was forced to turn to hard balancing measures by forming a war-fighting military alliance with the Holy Roman Empire and England against France.

States have also often used economic means to soft balance against potential hegemons. The economic philosophy of mercantilism is the embodiment of this principle. There was a general belief in the seventeenth century that the volume of world trade and wealth were finite, and that trade competition was a zero-sum game: an increase in one state’s trade necessitated a decrease of trade and wealth for another state. It was also widely

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<sup>61</sup> Derek McKay and H.M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers: 1648-1815* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1983), pp. 54-66.

believed that “the relationship between profit and power was in fact reciprocal. Not only could power help to win trade: success in trade could promote power.”<sup>62</sup> In short, success in trade was seen as an integral component of the balance of power in Europe. Thus, states undertook numerous activities to curb the economic clout of potential hegemon. For example, in 1651 England passed the Navigation Act under which no goods from Asia, Africa, and America were to be imported into England by foreign ships: the act was a deliberate attempt at decreasing French and Dutch shares of world trade. It is noteworthy that these soft balancing measures were implemented in an era of intense hostility and the eventual resort to open warfare between England and the Dutch Republic in 1652-54. They demonstrate another example of the phenomenon of hard and soft balancing marching in harmony.<sup>63</sup>

Another historical example of economic balancing, or activities akin to soft balancing, included Republican France’s loans to Tsarist Russia in the 1870s and 1880s. These loans were used to modernise Russia (especially the rail networks crucial for military campaigning) and equip it in the coming war with Wilhelmine Germany. There is academic consensus among historians that these loans were instrumental in engendering the Franco-Russian alliance of 1892.<sup>64</sup> This further illustrates how increasing economic cooperation can lay the foundation for hard balancing coalitions in the future.

Another widely employed method of winning an increased share of world trade was through the establishment of state-run trading corporations, such as the British East India Company. The French finance minister Jean Baptist Colbert likened these companies to standing armies. The companies’ most important objective was to win for themselves and

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<sup>62</sup> Luard, *The Balance of Power*, p. 218.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 208.

<sup>64</sup> See Jacob Viner, “International Finance and Balance of Power Diplomacy, 1880-1914” *Southwestern Political and Social Sciences Quarterly*, March 1929, pp. 407-451; and George F. Kennan, *The Decline of Bismarck’s European Order: Franco-Russian Relations 1875-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

their countries dominant control of trade in the regions in which they operated, and as a consequence, to indirectly undermine the economic power of their rivals.

Imperial states could also economically balance against a potential hegemon by restricting all colonial trade to themselves, thereby excluding other states. Britain, France, and the Dutch Republic all practised this type of protectionism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>65</sup> Even more directly, states could soft balance against a potential hegemon by erecting an economic embargo against it. The Dutch Republic attempted to soft balance against France in 1672 in this very manner by banning all trade. France soon reciprocated, and both states eventually went to war. Similarly, in 1678, England banned the import of many French products as a way to curb French power and moderate French adventurism on the Continent. The English and French also soon found themselves at war in 1689.<sup>66</sup> These cases provide further evidence that where one finds hard balancing and open warfare, there is a possibility that earlier soft balancing measures failed to curb the targeted state's unacceptable behaviour and ambitions.

In a more recent example, one of the not-so-subtle goals of the US Marshall Plan of 1947 was to defeat indigenous communist forces in Europe and enmesh Western Europe within the American security system – a fact which was not lost on Stalin when he instructed his client states in Europe to decline the assistance. Thus the Marshall Plan, which in a sense could be perceived as genuine act of friendship and goodwill, was in actuality a soft balancing tool which would later complement the hard balancing tool of NATO. This is a clear example of how hard and soft balancing measures may operate concomitantly in a grand strategy to prevent the rise of a hegemon in an area of vital interest.<sup>67</sup>

During the Cold War, France under De Gaulle undertook a series of diplomatic manoeuvres akin to soft balancing. In 1960, to the consternation of its American ally, France

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<sup>65</sup> Luard, *The Balance of Power*, p. 208.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 212.

<sup>67</sup> Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States", p. 38.

developed an independent nuclear force in order to safeguard its security and national interests. De Gaulle justified his position by rhetorically asking if any US President would ever be willing to sacrifice New York for Paris. In 1966 De Gaulle severely shook up the accepted norm of bipolarity in international relations. He withdrew France from the military branch of NATO, and on 1 September 1966 – just two months before his spectacular visit to Moscow in which he called for an independent “Europe stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals” – he delivered an even more vexing speech in Phnom Penh in defence of national sovereignty and called for an American withdrawal from Vietnam. These actions may be appropriately classified as “activities akin to soft balancing” because the primary objective of De Gaulle’s “policy of grandeur” was to establish France as an independent actor in the world rather than balance against US preponderance.<sup>68</sup>

This section has indicated how soft balancing is a new concept for an old phenomenon. It has enumerated many instances since the seventeenth century when states have undertaken diplomatic and economic activities akin to soft balancing against aspiring hegemon. The section has indicated that soft balancing measures are often employed as useful supplements when hard balancing strategies are temporarily unfeasible or undesirable. It has also revealed that hard and soft balancing measures may be employed concurrently, as they were with the Marshall Plan and NATO. The purpose of this section has not been to provide a complete or comprehensive account of all examples of soft balancing prior to the end of the Cold War; rather its purpose has been to indicate that the practice of soft balancing preceded the development of the concept itself, and that activities akin to soft balancing may occur in systems other than just the contemporary one of American unipolarity as Pape suggests.

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<sup>68</sup> This differs from soft balancing proper because the objective of soft balancing is a) to curb a hegemon’s unilateral use of force, and in the process, b) work towards the establishment of a more multipolar and multilateral international system.

### 2.3 The Provenance of the Concept of Soft Balancing

Soft balancing is a relatively new concept in the international relations lexicon. It was first articulated in 2003 by Robert A. Pape in a remarkably prescient article entitled *Soft Balancing: How the World will Respond to US Preventive War on Iraq*.<sup>69</sup> Pape argued therein that the most consequential effect of a preventive war on Iraq would be a fundamental transformation in how major states respond to American preponderance. He explained that although “one of the strongest regularities in international politics is a tendency for a balance of power to emerge,” the United States has largely been immune from this balancing dynamic because of its grand strategy of off-shore balancing, and correspondingly, its perceived non-belligerent intentions. However, America’s exceptional status was being threatened by the Bush Doctrine of unabashed unilateralism and preventive war.

In his article, Pape cautioned that if the United States invaded Iraq, the other great powers would face greater incentives to balance against American power. However, he predicted that they would do so by non-traditional means: rather than employing the traditional tools of hard balancing, such as military buildups, war-fighting coalitions, and transfers of military technology to allies, the great powers would employ the tools of soft balancing, which include international institutions, economic statecraft, and strict interpretations of neutrality. Pape argued that “balancing is about equalizing the odds in a contest between the weak and the strong...and that states balance when they take action intended to make it harder for strong states to use their military advantages against others.” It is important to note, that it is within this context that the non-military tools enumerated by Pape may be classified as balancing tools since they serve to equalise the odds between the strong and the weak, and to make it harder for a preponderant power to use its military might.

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<sup>69</sup> Robert A. Pape, “Soft Balancing: How the World will Respond to US Preventive War on Iraq”, Oak Park Coalition for Truth & Justice, 20 January 2003, <http://www.opctj.org/articles/robert-a-pape-university-of-chicago-02-21-2003-004443.html>.

Furthermore, Pape argued that soft balancing measures not only serve to constrain the unipolar leader's use of power, but also to change the balance of power towards greater equilibrium. Pape explained how four particular elements of soft balancing may accomplish this feat. First, "states may use international institutions and ad hoc diplomatic maneuvers to delay, disrupt, or eliminate the claimed purpose of military action by the superior state." This can severely increase the financial and diplomatic burden of unilaterally using military force. Second, superior states often require access to the territory of third parties "as staging areas for ground forces or as transit for air and naval forces." States may deny the superior state access to their territory which can adversely affect the superior state's ability to project power in the region, thereby reducing its prospects for military victory. A third way of balancing against a superior state in the long-run is by forming "regional trade blocs that increase trade and economic growth for members, while distorting trade away from non-members." Lastly, a formidable obstacle to the formation of a military alliance against a preponderant power is the problem of buck-passing; soft balancing may help mitigate this problem by developing a sense of trust among the potential members of a balancing coalition through repeated cooperation in low-level diplomatic and economic activities designed to frustrate the unipolar leader.

Pape concluded the article with the assertion that the world is on the cusp of a new era of soft balancing: "until now, we have lacked a concept for this form of balancing behaviour, and so it has been difficult to see that the early stages of soft balancing against American power have already started." He notes how France and other European states have used institutional rules and procedures to frustrate and delay American plans for a preventive war against Iraq, and how Turkey and Saudi Arabia have denied the United States the use of their territories as staging grounds for the US Army. He concludes with the observation that

although “none of these moves directly challenge American military power, they all make it more difficult for the United States to exercise power.”<sup>70</sup>

On 23 March 2003, four days after the onset of hostilities in Iraq, Pape published an updated and abridged version of his argument in the *Boston Globe* entitled *The World Pushes Back*.<sup>71</sup> The article generated an immediate and lively response from leading international relations scholars: on 6 April the *Boston Globe* published a formal response by Josef Joffe, Max Boot, Joseph Nye, Andrew Moravcsik, and Anne-Marie Slaughter.<sup>72</sup> Joffe concurred with Pape’s argument by noting that once the United States was liberated from the ropes of bipolarity, a surreptitious balancing was inevitable. Boot, on the other hand, conceded that although some degree of soft balancing against the United States was occurring, he doubted its significance, arguing instead that “the prospect of a world full of terrorists and rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction” is a lot more frightening than soft balancing. Nye agreed with the general thrust of Pape’s article, adding that the French, German, Chinese, and Russian obstruction at the United Nations had deprived the United States of the legitimacy of a second Security Council resolution, thereby undercutting not only America’s soft power but also its hard power.<sup>73</sup> Moravcsik commended Pape’s insightful analysis that the source of the world’s discontent with the United States is not its overwhelming military predominance, but rather its perceived belligerent intentions as manifest in the Bush Doctrine. Slaughter noted that the Bush Administration still had a historic opportunity to avoid the fate described by Pape if it went back to the UN and accepted some restraints on its own power.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Robert A. Pape, “The World Pushes Back”, *The Boston Globe*, 23 March 2003.

<sup>72</sup> Joseph Joffe *et al.*, “Exchanges and Returns: Is the World Pushing Back”, *The Boston Globe*, 6 April 2003.

<sup>73</sup> It is important to note that although soft power and soft balancing sound conceptually similar, they are not synonymous. Nye defines soft power as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion” or “getting others to want the outcomes you want.” See Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

## 2.4 The Soft Balancing Literature

There are three principal sources in the international relations literature which employ the concept of soft balancing: *Balance of Power* edited by T.V. Paul *et al.*, *Taming American Power* by Stephen Walt, and the 2005 summer edition of *International Security*.

In *Balance of Power*, the editors make the case that traditional conceptions of the balance of power do not fully capture the security behaviours of states in the post-Cold War international system.<sup>74</sup> T.V. Paul in particular argues that the problem with the traditional realist account of the balance of power is that it is always framed in dichotomous terms: either states balance or they do not. He argues that “these rigid theories cannot satisfactorily explain the empirical reality of contemporary world politics...and...what is needed, perhaps, is to broaden the concept of balancing behaviour to explain the various strategies states use to limit the power of a hegemonic actor.”<sup>75</sup> Consequently, Paul offers a definition for three distinct balancing behaviours: first, *hard balancing* involves forming and maintaining an open military alliance and/or initiating a robust armament programme to balance a strong state. Second,

*soft balancing* involves tacit non-offensive coalition building to neutralize a rising or potentially threatening power...states can adopt different means to engage in soft balancing: tacit understandings or ententes (short of formal alliances), the use of international institutions to create ad hoc coalitions and limit the power of the threatening state, or both.<sup>76</sup>

The third balancing behaviour, according to Paul, is “*asymmetric balancing* [which] encompasses interstate-level interactions and state versus non-state interactions. It could include the use of insurgency or terrorism by a weaker state to mitigate the power of a

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<sup>74</sup> T.V. Paul, “Introduction”, in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

relatively stronger adversary.”<sup>77</sup> The editors end on the note that “under the conditions of near-unipolarity, soft balancing makes a lot of sense for weaker states that are upset by American unilateralism and increasing militarism, if they want to avoid direct confrontation with the hegemon.”<sup>78</sup>

In *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy*, Stephen Walt is primarily concerned with expounding the multifarious methods by which great powers can deal with American unipolarity: these include not only several strategies of opposition such as balancing, balking, binding, blackmail, and delegitimation, but also several strategies of accommodation, such as bandwagoning, regional balancing, bonding, and domestic political penetration.<sup>79</sup> Soft balancing emerges from the discussion as only one of an entire family of responses to deal with American preponderance. Walt defines soft balancing as “the conscious coordination of diplomatic action in order to obtain outcomes contrary to US preferences – outcomes that could not be gained if the balancers did not give each other some degree of mutual support.” He explains that “soft balancing seeks to limit the ability of the United States to impose its preferences on others.”<sup>80</sup> The objectives of a strategy of soft balancing are fourfold:

First, and most obviously, states may soft balance in order to increase their ability to resist US pressure, including the use of military force...second, joining forces with others is a way of improving one’s bargaining position in global negotiations...third, soft balancing can also be intended as a diplomatic “shot across the bow,” to remind the United States that it cannot take for granted the compliance of other states...and fourth, soft balancing is also a way to hedge one’s bets in the face of growing uncertainty about relations with the United States.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>78</sup> Paul *et al.*, “Conclusions”, in *Balance of Power*, p. 370.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, pp. 126-7.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, pp. 127-9.

Walt concludes his discussion on soft balancing with the warning that if the United States continues to act in ways which harm the interests of great powers, then the number of potential soft balancers will rise.<sup>82</sup>

The 2005 summer edition of *International Security* contains the most fruitful dialogue on the concept of soft balancing. The opening article, *Soft Balancing against the United States* by Robert Pape, represents the most ambitious attempt to develop the concept of soft balancing. Pape refines his definition of soft balancing as “actions that do not directly challenge U.S. military preponderance but that use non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive unilateral U.S. military policies.”<sup>83</sup> He also warns that:

Soft balancing is likely to become more intense if the United States continues to pursue an aggressively unilateralist national security policy. Although soft balancing may be unable to prevent the United States from achieving specific military aims in the near term, it will increase the costs of using U.S. power, reduce the number of countries likely to cooperate with future U.S. military adventures, and possibly shift the balance of economic power against the United States.<sup>84</sup>

Pape ends with the assertion that soft balancing against the United States is not destiny: “the Bush Administration’s national security strategy of aggressive unilateralism is the principal cause of soft balancing and repudiating this strategy is the principal solution.”<sup>85</sup>

In the second article, *Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy*, T.V. Paul refines his earlier work on the concept of soft balancing and provides two short case studies which illustrate the concept in operation. He begins with a discussion of the existing explanations for the lack of hard balancing against the United States and argues that soft balancing was “attempted” in Kosovo in 1999 and Iraq in 2002-2003. Paul also concludes his article with the assertion that balancing against the United States is not automatic – as some neorealists

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 131.

<sup>83</sup> Pape, “Soft Balancing against the United States”, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, pp. 10, 43-5.

claim – and that it is contingent on whether or not the hegemon’s foreign policies are perceived to be threatening.<sup>86</sup>

In *Hard Times for Soft Balancing* Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth provide a penetrating critique of the concept of soft balancing and its proponents. The authors make the strong statement that “so far, the soft-balancing argument has only been asserted.”<sup>87</sup> They argue that the principal analytical flaw of all the essays which employ the concept of soft balancing is a failure to consider alternative explanations for state behaviour. They also claim that there is a dearth of careful empirical analysis of the phenomenon. In direct opposition to the recommendations made by Pape, Paul, and Walt, the article concludes that the soft balancing argument does not provide a compelling case for restraint in American foreign policy.<sup>88</sup>

*Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back* by Keir Lieber and Gerard Alexander is the fourth and final article devoted to the concept of soft balancing. Lieber and Alexander dismiss discussion of soft balancing as

Much ado about nothing. Defining or operationalising the concept is difficult; the behavior typically identified by it seems identical to normal diplomatic friction; and regardless, the evidence does not support specific predictions suggested by those advancing the concept.<sup>89</sup>

The authors conclude that soft balancing against the United States is *not* occurring because the grand strategy designed by the Bush Administration only threatens a very limited number of rogue regimes and terrorists rather than the international system as a whole.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> T.V. Paul, “Soft Balancing in the Age of US Primacy”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, pp. 47, 71.

<sup>87</sup> Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, “Hard Times for Soft Balancing”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 74.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>89</sup> Keir Lieber and Gerard Alexander, “Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 109.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 110.

## 2.5 The Limitations of the Soft Balancing Literature

Critics of the soft balancing argument pose serious challenges. In sum, there are five major gaps in the current balancing literature which require redress.

The first major gap concerns the conceptual clarity and definition of soft balancing. There is no consensus on what soft balancing actually is since each author uses a slightly different definition of the term. Some definitions are more useful than others, but all of the aforementioned authors fail to distinguish between what counts as evidence of soft balancing and what counts as evidence of policy bargaining or routine diplomatic friction. I seek to remedy this defect in the literature by offering a definition of soft balancing which modifies Pape's formulation to:

- 1) make it universal so it does not solely refer to the United States and,
- 2) make it account for the motives of state behaviour, which must include:
  - i) a preference for multilateralism by constraining the unipolar leader's unilateral use of force and/or,
  - ii) a preference to move towards a more balanced system – such as multipolarity.

In short, multipolarity and multilateralism (for instance, through the UN Security Council or under international law) are codewords for balancing. For example, under this definition, Canada's softwood lumber dispute with the US, which is not motivated by either of these two reasons, but is nevertheless a tool of economic statecraft being employed against US preferences, does not constitute an act of balancing, but rather an example of policy bargaining or routine diplomatic friction. France's opposition to the US invasion of Iraq at the UN and NATO was partly motivated by both of these reasons, and thus it does constitute an act of soft balancing. A more detailed critique of the way the aforementioned authors conceptualise the term will be provided in the third chapter.

A second major gap in the literature is that there is no systematic theory of soft balancing. Some scholars state that soft balancing is a response to US primacy in general,

whereas others argue it is a response to what appears to be increasingly belligerent US intentions and unilateralism in the wake of the 2002 National Security Strategy – and its practical fallout – the invasion of Iraq. A theory of tripartite strategic balancing – which incorporates hard and soft balancing – and amalgamates both Waltz’s structural variant of balance of power theory and Walt’s balance of threat theory, will also be articulated in the third chapter.

A third major gap in the literature is that there is no systematic attempt to test the proposition that balancing in general, and soft balancing in particular, is occurring against the United States through the use of rigorous empirical data. Brooks and Wohlforth brusquely assert that there is no empirical evidence supporting the proposition that soft balancing against the US is happening.<sup>91</sup> They are partly correct. Pape and Walt assert that soft balancing is occurring, but they offer only a modicum of empirical evidence.<sup>92</sup> Paul briefly explores the Kosovo (1999) and Iraq (2003) wars, but his account is neither sufficient nor convincing because it is merely descriptive and he fails to marshal evidence which distinguishes soft balancing from policy bargaining. There is also no empirical study which tests the proposition that states are employing soft balancing measures against the Russian Federation. Thus, in-depth case studies such as the Kosovo (1999), Iraq (1991-2003), and Georgia (2008) wars are a novel approach which can help identify the differences between genuine balancing behaviour and routine diplomatic friction.

The fourth major problem with the current literature is that the proponents of soft balancing assert it is happening as if it were the only force that drives state behaviour. They do not account for other explanations of state behaviour such as economic interests or electoral politics. The salience of alternative explanations will be addressed in the empirical chapters.

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<sup>91</sup>Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, “Hard Times for Soft Balancing”, p. 74.

<sup>92</sup>Walt, *Taming American Power*; and Pape, “Soft Balancing Against the United States”.

The fifth and final gap is that it is almost exclusively centred on the United States and the international level of analysis. Pape's groundbreaking article was titled *Soft Balancing against the United States*, and nearly every scholar has not explored the concept beyond the American experience. The notable exception is Yuen Foong Khong's article entitled: *Coping with Strategic Uncertainty: The Role of Institutions and Soft Balancing in Southeast Asia's Post-Cold War Strategy*.<sup>93</sup> Khong employs the concept to explain how states in Southeast Asia have pursued soft balancing strategies to cope with Chinese hegemony on a regional level of analysis.<sup>94</sup> Chapters six through eight seek to follow Khong's approach by similarly exploring how states in the European Near Abroad have pursued soft balancing strategies to cope with Russian hegemony on a regional level of analysis.

In sum, this dissertation seeks to rectify these five gaps by articulating a comprehensive theory of tripartite strategic balancing in the next chapter; the following chapters are devoted to testing the theory in both a system-wide and sub-systemic context, including both the United States and the Russian Federation.

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<sup>93</sup> Yuen Foong Khong, "Coping with Strategic Uncertainty: The Role of Institutions and Soft Balancing in Southeast Asia's Post-Cold War Strategy" in J.J. Suh, Peter Katzenstein and Allen Carlson, eds., *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp.171-208.

<sup>94</sup> Since the publication of Khong's article, other scholars have applied the concept to analyse security dynamics in East Asia. However, there are still no scholarly works which have examined soft balancing against Russian hegemony in its neighbourhood. For instance, see Kai He and Huiyun Feng, "If Not Soft Balancing, Then What? Reconsidering Soft Balancing and U.S. Policy Toward China", *Security Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2008, pp. 363-395.

### **CHAPTER 3: THE THEORY OF TRIPARTITE STRATEGIC BALANCING**

As nature abhors a vacuum, so international politics abhors unbalanced power.  
- Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", 2000

This chapter seeks to articulate a systemic theory of tripartite strategic balancing applicable to unipolar international systems. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section briefly recapitulates the first two dimensions of tripartite strategic balancing – internal and external balancing – and it enumerates the indicators which will test whether or not these types of balancing behaviours are being employed against a unipolar leader. The second section seeks to operationalise the third and most important prong of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing: soft balancing. In particular, this section seeks to operationalise the concept of soft balancing in a manner which distinguishes it from policy bargaining and routine diplomatic friction. It provides a brief overview of the limitations of the various definitions of soft balancing employed by scholars hitherto and it presents and attempts to justify an alternative definition of the term. The third section provides a discussion of what theory is and how theory is to be tested. In the fourth section the theory of tripartite strategic balancing is articulated. This section enumerates the theory's assumptions, definitions, causal variables, units and levels of analysis, and expected outcomes in the form of hypotheses. It explains how the theory of tripartite strategic balancing obtains its explanatory power through its association with balance of power theory. The fifth and final section briefly enumerates certain modifications and qualifications which must be made if the theory is to be applied to regional subsystems.

### **3.1 Prongs One and Two: Internal and External Balancing**

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing articulated in this dissertation retains two elements from traditional balance of power theory: internal and external balancing. *Internal balancing* strategies consist of transforming a state's economic, technological, social, and natural resources into military capabilities which can be utilised during a military confrontation with an opponent. This will be measured along the following indicators: 1) quantitative and qualitative military augmentation (this includes both size of armies, size of defence spending, and investment in new military technologies); 2) military transfers to/from a unipolar leader's opponents; and 3) support for non-state actors, such as terrorists or guerrilla fighters, which confront the unipolar leader.

*External balancing* strategies consist of constructing formal war-fighting military alliances with other states which can be invoked in the case of a military confrontation with an opponent state. External balancing will be measured along the following indicators: 1) signing bi- or multi-lateral war-fighting military pacts with other states; and 2) joining collective defence organisations such as NATO which have an automatic collective security clause committing every state to the defence of its members in the event of an attack.

### **3.2 Prong Three: a Definition of Soft Balancing Accounting for State Motives**

It is first appropriate to justify expanding the traditional notion of balancing before a specific definition of soft balancing is offered. As the second chapter demonstrated, conceptions of balancing may be as old as recorded history itself. In its more rudimentary version, notions of balancing have traditionally referred to shifting diplomatic and military alliances in response to the threatening actions of an aspiring hegemon. Eventually notions

of balancing have also come to encompass a state's internal policies directed at augmenting its military power. The former, external type of balancing witnessed its heyday in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European states-system, whereas the latter, internal type of balancing, was most prevalent among the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Since the end of the Cold War, however, both types of (hard) balancing strategies have been less prevalent in the relations among the great powers. Consequently, a rigid application of traditional balance of power theory to great power relations since the end of the Cold War would miss the more surreptitious forms of balancing which are occurring. Accordingly, expanding the traditional notion of balancing to incorporate the softer elements of power such as international institutions and economic statecraft is required to develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the great power politics of the post-Cold War era.

As mentioned above, a chief defect of the soft balancing literature is that it does not operationalise the concept in an analytically rigorous manner. In particular, the concept is defined so broadly as to include practically everything – rendering it unfalsifiable and hence analytically vacuous. The second chapter hinted that T.V. Paul's, Stephen Walt's, and Robert Pape's definitions of soft balancing may be challenged on these grounds. For instance, Paul's definition<sup>95</sup> does not adequately distinguish between internal balancing and soft balancing – since it is difficult to demarcate a threshold between “open arms buildups” and “limited arms buildups” – and it does not convey a sense of why the balancing is being employed – thus not distinguishing between soft balancing on the one hand and policy bargaining and routine diplomatic friction on the other. Moreover, any amount of arms buildup already falls within

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<sup>95</sup> “Soft balancing involves tacit balancing short of formal alliances. It occurs when states generally develop ententes or limited security understandings with one another to balance a potentially threatening state or a rising power. Soft balancing is often based on limited arms buildups, ad hoc cooperative exercises, or collaboration in regional or international institutions; these policies may be converted to open, hard-balancing strategies if and when security competition becomes intense and the powerful state becomes threatening.” T.V. Paul, “Introduction”, in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

the category of internal balancing. Walt's definition<sup>96</sup> of the term is so broad as to include nearly everything under the sun – thus making it unfalsifiable – and it similarly does not convey a sense of why the balancing is being undertaken. A theory which is unfalsifiable cannot be meaningfully tested. Pape's definition,<sup>97</sup> although the most analytically useful of the three – because it specifically refers to the use of non-military tools to constrain the unipolar leader's unilateral use of force – also does not adequately distinguish soft balancing from routine diplomatic friction because it does not account for the motives or purposes behind the soft balancing impetus. His definition is also intimately tied to one case study – the 2003 US invasion of Iraq – and does not suggest that the concept is applicable outside of the US experience.

It is vital to demarcate the difference between balancing and policy bargaining or routine diplomatic friction from the perspective of theory construction. As Brooks and Wohlforth argue, “bargaining is ubiquitous in a world of self-interested states.” Thus, if one equates balancing with bargaining then balancing becomes a *constant* in international relations, rather than a *variable*. Since constants by definition have no variability, the effect of this conflation would be to render a theory inherently unfalsifiable and “a catch-all description of international relations writ large.”<sup>98</sup>

Robert Art, a neorealist scholar who subscribes to the soft balancing argument, has attempted to find a solution to this “balancing / bargaining” conceptual conundrum in the following way:

‘Policy bargaining’ refers to behavior designed to obtain the best outcome for a state on a given issue or set of issues by deploying in the most effective manner the power

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<sup>96</sup> Soft balancing is “the conscious coordination of diplomatic action in order to obtain outcomes contrary to US preferences – outcomes that could not be gained if the balancers did not give each other some degree of mutual support.” Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 126.

<sup>97</sup> Soft balancing involves “actions that do not directly challenge US military preponderance but that use non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive unilateral US military policies.” Robert A. Pape, “Soft Balancing Against the United States”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, “Hard Times for Soft Balancing”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 104.

assets that the state *currently* possesses. ‘Balancing’ refers to behavior designed to create a better range of outcomes for a state vis-à-vis another state or coalition of states by *adding* to the power assets at its disposal, in an attempt to offset or diminish the advantages enjoyed by that other state or coalition. These assets include military forces, economic power and leverage, formal alliances, informal alignments, and voting and veto power in international organizations. The first three can be conceived of as hard assets; the last two, as soft assets. Use of any of the first three is hard balancing; of the last two, soft balancing. So, policy bargaining is the attempt to produce favourable outcomes with current assets, whereas balancing behavior is the attempt to augment assets so as to produce better outcomes the next time.<sup>99</sup>

The problem with Art’s formulation, as Brooks and Wohlforth correctly identify, is that under his definition every state is arguably engaging in balancing behaviour:

The United States is, of course, building up its capabilities ‘to create a better range of outcomes,’ so it is balancing, too, by Art’s definition. Who isn’t? Art does not show – nor is it clear how he could show – how his broadened conception of balance of power theory could ever be wrong.<sup>100</sup>

Art’s definition thereby creates a new difficulty because it fails to distinguish between state policies directed against hegemony and those that promote it; in other words, the unipolar leader could technically be said to be balancing against itself at times.

This thesis provides an alternative definition of soft balancing as *actions undertaken by a state seeking to establish a more multilateral and/or balanced system in a way which does not directly challenge the unipolar leader’s military preponderance but rather utilises non-military tools to constrain its most aggressive and unilateral military policies*. This definition distinguishes balancing from policy bargaining and routine diplomatic friction because it explicitly states that an action must be motivated by a desire to establish a more balanced system – such as multipolarity – in order for it to count as soft balancing. It is also closely related to the principle that multipolar international orders are characterised by greater multilateralism as opposed to unipolar unilateralism. In other words, the purported soft balancing must be linked to the idea of equilibrium and greater multilateralism. Other actions which may adversely affect the unipolar leader’s interests but are nonetheless motivated for

<sup>99</sup> Robert Art *et al.*, “Correspondence: Striking the Balance”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 3, Winter 2005-6, pp. 183-184.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

reasons other than establishing a more balanced international order based on multilateralism do not constitute acts of soft balancing.

This definition also indicates that the purpose of soft balancing measures is to constrain the unipolar leader's aggressive and unilateral use of military power.<sup>101</sup> Finally, it also specifies that the soft balancing measures are to be strictly non-military related.<sup>102</sup> These non-military tools refer to international institutions, economic statecraft, and strict interpretations of neutrality.

### 3.3 Theory Construction and Testing

This thesis adopts Kenneth Waltz's approach to theory construction and testing as articulated in the first chapter of his *Theory of International Politics*. Waltz first distinguishes between laws and theories:

Laws establish relations between variables...If *a*, then *b*, where *a* stands for one or more independent variables and *b* stands for the dependent variable: in form, this is the statement of a law...Rather than being mere collections of laws, theories are statements that *explain* them. Theories are qualitatively different from laws. Laws identify invariant and probability associations. Theories show why those associations obtain.<sup>103</sup>

Waltz explains that theories contain a series of assumptions which are not assertions of fact – “they are neither true nor false.” The assumptions are useful for the purposes of theory construction and they find their justification in the success of the theory of which they form part. A theory is judged by the extent of its explanatory power in subsuming many disparate laws into one theoretical system. Waltz argues that theory is fundamentally distinct from reality in that it is by definition a mere simplification of reality; in fact, he argues that

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<sup>101</sup> In this sense, the definition is similar to the one offered by Pape. However, the definition differs from Pape's definition in that it refers to unipolar systems in general, whereas Pape's definition is inextricably intertwined with the United States in particular.

<sup>102</sup> In this sense, the definition differs from the one offered by Paul in which limited arms buildups are considered soft balancing measures.

<sup>103</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), pp. 1, 5.

explanatory power is gained by moving away from reality. Waltz also asserts that theories are never proven true or false: instead, the hypotheses which are derived from theories may be subjected to empirical tests which either confirm or disconfirm them. Lastly, “in order to test a theory,” Waltz counsels, “one must do the following:”

1. State the theory being tested.
2. Infer hypotheses from it.
3. Subject the hypotheses to experimental or observational tests.
4. In taking steps two and three, use definitions of the terms found in the theory being tested.
5. Eliminate or control perturbing variables not included in the theory under test.
6. Devise a number of distinct and demanding tests.
7. If a test is not passed, ask whether the theory flunks completely, needs repair and restatement, or requires a narrowing of the scope of its explanatory claims.<sup>104</sup>

The subsequent chapters and the remaining sections of this chapter are roughly structured in light of these seven steps. The next section of this chapter addresses steps one and two, the empirical chapters address steps three to six, and the conclusion addresses the final step.

### **3.4 Towards a Theory of Tripartite Strategic Balancing Incorporating**

#### **1) Raw Power and 2) Perceived Intentions**

This section is devoted to constructing the theory of tripartite strategic balancing in unipolar international systems. The theory offered here uses Waltz’s neorealism and balance of power theory as a point of departure. It shares many common premises with Waltz’s neorealism and structural balance of power theory: in this sense, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing derives its explanatory power through its association with balance of power theory. First, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing assumes that the international system is anarchic. Second, it assumes that states are unitary and rational actors capable of

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

coming up with sound strategies to maximise their chances of survival.<sup>105</sup> Third, it assumes that states primarily seek survival as independent entities. However, whereas Waltz's neorealism leads to the prediction that "states will engage in [hard] balancing behavior...[and that there] will be a strong tendency toward balance in the system," the theory of tripartite strategic balancing leads to the expectation that in a unipolar system, second-tier great powers will soft balance against the unipolar leader.<sup>106</sup> As a corollary, as the international system becomes more multipolar, one would be expected to see more evidence of hard balancing.

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing differs from Waltz's structural realism in several important respects. One noteworthy weakness of Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* is that he is inconsistent on the point as to whether structural realism predicts only international political outcomes – namely the formation of balances of power – or if it also predicts state strategies. He often argues that structural realism only predicts systemic outcomes and not individual states' foreign policies. Since balancing is portrayed as the unintended consequence of states seeking to survive, Waltz is able to argue that there is a degree of automaticity in balance of power theory. However, as the above citation demonstrates, it seems that on this particular occasion he argues that a theory of outcomes is inextricably intertwined with a theory of state strategies. Furthermore, his distinction between internal and external balancing is confusing because it leads to the impression that balancing is in fact a state strategy.

In contrast, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing offered here hardly distinguishes between outcomes and state strategies in this sense: it predicts a certain

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<sup>105</sup> Although international history is replete with instances of states acting against their national interests and flagrantly violating this assumption of rationality, it is a necessary assumption for theory building in international relations. The same parallel can be drawn to the assumption that firms are rational, profit-maximisers in microeconomic theory: although there are instances where firms seek objectives other than maximising profits, these other objectives would usually be the exceptions to the rule. In short, an assumption of rationality by the units is integral to any structural theory, so much so that it is difficult to imagine how a structural theory where the units behave consistently irrationally could be analytically useful.

<sup>106</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 128.

international political outcome – that the international system will exhibit patterns of soft balancing against the unipolar leader – and it predicts a certain strategy – that great powers will employ soft balancing as a strategy to curb the preponderant power. In this way, the theory of soft balancing is not strictly automatic but requires conscious state policies aimed at soft balancing the unipolar leader. Although the theory of tripartite strategic balancing is essentially a structural one, this element of non-automaticity and focus on state strategies bridges part of the gap between structural and classical realism. The theory may thus be associated with “neoclassical realism,” insofar as this is defined as an approach to international relations which explores the formation of grand strategies through the interactions of systemic, state-level, and individual-level variables.<sup>107</sup>

Secondly, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing also differs from Waltz’s strictly structuralist variant of balance of power theory by incorporating a constructivist or ideational element of perceived intentions. In this sense, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing is particularly amenable to Walt’s balance of threat theory, which asserts that states do not so much as balance against raw power as they balance against threats. Walt employs a quadripartite definition of “threat” as 1) the distribution of capabilities, 2) geographical proximity, 3) offensive capabilities, and 4) perceived intentions.<sup>108</sup>

Walt’s quadripartite definition of “threat” subsumes Waltz’s emphasis on the distribution of capabilities as merely one factor determining the level of threat. This insight enables Walt to explain how a state may preponderate in terms of raw power, but nonetheless avoid balancing against it because of favourable geopolitical circumstances or perceived intentions. The theory of tripartite strategic balancing offered here does not subsume the distribution of capabilities under the omnibus category of “threat.” Both the distribution of

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<sup>107</sup> For a detailed exposition of “neoclassical realism” see: Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>108</sup> See Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

capabilities and perceived intentions are presented as separate, independent variables. This analytical separation of independent variables should provide for a better explanatory theory: by separating and demarcating the independent variables it becomes possible to better identify which variables explain international political outcomes among the great powers. The practical implication of this theoretical separation is that even if a unipolar leader, such as the United States, manages to engineer a benign perception of itself among other states, it will not eliminate the incentive that other states have to soft balance against it.

Hence, in unipolar international systems, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing articulated here has two independent variables: 1) the distribution of capabilities across the international system – *i.e.* raw power – and 2) perceived intentions – which fall on a spectrum ranging from belligerent to benign. In unipolar regional systems, a third independent variable – 3) geographical proximity – is added to the analysis; it is not included at the international level of analysis because it adds little explanatory power to the theory and it would dilute the theory's parsimony. This is discussed at length in the sixth chapter.

It will be argued that the distribution of capabilities in the international system changed from bipolarity to unipolarity with the end of the Cold War. Accordingly, the first independent variable leads to the theory's prediction that soft balancing measures will be undertaken by second-tier great powers against the unipolar leader irrespective of whether or not it is perceived to have belligerent or benign intentions. This is primarily because states know that perceptions are unreliable and intentions are always subject to change, and a national security strategy based on these is built on sand. In this sense, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing offered here differs from Pape's "theory of security in a unipolar world," which asserts that "the principal cause of soft balancing" is the Bush Doctrine and that "repudiating this strategy is the principal solution."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States", p. 10.

However, the second independent variable, perceived intentions, does lead to the prediction that if the unipolar leader develops a reputation for belligerent intentions as manifest in aggressive or unilateral policies or national security strategies, the soft balancing dynamic against the unipolar leader will intensify. As aforementioned, Walt used the variable “perceived intentions” as one of his four components which comprised of his omnibus concept of “threat,” and he argued that rather than balancing against aggregate power, states balance against threats.<sup>110</sup> However, Walt surprisingly failed to mention how to measure “perceived intentions” beyond simply asserting that “states that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them.”<sup>111</sup>

This dissertation seeks to remedy this defect by operationalising the independent variable of “perceived intentions” in terms of whether or not a unipolar leader’s use of force was sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council and is legal under international law. If it was sanctioned, it will be perceived as benign and legitimate. If it was not sanctioned, it will be perceived as belligerent or aggressive (at least by those states which did not authorise the use of force and consider it a unilateral violation of international law). The fourth chapter will demonstrate that Russia and China perceived the US-led military operation in Kosovo as a belligerent violation of international law, and the fifth chapter will argue that the Bush Doctrine was perceived by many of the great powers – even America’s allies – as a belligerent doctrine. The seventh and eight chapters will demonstrate that Russia’s military intervention in Georgia, along with its military doctrine of defending its citizens abroad, was perceived by the states of the European Near Abroad as a belligerent violation of international law, and it engendered greater soft balancing efforts against Russia. However, it is important to note that it is not possible to generalise about great power behaviour in the region from the analyses of one case study.

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<sup>110</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 22.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

Second-tier great powers have several reasons to fear, and consequently soft balance against, a unipolar leader. Stephen Walt convincingly argues there are two main reasons why states choose to balance. First, a state that fails to curb a rising hegemon before it becomes a unipolar leader places its survival at risk. This is because “to ally with the dominant power means placing one’s trust in its continued benevolence. The safer strategy is to join with those who cannot readily dominate their allies, in order to avoid being dominated by those who can.” Secondly, states prefer to balance because joining the weaker side should disproportionately increase the new member’s influence within the alliance, since the weaker side is in greater need of assistance. By contrast, joining the stronger side – *i.e.* bandwagoning – will give the new member less influence in the coalition and thus it should be less preferential.<sup>112</sup>

A third reason for balancing behaviour is the fear of direct attack by a unipolar leader against the territorial integrity and political independence of a sovereign state.<sup>113</sup> This is the most threatening yet the least likely outcome in the interactions between the unipolar leader and the great powers on the global level of analysis (however, as the Russo-Georgian war indicates, it is not as unlikely on a regional level of analysis). A fourth fear is of an indirect harm to a state’s national security interests. For instance, the unipolar leader may wage a unilateral war against a third party which might adversely affect a great power’s strategic and economic interests. A fifth fear, according to Pape, is that the unipolar leader

will become a global hegemon and thus capable of many harmful actions, such as rewriting the rules of international conduct to its long-term interests, exploiting world economic resources for relative gain, imposing imperial rule on second-ranked powers, and even conquering any state in the system.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, pp. 18-19.

<sup>113</sup> Pape, “Soft Balancing Against the United States”, p. 13.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

The sixth and final fear revolves around questions of prestige and dignity: a state may be motivated to challenge the unipolar leader for fear that if it does not, it will lose its great power status and the advantages this status confers.

In sum, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing leads to the following two hypotheses or expected outcomes: 1) in a unipolar international system soft balancing will be a feature of the interactions between second-tier great powers and the unipolar leader; and 2) that the soft balancing dynamic will be intensified if the unipolar leader develops a reputation for belligerent intentions as manifest in an aggressive or unilateral military policies.

These hypotheses would be falsified if there is a unipolar international system which exhibits no signs of soft balancing against the unipolar leader<sup>115</sup>; these hypotheses would be falsified *a fortiori* if the unipolar leader is perceived to harbour belligerent intentions (which might be manifest in a unilateral military doctrine) and implements them through an illegal war and the great powers do not respond with soft balancing measures.

### 3.5 Applying the Theory to Regional Subsystems

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing articulated above focuses primarily on unipolar international systems and the interactions between the unipolar leader and second-tier great powers. The strategic interests of great powers by definition cover the international system in its entirety. In fact, some great powers – especially Russia – equate their very existence with the continuation of their great power status.<sup>116</sup> Minor-regional powers, on the

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<sup>115</sup> The rival hypothesis may be stated as such: given a unipolar international system, one should expect to see second-tier great powers bandwagon with the unipolar leader rather than balance against it. This argument is made in William Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World”, *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 1, Summer 1999, pp. 5-41.

<sup>116</sup> For instance, there has been a prevalent opinion among both ruling elites and the public in Russia that Russia must maintain its great power status (*derzhavnost*) or it will “cease to be Russia.” See Thomas Ambrosio, *Challenging America’s Global Preeminence: Russia’s Quest for Multipolarity* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005).

other hand, define their strategic interests in a different way. The scope of their strategic interests is usually limited to their regional subsystem. It is for this reason that a third independent variable (or unit of analysis) of geographical proximity needs to be added to the theory. This variable is not needed in the international level of analysis because the unipole and great powers are more likely to define their security interests globally, and correspondingly, it would add little to the explanatory power of the theory while diluting its parsimony.

Hence, minor-regional powers often focus their balancing efforts primarily against the regional hegemon, because the regional hegemon threatens their security the most. As Walt argues, threats travel more easily across short distances, and we should expect to see that states which are in close geographic proximity to the regional hegemon are more likely to engage in balancing behaviour against it.<sup>117</sup> In fact, due to the “stopping power of water,” minor-regional powers often invite the unipolar leader (*i.e.* the United States) to serve as an offshore-balancer to offset the preponderance of the regional hegemon.<sup>118</sup>

In sum, the regional level of analysis adds a new unit of analysis to the theory of tripartite strategic balancing: geographical proximity to the regional hegemon. It leads to the theoretical proposition that: 3) the closer a minor-regional power is to the regional hegemon, the more likely it is to employ soft balancing measures against it. This theoretical expectation is not meant to be a deterministic law, but it could narrow the set of options available for a state. By employing a regional level of analysis, this dissertation attempts to unify the theory of tripartite strategic balancing with insights from the field of geopolitics. It enables the theory to apply to regional subsystems and it also accounts for why many minor-regional powers choose to balance against a regional hegemon rather than the global unipolar leader. Chapter six will discuss the regional level of analysis in detail by employing Buzan

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<sup>117</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>118</sup> For the state strategy of offshore balancing see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), p. 42.

and Weaver's regional security complex theory as a base to develop a framework for analysing and testing soft balancing in the European Near Abroad.<sup>119</sup> Table 3.1 below summarises the levels of analysis (and their corresponding units of analysis / independent variables) involved in the theory of tripartite strategic balancing.

**Table 3.1: Levels of Analysis and Corresponding Units of Analysis**

| <b>Level of Analysis</b>                          | <b>International or Global</b>  | <b>Regional</b>  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Units of Analysis or Independent Variables</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distribution of Capabilities (Unipolarity, Bipolarity, Multipolarity)</li> <li>2. Perceived Intentions (Benign, Belligerent)</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distribution of Capabilities (Unipolarity, Bipolarity, Multipolarity)</li> <li>2. Perceived Intentions (Benign, Belligerent)</li> <li>3. Geographical Proximity</li> </ol> |

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<sup>119</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

## **CHAPTER 4: TRIPARTITE STRATEGIC BALANCING AND THE KOSOVO CRISIS 1999**

“I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old.”

- British Foreign Secretary George Canning’s speech to Parliament 1826, concerning the growing French ascendancy on the Continent.

This chapter examines the soft balancing (or lack thereof) against the United States in the 1990s and during and immediately following the US-led NATO campaign in Kosovo in 1999. It is divided into five sections. The first two sections further develop the two independent variables. The first section sets the international context for the case studies by presenting the debate on US unipolarity, and the second section briefly discusses the international law on the use of force. The remainder of the chapter provides an in-depth examination of the great power relations surrounding the Kosovo Crisis. The third section provides a historical background to the conflict and the fourth examines the absence of any soft balancing against the US by its allies – Britain, France, and Germany. By contrast, the fifth section illustrates the various attempts at soft balancing by Russia, China, and India. The final section examines the consequences that the Kosovo Crisis had on the strategic relationship between the United States, Russia, and China. The analysis will focus primarily on Russia – the chief protagonist of soft balancing during this period.

### **4.1 First Independent Variable: The Debate on American Unipolarity**

On 25 December 1991, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev appeared on state television and announced the effective dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Thirty minutes after the broadcast the red hammer-and-sickle flag over the Kremlin was pulled down for the last time. Not only had the USSR hit the dustbin of history, but so had

bipolarity – a characteristic of the international system widely perceived as having shaped the international order since the end of the Second World War. Commentators were quick to articulate that an unprecedented “unipolar moment” had arrived for the United States.<sup>120</sup> While some international relations scholars perceived the end of the Cold War as the “end of history” or as a harbinger of a “new world order” based on peaceful democratic capitalism, others were less sanguine. For instance, the realist scholar John Mearsheimer wrote an ominous article entitled *Back to the Future* in which he argued that rather than witnessing an end to history, Europe was condemned to repeat it, owing to its newfound multipolarity.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Aaron Friedberg wrote a complementary article on the prospects of stability in East Asia, and concluded that “for better and for worse, Europe’s past could be Asia’s future.”<sup>122</sup> Christopher Layne, another realist scholar, argued in 1993 that “the unipolar moment is just that, a geopolitical interlude that will give way to multipolarity between 2000-2010.”<sup>123</sup>

Other notable scholars have also challenged the notion that the international system is best characterised as unipolar. For instance, Samuel Huntington argues that the unipolar moment has passed and that what is left is a “strange hybrid, a uni-multipolar system with one superpower and many major powers.”<sup>124</sup> In similar terms, Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver describe the international system as a 4+1 system, with one superpower (the United States) and four great powers (the European Union, Russia, China, and Japan). The chief advantage of this characterisation of “weak unipolarity” is that it leaves the door open for investigation of security dynamics at the regional level of analysis.<sup>125</sup> On a slightly different note, Joseph Nye describes the international system as a three-dimensional chessboard where the

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<sup>120</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, Winter 1990-91, pp. 23-33.

<sup>121</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War”, *International Security*, vol. 15, no. 1, Summer 1990, pp. 5-56.

<sup>122</sup> Aaron Friedberg, “Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia”, *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 3, Winter 1993-94, pp. 5-33. Friedberg characterises the international system as “multi-multipolarity.”

<sup>123</sup> Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise”, *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 4, Spring 1993, p. 7.

<sup>124</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 2, March/April 1999, p. 36.

<sup>125</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 30.

distribution of power is unipolar militarily, multipolar economically, and widely distributed with regards to soft power.<sup>126</sup>

While all of these alternative conceptions of the international system are plausible, this thesis adopts a definition of polarity which is derived from the logic of balance of power theory. Under this formulation, unipolarity is a system in which one state's capabilities are so concentrated as to preclude the formation of a (hard) counterbalancing coalition against it.<sup>127</sup> On the one hand, unipolar systems are thus distinct from both multi- and bi-polar systems which function as traditional balance of power systems: *i.e.* great powers hard balance each other. On the other hand, the capabilities are not so concentrated as to enable a global empire wherein a state may impose its will on others and establish international rules in its favour.<sup>128</sup> It is important to note that US unipolarity does not necessarily mean that the US will achieve all of its foreign policy objectives – such as bringing domestic stability to Iraq. What matters when counting poles is not an ability to influence international political outcomes but rather relative capabilities.

In order to count as a polar power, a state must score well on *all* components of power: “size and population of territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence.”<sup>129</sup> By any of these measures the United States

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<sup>126</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>127</sup> This definition is also preferred by Christopher Layne and William Wohlforth. See Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion” and William Wohlforth, “The Stability of the Unipolar World”, *International Security*, vol. 24, no. 1, Summer 1999, p. 9.

<sup>128</sup> Mearsheimer defines a global hegemon as “a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system.” He argues that it is virtually impossible for a state to achieve a global hegemony, although regional hegemonies have been established, such as the US hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 40-42. It is interesting to note that some scholars make a cogent case for treating various regional subsystems as either multipolar or bipolar. For instance, Robert Ross argues that the post-Cold War international system is characterised as an American-Russian bipolarity in Europe and an American-Chinese bipolarity in East Asia. See Robert Ross, “Bipolarity and Balancing in East Asia”, in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 267-304.

<sup>129</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), p. 131.

enjoys a preponderance of power unseen since the emergence of the modern state system.<sup>130</sup> As tables 4.1 and 4.2 below indicate, the United States is the world's third largest country in terms of population and territory. Its population is over twice the size of Russia's and its territory is larger than China's. Although China and India occupy the top positions with over a billion in population, this is in many ways a double-edged sword, and while the Russian Federation retains the largest territory, a large proportion of it is barren tundra.

**Table 4.1: Population of the Unipolar Leader and the Great Powers, 2013<sup>131</sup>**

| State              | World Ranking | Population    |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| China              | 1             | 1,349,585,838 |
| India              | 2             | 1,220,800,359 |
| United States      | 3             | 316,668,567   |
| Russian Federation | 9             | 142,500,482   |
| Japan              | 10            | 127,253,075   |
| Germany            | 16            | 81,147,265    |
| France             | 21            | 65,951,611    |
| United Kingdom     | 22            | 63,395,574    |

**Table 4.2: Territory of the Unipolar Leader and the Great Powers, 2013<sup>132</sup>**

| State              | World Ranking | Territory (Sq km) |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Russian Federation | 1             | 17,098,242        |
| United States      | 3             | 9,826,675         |
| China              | 4             | 9,596,961         |
| India              | 7             | 3,287,263         |
| France             | 43            | 643,801           |
| Japan              | 62            | 377,915           |
| Germany            | 63            | 357,022           |
| United Kingdom     | 80            | 243,610           |

<sup>130</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), p. 31.

<sup>131</sup> *CIA World Factbook*, World Population Rankings, July 2013 Estimates, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>.

<sup>132</sup> *CIA World Factbook*, World Territory Rankings, July 2013 Estimates, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2147rank.html>.

As Table 4.3 below demonstrates, the US economy also maintains a wide margin of superiority over its chief rivals. According to the International Monetary Fund, the US economy is still nearly twice the size of the Chinese economy and over seven-times the size of the Russian economy using current exchange rates. In fact, the US economy is a comparable size to the economy of the entire European Union, and it is growing at a much faster rate. Although the figures under the purchasing-power-parity method show a closer race, it is submitted that the nominal data is more useful in comparing relative capabilities because advanced military hardware like F-16s can only be purchased using US dollars.

**Table 4.3: GDP of the Unipolar Leader and the Great Powers, 2013<sup>133</sup>**

| State              | GDP (USD) (billions) | GDP (PPP) (billions) |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| United States      | 16,237.746           | 16,237.746           |
| China              | 9,020.309            | 13,623.255           |
| Japan              | 5,149.897            | 4,778.523            |
| Germany            | 3,597.965            | 3,269.562            |
| France             | 2,739.274            | 2,289.622            |
| United Kingdom     | 2,422.921            | 2,391.042            |
| Russian Federation | 2,213.567            | 2,640.737            |
| India              | 1,972.844            | 5,031.678            |

The United States also wields a disproportionate amount of influence at key international institutions such as the UN Security Council, WTO, IMF, and NATO, which is arguably the most successful military alliance in history. The US is also the world's leader in terms of cultural or soft power, which can confer legitimacy to its foreign policy decisions.<sup>134</sup> However, the most important and greatest gap between the unipolar leader and the great powers remains in the military field.

<sup>133</sup> International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, April 2013 Estimate, <http://www.imf.org>.

<sup>134</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*.

**Table 4.4: Defence Expenditures of the Unipolar Leader and the Great Powers, 2012<sup>135</sup>**

| State          | Defence Expenditure (USD millions) | Defence Expenditure as percentage of GDP |
|----------------|------------------------------------|--|
| United States  | 645,700                            | 4.12                                     |
| China          | 102,436                            | 1.24                                     |
| United Kingdom | 64,080                             | 2.63                                     |
| Russia         | 59,851                             | 3.06                                     |
| Japan          | 59,443                             | 0.99                                     |
| France         | 48,121                             | 1.86                                     |
| Germany        | 40,356                             | 1.20                                     |
| India          | 38,538                             | 1.98                                     |

Table 4.4 paints an even starker picture of US unipolarity. In 2012 the US still spent over fifty percent more on defence than the figure for all of the great powers combined. In fact, US defence expenditures exceeded the military spending of the next fourteen countries combined.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, arguably the United States' closest ally, the United Kingdom, spends more than the Russian Federation. The second column describing expenditures as a percentage of GDP reveals that the US military edge should be expected to continue in the near future. Most drastically, China only spends 1.24 percent of its GDP on military expenditures. This is a deliberate strategy as part of China's peaceful rise. Nevertheless, these figures paint such a stark picture that they make it seem like the great powers have completely given up on the hard balancing game. According to the US Department of Defence, the US has 1,372,522 active-duty personnel, and 172,966 soldiers, sailors, and airmen deployed in more than 150 countries around the world.<sup>137</sup> The US also possesses a wide margin of superiority over military technology. In particular, its developments in anti-ballistic missile technology are even threatening other states' second-strike capabilities.

<sup>135</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013*, 113:1, 14 March 2013, pp. 543-556.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> "Total Military Personnel and Dependent End Strength By Service, Regional Area, and Country", United States Department of Defence, 31 December 2012, [http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/history/SIAD\\_309\\_Report\\_P1212.xlsx](http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/history/SIAD_309_Report_P1212.xlsx).

Finally, the United States is also blessed geostrategically: it is the only great power in the Western Hemisphere, while every other potential peer competitor in Eurasia is surrounded by other great powers. This fortuitous geostrategic position has enabled the United States to pursue a regional balancing strategy in Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf; it has also mitigated the sense of threat that other states feel towards the United States and it has contributed to the lack of hard balancing against it.<sup>138</sup> The US wars in Kosovo 1999, Afghanistan 2001, and Iraq 2003 – all of which succeeded in removing the systems of governance prevalent in those areas – also provide some evidence of US unipolarity.

Waltz's definition of great power holds that a state must score high on all the dimensions of power. The remaining great powers were selected on this basis, with particular emphasis being placed on their possession of nuclear weapons. This is why states such as Brazil, Mexico, and Italy, which have large populations, territories (the former two) and economies, did not make the ranks of the great powers. Furthermore, nuclear states such as Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel, also do not count as great powers because they substantially lack in one of the dimensions of power. If Iran develops a second-strike nuclear capability, it could also arguably join the ranks of the great powers due to the size of its territory, population, and economy.

In sum, no combination of other states may match the capabilities of the United States, and hence, the international system is best characterised as unipolar. As the theory of tripartite strategic balancing has indicated, this distribution of capabilities has important consequences for the relations between the unipole and the great powers. The unipolar leader and the states identified as great powers are summarised Table 4.5 below. The next section examines the second independent variable, perceived intentions, in greater detail.

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<sup>138</sup> Walt, *Taming American Power*, pp. 39-40.

**Table 4.5: Classification of States in the International System**

| <b>Level of Analysis</b>    | <b>Unipolar Leader / Hegemon</b> | <b>Second-tier Great Powers</b>  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>International System</b> | United States                    | Russian Federation, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, United Kingdom |

#### **4.2 Second Independent Variable: Perceived Intentions and the Legality of Use of Force**

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing predicts that under the conditions of unipolarity, a soft balancing coalition will likely form against the unipolar leader. It also predicts that if the unipolar leader develops a reputation for harbouring belligerent intentions – as reflected in an aggressive national security strategy or cavalier disregard of international law – it will intensify the soft balancing coalition against it, and elements of hard balancing may even begin to show. One of the best indicators of belligerent intentions is whether or not a state’s resort to force has the sanction of international law and the UN Security Council. This section will enumerate the various conditions under which a state may use force under international law.

International law generally prohibits the use of force as an instrument of a state’s foreign policy. In particular, Article 2(4) of the UN Charter states the basic proposition that “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.” Furthermore, the International Court

of Justice, in arguably their most authoritative decision in *Nicaragua v. United States* (1986), suggested that the ban on the use of force is such a strong form of customary international law that it might even be construed as a peremptory norm (or *jus cogens*) of international law from which it is not possible to derogate.<sup>139</sup>

Nevertheless, although international judges, scholars, and academics may debate the fine contours of the general prohibition on the use of force, the international system is anarchic, and correspondingly, international law is what states make of it. International law matters in general – and in particular for the purposes of this dissertation – because it influences a state’s reputation and its perceived intentions among other states in the international system. For instance, if a state is perceived as acting in accordance with international law, then it is not perceived as harbouring belligerent intentions. If, on the other hand, a state cavalierly eschews international law, then it will be more likely to be perceived as harbouring belligerent intentions. The theory of tripartite strategic balancing suggests that if a unipolar leader is perceived to harbour belligerent intentions, by acting outside the accepted norms of international law, a soft balancing coalition will likely form against it.

Therefore, despite the seemingly formidable legal restrictions on the use of force as articulated in the judgments of the International Court of Justice, state practice demonstrates that international law, and Article 2(4) of the UN Charter in particular, need not be construed as straitjackets. There are two schools of thought regarding how strictly Article 2(4) is to be interpreted: the restrictive and the permissive school. The former argues that the article lays down a total ban on the use of force except for two main situations: 1) where there is authorisation by the Security Council under Article 42, and 2) as self-defence under Article

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<sup>139</sup> Christine Gray, *International Law and the Use of Force*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 30; International Court of Justice, *Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America)*, ICJ Judgment, 27 June 1986, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=3&k=66&case=70&code=nus&p3=3>.

51.<sup>140</sup> The latter school argues in favour of a wider interpretation which permits the use of force in a variety of situations. These exceptional situations will be briefly enumerated.

The least controversial exception to the general prohibition against the use of force is the collective security provision in Article 42. Articles 38-42 provide that if the Security Council determines that there is a “threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression”... “it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.” However, the problem with the collective security measure is that it has only been implemented twice – in Korea in 1950 and Iraq in 1991 – under circumstances which can be considered *sui generis*: the Soviet Union boycotted the Security Council in 1950<sup>141</sup> and it was in its death throes in 1990-1991. Thus, collective security mechanisms are unlikely to play a major role in the post-Cold War era where the divisions among the great powers are rife.

The more common exception to the general ban on the use of force is articulated in Article 51: “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence *if an armed attack occurs* against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.” The customary international law on this question is governed by the *Caroline Affair* (1837). The *Caroline* was an American ship which was reinforcing Canadian insurgents against British rule in Canada. The British subsequently launched a strike and destroyed the ship on US territory in order to prevent further aggression. In an oft-cited passage in his letter to the British Ambassador, the US Secretary of State Daniel Webster

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<sup>140</sup> Actions pursuant to Articles 42 and 51 are widely construed as the two “main” situations under which force can be used under international law. There are two other situations. The third exception to the ban on the use of force in Article 2(4) involves enforcement actions by regional arrangements or alliances with the prior authorisation of the Security Council. The fourth exception is only of historical interest now: Article 53 and 107 provide for the legality of the use of force in relation to any state which, during the Second World War, was an enemy of any state signatory of the Charter. The so-called “enemy states” clause remains in the Charter.

<sup>141</sup> The Soviet Union was protesting the exclusion of the People’s Republic of China from assuming the “China-seat” in the Security Council. This enabled the United States to clothe its military intervention in Korea with the UN banner, and it was a serious diplomatic mistake which the Soviet Union would not repeat. The “China-seat” was occupied by the Republic of China until 1971 when it was replaced by the People’s Republic of China.

stated that the necessity for a pre-emptive self-defence must be “instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means, and no moment of deliberation.”<sup>142</sup> This formula was hereafter known as the *Caroline* test.

The permissive school, applying the *Caroline* test, argues that the self-defence scenario permits the use of force in the following circumstances: 1) in response to an ongoing armed attack (as in Kuwait’s defence against Iraq in 1991); 2) in anticipation of an armed attack or threat to the state’s security, so that a state may strike first in order to neutralise an immediate and potential threat (e.g. Israel’s pre-emptive war against its Arab neighbours in 1967, or Israel’s air strike against the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq in 1981); and 3) in response to an attack against a state’s interests, such as its territory, nationals, or property (e.g. Israel’s raid in Entebbe, Uganda in 1977).

There is a debate as to the degree of imminence required before Article 51 could be lawfully triggered. In other words, does a state have to wait for “an armed attack” to have already occurred before it can respond militarily? And if it can strike back against imminent threats, how far into the future does the purported attack have to be? In the wake of the 2003 Persian Gulf War, a UN High-Level Panel of Experts was set up to respond to the challenges to the collective security system after the attacks of 11 September 2001, and it concluded that whereas there is an anticipatory/pre-emptive right of self-defence (where the threat is imminent) in international law, the Bush doctrine of preventive war is *not legal*.<sup>143</sup> The difference between the two is reflected in the imminence of the threat. In a pre-emptive strike, the threat of armed attack occurring is immediate and imminent, like in the *Caroline* test, whereas in a preventive strike, the threat of armed attack is not imminent but is rather in

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<sup>142</sup> Daniel Webster, US Secretary of State, *Letter to British Ambassador Lord Ashburton*, 6 August 1842, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/br-1842d.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/br-1842d.asp).

<sup>143</sup> Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, “A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility”, Fifty-ninth Session of the General Assembly, 2 December 2004, A/59/565, [http://www.unrol.org/files/gaA.59.565\\_En.pdf](http://www.unrol.org/files/gaA.59.565_En.pdf), also see Christine Gray, “The Use of Force and the International Legal Order”, in ed. Malcolm Evans, *International Law*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 631.

the medium- to long-term future. Similarly, a panel of leading international legal scholars in the United Kingdom agrees that “it is unrealistic in practice to suppose that self-defence must in all cases await an actual attack.”<sup>144</sup> However, there is a considerable degree of ambiguity and discretion between imminent and medium-term threats (as the 1981 Israeli attack on Iraq demonstrates), and it is likely that states will continue to use force if their national security is seriously threatened.

Some states have argued that force is permitted under customary international law and state practice in order to protect its nationals. This right has been asserted by the United States (Dominican Republic 1965, Grenada 1983, and Panama 1989), the United Kingdom (Suez 1956), Israel (Uganda 1976), and most importantly for our purposes, by the Russian Federation (Georgia 2008). This will be assessed in more detail in the eighth chapter, but for now it is appropriate to note that this argument is of dubious authority because it is not accepted by the majority of states. In those limited conditions in which it could be construed as legal, the intervention must be proportionate and necessary. In this context, only the Israeli intervention in Uganda seems to meet the criteria of necessity and proportionality.

Some states have also resorted to the use of force as reprisals, viewing them as the proper legal procedure for the vindication of rights illegally denied, or as the proper method for inflicting punishment for harm suffered. Recent examples include the US airstrikes against Iraq in 1993 in retaliation to an assassination attempt on President H.W. Bush, and the US airstrikes on Libya in 1996 in retaliation to terrorist attacks against US citizens in Berlin. It is submitted that although these two reprisals were proportionate, the consensus among legal scholars is that Article 2(4) outlaws the use of reprisals. Reprisals will nonetheless continue to play an important role in international relations as a matter of state practice.

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<sup>144</sup> Elizabeth Wilmshurst *et al.*, *The Chatham House Principles of International Law on the Use of Force in Self-Defence*, October 2005, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/108106>.

Some commentators have also argued that the use of force is permitted in situations of national self-determination, especially in the decolonisation context. They cite various UN General Assembly Resolutions,<sup>145</sup> the International Court of Justice's *Palestinian Wall Advisory Opinion*, and the fact that the Security Council authorised the use of force in East Timor in 1999, as evidence that there is a right to use force in cases of self-determination. It is amusing (although not entirely surprising) that the very states which favoured this interpretation of legal rights during the 1960s and 1970s are today's greatest champions of Art 2(7): non-interference in the domestic affairs of states. Once again, it is not clear whether this right to use force has been accepted as a general exception to Article 2(4), but the better answer is that it has not.

There are two final arguments or exceptions to the general prohibition on the use of force in international law: the Bush Doctrine of preventive war and the doctrine of humanitarian interventions. The former maintains that the union between terrorists and weapons of mass destruction is the single greatest security threat of the post-Cold War era, and that correspondingly, international law should be able to accommodate this new security challenge by loosening the requirements of imminence under Article 51. The fifth chapter on Iraq assesses the Bush Doctrine in detail.

The second challenge to the strict interpretation of the UN Charter involves the doctrine of humanitarian interventions. The legality of the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, with particular reference to the 1999 US-led airstrikes in Kosovo, will be discussed in the remainder of the chapter.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> General Assembly Resolution 3314 (with the "Definition of Aggression" annexed), Adopted at the 2319<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the General Assembly, 14 December 2004, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/3314%28XXIX%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/3314%28XXIX%29).

<sup>146</sup> For a short argument on the (in)compatibility of "humanitarian interventions" with international law, see Alexander Volsky, "Reconciling Human Rights and State Sovereignty, Justice and the Law, in Humanitarian Interventions", *International Public Policy Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, June 2007, pp. 40-47.

### 4.3 Historical Background to the Kosovo Conflict

This section will offer a brief historical background to the war in Kosovo. From the West's perspective, the 1999 NATO campaign in Kosovo was primarily a "humanitarian intervention" aimed at preventing the ethnic genocide of Albanians/Kosovars at the hands of the Slobodan Milosevic regime. Historic tensions in the region often trace back to the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, where the Serbs alleged that Albanians assisted an Ottoman invasion which ultimately snuffed out Serbian independence for centuries. These ethnic tensions were largely suppressed in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1943-1992), but after Josip Tito's death in 1980, the cementing communist ideology was gradually replaced by an extreme jingoism on both sides.<sup>147</sup>

Although Serbs had historical claims to the region – which trace back to the 1389 Battle of Kosovo Fields – by the 1990s the province of Kosovo was approximately eighty to ninety percent ethnic Albanian, the majority of whom wanted independence from Belgrade. However, in early 1989, in an effort to consolidate his power as President, Milosevic backtracked and stripped the region of its autonomy. In response, the Albanians intensified their efforts to create parallel state structures.

By the early 1990s Milosevic focused his attention on the wider conflicts in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia which ultimately led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1992. These civil wars generally came to an end with the signing of the Dayton Accords in December 1995. However, during this conflict a paramilitary group known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) formed and began attacking Serbian law enforcement officials in Kosovo. After the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts, Milosevic returned his attention to the situation in Kosovo.

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<sup>147</sup> Ivo Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington: Brookings Institute Press, 2000), pp. 6-11; Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report: Conflict, International Response, Lessons Learned* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 33-66.

Mutual recriminations persisted from 1995 to 1998 as the KLA believed that the increased attacks on Serb forces were the only way to bring the world's attention to their plight, and the Serbian leadership believed that violent crackdowns were the only way to undermine the KLA's growing influence. In early 1998 the violence intensified and the United States sent its special envoy, Richard Holbrooke, to the region in an attempt to broker a solution to the crisis with Milosevic and Yeltsin. These negotiations ultimately proved fruitless, and by 23 September 1998 the UN Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, passed Resolution 1199 which expressed grave concern at the deteriorating situation in Kosovo, including the displacement of 230,000 persons from their homes, and called on both sides to issue a ceasefire.<sup>148</sup> On 13 October NATO issued an activation warning declaring its intention to execute limited air strikes in approximately 96 hours.<sup>149</sup> This threat was diverted by a hastily agreed ceasefire (the NATO Kosovo Verification Agreement), but both sides would soon violate it and the mutual violence resumed.

One final attempt at a peaceful solution to the crisis was attempted during the Rambouillet Conference in February 1999. The so-called Rambouillet Accords were drawn up which envisaged a NATO administration of an autonomous Kosovo within Yugoslavia. By mid-March the Albanian, American, and British delegations signed the accord, but the Serbian and Russian delegations refused on the basis that it represented an unacceptable violation of Serbia's sovereignty. Ambassador Holbrooke became convinced that the use of force was necessary to find a solution to the rapidly degenerating humanitarian crisis. On 23 March he travelled to Brussels where he debriefed the NATO Secretary General, Javier Solana, on the failure of the peace talks and explained that "the process now is handed both

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<sup>148</sup> Security Council Resolution 1199, Adopted at the 3930<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 23 September 1998, S/RES/1199, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1199%281998%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1199%281998%29).

<sup>149</sup> Javier Solana, Statement to the Press by the Secretary General, NATO, 13 October 1998, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1998/s981013a.htm>.

symbolically and formally back to you. It's NATO's issue."<sup>150</sup> The following day Operation Allied Force commenced.<sup>151</sup>

#### 4.4 Soft Balancing up to and during the Kosovo Crisis among NATO Allies?

The relations between the second-ranked great powers and the United States from the end of the Cold War until the Kosovo Crisis may be characterised as generally cooperative or non-belligerent.

For the most part, the United States' allies – Britain, France, and Germany – cooperated with the United States up to and during the Kosovo War.<sup>152</sup> There was some rhetoric from France and Germany warning of the dangers of unipolarity, but this was largely symbolic and France and Germany did not undertake any balancing action – hard or soft – or follow through on the rhetoric during the Kosovo Crisis.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, sharp rhetoric on standing up to the United States as a means to maximise French independence and autonomy of action has been a prevalent feature of French politics ever since De Gaulle – but rhetoric without corresponding action does not count as evidence for any type of balancing behaviour.

This does not mean, however, that there were no contentious issues between the United States and its Western allies during this period. The source of any friction was usually a dispute over a particular policy rather than a stated desire by any of the states to balance against the US in principle. For instance, in the late 1980s, the prospect of German unification was met with deep anxiety in Britain and France. In 1989 French President Francois Mitterrand flew to Kiev to consult with Gorbachev on how to retard, if not totally

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<sup>150</sup> "NATO Poised to Strike", *BBC News*, 23 March 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/301900.stm>.

<sup>151</sup> Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report*, pp. 67-92.

<sup>152</sup> The exception is France in 1998, when it opposed the US-UK led Operation Desert Strike against Iraq.

<sup>153</sup> For instance, in September 1991, as the Soviet Union was crumbling, the French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas warned that American "might reigns without balancing weight" and he and the European Community Commission President Jacques Delors called for the EC to counterbalance the United States. See "France to U.S.: Don't Rule", *The New York Times*, 3 September 1991.

prevent, such unification, and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher advised George H. W. Bush that Germany should not unify for ten to fifteen years.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, the United States took an active role in promoting the speedy unification of Germany – a feat which was accomplished by 1991. The British and French responded by further binding Germany to European institutions and ensuring that the NATO alliance – which maintained American military hegemony in Europe – was preserved to deter any possible German revanchism. The US military presence also played a second role in deterring a potentially resurgent and revanchist Russia.

Another major policy dispute between the United States and its European allies in this period involved the issue of NATO enlargement. Robert Art explains that “the Europeans’ initial reactions to this proposal ranged from tepid to opposed.”<sup>155</sup> The British worried that the expansion would dilute NATO; the French feared the opposite – that it would strengthen NATO and thereby increase US influence in Europe while retarding the process of EU integration. The Germans, for their part, were sensitive to the effects that the enlargement would have on relations with Russia, but they generally followed the United States’ lead.<sup>156</sup> Once again the US was able to impose its preferences on its allies: “enlarging NATO became the price the Europeans had to pay if they wanted to keep NATO vibrant and the United States militarily engaged on the continent.”<sup>157</sup>

During the Kosovo Crisis the interests of the United States and its European allies were largely synchronised. Adam Roberts argues that the motives for the NATO military action stemmed from a sense of guilt over past inaction in the Balkans, a concern over peace and regional stability – especially with regard to the catastrophic refugee crisis – and perhaps

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<sup>154</sup> Robert Art, “Europe Hedges Its Security Bets”, in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 188.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, p. 192.

<sup>156</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 46-47, 229.

<sup>157</sup> Art, “Europe Hedges Its Security Bets”, p. 192.

most importantly, a desire to maintain NATO's credibility.<sup>158</sup> Most of the disputes between the allies during the crisis revolved around technical military matters such as targeting and the utilisation of ground forces. For instance, many European states found themselves unable to interoperate fully with US air power and some states, most notably Britain, were outspoken proponents of preparations for a ground war which was categorically renounced by the US.<sup>159</sup> In sum, there was no soft balancing among allies in NATO up to and during the Kosovo Crisis.

#### **4.5 Russian, Chinese, and Indian Soft Balancing and the Kosovo Crisis**

There were, however, various attempts at soft balancing exhibited in the relationship between the United States and Russia, China, and India during the Kosovo Crisis. Although the period immediately after the end of the Cold War up to the Kosovo Crisis was marked by a general cooperative engagement between the US and Russia, there were some notable strains in their relationship.

One of these strains involved the US-led NATO operations in Bosnia in 1993-95. The central difference between NATO operations in Bosnia and the subsequent NATO operations in Kosovo is that in the former, the utilisation of force was legally authorised under UN Security Council Resolution 816, whereas in the latter it was not.<sup>160</sup> The Russians initially reluctantly supported the US-led strikes against the Serbian forces in Bosnia that were violating the UN-mandated safe areas. The rules of engagement stipulated that NATO forces were to give Serbian forces warning of imminent attack before strikes commenced. The first engagement occurred on 28 February 1994 when three US F-16 fighters fired air-to-

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<sup>158</sup> Adam Roberts, "NATO's 'Humanitarian War' over Kosovo", *Survival*, vol. 41, no. 3, Autumn 1999, p. 108.

<sup>159</sup> Dick Leurdijk and Dick Zandee, *Kosovo: From Crisis to Crisis* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), p. 91.

<sup>160</sup> Rebecca J. Johnson, "Russian Responses to Crisis Management in the Balkans: How NATO's Past Actions May Shape Russia's Future Involvement", *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 9, no. 2, Spring 2001, p. 1.

air missiles against four Bosnian Serb ground-attack jets operating near the safe areas. This episode marked the first time NATO used force since its inception in 1949.<sup>161</sup>

This uneasy arrangement lasted throughout 1994 until 30 August 1995 when, from Russia's perspective, NATO switched tactics in violation of the rules of engagement and launched a sustained bombing campaign – Operation Deliberate Force – without giving Serbian forces advanced warning.<sup>162</sup> These strikes continued until 15 September when the Bosnian Serbs finally capitulated to NATO's demands by recalling their heavy artillery from Sarajevo and allowing for the unfettered access of UN personnel and relief workers throughout Bosnia.<sup>163</sup>

The Russian government opposed Operation Deliberate Force on the grounds that it overstepped the bounds of the UN Security Council Resolutions. President Yeltsin lambasted NATO for having taken the role of “judge in the conflict, as well as that of executor.”<sup>164</sup> Western sources, however, defended the operation, arguing that the current resolutions had placed within NATO's prerogative the responsibility of fulfilling the UN mandates – including protection of the safe zones. In any case, it is doubtful that Russia's opposition to the US-led strikes in Bosnia in 1994 and 1995 may be classified as evidence of soft balancing. The opposition was framed almost in terms of a technical operational difference, rather than from a stated desire by Russia to oppose US unipolarity in principle. But the currents were slowly shifting.

There were two further matters which soured relations between the United States and Russia in the lead-up to the Kosovo War. The first was the issue of NATO expansion and the

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>162</sup> One tense moment occurred on 2 December 1994 when the Russian Federation vetoed a Security Council Resolution on expanding the sanctions regime on the Bosnian and Krajinan Serbs. The Russian Ambassador to the UN at the time, Sergey Lavrov, admitted that he regretted the fact the issue was raised at the Security Council and that he had to veto it because the government of FRY was “cooperating constructively” with various international regimes and that it deserved “further encouragement.” 3475<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 2 December 1994, New York City, S/PV.3474, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N94/873/30/PDF/N9487330.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>163</sup> Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 133.

<sup>164</sup> Quoted in Johnson, “Russian Responses to Crisis Management in the Balkans”, p. 3.

second was the American plan to scuttle the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Three former Warsaw Pact members – Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary – entered into the Partnership for Peace Programme in 1994 and were slated to become members of NATO in 1999. In response to these developments, Yeltsin told the Russian National Assembly in February 1998 that NATO’s enlargement would undermine Russia’s national security and he protested against a European security structure based exclusively on NATO and a “unipolar world.”<sup>165</sup>

American relations with China were generally cooperative in the period leading up to the war in Kosovo. Despite a series of economic sanctions that the United States placed on China in light of the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations, economic trade between the two countries continued to expand throughout the 1990s, and the only significant diplomatic confrontation occurred in 1995 during the Third Taiwan Straits Crisis. China also opposed some US operations in Iraq – a fact which will be addressed in the next chapter. But the Chinese President Zemin visited the United States in 1997 – the first Chinese leader to visit since 1985 – and President Clinton visited China a year later. However, Sino-American relations would soon take a turn for the worst during the Kosovo crisis.<sup>166</sup>

The United States’ relations with India were also lukewarm in the 1990s. Even though India had a warm relationship of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, it also (seemingly contradictorily) spearheaded a “third way” or “non-aligned” movement in international relations which was premised on 1) respecting sovereignty and 2) eschewing the use of force. After the Cold War US-Indian relations were particularly frosty due to the Clinton Administration’s refusal to compromise on its official non-proliferation policy in light of India’s successful nuclear tests in 1998. However, an opening for better economic

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<sup>165</sup> Charlotte Wagnsson, “Developing the ‘Moral’ Arguments: Russian Rhetorical Strategies on Security Post-Kosovo?”, *Occasional Paper 28*, Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, July 2001, p. 7.

<sup>166</sup> During the Third Taiwan Straits Crisis, China conducted a series of missile tests in the Taiwan Straits to deter Taiwan from taking a more pro-Independence position, and the US responded by sending aircraft carriers into the region. See Ross, “Bipolarity and Balancing in East Asia”.

and diplomatic relations between the two states was appreciated by officials on both sides.<sup>167</sup> In sum, despite a few minor heated exchanges, American relations with Russia, China, and India were generally non-belligerent up to the Kosovo War, especially since all three of these great powers profited from American economic trade, financial investments, and technology transfers.<sup>168</sup>

In the late 1990s Russia, China, and India took the first steps towards building a soft balancing coalition against the United States. Unlike his predecessor, Andrei Kozyrev, who was interested in cooperating with the United States, Yevgeny Primakov turned his attention to implementing a new policy of “multipolarity” or “revised bipolarity.” Bobo Lo explains that “Russia alone could not contain the hegemonic behaviour of the United States, but it might mitigate its effects by working with other major players similarly disturbed by Washington’s monopoly of power.”<sup>169</sup> He explains that the Clinton Administration had already successfully co-opted the Europeans into America’s internationalist agenda, and thus Russia had to turn to look for allies among the non-Western powers: China and India.<sup>170</sup>

With this strategic objective in mind, Primakov set out to deliver a series of speeches, articles, and press conferences which became known as the Primakov Doctrine: *i.e.* the belief that the post-Cold War international system is developing into several poles of power, such as the United States, Russia, the European Union, China, India, and Japan.<sup>171</sup> Primakov, who became Prime Minister in September 1998, incessantly advocated creating a multipolar world as an alternative to US unipolarity, and tried to cultivate Russia’s ties with many of

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<sup>167</sup> Harsh Pant, *Contemporary Debates in Indian Foreign and Security Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 20-21.

<sup>168</sup> Charlotte Wagnsson, “Developing the ‘Moral’ Arguments”, pp. 1-25.

<sup>169</sup> Bobo Lo, *The Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics* (London: Chatham House, 2008), p. 160.

<sup>170</sup> Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 108.

<sup>171</sup> Tomas Kolesnichenko, “Our Foreign Policy Cannot Be the Policy of a Second-Rate State-Primakov on NATO Relations, Multipolar World”, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 17 December 1996, pp. 1-7. See also Aleksandr Nechayev and Victor Khrekov, “Text of Primakov Interview on Reform”, *ITAR-TASS*, 8 January 1997. Cited in Ariel Cohen, “The Primakov Doctrine: Russia’s Zero-sum game with the United States”, *The Heritage Foundation*, 28 October 2004, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1259846/posts>.

America's enemies, including Iran and Iraq. As stated above, the nineteenth-century British Foreign Secretary George Canning sought to protect the balance of power by invoking "the New World" to ensure that if France absorbed Spain, it excluded Spain's vast colonial possessions. Primakov, on the other hand, turned to "the Ancient World" – *i.e.* the rapidly growing states of China and India. He advocated the formation of a "strategic triangle" between Russia, China, and India to form a counterbalance to the United States.

One of the first steps towards implementing the Primakov Doctrine was undertaken on 23 April 1997, when Chinese President Jiang Zemin met with Russian Premier Victor Chernomyrdin in Moscow and announced the formation of a new "strategic partnership." The two states signed the "Joint Russian-Chinese Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New World Order" and vowed "to promote multipolarization and the establishment of a new international order."<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, in a not-so-veiled attack on the United States, the Russian and Chinese leaders declared that "no country should seek hegemony, practise power politics or monopolize international affairs" and that the new international order should be based on respect for sovereignty and the UN Security Council (where both sides wielded the veto).<sup>173</sup> Interestingly, the Chinese President was careful to instruct the media that this was not a formal alliance directed against any third party – *i.e.* it was not to be construed as an external hard balancing alliance.

The following year in December, a couple of weeks after the joint US-UK air strikes in Iraq, Primakov travelled to New Delhi and publicly called for the formation of a "strategic triangle" of Russia, China, and India to counterbalance US unipolarity. Satinder Lambah, the Indian Ambassador to Russia at the time, accompanied Primakov during his meetings with the Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee. Ambassador Lambah recalls that the "strategic

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<sup>172</sup> "Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order", Letter Addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 23 April 1997, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/52/plenary/a52-153.htm>.

<sup>173</sup> Michael Gordon, "Russia-China Theme: Contain the West", *The New York Times*, 24 April 1997.

triangle was Primakov's 'pet-project' and that in truth both Prime Ministers knew a lot of issues still separated the three sides before we could call ourselves a strategic triangle."<sup>174</sup> However, all three sides would soon be brought even closer together.

The US-led NATO intervention in Kosovo, code-named Operation Allied Force, provided Russia, China, and India with a strategic opportunity to soft balance against the United States. The bombing campaign in Kosovo began on 24 March 1999.

Moscow objected to the NATO campaign for several reasons. One of the most prominent was that it set a dangerous precedent for future interventions in the internal affairs of other states.<sup>175</sup> Igor Ivanov, the Russian Foreign Minister, succinctly explained this motivation with his assertion that "there are many Kosovos in Russia."<sup>176</sup> Russian officials were concerned that it could serve as a model for independence movements in Chechnya, Dagestan, Tatarstan, and other republics.<sup>177</sup> A second reason for Russia's objection concerned the changing role of NATO. Various academics and officials explain that the Russian reaction to the war in Kosovo had little to do with cultural affinities and concerns for the plight of Serbs; rather the Russian reaction was directed against a perceived expansion of NATO's power and purpose.<sup>178</sup> The war coincided with talks of a second wave of NATO expansion into the remaining states of Central and Eastern Europe. In Moscow's perspective, the war in Kosovo and the concomitant NATO expansion seemed to be transforming NATO from a defensive military alliance into an aggressive, expansionary, war-fighting one. Third,

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with Satinder Lambah, Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation (1998-2001), New Delhi, 25 September 2012.

<sup>175</sup> Oleg Levitin, "Inside Moscow's Kosovo Muddle", *Survival*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2000, p. 131; Oksana Antonenko, "Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo", *Survival*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2007, pp. 91-106.

<sup>176</sup> John Norris, *Collision Course: NATO, Russia, and Kosovo* (London: Praeger, 2005), p. xxiv.

<sup>177</sup> In fact, during the Kosovo war, the President of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaimiev threatened he would send Tatar fighters to protect the Kosovars if Russia's nationalist volunteers assisted the Serbian army. See Cameron Ross, ed., *Regional Politics in Russia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 12.

<sup>178</sup> For instance, Oksana Antonenko cites 2004 opinion polls which overwhelmingly suggest that Russians did not have "special feelings" to Serbian people and that Russia does not share "special fraternal ties" with Serbia; and the Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev described the fates of Serbs as "small change in the realisation of the US global strategy directed at creating a *unipolar* world." See Antonenko, "Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo", p. 97; and Igor Sergeyev quoted in Wagnsson, "Developing the 'Moral' Arguments", p. 8.

Russian policy reflected a traditional Russian interest in maintaining a sphere of influence in the Balkans, which was primarily advanced through Russia's alliance with Serbia – often seen as the last pro-Russian ally in Europe.<sup>179</sup> A fourth and related reason for Russia's connection to Serbia involved a shared sense of history, pan-Slavism, and Orthodox identity (although this type of cultural affinity should not be overestimated). The fifth reason involved Russia's identity as a great power: the Balkans were one of the few remaining areas in which Russia could project its power and Moscow wanted to have its say in the deliberation that would decide the region's fate. A sixth reason concerns domestic politics: Russia was in the midst of a serious economic and financial crisis, and Yeltsin took an anti-NATO stance in order to placate Russian nationalists. The final and interrelated reason was rooted in the Russian desire to challenge US unipolarity. As the following analyses will demonstrate, Russian officials frequently classified their opposition to the US-led strikes in terms of resisting US “unipolarity,” “unilateralism,” and a US-imposed “new world order” wherein force trumps international law.

The Chinese objection to the war was primarily a matter of principle, but they were especially livid when the US Air Force controversially dropped a bomb on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. Like the Russians, the Chinese feared that the Kosovo intervention would dilute the norm of non-intervention in international relations.<sup>180</sup> The Chinese feared such a precedent could give the United States a *carte blanche* to meddle in its own affairs regarding the secessionist movements in Tibet, Taiwan, and Xinjiang. Most importantly, Chinese persistence to uphold the norm of non-intervention was viewed as the best means with which to “counter US hegemony in the post-Cold War era.”<sup>181</sup> In fact, one Chinese analyst vividly described the war in Kosovo as part of an American “python strategy” of

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<sup>179</sup> Levitin, “Inside Moscow's Kosovo Muddle”, p. 131; Antonenko, “Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo”, p. 96.

<sup>180</sup> T.V. Paul, “Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 60.

<sup>181</sup> Russel Ong, *China's Security Interests in the Post-Cold War Era* (London: Curzon, 2002), p. 142.

using “its thickest body to coil up tightly around the world and prevent any country from possessing the ability to stand up to it.”<sup>182</sup>

India also had a host of reasons to oppose the use of force in Kosovo. Ambassador Lambah explained that there were a variety of reasons why India opposed the use of force in Kosovo, and that a desire to balance the United States was one of them. First, he explained that India strongly believed that the use of force could only be sanctioned by the Security Council. India also opposed the use of force out of a belief that the matter was essentially an internal one which should not attract international intervention: in particular, Indian officials were concerned that it might set the wrong precedent for international intervention in Kashmir. Moreover, there was also a domestic issue at stake: Indian officials were conscious of antagonising the millions of Muslims living in India.<sup>183</sup>

Russia, China, and India thus attempted to stall the intervention at the UN Security Council, and the former two states threatened to use their vetoes to this effect. At the request of the Russian Federation, the Security Council held its 3988<sup>th</sup> meeting on 24 March. The Russian Ambassador, Sergey Lavrov, opened the meeting by expressing his “profound outrage” at the use of force and he explicitly linked Russia’s opposition to its commitment to multipolarity:

The Russian Government strongly proclaimed its categorical rejection of the use of force in contravention of decisions of the Security Council and issued repeated warnings about the long-term harmful consequences of this action not only for the prospects of a settlement of the Kosovo situation and for safeguarding security in the Balkans, but also *for the stability of the entire modern multi-polar system of international relations*.<sup>184</sup>

The Chinese Ambassador Qin Huasun supported the Russian position, calling the operation a “blatant violation of international law.” He explained that Kosovo was an “internal matter”

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<sup>182</sup> Cheng Guangzhong, “Kosovo War and the US Python Strategy”, *Ta Kung Pao*, 2 June 1999, <http://mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/cheng.htm>.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Satinder Lambah, Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation (1998-2001), New Delhi, 25 September 2012.

<sup>184</sup> 3988<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 24 March 1999, New York City, S/PV.3988, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.3988](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.3988).

and that China opposed “power politics whereby the strong bully the weak.”<sup>185</sup> Even though India did not hold a seat as one of the fifteen members of the Security Council – let alone a permanent veto-wielding seat – it departed from the regular diplomatic procedures of the Security Council and specifically requested an invitation to sit at the Council and participate in the deliberations over the Kosovo issue. The Indian Ambassador Kamallesh Sharma took the occasion to declare that the US-led operation was illegal, that Kosovo was an internal matter, and that no group of countries, “no matter how powerful, can arrogate to itself the right to take arbitrary and unilateral military action against others. That would be a return to anarchy where might is right.”<sup>186</sup>

Although this diplomatic effort ultimately failed – since the United States used NATO to circumvent the UN – Russian, Chinese, and Indian soft balancing measures did not cease. Russia continued to soft balance against the United States through multinational European institutions. Upon hearing news of the air strikes, Primakov cancelled his scheduled trip to the United States mid-air on 23 March 1999. The next day Yeltsin exhorted the American President to stop the bombing. On the same day Russia withdrew from NATO’s 1997 Founding Act and Partnership for Peace Programme, recalled its chief military envoy to NATO, ordered the closure of Russia’s offices at NATO Headquarters, and ordered the NATO information representative in Moscow to leave the country.<sup>187</sup> Russia also terminated a number of non-military related programmes, including educational exchanges: for instance, Russia withdrew all of its students from schools in NATO countries.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> On 8 May China requested another meeting of the Security Council and issued an even more trenchant critique of the United States after three missiles hit the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and caused several casualties. Lavrov used this occasion to once again lambast against the United States for “exceeding all limits” and explained that “the humanitarian banner is being used as a cover for NATO’s attempts to destroy the present world order, which is based on respect for international law and for the Charter of the United Nations.” See 4000<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 8 May 1999, New York City, S/PV.4000, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.4000](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.4000).

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Oksana Antontenko, “Russia, NATO and European Security after Kosovo”, p. 131.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, p. 142.

On 25 March the Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov explained that Russia and the West had not been as close to such a serious rift since 1945. He described the US rationale behind the attacks as obvious: “to enforce the United States’ political, military and economic dictates and strengthen a *unipolar* world, where Washington could control everybody’s fates...Yesterday, it was Iraq. Today Yugoslavia. What is next?” He continued with the ominous note that “If NATO’s aggression continued, a larger war in the Balkans might occur, the consequences of which are well known from history.”<sup>189</sup>

The Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev framed the Russian response to the war in similar terms. He announced that although Russia would not oppose the US with military force, it would send a symbolic warship into the Mediterranean to monitor events. In his mind the motives of the US-led war were equally clear:

In Yugoslavia today are decided not only the fates of Serbs and Albanians. They are small change in the realisation of the US global strategy directed at creating a *unipolar* world...in which the dictates of military force will dominate, where there will be one single superpower.”<sup>190</sup>

It is evident that the Russian Defence Minister’s position on the US-led operations in Kosovo was unambiguously determined by his opposition to US unipolarity.

Furthermore, in a direct show of Russian-Chinese solidarity, Ivanov met with his Chinese counterpart during the Kosovo Crisis and discussed “the roles that Russia and China should play in case the situation worsens, future international relations, the role of the United States, and the efforts of Moscow and Beijing to reconstruct a new world multipolar order.”<sup>191</sup>

Even though Russia, China, and India’s first attempts at soft balancing at the UN Security Council failed to prevent the United States and its allies from using force, the three Eurasian powers continued to rely on the Security Council to restrain the US war effort.

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<sup>189</sup> Quoted in Wagnsson, “Developing the ‘Moral’ Arguments”, p. 8.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>191</sup> Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin quoted in Elisabeth Zing, “Kosovo Brings China, Russia Close but not that Close”, *Agence France Presse*, 31 May 1999.

Therefore, two days later, on 26 March, representatives from Russia, India, and Belarus submitted to the Security Council a draft resolution calling for a ceasefire and a return to talks. Before the vote, Lavrov once again revealed that his motive to employ the soft balancing measures was linked to wider issues of international order:

Today's vote is not just on the problem of Kosovo. It goes directly to the authority of the Security Council in the eyes of the world community...and the fundamental bases of the entire modern system of international relations, which is based on the Primacy of the UN Charter.<sup>192</sup>

China and India once again repeated their opposition to the US-led operation, but the vote on the draft resolution failed 3-12-0.<sup>193</sup> In this way, a soft balancing coalition of Russia-China-India emerged at the UN in reaction to the US use of military force against Serbia.

China initially confined its soft balancing measures by threatening to veto any resolution introduced to the UN Security Council by the United States or any of its European allies. But after the American bombing of China's Embassy in Belgrade on 8 May, Beijing ceased all military exchanges and human rights dialogues with the United States and intensified its strategic collaboration with Russia through the activation of a hotline.<sup>194</sup> China also intensified its bilateral trade with Russia, which increased by over forty percent in 2000, and accelerated negotiations for the purchase of more advanced weaponry, including fifty Sukhoi-30MKK jet fighters, early-warning A-50 aircraft, and eight super-quiet Kilo-class Project 636 diesel submarines – all of which had implications for the military balance in the Pacific Rim.<sup>195</sup>

Russia's most audacious manoeuvre during the Kosovo Crisis took place one day after the official cessation of hostilities between NATO and Serb forces on 10 June 1999: two

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<sup>192</sup> 3989<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 26 March 1999, New York City, S/PV.3989, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.3989](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.3989).

<sup>193</sup> Only the Russian Federation, China, and Namibia voted in favour of the ceasefire.

<sup>194</sup> Yu Bin, "NATO's Unintended Consequences: A Deeper Strategic Partnership...Or More", *Comparative Connections* (Washington: CSIS, 1999), p. 69.

<sup>195</sup> Michael L. Levin, *The Next Great Clash: China and Russia vs. America* (London: Praeger Security International, 2008), p. 101.

hundred Russian soldiers were clandestinely paratropped into Pristina airport overnight and pre-empted its occupation by NATO forces. Although the entire operation remains clouded in ambiguity – it even caught Ivanov by surprise as he was unaware that Yeltsin had issued the order – the Russian motives for such a military escalation are not completely unclear.<sup>196</sup> During the negotiation to determine the future military occupation of Kosovo, Yeltsin had demanded one of the four sectors of the country (in the north-west) to be under direct Russian control. When the US government rejected these demands, the Russian General Staff decided to dispatch an advanced party to create facts on the ground and present NATO with a *fait accompli*. When NATO forces inevitably confronted the Russian advanced party, a tense and confusing stand-off ensued, described by some Russian analysts as the most dangerous moment in US-Russian relations since the crises in Berlin and Cuba.<sup>197</sup> This episode demonstrated that Russia was willing to use limited hard balancing measures to curb US influence in areas which it considered to be its traditional sphere of influence.

In late June 1999 Russia also engaged in further military demonstrations with the so-called “West-99” exercises – the largest Russian military exercises in more than a decade. The military exercises were jointly conducted by Russian and Belarusian forces. Earlier, the Belarusian President Lukashenko had claimed that “the Union of Belarus and Russia should become an actual counterweight to the unipolar world that has currently developed.”<sup>198</sup> Yeltsin was less hyperbolic but similarly expressed his approval that Russia would gain “geopolitically and strategically” through a closer relationship with Belarus.<sup>199</sup> Defence Minister Sergeyev also announced that Russia’s post-Cold War armed-forces reductions

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<sup>196</sup> The US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs at the time, Ronald Asmus, has written that Vladimir Putin was directly involved in the decision to occupy the airfield before NATO forces could arrive. See Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 93.

<sup>197</sup> Dov Lynch, “Walking the Tightrope: The Kosovo Conflict and Russia”, *European Security*, vol. 8, no. 4, Winter 1999, pp. 76-77.

<sup>198</sup> “A New Stage in Uniting the Fraternal Belarusian and Russian Peoples Has Begun”, *Narodnaya Hezeta*, Minsk, 22 January 1999.

<sup>199</sup> Thomas Ambrosio, “Russia’s Quest for Multipolarity: A Response to US Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era”, *European Security*, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring 2001, p. 55.

would stop, and he recapitulated Russia's commitment to use conventional and nuclear forces if its national security was threatened. The line between soft balancing and hard balancing was becoming blurred.

#### 4.6 The Consequences of the Kosovo Conflict: Deeper Strategic Partnership

In May 1999, amidst the US-led bombing campaign against Serbia, the Oxford Union debated the proposition that “resolved, the United States is a rogue state.” Although the resolution was defeated, it reflected a growing global sense of unease over an international order perceived to be dominated by a single state.<sup>200</sup> There were two primary consequences of the US use of force in Kosovo. The first was a fundamental shift in Russia's military and foreign policy doctrines; in fact, the conflict prompted a revision of three strategic documents: Russia's Military Doctrine, Russia's National Security Concept, and Russia's Foreign Policy Concept. The second consequence was a deeper strategic partnership between Russia, China, and India.

The Kosovo conflict gave a new impetus to revise Russia's post-Cold War strategic doctrines. One revision of the military doctrine in 1999 invoked “a basically new assessment of the development of the military-political situation of the world.” The document directly identified “attempts to form a *unipolar* world based on military superiority and the predominance of one superpower” during the Kosovo Crisis as the most serious problem in the international system.<sup>201</sup> The final military doctrine, signed into law by President Putin on 21 April 2000, declared that, *inter alia*, the main external threat to the Russian Federation included “attempts to ignore (infringe) the Russian Federation's interests in resolving international security problems, and to oppose its strengthening as one influential center in a

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<sup>200</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “Getting Hegemony Right”, *The National Interest*, Spring 2001, pp. 17-24.

<sup>201</sup> “1999 Draft of Russian Military Doctrine”, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Moscow, 9 October 1999.

multipolar world.”<sup>202</sup> Russian defence ministers have publicly proclaimed that the US unilateral war in the Balkans directly prompted this radical revision of military doctrine.<sup>203</sup>

On 10 January 2000 the Russian government published a new National Security Concept. The previous National Security Concept of 1997 confidently asserted that the world was becoming multipolar. The newer version was much less sanguine: it identified two exclusive tendencies in international politics – one towards a multipolar world based on respect for international law and the other towards a unipolar world based on “US unilateralism and military force.” It was the first Russian National Security Concept which explicitly framed the United States in such belligerent terms since the end of the Cold War. The previous concept had emphasised internal economic crisis and local terrorist conflicts among Russia’s borders. The new concept shifted the balance from internal to external threats: it emphasised the threat of direct military action against Russia and its allies. The concept enumerated international terrorism and “attempts to hinder Russia’s development as a centre of influence in a multipolar world” as the most dangerous threats to Russia’s security.<sup>204</sup> It also explicitly identified strengthening multipolarity as one of Russia’s fundamental national interests.

In a similar vein, on 28 June 2000 the Russian government promulgated a new Foreign Policy Concept. It explicitly warned that “new challenges and threats to the national interests of Russia are emerging in the international sphere. There is a growing trend towards the establishment of a *unipolar* structure of the world with the economic and power

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<sup>202</sup> “2000 Russia’s Military Doctrine”, signed by President Vladimir Putin on 21 April 2000, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000\\_05/dc3ma00](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_05/dc3ma00).

<sup>203</sup> Oksana Antonenko, “Russia, NATO and European Security After Kosovo”, p. 134.

<sup>204</sup> “2000 Russian National Security Concept”, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 10 January 2000, <http://www.russiaeurope.mid.ru/russiastrat2000.html>.

domination of the United States.”<sup>205</sup> The document also reiterated Russia’s commitment to establishing multipolarity based on respect for international law.

Russia also attempted to solidify its relationships with the other poles of international power, such as China and India. Vladimir Putin, who became acting President on 31 December 1999, resurrected Primakov’s idea of a “strategic triangle.” Following in Primakov’s footsteps, Putin also visited New Delhi in October 2000 and signed a declaration of strategic partnership which expressed both countries’ opposition “to the unilateral use or threat of use of force in violation of the UN Charter, and to intervention in the internal affairs of other states, including under the guise of humanitarian interventions.”<sup>206</sup> The two countries also signed a number of arms sales agreements.<sup>207</sup>

The Indian Ambassador to Russia, Satinder Lambah, explains that Putin revived Primakov’s doctrine of a strategic triangle during the meeting and that the two sides also discussed a number of arms sales agreements, which amount to over three billion USD. However, Lambah explains that there were still “too many issues that divided the three countries.” Although all three had common interests in 1) challenging US unipolarity and promoting a multipolar world based on multilateralism and the rule of international law; 2) expanding economic trade; 3) expanding arms sales<sup>208</sup>; 4) combating Islamic terrorism; and 5) upholding the norm of non-intervention in international relations, there were still too many

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<sup>205</sup>“2000 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation”, 28 June 2000, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>.

<sup>206</sup> Quoted in Julie M. Rahm, “Russia, China, India: A New Strategic Triangle for a New Cold War?”, *Parameters*, vol. 31, no. 4, Winter, 2001-02, pp. 87-97. On 22 June 2000 the Presidents of China and Iran also issued a joint communiqué signalling that they would work towards “multipolarisation” and establishing an “equitable, just, fair and reasonable new international political and economic order that is free of hegemony and power politics and is based on equality.” See “Iran and China Call for Multipolar World Versus Unipolar”, *Iran Press Service*, 22 June 2000, [http://www.iran-press-service.com/articles\\_2000/june\\_2000/khatami\\_china\\_22600.html](http://www.iran-press-service.com/articles_2000/june_2000/khatami_china_22600.html).

<sup>207</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, “Russia’s Relations with China and India: Strategic Partnership, Yes; Strategic Alliance, No”, *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 9, no. 2, Spring 2001.

<sup>208</sup> In fact Naresh Gujral, a Member of the Parliament of India who sits on the defence subcommittee, stressed that the relationship between Russia and India is very important because “purchasing military equipment is not like buying a car: you need to service it for a very long time, and this requires a good, lasting relationship with the supplier for spare parts and equipment.” Interview with Naresh Gujral, Member of the Parliament of India (2007-), New Delhi, 26 September 2012.

outstanding issues that divided them. Bobo Lo identifies two in particular which militated against a strong alliance: 1) the dominance of the United States, which ultimately had a more important relationship with each of the three states than they had among themselves and 2) Russia's fear of becoming a junior partner to a rising China.<sup>209</sup> Ambassador Lambah revealed a third and fourth: 3) India's frosty relations with China ever since the 1962 Sino-Indian war and 4) China's military and diplomatic support for Pakistan.<sup>210</sup> All three sides also concluded that the likelihood of the United States intervening in Chechnya, Xinjiang, and Kashmir was insignificant.<sup>211</sup>

Nonetheless, Russia and China continued to solidify their strategic partnership. In July 2001 the two Eurasian giants signed a "Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation" – the first such treaty since one signed by Stalin and Mao. It is a multidimensional treaty. Its central features are to cooperate in "joint actions to offset perceived US hegemonism," expand economic trade (including energy, arms sales, and technology transfers), resolve outstanding border disputes, and combat Islamic terrorism.<sup>212</sup> Article 9 of the Treaty contains what some analysts describe as an implicit mutual defence pact:

When a situation arises in which one of the contracting parties deems that peace is being threatened and undermined or its security interests are involved or when it is confronted with the threat of aggression, the contracting parties shall immediately hold contacts and consultations in order to eliminate such threats.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience*, p. 160.

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Satinder Lambah, Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation (1998-2001), New Delhi, 25 September 2012.

<sup>211</sup> Raju G.C. Thomas, "South Asian Security Balance in a Western Dominant World" in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 322, 324.

<sup>212</sup> Ariel Cohen, "The Russia-China Friendship and Cooperation Treaty: A Strategic Shift in Eurasia", *The Heritage Foundation*, 18 July 2001, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/BG1459.cfm>.

<sup>213</sup> Article 9 of "2001 Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 24 July 2001, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/2649/t15771.htm>.

While this is certainly too vague a clause to constitute an iron hard balancing alliance, it may be seen as an archetype for what soft balancing scholars describe as “limited security ententes.”

In August 1999, shortly after the Kosovo conflict and NATO expansion, Yeltsin declared he was “ready to fight, especially with Westerners” at a meeting of the Shanghai Security Organisation.<sup>214</sup> It was in this context that two years later a new organisation – the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation – was formed including Russia, China, and four Central Asian states. According to its founding charter, the SCO was established, *inter alia*, to “[build] a democratic, just, and rational international political and economic order” and “[maintain] a global strategic balance and stability.” In reality, according to Chinese President Zemin, this implied creating “world multipolarisation.”<sup>215</sup> The organisation has also been used as a vehicle to intensify Russian and Chinese military cooperation.<sup>216</sup> It paved the road to the August 2005 Peace Mission – the first ever joint exercise between Russian and Chinese forces – which consisted of a number of land, air, and sea operations between the two Eurasian powerhouses.<sup>217</sup> It is difficult to imagine how these massive naval and air operations, including naval blockades and amphibious assaults on coastland, have strictly anti-terrorist implications.

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<sup>214</sup> See Michael Ninyon, “Moscow and China Cement Anti-NATO Pact”, *The Times*, 25 August 1999.

<sup>215</sup> Cited in Thomas Ambrosio, *Challenging America’s Global Preeminence: Russia’s Quest for Multipolarity* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), p. 87.

<sup>216</sup> Charter of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, [http://www.sectSCO.org/news\\_detail.asp?id=96&LanguageID=2](http://www.sectSCO.org/news_detail.asp?id=96&LanguageID=2).

<sup>217</sup> “China-Russia War Games Under Way”, *BBC News*, 18 August 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4162054.stm>.

#### 4.7 Assessment of the Theory of Tripartite Strategic Balancing and the Kosovo Crisis

It has been argued that the period between 1991 and 1999 exhibited little to no soft balancing against the United States by its allies in NATO. Britain, France, and Germany generally cooperated with the United States during this period and supported its wars in the Balkans.<sup>218</sup> Robert Art has argued that one of the consequences of the Balkan wars was to intensify European efforts at creating an independent military capability such as the European Rapid Reaction Force.<sup>219</sup> He argues that while the ERRF does not resemble hard balancing, it is nevertheless a tool of soft balancing against the United States.<sup>220</sup> Using the definition of soft balancing offered in this thesis does not lead to the same conclusion: the *raison d'être* of the ERRF is not to create a multipolar world, or even to challenge US military policies, but rather to enhance Europe's influence within the NATO alliance (policy bargaining), and to give Europe the military capability to act in situations in which the US decides to stay on the sidelines.<sup>221</sup> This does not mean, however, that an increased European military capability outside of NATO command will never be used to soft (or hard) balance against the United States in the future.

A Russian-led coalition of China and India was the principal soft balancer against the United States during the Kosovo Crisis. Russian, Chinese, and (less so) Indian leaders promoted a policy of "multipolarisation" during the 1990s, but did not actually soft balance against US military policies until the 1999 US-led war in Kosovo, which each country saw as

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<sup>218</sup> Japan also quietly supported the NATO mission. See Julie Gilson, "Japan in Kosovo: Lessons in the Politics of 'Complex Engagement'", *Japan Forum*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2000, pp. 65-75.

<sup>219</sup> A 60,000 strong force that could be deployed within sixty days and sustain a major war effort for up to one year.

<sup>220</sup> Art, "Europe Hedges its Security Bets", p. 199.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, p. 199. In fact, America's involvement in the Kosovo Crisis was a "near miss:" the US Senate passed a resolution by a vote of only 52 to 47 authorising the bombing campaign, while the House of Representatives failed to pass a resolution (the vote was 213 to 213). See Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Books, 2002), pp. 205, 213.

a unilateral transgression of international law.<sup>222</sup> Russian leaders were the least ambiguous in linking their opposition to US policies in Kosovo to their concern of US unipolarity and their desire to promote a multipolar world based on greater multilateralism: they explicitly stated that the war was not about Serbia or Kosovo, but rather about the danger of an international order based on US unipolarity and disregard for international law.

How well does the theory of tripartite strategic balancing relate to the Kosovo case study? It is useful to analyse the case study in relation to the four indicators of soft balancing enumerated earlier: 1) territorial non-complicity, 2) entangling diplomacy, 3) economic strengthening, and 4) signals of resolve to balance.

In terms of territorial non-complicity, there was limited soft balancing against the United States, with one notable exception. The United States' NATO allies allowed the US to use their forward bases in Europe to launch strikes against Serbia. The one exception was the Russian dash towards Pristina airport in the aftermath of the hostilities. On the second indicator, Russia, China, and India all tried to tie down the United States at the UN and other multinational institutions. Gulliver, however, refused to be bound. The Kosovo Crisis also arguably provided a boost to the increased bilateral economic trade between Russia and China – which grew by forty percent in 2000 – and it was indirectly instrumental in the formation of the SCO.<sup>223</sup> Russia and India also signed an important arms agreement during Putin's trip to New Delhi in 2000. Lastly, the crisis led to the dissemination of several declarations, joint statements, and treaties by Russia, China, and India with the explicit aim of fostering a new multipolar international order.

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing generated the hypothesis that second-tier great powers would employ soft balancing measures against the United States. Russia, China, and arguably India fall within this category. But the theory does not satisfactorily

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<sup>222</sup> The one exception is during the 1998 Operation Desert Fox, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

<sup>223</sup> Note that the United States applied for observer status in this organisation in 2005 but was denied.

explain why these states would soft balance against the United States and not the European states. This suggests an important limitation to the theory of tripartite strategic balancing offered here, as well as to all structural theories in international relations: excessive theoretical parsimony does not allow one to delve into the “black box” of a state to explain the other sources of a state’s foreign policy.

On a similar note, the theory is able to illuminate one important dimension in great power relations during the Kosovo Crisis – namely the desire that several states had to soft balance against the US as a means of curbing its military policies and engendering a more balanced international system – but the theory fails to account for the myriad of other motives that the second-tier great powers had in resisting US policies. For instance, Yeltsin had domestic reasons to stand up to the Americans at Kosovo and placate Russian nationalists. Similarly, the various bilateral arrangements between the Russians and the Chinese, and in particular the formation of the SCO, have many functions other than soft balancing against the US: one important function of these diplomatic channels is to foster regional cooperation against terrorism and/or to provide a venue for Russian arms sales to China – sales which are primarily driven by domestic economic considerations rooted in the massive Russian military-industrial complex rather than a principled Russian position against the US. China and India also had domestic reasons (in Tibet and Kashmir) not to support the emerging doctrine of humanitarian intervention.

This case study also raises questions as to whether or not Russia and China hard balanced against the United States. Soft balancing tools are defined as strictly non-military in the sense that they do not invite direct confrontations or comparisons between one state’s military capabilities and another’s. However the Kosovo case study is marked by two incidents which blur the distinction between hard and soft balancing: the first is the Russian Special Forces’ pre-emptive occupation and closure of Pristina airport in the aftermath of the

NATO-Serbia ceasefire, and the second is the increased arms trade between Russia and its two allies. This case study also raises the question as to whether some degree of independent military capability to defend oneself is a prerequisite for states to engage in soft balancing against the unipolar leader.

Nonetheless, the theory offers important insights into the subtle tactics that second-tier great powers have used to deal with American preponderance in the post-Cold War world. Russian leaders repeatedly insisted that the challenge to the United States was based on their disdain for a unipolar order. This was a clear indication of the balancing motive – and not policy bargaining. In fact, Russian Defence Minister Sergeyev hinted that if Russia had the military wherewithal to resist the Americans at Kosovo, they would have taken a much stronger stance. Sending warships to the Mediterranean and seizing airfields were the only hard balancing signals that Russia could muster: the bulk of its balancing strategies were confined to the softer elements of international institutions and informal alliances or ententes with other dissatisfied great powers.

In sum, this case study demonstrates that the United States was soft balanced against by some, though not all, of the second-tier great powers during the Kosovo Crisis. Whether or not this soft balancing coalition against the United States would expand if the US developed a doctrine of preventive war is the question addressed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: TRIPARTITE STRATEGIC BALANCING IN IRAQ 1991-2003**

“Iraq has answered a decade of UN demands with a decade of defiance. All the world now faces a test, and the United Nations a difficult and defining moment. Are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?”

- George W. Bush’s address to the UN General Assembly, 2002

This chapter examines great power relations concerning US military policies in Iraq from 1991 to 2003. Its chief purpose is to offer a second example of second-tier great powers forming a soft balancing coalition against the United States. The chapter consists of five sections. The first two sections will provide a brief historical background of the origins of the Persian Gulf Wars and trace the breakdown of the US-led Grand Coalition which expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991. Seminal events such as Operation Desert Strike (1996) and Operation Desert Fox (1998) will receive appropriate attention. The third section presents an analysis of the Bush Doctrine, which was the theoretical guiding star of the Bush Administration’s decision to launch Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003). The fourth section introduces the balancing measures that various states employed to constrain the US use of force in Iraq in the lead-up to the Third Gulf War in 2003. The final section examines how well the empirical evidence fits the expectations derived from the theory of tripartite strategic balancing set out in the earlier chapters.

### **5.1 The First and Second Persian Gulf Wars (1980-88; 1990-91)**

The last quarter century has borne witness to three large-scale interstate military conflicts in the Persian Gulf. The first of these – the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) – was the most bloody and costly interstate war since the Second World War. The war was at heart a

struggle for mastery of the Persian Gulf in the aftermath of British withdrawal from the region in 1971. It cost its principal belligerents close to one million in military deaths and it financially devastated the Iraqi economy, mortgaging it to its Arab neighbours, and thereby indirectly precipitating the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.<sup>224</sup>

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait had its roots in the European colonial period: the British had demarcated the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border in Kuwait's favour in 1922, and even as early as 1937, Iraq's King called for Kuwait's annexation. Saddam Hussein revived these demands in 1990. He cited revelations that Kuwait had been overstepping its OPEC quotas and siphoning-off oil from the Rumaila oilfield (which straddled the two countries' border) as tantamount to military aggression, and he invaded the small Persian Gulf country on 2 August 1990.<sup>225</sup>

This Iraqi aggression generated a swift response from the international community: on the same day the United States and the Soviet Union – the latter being in the midst of disintegration – announced an immediate arms embargo on Iraq. Other great powers soon followed suit. The United States eventually managed to assemble a thirty-four member military coalition to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait under the mandate of UNSC Resolution 678. The resolution was passed by twelve affirmative votes, one abstention (China), and two votes against (Cuba and Yemen). The subsequent UN action against Iraq – oft-referred to as a textbook example of the principle of collective security – was only the second time in history that the UN sanctioned the use of force against one of its member states.

All of the great powers either cooperated entirely with the US or did not actively obstruct its war efforts.<sup>226</sup> The Soviet Union, which was regressing from a bipolar

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<sup>224</sup> Stephen Pelletiere, *The Iran-Iraq War: Chaos in a Vacuum* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1992).

<sup>225</sup> David M. Malone, *The International Struggle over Iraq: Politics in the UN Security Council 1980-2005* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>226</sup> India mildly protested the operation and acted consistent with its traditional opposition to Western imperialism and commitment to non-alignment. See Sumit Sarkar, "The Gulf War and India", *Middle East Report*, no. 170, May-June 1991, p. 41.

superpower to a great power, provided diplomatic support at the UN Security Council. Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, explained that “it was a difficult decision for the Soviet Union,” given the Soviet Union’s long-standing ties with Iraq, but he ultimately believed all other avenues to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait were exhausted. The Soviet Union did not, however, participate militarily in either Operation Desert Shield (to protect Saudi Arabia) or Operation Desert Storm (to liberate Kuwait).<sup>227</sup>

China arguably offered the most resistance of any of the great powers: not only did they not contribute militarily, but they also diplomatically questioned the US-led operation at the UN Security Council. The Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, who chaired China’s seat at the Security Council, explained China’s abstention in the following terms: since China is against the use of force in international relations, it “has difficulty voting in favour of the resolution;” however, since China is in favour of Resolution 660 and the resolutions urging Iraq’s immediate withdrawal from Kuwait, China “will not cast a negative vote on this draft resolution either.” The Chinese were not willing to stake any diplomatic capital on obstructing the otherwise historic unity in the Security Council.<sup>228</sup>

India was also somewhat ambivalent over the crisis, but it elected not to block the emerging US-led coalition in 1990. Indian Prime Minister Inder K. Gujral (1997-1998), who was serving as Foreign Minister at the time, explained that India and Iraq had cordial relations and his primary concern was the fate of the thousands of Indian migrants in the Gulf. Prior to the onset of hostilities, Gujral met with the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement in Yugoslavia, where the leaders expressed concern with the situation, but Gujral was careful not to issue any inflammatory statements. Then on 21 August, three weeks after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, Gujral flew to Baghdad. Saddam Hussein, dressed in his traditional khaki uniform and brandishing a gun in his holster, personally welcomed Gujral

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<sup>227</sup> 2963<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 29 November 1990, New York City, S/PV.2963.

<sup>228</sup> 2963<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 29 November 1990, New York City, S/PV.2963.

with a hug. Gujral stated that the media made a lot of his gesture, “splashing the picture far and wide,” but Gujral warned Saddam that he had just met with US Secretary of State Baker, and that the “Americans were serious about getting you.” Saddam replied: “then let them come, we are ready to fight.”<sup>229</sup> Despite these diplomatic signals of support for the non-aligned movement in Belgrade and Baghdad, India nevertheless did not actively obstruct the US-led operation to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Germany and Japan also provided diplomatic support and made substantial financial contributions to the US-led war effort. However, neither country provided any military support for the Grand Coalition; the German public proved particularly averse to the idea of sending the Bundeswehr into a foreign conflict and hundreds of thousands of Germans took to the streets in protest of the war.<sup>230</sup> Britain and France bandwagoned with the United States in the Second Gulf War. Both states provided significant diplomatic *and* military support to the US-led Grand Coalition. Minor diplomatic disputes arose between the US and France concerning the linkage of the Iraqi invasion to the Palestinian conflict, but these were mere policy disputes because they were not linked to any sustained French effort to create a more balanced international system, and correspondingly, to soft balance against the US.

The theory offered in the third chapter does not provide any distinct predictions concerning the great power dynamics in the Second Gulf War. Technically, the Soviet Union was still an actor on the international scene, and at best the US “unipolar moment” was still inchoate. Thus, the first explanatory variable – the distribution of capabilities – does not offer any conclusive insights into this military episode because the polarity of the international system was in flux.

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<sup>229</sup> Interview with Inder K. Gujral, Indian Prime Minister (1997-1998) and Minister of External Affairs (1989-90/1996-98), New Delhi, 26 September 2012. Also see Inder K. Gujral, *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Hay House Publishers, 2011), pp. 312-317.

<sup>230</sup> Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, “The Gulf War: The German Resistance”, *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2003.

Arguably, a better reason which explains the absence of any type of balancing against the United States in 1991 is the fact that the war was not an aggressive or unilateral application of US military power – in other words, the United States was not perceived to harbour any belligerent intentions. On the contrary, it was perceived by most states as a legitimate application of the principles of collective security, or alternatively, as an act of collective self-defence.<sup>231</sup>

As the fourth chapter argued, one method to measure “perceived intentions” of a state undertaking military operations is to examine whether or not the operation has the sanction of the UN Security Council. At the historic 2963<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Security Council on 29 November 1990 the Council passed Resolution 678 authorising the “use of all necessary means” to implement Resolution 660 (calling for a withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait) and to restore international peace and security in the area. The resolution was passed 12-2-1 (Cuba and Yemen opposed, China abstained).<sup>232</sup>

For all practical purposes, the international community and international law was in favour of the US-led operation. In the days before the final resolution, Iraq tactfully called on the General Assembly to hear its case and adopt a resolution discouraging the use of force. As Iraq knew, the General Assembly, where every state has one vote, is dominated by a large number of non-aligned states which traditionally vote against any use of force, especially by

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<sup>231</sup> Self-defence and collective security differ in many important respects. Most notably, the trigger for self-defence is when armed attack has occurred (or is imminent), whereas the trigger for collective security could be a mere threat to the peace. Secondly, self-defence is available automatically, whereas collective security can only be authorised by the Security Council after various procedures are followed. Third, under collective self-defence, the victim state (this time Kuwait) can invite other states to contribute to its defence. In collective security, the Security Council once again decides what bodies will be authorised to act (for instance, regional organisations, individual states, or coalitions of states). A final important difference is that under self-defence, the retaliation is limited to what is necessary and proportionate to the armed attack. An operation authorised as an act of collective security can have a wider mandate.

During the outbreak of hostilities, the main participants of the US-led coalition (i.e. the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Italy, and Turkey) justified the intervention as an instance of collective security. Kuwait, on the other hand, classified it as an act of self-defence. See Marc Weller, *Iraq and the Use of Force in International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp 34-41.

<sup>232</sup> Yemen argued that as the resolution was “vague and broad,” and did not contain any time limits, it could not vote in favour of it. Cuba stated it would not vote in favour of a resolution which was a “virtual declaration of war” and violated the Charter’s prohibition on the use of force. 2963<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 29 November 1990, New York City, S/PV.2963.

powerful member states like the United States. However, as a matter of law, the General Assembly can only make recommendations which lack binding force. Only the Security Council can issue orders, directives, and demands which may be legally obligatory, and the division of power within the United Nations stipulates that once the Security Council assumes responsibility over an issue of international peace and security (as it had over Iraq), the General Assembly is technically barred from making resolutions on the matter.<sup>233</sup>

In sum, since the United States had the support of the great powers on the Security Council it was not perceived to harbour unilateral or belligerent intentions in its resort to force against Iraq in 1990-1991. Correspondingly, as the second independent variable of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing predicts, there were no balancing measures adopted by the great powers against the nascent unipolar leader on this occasion.

## 5.2 Creeping Unilateralism of the 1990s

As Avi Shlaim vividly describes, the US-led military operation in the Second Gulf War (1990-1991) proved to be a cakewalk: “the mother of all battles threatened by Saddam had ended in a military catastrophe. But while Operation Desert Storm was a triumph of advanced military technology against a Third World army that lacked the will to fight, its political aftermath was more problematic.”<sup>234</sup> On 28 February 1991, when coalition forces had overrun Kuwait and southern Iraq, George H. W. Bush ordered a ceasefire without toppling Saddam’s regime. The Bush Administration was concerned that toppling the Ba’athist regime was outside the purview of the UNSC Resolution 678 and feared the implications such a move would have for the regional balance of power. Almost immediately

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<sup>233</sup> As a matter of practice, the General Assembly often shuns this internal division of power with the Security Council and makes many pronouncements. This is one of the many reasons why great powers prefer to handle their diplomatic relations in the Security Council and ignore the General Assembly.

<sup>234</sup> Avi Shlaim, *War and Peace in the Middle East* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 101.

thereafter Saddam moved to crush the Shia and Kurdish uprisings in the south and north of the country, respectively. These repressions set the scene for the next decade of US unilateral moves to enforce ceasefire stipulations on Iraq.

On 5 April 1991 the Security Council passed Resolution 688 which condemned the Iraqi repressions and declared them a threat to international peace and security. It is important to note, however, that Resolution 688 was not passed under Chapter VII of the Charter, and thus its provisions were not legally enforceable through the application of force. As will be explored below, this fact has important implications for the “perceived intentions” of the United States. On the record, Russia, China, and India denied that Resolution 688 permitted any member state to enforce the provisions of the ceasefire conditions on Iraq, but as David Malone argues, “their rhetoric did not match the reality of their frequent unwillingness during the 1990s to confront the emerging unipolar power – the United States – and whatever ‘coalition of the willing’ it could assemble.”<sup>235</sup>

In fact, the Security Council grudgingly acquiesced in the unilateralist interventions of the US, Britain, and France throughout the first half of the 1990s. For instance, on 7 April 1991, in order to facilitate humanitarian assistance to the Kurds in northern Iraq, the US unilaterally announced the creation of a northern “no-fly zone” above the thirty-sixth parallel. Britain and France soon joined the US in patrolling the no-fly zones, which were later extended to include the south of the country. These countries also sent ground troops into the north to assist in humanitarian relief and set up “safe havens.” Russia, China, and India did not vehemently condemn these Western unilateral enforcements, but they did not authorise them at the Security Council either.<sup>236</sup> Prime Minister Gujral stated that despite the mild protest from the three Eurasian powers at the UN, the United States did not pay much attention: “The UN had served the purpose of the West in so far as it had legitimized the war;

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<sup>235</sup> Malone, *The International Struggle over Iraq*, p. 87.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

after that, its counsel was ignored with impunity.”<sup>237</sup> By the end of 1991 it was evident that all three great powers had dropped out of the Grand Coalition of the Second Gulf War.

The decade of the 1990s was marked by a “creeping unilateralism” by the three Western Powers.<sup>238</sup> In December 1992 a US air patrol encountered an Iraqi Mig-25 in the southern no-fly zone and shot it down. Neither Russia nor China protested this move at the Security Council. In January 1993 one hundred American, British, and French planes and ships attacked Iraqi missile sites and weapons facilities. In October 1994 a US expeditionary army of 54,000 assembled in the Persian Gulf to deter Iraqi troops amassing near the Kuwaiti border. The Security Council passed Resolution 949 which demanded an Iraqi demilitarisation of the border area. Iraq complied, but the real significance of this episode is that it showed the first crack in the Anglo-American-French compact: while the United States and Britain interpreted Resolution 949 as giving them “authorization to use force in the event of Iraqi non-compliance, the French and Russians were opposed to such an interpretation, and China remained silent.”<sup>239</sup>

On 3 September 1996 the United States and Britain launched Operation Desert Strike, which consisted of a barrage of forty-four Tomahawk cruise missiles directed against radar installations in the south of Iraq. This choice of targeting was a curious one since the strikes were launched in response to the Iraqi army’s invasion of the Kurdish regional capital city of Irbil in the north. The United States and Britain also unilaterally extended the legally controversial no-fly zone in the south from the thirty-second parallel to the thirty-third parallel. At the Security Council Russian Ambassador Lavrov denounced this “unprovoked,

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<sup>237</sup> Interview with Inder K. Gujral, Indian Prime Minister (1997-1998) and Minister of External Affairs (1989-90/1996-98), New Delhi, 26 September 2012. Also see Inder K. Gujral, *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*, p. 327.

<sup>238</sup> Unilateralism is defined herein as the use of force without authorisation from the UN Security Council or the sanction of international law. For an insightful discussion of unilateralism see: David M. Malone and Yuen Foong Khong, eds., *Unilateralism and US Foreign Policy: International Perspectives* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

<sup>239</sup> Malone, *The International Struggle over Iraq*, pp. 98-100.

unilateral act of force...which grossly violated international law,” and the Chinese Ambassador Huasun also stated he was “shocked about the unprovoked military action...We are against power politics or the unilateral resort to the use or threat of force in international relations. We believe such acts contravene international law.” Most interestingly, France no longer supported the US-UK attacks: it refused to participate in the air strikes and refused to patrol the expanded no-fly zone, restricting its sorties to the thirty-second parallel. The gulf between the Gallic state and its Anglo-Saxon partners was widening.<sup>240</sup>

The final wedge between the three Western Allies was driven in by Operation Desert Fox. On 16 December 1998 the US and Britain launched a four-day large-scale military bombardment of Iraq, including approximately 650 air strikes and 400 cruise missile attacks against approximately one hundred targets. The stated *casus belli* included Iraqi non-compliance with various Security Council resolutions as well as its obstructionist tactics against UN weapons inspectors. France joined Russia and China in protesting against these strikes and it subsequently ceased patrolling the no-fly zones. A Franco-Russo-Chinese coalition against the two Anglo-Saxon Powers was already apparent.<sup>241</sup>

The French and Russian resistance to American policies in Iraq in the latter part of the 1990s may be classified as soft balancing. In 1998-1999 the French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine popularised the term “hyperpower/*hyperpuissance*” as an overarching criticism of America’s multifaceted preponderance of the post-Cold War world. He explained that the term “superpower” was no longer sufficient because:

The United States of America today predominates on the economic level, the monetary level, on the technological level, and in the cultural area in the broad sense of the word...[it extends to] domination of attitudes, concepts, language and modes of life...It is not comparable, in terms of power and influence, to anything known in modern history... *The entire foreign policy of France*, among other objectives, is

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<sup>240</sup> 3955<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 16 December 1998, New York City, S/PV.3955, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.3955](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.3955).

<sup>241</sup> Malone, *The International Struggle over Iraq*, pp. 100, 160.

*aimed at making the world of tomorrow composed of several poles, not just a single one.*<sup>242</sup>

In a speech on 1 February 1999 before the Association France-Amériques, a group promoting friendship between France and the Americas, Vedrine explained that throughout history great dynasties were almost always “counterbalanced” by other great powers. However, “today, that’s not the case, and therefore there is this question at the center of the world’s current problems.” During an interview with the weekly newsmagazine *L’Express* later that week Vedrine pondered how France could attract other countries to the idea of counterbalancing the United States and tellingly explained:

How do you counterbalance these [American unipolar/unilateral] tendencies when they are abusive? *Through steady and persevering work in favor of real multilateralism against unilateralism, for balanced multipolarism against unipolarism, for cultural diversity against uniformity...None of that will happen automatically and our influence in the world isn’t going to grow all by itself. A strategy, a tactic, a method, are necessary. It’s possible.*<sup>243</sup>

French President Jacques Chirac also challenged the United States’ growing unilateralism in the language of a commitment to multipolarity. In an official statement made during his historic visit to New Delhi before Operation Desert Fox, Chirac espoused his policy of multipolarity:

I am deeply attached to the principle of multipolarity. And I think there is no other means by which we can *maintain a balance in the world*. It flows naturally...It is only by recognizing this new reality of a multipolar and interdependent world that we will be able to build an international order that is both safer and more just.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Craig R. Whitney, “NATO at 50: With Nations at Odds, Is it a Misalliance?”, *The New York Times*, 15 February 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/15/world/nato-at-50-with-nations-at-odds-is-it-a-misalliance.html>.

<sup>243</sup> “To Paris, U.S. Looks Like a ‘Hyperpower’”, *The New York Times*, 5 February 1999, [http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/05/news/05iht-france.t\\_0.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/05/news/05iht-france.t_0.html). As recent as the summer of 2008 Jean-Maurice Ripert, the French Ambassador to the United Nations (2007-2009), also spoke critically of America’s preponderance of power and penchant for unilateralism, while at the same time stressing that France is among one of the important poles in the international order. Interview with Jean-Maurice Ripert, French Ambassador to the United Nation (2007-2009), United Nations Secretariat, New York City, July 2008.

<sup>244</sup> Jacques Chirac, “State Visit to India, Interview Given by Jacques Chirac to Indian Weekly Magazine ‘India Today’”, *France Diplomatie – Ministère Des Affaires Etrangères*. <https://pastel.diplomatie.gouv.fr/editorial/actual/ael2/bulletin.gb.asp?liste=20060217.gb.html>.

Not only did Chirac warn that US influence should be curbed in the United Nations, but also in other international organisations such as NATO and the IMF. In his memoirs Chirac recounted that he challenged the US position on the grounds that he opposed unilateralism and championed the role of the UN Security Council – even though one year later Chirac was more than willing to circumvent the Council when military intervention in the Balkans was at stake.<sup>245</sup>

German officials also (more quietly) treaded in France's footsteps on the issue: German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder added “that there is a danger of unilateralism, not by just anybody but by the United States, is undeniable,” and German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer explained that the “growing tendency to avoid multilateral solutions” should be seen by Europe as “a challenge to build up its own political authority.”<sup>246</sup>

The Russian objection to operations Desert Strike and Desert Fox may also be framed in the language of soft balancing. As early as March 1996 Primakov was warning that “Russia must find herself as a great power by playing the crucial role as balancer within the international system.”<sup>247</sup> Immediately after operation Desert Strike Primakov explained that these actions proved “how correct our forecasts were that there are forces, which are endeavouring to create a *unipolar world*, which want to have only one superpower in the world that could dictate its terms to others...”<sup>248</sup> After Operation Desert Fox, Primakov held a joint Russo-Indian Summit in which he claimed that the basis of the talks centred around “the understanding that it was necessary to create a multipolar world.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Jacques Chirac, *My Life in Politics*, trans. Catherine Spencer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 262-263.

<sup>246</sup> Craig R. Whitney, “NATO at 50: With Nations at Odds, Is it a Misalliance?”, *The New York Times*, 15 February 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/15/world/nato-at-50-with-nations-at-odds-is-it-a-misalliance.html>.

<sup>247</sup> “Russia is Looking for a New Place in the World”, *Official Kremlin International News Broadcast*, 6 March 1996.

<sup>248</sup> “Russia Will Not Pass Britain’s UN Draft Resolution on Iraq”, *BBC News*, 5 September 1996.

<sup>249</sup> “Text of Indo-Russian Statement”, *The Hindu*, 23 December 1998.

Even William Wohlforth, arguably the most vocal critic of the soft balancing argument, conceded that “in the late 1990s, Russia’s policy on Iraq was largely driven by two concerns: constraining the United States via ‘soft balancing’ in the UN Security Council, and extracting economic benefits from Baghdad.”<sup>250</sup> This does not suggest that Russia did not have any other motives in opposing the joint US-UK strikes (such as ensuring economic trade with Iraq – a major purchaser of Russian arms), but it does indicate that a desire to resist US unipolarity was at least part of the explanation.

### 5.3 The Bush Doctrine

The National Security Strategy of the United States (NSS) – which was the most comprehensive articulation of the Bush Doctrine – was unveiled in September 2002.<sup>251</sup> It began with the resounding assertion that “the great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom – and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free-enterprise.”<sup>252</sup> Robert Jervis provides a cogent analysis of the Bush Doctrine’s three fundamental pillars.<sup>253</sup> The first is a strong belief that there is a historic moment of opportunity for the United States to remake the global order in its image (*i.e.* spread democracy); the second is a belief that new threats can only be thwarted through new policy innovations – read the doctrine of prevention; and the third is the strong willingness of the United States to act unilaterally.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> William Wohlforth, “Russia’s Soft Balancing Act”, *Strategic Asia*, 2003-04, p. 170.

<sup>251</sup> A second version of the National Security Strategy was issued in 2006 which strongly reaffirmed the most belligerent aspects of the 2002 version. The Obama Administration released a revised document in 2010.

<sup>252</sup> “2002 National Security Strategy of the United States”, White House, Washington, DC: 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nssall.html>.

<sup>253</sup> Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006).

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*, p. 365.

Bush articulated the first pillar of his doctrine during an interview in February 2002, when he stated that “history has given us a unique opportunity to defend freedom. And we’re going to seize the moment, and do it.”<sup>255</sup> Making the world more peaceful and free in Bush’s language, however, reflected his Wilsonian conviction that “democracies do not fight each other,” and accordingly, that peace is pursued by spreading democracy. As the 2002 National Security Strategy explained, the United States will use its unprecedented power during this historic moment to “promote a balance of power that favors freedom.”<sup>256</sup> It was believed that more democracies will translate to greater international stability, peaceful relations with neighbours, and less terrorism.<sup>257</sup>

Before dismissing and castigating the first pillar of the Bush Doctrine – as has been widely done in the media – it is interesting to note that there is in fact some academic support in favour of the thesis that democracies do not fight wars against each other. Many empirical studies have found a strong correlation between democratic dyads and the absence of war. For instance, Jack Levy famously remarked that “the absence of war between democracies comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations.”<sup>258</sup> In a similar vein, Bruce Russett states that the assertion that democracies do not fight each other is “one of the strongest nontrivial or nontautological statements that can be made about international relations.”<sup>259</sup>

However, it should be noted that not all international relations theorists accept the proposition that democracies do not fight wars against each other. Some scholars, including John Mearsheimer, and Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa, explain absence of war between

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<sup>255</sup> George W. Bush and Junichiro Koizumi, “President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi Hold Press Conference”, White House Press Release, 18 February 2002.

<sup>256</sup> 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States, p. vi.

<sup>257</sup> Robert Jervis, “Understanding the Bush Doctrine”, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 118, no. 3, Fall 2003, p. 367.

<sup>258</sup> See Jack Levy, “Domestic Politics and War” in Robert I Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb, eds., *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 88.

<sup>259</sup> Bruce Russett, “Democracy and Peace” in Russett, Bruce, *et al.*, eds., *Choices in World Politics: Sovereignty and Interdependence* (New York: Freeman, 1985), p. 245.

democracies on the basis of several factors, including balance of power calculations, shared national interests, or a common enemy (as existed among the western democracies during the Cold War).<sup>260</sup> In fact, Farber and Gowa argue that if one controls for all disputes related to the United States – Soviet Union rivalry during the Cold War, it is possible that democratic dyads would be just as disputatious as the others.<sup>261</sup> Other scholars, such as Christopher Layne, argue that the answer lies largely in how the variable “democracy” is defined, measured, and operationalised. For instance, Layne and other scholars point to several wars between what were considered democracies at the time: the War of 1812, the American Civil War, the 1898 Spanish-American War, the First and Second Boer Wars (1880-1902), the First World War, the Polish-Lithuanian War (1920), and the near war between Britain and France during the 1898 Fashoda Incident, which was averted not because of a shared commitment to democracy, but rather for balance of power calculations with a rising Germany.<sup>262</sup>

However, there is a difference between the seeming empirical law in international relations that two well-established democratic dyads do not go to war with each other, and Bush’s foreign policy doctrine based on promulgating western-style democratisation by force. Furthermore, in an insightful article, Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder provide empirical evidence in support of the proposition that states in transition from autocracy to democracy are in fact: 1) more likely to engage in conflict than states that are not in a transitional stage, and 2) more likely to engage in conflict than states engaged in the reverse transition from democracy to autocracy.<sup>263</sup> The explanation for this phenomenon is that

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<sup>260</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War”, *International Security*, vol. 15, no. 1, Summer 1990, pp. 5-56.

<sup>261</sup> Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa, “Building Bridges Abroad”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 43, no. 3, June 1997, pp. 455-456.

<sup>262</sup> Christopher Layne, “Kant or Cant: the Myth of the Democratic Peace”, *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 2, Autumn 1994, pp. 5-49.

<sup>263</sup> Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War”, *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 2, Spring 2002, pp. 297-337.

political elites in the democratising states often resort to belligerent nationalist rhetoric to shore up their populist base of support, and this eventually unleashes a process towards greater confrontation which is difficult to curb. Therefore, the first pillar of the Bush Doctrine, namely that the spread of democracy would increase the prospects for peace, had a flimsy foundation at best.

The second pillar of the Bush strategy is the doctrine of prevention. During a speech to West Point graduates, Bush announced that “the gravest danger to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology.”<sup>264</sup> This warning is reproduced almost verbatim in the National Security Strategy. As a corollary to these new threats, the Bush Administration promised to build defences against ballistic missiles and announced a controversial right of pre-emption/prevention. The latter of these sought to confront threats before they fully materialised, and argued that “the only path to safety is the path of action.”<sup>265</sup> Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay succinctly explain the essence of the new doctrine: “The United States should be prepared to act not just *pre-emptively* against *imminent* threats, but also *preventively* against *potential* threats.”<sup>266</sup> The National Security Strategy concluded that “the greater the threat, the greater the risk of inaction – and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves.”<sup>267</sup> The considerable diplomatic and legal ramifications of the second pillar of the Bush Doctrine will be considered later in the chapter.

The third pillar of the Bush Doctrine is the unprecedented willingness of the United States to act unilaterally. The National Security Strategy explained that “while the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not

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<sup>264</sup> George W. Bush, “President Bush Remarks at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy”, White House Press Release, 1 June 2002.

<sup>265</sup> 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States, p. 15.

<sup>266</sup> Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), p. 13.

<sup>267</sup> 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States, p. 15.

hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defence by acting preemptively.”<sup>268</sup> Daalder and Lindsay provide an explanation of Bush’s logic of unilateralism:

In a dangerous world the best – if not the only way – to ensure America’s security is to shed the constraints imposed by friends, allies, and international organizations. Maximizing America’s freedom to act is essential...and Americans cannot count on others to protect them.<sup>269</sup>

This does not imply that the United States is opposed to multilateral interventions *per se*, it only clarifies that the US views such engagements as merely instrumental in the pursuit of its national security interests. US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld explained the Administration’s position perfectly and succinctly when he stated: “we cultivate flexible coalitions that will change and evolve – the mission determines the coalition, and the coalition should not determine the mission.”<sup>270</sup>

It is not difficult to understand why second-tier great powers, including many of America’s allies, criticised what is arguably the most belligerent doctrine in America’s history. French President Chirac condemned these “attempts to legitimise the unilateral and preemptive use of force” and German chancellor Gerhard Schroder reacted by making opposition to America’s Iraq policy the centrepiece of his re-election campaign.<sup>271</sup> Foreign opinion of the United States increasingly soured in 2002 and the beginning of 2003. Of the eight largest European countries polled in March 2003, only in Poland did fifty percent of the population hold a favourable view of the United States. Britain came a close second, with forty-eight percent, but the remaining states were all below one third (France and Italy were one-third; Russia and Germany were one quarter; and Spain and Turkey were less than ten

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>269</sup> Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>270</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, United States Department of Defense, News Transcripts, News Briefing, 21 October 2001.

<sup>271</sup> “Administration Seeking to Build Support in Congress on Iraq Policy”, *The New York Times*, 30 August 2002.

percent).<sup>272</sup> These results are all the more pronounced considering the near-universal sympathy that the United States enjoyed in the wake of the September 11 attacks. In short, the Bush Doctrine seriously challenged the United States' longstanding reputation of benign intent.

#### **5.4 The Third Persian Gulf War 2003: Soft Balancing Against the United States**

The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq put word into deed. While it is difficult to summarise the plethora of different *casus belli* provided by the Bush Administration – because they were often shifting and inconsistent – four reasons stand out: first, the accusation that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction which threatened America's national security; second, the legal argument that the previous Security Council resolutions (678, 687, and 1441) already implicitly authorised the use of force<sup>273</sup>; third, the connection that the Iraqi regime was purported to have to al-Qaeda; and fourth, the neoconservative argument that regime change was necessary to spread democracy, freedom, free enterprise, and human rights to Iraq. The first, third, and fourth reasons are directly related to the implementation of the Bush Doctrine, while the second reason was widely seen as window-dressing for the other more compelling reasons.

The US-led invasion of Iraq was preceded by six months of intense efforts by the Bush Administration to gain Security Council authorisation for the use of force. During this period a coalition led by France, Russia, Germany, China, and (arguably) India formed in strong opposition to the US-led war coalition.

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<sup>272</sup> “America's Image Further Erodes, Europeans Want Weaker Ties”, Nine Country Survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 18 March 2003, p. 11, <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/175.pdf>.

<sup>273</sup> For an exposition of the implied authorisation argument, see Adam Roberts, “Law and the Use of Force After Iraq”, *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 2, Summer 2003, pp. 31-56.

On 12 August 2002 US Vice-President Dick Cheney called for the United States to launch a preventive war against Iraq. One month later Bush took the stage at the annual September opening of the General Assembly and posed a provocative challenge to the United Nations. He overtly hinted that if the United Nations did not act to enforce the Security Council resolutions against Iraq, the United States would fill the void: “are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?”<sup>274</sup>

The second-tier great powers were mildly perturbed by America’s saber-rattling. Immediately after the speech Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov met with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the two statesmen confirmed their “common stance on the need for a further strengthening of the UN as the central mechanism for guaranteeing security, stability, and the regulation of international relations in the *developing multipolar world*.”<sup>275</sup>

In fact, even a week before Bush delivered his speech at the General Assembly Chirac tried to pre-empt the issue by denouncing what he called Bush’s “doctrine of pre-emptive war.” He had a telephone conversation with Bush and Blair on 6 September and privately expressed his reservations: he reiterated that “only the Security Council is authorized to take the decisions that might be required [*i.e.* regarding the use of force]” and concluded “I am not in favour, as you know, of ‘unilateralism’ from *any* quarter,” apparently missing the irony of France’s intervention in Kosovo a few years earlier.<sup>276</sup>

The following day, on 7 September, Chirac and Schroder discussed the issue of Iraq in detail over dinner at the German leader’s home in Hannover. In his memoirs Chirac explained that “our points of view easily coalesced,” and after the dinner the two statesmen held a joint press conference in which they agreed on a common Franco-German position:

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<sup>274</sup> George W. Bush, “President’s Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly”, 12 September 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>.

<sup>275</sup> Quoted in Thomas Ambrosio, “The Russo-American Dispute Over the Invasion of Iraq: International Status and the Role of Positional Goods”, Paper Presented at ISA Annual Conference, Honolulu, 2005, p. 17.

<sup>276</sup> Chirac, *My Life in Politics*, p. 265.

“first, we are clearly and resolutely opposed to all unilateral actions...[and] we are in agreement that the United Nations should have a vital role to play in terms of Iraq.” Chirac admitted he “felt comforted by the fact that France and Germany had the same understanding of the Iraqi problem,” and two days later he decided “to make France’s position publicly known by giving a long interview with *The New York Times*.<sup>277</sup> When asked about the Bush Doctrine, Chirac explained

I’ll be very frank with you. As I’ve already told President Bush, I have great reservations about this doctrine. As soon as one nation claims the right to take preventive action, other countries will naturally do the same. That is, I believe, an extraordinarily dangerous doctrine and one that could have dramatic consequences.<sup>278</sup>

Chirac also recapitulated that his opposition to the United States was not premised on shielding the Saddam regime but was rather based on a greater question of international order: “what is in question today is not a change of the Iraqi regime. We can want that, we do obviously want it, but we need a little order to maintain the affairs of the world.”<sup>279</sup>

On 22 October 2002, a week after the US Congress passed a joint resolution authorising military action against Iraq, France and Russia announced their strong opposition to granting the US such a right through the UN. After another month of diplomatic jousting at the UN, however, the great powers finally conceded to some of the United States’ demands: the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441, which found Iraq in “material breach” of earlier resolutions, established a new weapons inspection regime, and warned of “serious consequences” in the event of further Iraqi non-compliance. However, the traditional UN euphemism authorising war – “all necessary means” – was discernibly

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid, pp. 262-266.

<sup>278</sup> “Interview with Jacques Chirac”, *The New York Times*, 9 September 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/09/international/europe/09CTEX.html>.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

absent in the language of the resolution. The United States also promised to take the case to the Security Council before taking any future military action.<sup>280</sup>

After the resolution Iraq permitted weapons inspectors to return and it published a progress report on 13 November. US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice described the document as a “12,200 page lie.”<sup>281</sup> It was becoming increasingly evident that the Bush Administration had made up its mind to invade Iraq.

Nonetheless, the soft balancers swung into full gear. Schroder visited Chirac in Paris on 20 January and the two statesmen held a joint press conference. Chirac explicitly stated that “everything must be done to avoid war” and that “France and Germany have the same judgement on this crisis.” He explained that they opposed any unilateral action on Iraq, that everything needed to be done through the Security Council, and that they would “do all [they] could to ensure [their] position was understood by everyone.”<sup>282</sup> The very next day Russia and China delivered their own statements against the US position: the Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov concurred that “there was no evidence to justify war in Iraq” and the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue explained that China’s position was “extremely close to that of France.”<sup>283</sup> Russian and Chinese officials were undoubtedly pleased that the French were leading the opposition to the United States.

Largely out of deference to Britain’s wishes, the United States set out one last time to create unity in the Security Council in the month of February 2003. On 5 February Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, presented the Security Council with a multimedia dossier of purported “WMD sites” in Iraq. His presentation was met with widespread scepticism.

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<sup>280</sup> T.V. Paul, “Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 65.

<sup>281</sup> Malone, *The International Struggle over Iraq*, p. 196.

<sup>282</sup> “France, Germany Stand Firm on Iraq”, *CNN.com*, 22 January 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/01/22/sproject.irq.schroeder.chirac/index.html>.

<sup>283</sup> “No Evidence to Justify War on Iraq: Ivanov”, *Agence France Presse*, 23 January 2003; and “China Adds Voice to Iraq War Doubts”, *CNN.com*, 23 January 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/east/01/23/sprj.irq.china/>.

On 10 February Putin flew to Paris from Berlin, where he had held strategic talks with Schroder during the weekend. When Putin had visited Paris in the past, Chirac normally sent an official to greet him at the airport. This time Chirac personally welcomed Putin at the airport with open arms. The two leaders went into a private chamber in the Elysees Palace and had a secret conversation. When they emerged they gave press conferences that torpedoed US efforts at getting UN approval for the war. Chirac announced that France, Germany, and Russia have agreed to an unprecedented joint declaration expressing their “determination to ensure that everything possible is done to disarm Iraq peacefully” and that their position “is similar to that of a large number of countries within the Security Council.” When Putin spoke, he brusquely clarified that “Russia is against the war. I have nothing more to say on the subject.”<sup>284</sup>

On 24 February the US, Britain, and Spain introduced a draft resolution to the Security Council declaring that “Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it in Resolution 1441.” On the same day, France, Germany, and Russia submitted a counter proposal which called for an expansion and extension of weapons inspections for another four months.<sup>285</sup> On 5 March the Franco-Russo-German axis of opposition convened once again in an emergency meeting in Paris. The three foreign ministers met to discuss the impending war and held a joint press conference. Once again, Dominique de Villepin, the French Foreign Minister, took the lead role by unequivocally stating that “we will not allow a resolution to pass that authorizes the resorting to force.” He hinted that France was willing to use the veto in case the issue was raised, and that he was “in total agreement with the

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<sup>284</sup> “Joint Declaration by France, Germany, and Russia on Iraq”, *BBC News*, 10 February 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2746885.stm>; also see BBC Interview with Condoleezza Rice, *Putin, Russia and the West: Taking Control*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 19 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

<sup>285</sup> “France, Germany and Russia Launch New Anti-War Initiative over Iraq”, *CBC News Canada*, 24 February 2003, <http://archive.truthout.org/article/france-germany-russia-present-plan-un>.

Russians” on this point.<sup>286</sup> Once again the following day the Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan declared that “China’s position on Iraq is consistent with their joint resolution.”<sup>287</sup>

In a televised address on 10 March Chirac boldly asserted that “whatever the circumstances France would vote no” and veto the US resolution: “in the unlikely event of the resolution obtaining a majority, France would still make use of its right of veto.”<sup>288</sup> The Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov also publicly confirmed that if the resolution “is nonetheless put to a vote, then Russia will vote against this resolution.”<sup>289</sup> Later that month French, Russian, Chinese, and German officials recapitulated their public disagreement with the United States at the 4726<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council.<sup>290</sup>

Despite these soft balancing measures, the leaders of the US, Britain, and Spain met in the Azores on 16 March and decided that a second resolution authorising war was not necessary. They thereby skilfully avoided the need to call for another Security Council vote on the matter and prevented giving their opponents an opportunity to officially veto it. The following day the United States issued an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave the country within forty-eight hours or face military conflict. Operation Iraqi Freedom commenced on 19 March 2003.<sup>291</sup>

France and Germany also used NATO to soft balance against the United States during the run-up to the Third Gulf War. On 16 January 2003, US Deputy Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz requested NATO support in the event that the US went to war. In particular, he requested NATO to send AWACS surveillance planes and Patriot anti-missile batteries to Turkey (which the US planned to use as a staging ground for aerial and ground combat

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<sup>286</sup> “Foreign Ministers Vow to ‘Not Allow’ Force Resolution”, *Associated Press*, 5 March 2003, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/167-attack/35246.html>.

<sup>287</sup> “China Backs Statement Opposing War Resolution”, *PBS.org*, 6 March 2003, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/iraq\\_03-06-03.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/iraq_03-06-03.html).

<sup>288</sup> Chirac, *My Life in Politics*, pp. 280-281

<sup>289</sup> Nick Paton Walsh and Brian Whitaker, “Chirac Promises to use Veto but Putin Faces Dilemma”, *The Guardian*, 11 March 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/mar/11/iraq.unitednations3>.

<sup>290</sup> 4726<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 27 March 2003, New York City, S/PV.4726, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.4726](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.4726).

<sup>291</sup> Malone, *The International Struggle over Iraq*, p. 196-201.

operations in northern Iraq), and to augment its naval presence in the Mediterranean as a means to protect US cargo vessels en route to the Persian Gulf. On 23 January and 12 February France and Germany vetoed these American requests on the grounds that they were unnecessary and premature absent a Security Council resolution authorising the use of force.<sup>292</sup>

France also used its powers and prestige in other international organisations and forums. For instance, Chirac used the European Union as a forum for mobilising an antiwar coalition against the United States. He pressured the EU to draft a statement giving more time to the weapon inspectors in Iraq and opposed allowing the thirteen Central and Eastern European states awaiting accession to the EU to speak on the matter. France's opposition to military intervention was also endorsed at a summit of fifty-two African states (including three non-permanent members of the Security Council – Angola, Cameroon, and Guinea) in Paris.<sup>293</sup>

France's opposition to the US-led invasion of Iraq stemmed from two primary considerations.<sup>294</sup> The first was the ramifications that such a misadventure would have on the war on terror and France's large Muslim community: Chirac presciently argued that "a war of this kind cannot help giving a big lift to terrorism. It would create a large number of little bin Ladens."<sup>295</sup> The second was rooted in the traditional French role of standing up to the United States. The French public was particularly partial to this position, and the Soviet threat, which had submerged transatlantic differences during the Cold War, was no longer a consideration. French leaders had warned of the dangers of unbridled US unipolarity as early

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<sup>292</sup> Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy", p. 67.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>294</sup> France also had significant economic interests at stake in Iraq – for example, the French BNP Paribas Bank had exclusive rights to handle all of the funds coming out of the Iraq Oil-for-Food Programme, which amounted to nearly \$80 billion – but most analysts agree that this was only of secondary importance. See Catherine Belton, "Putin's Delicate Balancing Game", *Russia Weekly*, 13 March 2002, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/248-2.cfm>.

<sup>295</sup> James Graff and Bruce Crumley, "France is not a Pacific Country", *Time*, 16 February 2003; Chirac, *My Life in Politics*, p. 278.

as 1991. Foreign Minister Vedrine had also been calling for a new balance of power to check the unipolar leader since 1998-1999.<sup>296</sup> Chirac also repeatedly expressed his unease with US “*hyperpuissance*” and Washington’s “unipolar moment” during his first campaign elections in 1995, and he explicitly linked these terms to his opposition to the war in Iraq.<sup>297</sup> In his memoirs he wrote that the Iraqi matter was essentially a dispute over

two opposing visions of the world and of the role of the international community as well as two concepts of the relations between nations and the principles that should inspire them. On the one side, a multilateral and legalistic approach. On the other, a dominating and Manichean logic that favored force over law.<sup>298</sup>

After the onset of hostilities in Iraq, Chirac even engaged in an academic debate with Tony Blair over what type of world – a unipolar one or a multipolar one – would be most conducive to international peace and stability. Chirac made the Waltzian argument that “when you look at the evolution of the world, you see that quite naturally a multipolar world is being created, whether one likes it or not. It’s inevitable.”<sup>299</sup>

Russia also had two primary reasons for obstructing the US-led campaign against Iraq. First, Russia is said to have profited handsomely under the UN Oil-for-Food Programme. Saddam Hussein had promised long-term contracts to Russia which could only be realised if he stayed in power and sanctions were withdrawn: for example, Russia’s Lukoil was promised a major development contract estimated at around \$12 billion and Iraq still owed Russia \$8 billion in debt relief. Moreover, the US also charged that Moscow had been violating UN sanctions and supplying Iraq with night-vision goggles and anti-missile defence systems which were subsequently used against US forces. Other more serious rumours persist that not only did Russia help smuggle nuclear technology into Iraq in defiance of the

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<sup>296</sup> Carol M. Glen, “Multilateralism in a Unipolar World: The UN Security Council and Iraq”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, vol. 6, no. 2, March 2006.

<sup>297</sup> Frederico Bordonaro, “Chirac’s Strategic Visit to Beijing”, *Asia Times*, 27 October 2006; Stephen G Brooks and William Wohlforth, “Hard Times for Soft Balancing”, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 101.

<sup>298</sup> Chirac, *My Life in Politics*, p. 274.

<sup>299</sup> “Chirac Responds to Blair: ‘World is Multipolar’”, *Shanghai Star*, 1 May 2003.

UN sanctions, but that it also smuggled it out via Syria before the coalition had a chance to find it.<sup>300</sup> If these allegations are true, then they represent an instance in which Russian soft balancing spilled over into hard balancing, since the transfer of arms to the enemy of your enemy is traditionally conceived of as a form of internal balancing. Hence, Russia had a powerful economic incentive to keep the Ba'athist regime afloat.<sup>301</sup>

The second reason why Russia soft balanced against the United States in Iraq was rooted in its commitment to multipolarisation. Even though Russia supported America's war against terrorism, especially in the wake of the September 11 attacks, and provided intelligence for US forces in Afghanistan and acceded to an American military presence in Central Asia, Putin did not completely eschew Primakov's multipolarity policy.

For instance, in December 2002 – in the midst of the diplomatic jousting at the UN – Putin visited Beijing and issued a joint statement with his Chinese counterpart reaffirming both states' commitment to the UN and the process of global “multipolarisation.” In the same month Putin travelled to New Delhi and issued a joint statement with the Indian Prime Minister reiterating the two states' support for multipolarity.<sup>302</sup> On 9 February 2003 Putin travelled to Paris and clearly articulated his position on Iraq:

The main thing is that France and Russia have common approaches to constructing the future edifice of international security. As we believe here in Russia, and as the French President Chirac believes – the future edifice of world security must be based on a multipolar world. This is the main thing that unites us. I am absolutely confident that *the world will be predictable and stable only if it is multipolar.*<sup>303</sup>

The next day Putin explained the Franco-Russo-German position in an interview on French television in which he gave the clearest indication of how Russia's policy on Iraq was inextricably intertwined with its opposition to US unipolarity and its policy of promoting

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<sup>300</sup> Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces both Russia and the West* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2008), p. 249.

<sup>301</sup> Wohlforth, “Russia's Soft Balancing Act”, p. 171.

<sup>302</sup> Ambrosio, “The Russo-American Dispute Over the Invasion of Iraq”, p. 20.

<sup>303</sup> “Interview Granted by President Vladimir Putin to France-3 Television”, Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, 9 February 2003, <http://www.geneva.mid.ru/press/03.html>.

multipolarisation. In response to a question about the previous day's joint statement on opposing US policy on Iraq, Putin explained that:

You know, it's not just about Iraq. An even more important question – what kind of world do we want to build and what sort of world we will hand over to future generations. If we look at the problem from this point of view, then we will understand that if we want the world to be more predictable, more prognosticable, and then safer, it has to be *multipolar*, and all the participants of international intercourse have to abide by certain rules, namely, the rules of international law. *That's, strictly speaking, towards what all our efforts are being bent* – not towards shielding the Baghdad regime or making a screen for it....<sup>304</sup>

After his meeting with Chirac and Schroder, Putin declared his trip to Paris as “the first step toward a multipolar world.”<sup>305</sup> Even William Wohlforth concedes that Russia's “policy stance on Iraq was consistent with [its] low-cost ‘soft balancing’ approach of trying to use international institutions to dampen the effects of U.S. hegemony.”<sup>306</sup>

The Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations, Hamid Al-Bayati (2006-), also describes the Russian and French position on the Third Persian Gulf War as tantamount to soft balancing. He explains that:

Although there is no one dimension in politics, for you cannot say that Saddam invaded Kuwait for one reason, or that Hitler started the Second World War for one reason, or that Russia and France opposed the United States for one reason, I have noticed through my work at the UN that many times Russia opposes something on Iraq [including the 2003 invasion, but not limited to it] not because of the particulars but because they want to oppose the United States in general. France opposed the war for the same reason. France, Germany, and Russia wanted to form an alliance and balance against America, and Iraq gave them the perfect opportunity to do so.<sup>307</sup>

France and Russia were clearly the leaders of the soft balancing coalition that developed against the United States in 2002-3. Germany and China also attached themselves to this coalition, but their leaders were much less vociferous in their rhetoric and did not publicly frame their opposition in the language of multipolarity. Rather, Germany and China

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<sup>304</sup> “TF-1 Interview with Vladimir Putin”, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 February 2003, <http://www.iraqwatch.org/government/Russia/russia-mfa-putin-021103.htm>.

<sup>305</sup> “Iraq Declaration a Step toward a Multipolar World”, *Agence France Presse*, 12 February 2003.

<sup>306</sup> Wohlforth, “Russia's Soft Balancing Act”, p. 172.

<sup>307</sup> Interview with Hamid Al-Bayati, Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations (2006-), United Nations Secretariat, New York City, 30 July 2008.

more prudently couched their opposition to the US in terms of multilateralism and respect for international law. Schroder also had powerful domestic interests at stake, since the onset of the war coincided with the German elections. In fact, it is generally accepted that Schroder's fierce anti-Americanism tipped the scales in his favour during the election.<sup>308</sup> Nevertheless, Germany did follow in France's and Russia's footsteps at the Security Council and NATO even if they did it for less obstructionist reasons.

The same is true of China. The Chinese calculated that with France and Russia taking such a vehement position against the United States, they had no reason to further antagonise the US and potentially harm their extensive economic relations. This explains why China characteristically waited a day or two after major diplomatic declarations or initiatives were made before silently siding with the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis. Nevertheless, the Chinese President Jiang Zemin did meet with Putin during the six months of diplomatic negotiations at the Security Council and he recapitulated his commitment to multipolarisation.<sup>309</sup>

During the Third Gulf War India officially opposed the war and maintained its traditional non-aligned policy. Since India did not have a seat at the Security Council in the lead-up to the war, its official policy received less attention in the media. Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee explained his policy as "being critical, but not condemning" the US attack on Iraq.<sup>310</sup> India's National Security Advisor, Shivshankar Menon, who was India's Ambassador to China during the diplomatic crisis, explained that on the question of Iraq "Russia and India saw things almost instinctively," but he explains that enthusiasm for the rhetoric of the strategic triangle was already well on the wane.<sup>311</sup> India's position was thus essentially similar to China's position (albeit even more reticent): since France, Germany,

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<sup>308</sup> Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Gulf War".

<sup>309</sup> Ambrosio, "The Russo-American Dispute Over the Invasion of Iraq", p. 20.

<sup>310</sup> K Subrahmanyam, "Criticise, Not Condemn: India Must Tread Softly on Iraq War", *The Times of India*, 7 April 2003, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-04-07/edit-page/27275818\\_1\\_kashmir-issue-kashmir-dispute-india-and-pakistan](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-04-07/edit-page/27275818_1_kashmir-issue-kashmir-dispute-india-and-pakistan).

<sup>311</sup> Interview with Shivshankar Menon, National Security Advisor of India, Prime Minister's Office, New Delhi, 27 September 2012.

and Russia were already issuing vehement criticisms of the US, India concluded that there was no reason to needlessly antagonise the unipolar leader. Moreover, this change in tone is partly explained by the fact that US-Indian relations greatly improved under the Bush Administration when the US decided to gradually acquiesce to India's nuclear arsenal.<sup>312</sup>

Two major regional powers – Turkey and Saudi Arabia – also soft balanced against the United States by denying it the use of their territories as launching pads into Iraq. Turkey was an important case because the United States made repeated efforts to gain its cooperation. For instance, in January 2003 the Bush Administration asked Turkey to permit the deployment of 60,000 to 90,000 US ground troops on its soil. These ground troops were an integral component of the initial US pincer plan to invade Iraq from Turkey in the north and Kuwait in the South. Turkey refused, and the United States was forced to revise its military plans. Although the American invasion was ultimately successful, this Turkish obstructionism arguably made the operation more time-consuming and bloody.<sup>313</sup>

## 5.5 Assessment of the Theory of Tripartite Strategic Balancing and the Iraq Wars

The world responded to President Bush's challenge to the UN General Assembly in September 2002, but not in the way he hoped. Instead of bandwagoning with the unipolar leader, the second-tier great powers arguably found the new strategy or tactic that Vedrine was looking for in the late 1990s: *i.e.* they implemented the strategy of soft balancing. In particular, a soft balancing coalition of France, Russia, Germany, China, and (arguably) India emerged to oppose the United States' military policies in Iraq during the Third Gulf War of 2003. The Second Gulf War of 1991 witnessed a historic unity in the Security Council in

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<sup>312</sup> Harsh Pant, *Contemporary Debates in Indian Foreign and Security Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 20-21.

<sup>313</sup> Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States", *International Security*, vol. 30, no.1, Summer 2005, p. 35.

which all second-tier great powers either actively supported the US-led coalition to expunge Iraq from Kuwait – both diplomatically and militarily – or did not actively oppose it. Soon after the mission was completed, however, Russia, China, and India dropped out of the coalition and silently protested the creeping unilateralism that the US, Britain, and France were exhibiting by enforcing sanctions against Iraq. In the late 1990s France also dropped out of the coalition during Operation Desert Fox, and French and Russian leaders explicitly denounced American unipolarity at this time. After the September 11 attacks the United States articulated the Bush Doctrine of preventive war. The Bush Doctrine was met with widespread scepticism among both America's friends and enemies. The Franco-Russian axis was revived once again in the fall of 2002 when the Bush Administration began its diplomatic campaign to win Security Council authorisation to launch the Third Gulf War. This time Germany, China, and India also joined the ranks of the countercoalition, albeit not as vocally as their French and Russian allies.

How well does the theory of tripartite strategic balancing explain great power relations during the Third Gulf War? It is clear that the first two prongs of tripartite strategic balancing are of limited utility: there were no direct war-fighting military alliances created among the United States' opponents, and thus the traditional external form of balancing was discernibly absent. Moreover, as the third chapter on Kosovo illustrated, the United States' principal challengers generally scaled back the size of their military budgets in the decade of the 1990s, and thus internal balancing is also of limited use in explaining balance of power dynamics in the post-Cold War era. The one qualification that must be made involves the issue of arms transfers (this falls under the category of internal balancing): if the American charges are correct, then Russia technically did engage in hard balancing measures against the United States during this period. The US charged Russia with violating UN sanctions and supplying Iraq with night-vision goggles and sophisticated air defences

which were used against coalition forces in 2003. The transfer of military technology and equipment to the enemy of one's enemy is a traditional hard balancing tactic. Russia seems to have taken one step across the line which separates hard and soft balancing; nonetheless, it is apparent that an application of the third prong of tripartite balancing, *i.e.* soft balancing, is necessary in order to capture the comprehensive picture of balancing of power dynamics among the great powers with respect to the Iraqi question.

With respect to soft balancing, once again it is informative to analyse the case study in relation to the four indicators of soft balancing enumerated earlier: 1) territorial non-complicity, 2) entangling diplomacy, 3) economic strengthening, and 4) signals of resolve to balance.

Although none of the second-tier great powers soft balanced against the United States by denying the US military bases from which to launch attacks against Iraq, two major regional powers – Turkey and Saudi Arabia – did. On the second indicator, France, Russia, Germany, and China all engaged in entangling diplomacy at the UN by trying to bind Gulliver to international institutions and international law. France and Germany also used NATO, the EU, and other international forums to propagate its anti-war stance. As Andrew Hurrell notes, these soft balancing measures can have a strong effect on the unipolar leader's legitimacy – which is a vital component of the unipolar leader's overall power capabilities.<sup>314</sup> The third indicator is not directly applicable to this case study although economic regionalism in Europe and Asia was strengthened during this period.<sup>315</sup> Finally, there were many indications of great powers signalling their resolve to balance against the United States. France and Russia were particularly vocal in invoking a return to multipolarity, while the rest

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<sup>314</sup> Andrew Hurrell, "Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-be Great Powers?", *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1, 2006, pp. 15-16.

<sup>315</sup> Economic regionalism in the European Union and ASEAN was largely a byproduct of local forces rather than a desire to balance against the United States; however, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation does have an important implicit counterbalancing component to it, and a united EU may turn into a potential superpower with a capability to balance against the United States in the future.

of the great powers focused their statements on multilateralism and the primacy of the Security Council and international law.

The theory's hypothesis expected second-tier great powers to employ soft balancing measures against the United States, and that these soft balancing dynamics would be accentuated if the United States developed a reputation for belligerent intentions. During the Kosovo Crisis there were three soft balancers against the United States: Russia, China, and arguably India. Once the United States articulated a belligerent doctrine of preventive war and proceeded with implementing it in a region of geostrategic importance, the number of soft balancers increased: the original Russian and Chinese counterbalancing coalition was expanded to include France and Germany, while India – which no longer held a seat at the Security Council – adopted a milder position of “criticise, not condemn” the US-led coalition. In addition, several other important regional powers declined to cooperate fully with the United States in 2003, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Hence, it appears that the theory's expectations are confirmed by the evidence presented in the two case studies.

However, the Iraqi case study also illuminates important limitations of the theory offered in the third chapter. For instance, the theory cannot explain why Britain and Japan chose not to balance against the United States. Moreover, it cannot explain why France and Russia were so outspoken while Germany and China (and especially India) silently hid behind the Franco-Russian axis. A structural theory such as the one offered in the third chapter does not sufficiently account for these differences in states' foreign policies.

Finally, the theory offered in the third chapter does not capture the complete picture of every state's foreign policy goals or motivations. The sub-systemic levels of analysis in international relations – *i.e.* the state level of analysis and individual level of analysis – are needed to develop a more comprehensive and satisfactory understanding of the dynamics of great power politics in the post-Cold War era. For instance, there were numerous economic

reasons why Russia would resist an American attempt to subvert Saddam Hussein. Similarly, Schroder had personal electoral reasons to take an anti-war stance as a means to curry favour with an increasingly anti-American and anti-war German public. The next chapter introduces another level of analysis in international relations: regional security complexes.

**CHAPTER 6: THE REGIONAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS AND**  
**TRIPARTITE STRATEGIC BALANCING**

“There are regions in which Russia has privileged interests.”

- Dmitry Medvedev speaking after the August War, 2008

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing predicts that in an international system characterised by unipolarity, great powers will employ soft balancing measures against the unipolar leader. It also predicts that the soft balancing measure will intensify – perhaps even leading to limited hard balancing measures – if the unipolar leader develops a reputation for belligerent and unilateral military policies. However, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing may also be applied to a regional level of analysis. In a regional context, the theory offers the same predictions: that minor-regional powers will seek to soft balance the regional hegemon, and that the soft balancing measures will intensify, and perhaps slip into hard balancing, if the regional hegemon develops a reputation for belligerent and unilateral military policies.

The next three chapters seek to apply the theory of tripartite strategic balancing to a regional level of analysis. This chapter is divided into five main parts. The first outlines the regional level of analysis and Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver’s regional security complex theory, which forms the backbone of the regional framework employed in this chapter. The strengths and weaknesses of Buzan and Weaver’s framework are discussed in the second part, and the third part examines how the regional framework or level of analysis adopted in this dissertation differs from Buzan and Weaver’s framework. In particular, this section attempts to combine the regional level of analysis with the theory of tripartite strategic balancing, and in doing so, it will become apparent that a third independent variable – geographical proximity – is added to the theoretical equation. Fourthly, the regional level of

analysis of the “European Near Abroad” is introduced and justified, and the fifth section enumerates some theoretical implications of adding a regional level of analysis into the equation. This chapter ultimately seeks to unify insights from geopolitics and tripartite strategic balancing theory. The next two chapters will test the theory of tripartite strategic balancing at the regional level of analysis in the European Near Abroad.

## **6.1 The Fourth Level of Analysis: Buzan and Weaver’s Regional Security Complex Theory**

It is commonplace to analyse international political outcomes through “levels of analysis.” The original three levels of analysis, or “images of international politics,” were first articulated by Kenneth Waltz in his groundbreaking *Man, the State and War*. Waltz asserts therein that the causes of war are to be found within the system of states (international system), within the internal structure of states, and within the motivations of key individuals.<sup>316</sup> While he would later revise this position in his more famous *Theory of International Politics*, he asserted that some combination of these three images is required for the most accurate understanding of the causes of war.<sup>317</sup>

The first level of analysis – or what Waltz termed “the third image” - is the systemic level, and it maintains that states are essentially similar, unitary actors and that the system is defined by its polarity. Systemic-level theories are “outside-in” arguments because they contend that the source of a state’s foreign policy is found in the distribution of power among states and international anarchy.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 12.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>318</sup> Steven Spiegel *et al.*, *World Politics in a New Era*, 3rd edn. (Toronto: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2004), p. 53.

On the other hand, state-level theories, which form the second “image” or level of analysis, are “inside-out” arguments because they contend that the source of a state’s foreign policy is found in various domestic political, economic, bureaucratic, socio-cultural, and historical factors.<sup>319</sup> Both of these first two approaches hold that a decision-maker’s foreign policy choices are shaped by either the international system or domestic forces within the state; and while proponents of both approaches do not claim that their theories always predict the decisions that are made by individuals, they nevertheless point out that systemic and sub-systemic forces operate over leaders’ heads and constrain the range of options available to them.<sup>320</sup> Nonetheless, despite these constraints, powerful individuals always have some independent influence over the foreign policy decisions that are made.

The third level of analysis, the individual level (which originally formed part of Waltz’s first image of international relations), posits that the source of a state’s foreign policy is found in the nature and behaviour of man. Waltz originally wrote in 1959 that “wars result from selfishness, from misdirected aggressive impulses, from stupidity. Other causes are secondary and have to be interpreted in light of these factors.”<sup>321</sup> He would significantly revise this in his subsequent writings.

In *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver proposed viewing international political outcomes through a fourth level of analysis: regional systems. They propounded the thesis that since the end of the Cold War security dynamics at the regional level of analysis have become more autonomous and more prominent in international politics. This relative autonomy of regional security dynamics is fundamentally different from the bipolarity of the Cold War, where every region was viewed through the lens of the superpower rivalry. Buzan and Weaver argue that characterising the

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. p. 72.

<sup>321</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 16.

new world order as either unipolar, multipolar, or globalist is inadequate at describing the new security architecture. Rather, it is better explained through their “regional security complex theory.”<sup>322</sup>

Regional security complex theory distinguishes between the global or international level of analysis, which is defined primarily by the security dynamics between the unipolar leader and the great powers, and the sub-systemic regional level of analysis, which is marked by the security dynamics of local actors. The main idea is that since threats travel more easily over shorter distances than longer ones, security dynamics are normally patterned on regionally-based clusters – or in the authors’ words, “security complexes.” Processes of “securitisation” and the degree of security interdependence are more concentrated between states within regional clusters than they are between states outside of them. Although security complexes may be influenced by outside great powers – a process termed “penetration” – the regional security complexes have an autonomous dynamic of their own, and thus they are important in developing a comprehensive understanding of the security dynamics in the post-Cold War international system.<sup>323</sup>

Buzan and Weaver’s regional approach combines elements of what they term the “neorealist and the globalist perspectives.” The former focuses on all the traditional state-centric aspects of international politics, including polarity, distribution of capabilities, and balance of power. The latter, on the other hand, is described as the “antithesis” of neorealism: it removes the state from centre stage in world politics, making room for non-state actors such as corporations and social classes of various kinds, and it promotes a “deterritorialised notion of security.”<sup>324</sup> The authors’ theory thus mixes both of these materialist and constructivist approaches in their regional security complex theory. For

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<sup>322</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 3-4.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid, pp. 6-14.

instance, they use materialist concepts of polarity, the distribution of capabilities, and bounded territoriality, but at the same time, they employ the constructivist concept of “securitisation.” In contrast to neorealism’s materialist elements, this is a constructed element because it is defined as a process that examines the way in which security issues become socially constituted as threats. Therefore, in Buzan and Weaver’s analysis, not only is the Waltzian distribution of capabilities treated as an independent variable, but so are the Wendtian social patterns of amity and enmity.

Buzan and Weaver have retained the patterns of amity and enmity in their analyses because “these patterns are allocated a historically derived reality of their own as the socially constructed dimension of structure.”<sup>325</sup> In other words, once structure is perceived as having social and historical (rather than merely materialist) elements, the utility of the amity-enmity variables becomes abundantly clear.<sup>326</sup> In *Social Theory of International Politics*, Alexander Wendt developed a similar but more differentiated scheme than the simple dyad of friend or enemy. In fact, Wendt explained that there are three types of roles actors may hold in relation to each other under the conditions of anarchy: enemy, rival, or friend. These three roles roughly correspond to conditions in the Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian states of nature, respectively. Moreover, the social structure of anarchy is also characterised by the degree to which these roles have been internalised by the actors themselves: *i.e.* by coercion (external force), by interest (calculations of gain and loss), or by a belief in their legitimacy (understandings of right and wrong).<sup>327</sup> This is largely what Wendt had in mind when he famously declared that “anarchy is what states make of it.”<sup>328</sup> The regional framework

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid, p.50.

<sup>326</sup> For a treatment of the social and historical element of structure see: Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>327</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 247.

<sup>328</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics”, *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 391-425.

developed in this thesis will build upon Buzan and Weaver's regional security complex theory.

## 6.2 Assessment of Regional Security Complex Theory

Buzan and Weaver's regional security complex theory is innovative and insightful. It is also very comprehensive. Comprehensiveness, however, is a double-edged sword in international relations theory building: it has its virtues and vices.

Buzan and Weaver attempt to accommodate the globalist perspective in international relations which focuses on a range of explanatory factors such as: non-state actors, globalisation, decolonisation, the market economy, core-periphery relations, and pre-modern, modern and post-modern states.<sup>329</sup> The virtue of this model is that it is rich in its descriptive accuracy of international political outcomes. With its emphasis on a variety of explanatory factors, it presents a relatively complete and complex picture of the phenomena of international relations. In short, all of these myriad factors have an influence in shaping international political outcomes to a degree, and thus if an analyst is seeking a model which is rich in descriptive accuracy, Buzan and Weaver's regional security complex theory is very useful.

However, if an analyst is seeking explanatory power or predictive power in a theoretical model, then Buzan and Weaver's regional security complex theory may just be too "complex." This is because explanatory and predictive power is gained as one moves away from reality.<sup>330</sup> The difficulty with comprehensive international relations theories is that they threaten to extend theory to a breaking point. In particular, it cannot be ascertained which of

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<sup>329</sup> Buzan and Weaver, *Regions and Powers*, chapter 1.

<sup>330</sup> For a classic statement on the virtues of descriptive accuracy versus explanatory power, see David Singer, "The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations", *World Politics*, vol. 14, no. 1, October 1961, pp. 77-92; and Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*.

these explanatory factors is most important, *i.e.* which factor carries the majority of the explanatory power, and which ones, if any, are merely secondary or subsidiary variables and may be dropped out of the analysis.

A final complication with this type of analysis is that it is difficult to operationalise these factors and test them accordingly. For instance, there is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes a “democratic state,” let alone what the authors refer to as “pre-modern, modern, and post-modern states.”<sup>331</sup> It is also very difficult to quantify the casual impact that general forces such as globalisation and the market economy have on the foreign policies of states. These definitional ambiguities make theory building and testing difficult. The regional framework developed in this thesis will build upon the foundation of Buzan and Weaver’s regional security complex theory, but it will attempt to ameliorate these difficulties.

### **6.3 Tripartite Strategic Balancing at the Regional Level of Analysis**

This section seeks to build upon the theory of tripartite strategic balancing articulated in the third chapter by adapting it to a regional level of analysis. In brief, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing applies wherever three, and only three, requirements are met: 1) the international system is anarchic; 2) it is populated by units (states) seeking to survive; and 3) the distribution of capabilities is characterised by unipolarity.<sup>332</sup> It predicts two related international political outcomes which serve as hypotheses: 1) that a soft balancing coalition of great powers will form against the unipolar leader; and 2) that this soft balancing coalition

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<sup>331</sup> For a classic discussion of the difficulties of defining a democracy in the context of the democratic peace thesis see Michael Brown *et al.*, eds, *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996).

<sup>332</sup> In a similar vein, Kenneth Waltz famously proclaimed that “balance-of-power politics prevail wherever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive.” The theory of tripartite strategic balancing seeks to reformulate this aspect of neorealism to suit the conditions of unipolarity. See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), p. 121.

will solidify (perhaps slipping into hard balancing) if the unipolar leader develops a penchant for aggressive and unilateral military policies. Therefore, the two independent variables of tripartite strategic balancing in unipolar international systems are 1) the distribution of capabilities and 2) perceived intentions.

Although the theory of tripartite strategic balancing as articulated in the third chapter operates at the level of the international system as a whole, it may be adopted into a regional level of analysis. There are various theoretical consequences when the theory is applied to the regional context.

The regional level of analysis is a theoretical abstraction of part of the international system. The regional framework or level of analysis revolves around the idea of regional security complexes. Buzan and Weaver define a regional security complex in Bullian terms as “a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another.”<sup>333</sup> For the purposes of tripartite strategic balancing, what is essential is the idea that a regional security complex is a group of states with a high degree of security interdependence.

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing may apply to the regional level of analysis or regional security complexes when the region is characterised by regional unipolarity or hegemony. This occurs when one regional actor has so much aggregated capabilities that even if all the other regional actors coalesced to form a hard balancing coalition against it, the coalition would still not be able to match the capabilities of the regional hegemon. Such a local balancing enterprise, even if it were tried, would be inherently unstable and dangerous. The regional hard balancing coalition would be unstable because it would not be able to match the capabilities of the regional hegemon, and consequently it would quickly dissipate.

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<sup>333</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Ryder Publishing, 1998), p. 201.

The regional hegemon could employ divide-and-rule tactics to quickly tear the coalition asunder, and many of the weakest states with nothing to add to the coalition might be tempted to bandwagon with the regional hegemon. It would also be a dangerous strategy because it could incur the wrath of the regional hegemon: the regional leader might be tempted to employ its superior military might against a member of the coalition as a means to punish it or compel it to follow a certain course; this *tour de force* might be designed to send a message of deterrence to other would-be hard balancers. Consequently, soft balancing may be the only prudent balancing strategy available to these states.

There is, however, another type of balancing strategy available to regional states attempting to survive in a regional security complex characterised by a regional hegemon: offshore balancing. This balancing strategy involves a minor-regional power inviting (or acquiescing to) a great power from another region to enter the security dynamics of its region and balance against a rising regional hegemon. John Mearsheimer argues that the United Kingdom has employed this strategy throughout history to prevent regional hegemonies from forming in Europe. He also argues that the United States mimicked this strategy once its buck-passing options failed and it needed to prevent regional hegemonies from arising in Europe and Northeast Asia.<sup>334</sup>

Although in reality this type of balancing strategy is always an option for minor-regional powers, for the purpose of analytical clarity it is important (at first) to bracket out outside intervention and concentrate on regional security dynamics. The regional level of

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<sup>334</sup> Mearsheimer argues balancing and buck-passing are the two main strategies great powers employ to prevent rivals from upsetting the balance of power. Balancing, according to Mearsheimer, involves states making a commitment to “shoulder the burden of deterring, or fighting if need be, the aggressor.” Buck-passing, on the other hand, is where states “try to get another great power to check the aggressor while they remain on the sidelines.” Mearsheimer argues that states will usually prefer the buck-passing option because the buck-passers avoid the costs of fighting the aggressor in the event of war. Nonetheless, buck-passing should not be considered a vastly different alternative from balancing because its ultimate objective is the same: to balance against a potential hegemon. It is a form of balancing-on-the cheap: if a state can manage to marshal the capabilities of its allies and avoid running the risks of incurring the hegemon’s wrath, then it is an attractive strategy. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 139-167.

analysis is artificial in this sense: it boxes out a certain section of the international system and it examines the security dynamics between the states within that region. Once these are examined, however, it then becomes insightful to examine what Buzan and Weaver refer to as penetration: “this occurs when outside powers make security alignment with states in a regional security complex.”<sup>335</sup>

Penetration is what links the global level of analysis with the regional level of analysis. For instance, an indigenous regional rivalry between India and Pakistan in the South Asian subcomplex invites opportunities for great powers to intervene in the region and choose sides. This is largely what occurred during the Cold War when the Soviet Union tilted towards India and the United States tilted towards Pakistan. A similar pattern is discernible in the Persian Gulf subcomplex during the Cold War: the Soviet Union tilted towards Iraq and the United States tilted towards Iran.

Another instance where the international and regional level of analysis may overlap is when one side views a particular confrontation through the lens of one level of analysis, whereas the other side views it through a different level of analysis. As the next chapter will demonstrate, this is largely what occurred during the Russo-Georgian War of 2008: the Russian Federation viewed the confrontation as further evidence that the United States was expanding its global unipolarity into areas which were traditionally in Russia’s sphere of influence; whereas the Georgian side viewed the war as an attempt to resist increasing Russian regional hegemonisation. One purpose of the regional framework, however, is to combat this tendency to see entire regions through the lens of great power rivalry at the global level. Consequently, the analysis adopted in this thesis will examine the regional dynamics of the European Near Abroad first, and then it will analyse relevant elements of penetration.

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<sup>335</sup> Buzan and Weaver, *Regions and Powers*, pp. 46-47.

When this theoretical abstraction of part of the international system is added to the theory of tripartite strategic balancing, a number of theoretical implications arise. Most strikingly, it adds a geopolitical element into the theoretical equation in the form of a third independent variable. This geopolitical element leads to the following theoretical expectation or hypothesis: 3) the closer a minor-regional power is to the regional hegemon, the more likely it is to employ soft balancing measures against it.

This geopolitical expectation is derived from Stephen Walt's classical exposition on *The Origins of Alliances*. Walt argued that "because the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away."<sup>336</sup> In other words, states are primarily concerned about the security dynamics of their close neighbours.

Arguably the most prominent (or notorious) insight from the study of geopolitics is captured by the ancient Arab proverb that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." The Chinese have a similar proverb which is often attributed to Sun Tzu's masterful treatise on *The Art of War*. A variation on this proverb is captured by the idea that "the neighbour of my neighbour is my friend." The proclivity of states to align with their neighbour's neighbour was first described by the ancient Indian strategist, Kautilya, in the fourth century:

The king who is situated anywhere immediately on the circumference of the conqueror's territory is termed the enemy. The king who is likewise situated close to the enemy, but separated from the conqueror only by the enemy, is termed the friend (of the conqueror)...In front of the conqueror and close to the enemy, there happen to be situated kings such as the conqueror's friend, next to him the enemy's friend, and next to the last, the conqueror's friend, and next, the enemy's friend's friend.<sup>337</sup>

This strategic behaviour creates a network of alliances which resemble red and black checkerboards. Diplomatic history is replete with examples of this pattern. For instance, during the interwar period, France created a network of alliances with Poland and the Little

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<sup>336</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp 23-24.

<sup>337</sup> See Kautilya, "Arthashastra", in *Balance of Power*, ed. Paul A. Seabury (San Francisco: 1965), p. 8.

Entente (Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia) to encircle Germany.<sup>338</sup> Germany, for its part, responded by aligning with the Soviet Union and partitioning Poland for the fourth time in the past two centuries. More strikingly, during the late 1970s and 1980s the strategic map of Asia generally resembled a black and red checkerboard: the red side, led by the Soviet Union, included Vietnam and India, whereas the black side, led by China, included Cambodia and Pakistan. The Middle East of the 1980s included Iran and Syria on one side, Iraq and its Gulf-area allies on the other.

This geopolitical insight should not be overestimated, however, as one could undoubtedly find just as many examples where the pattern of international alignments did not fit a checkerboard pattern. But its chief virtue lies in its simplicity: it seeks to explain so much, with so little. It also provides simple theoretical predictions: neighbours will be more likely to balance each other, and a neighbour's neighbours are likely to be partners in balancing the state they encircle. This theoretical parsimony is commendable and stands in stark contrast to Buzan and Weaver's globalist perspective articulated above. It also involves strictly material (or more precisely spatial) aspects of a particular state's capabilities, and thus it is much easier to define, operationalise, and test than other ideational aspects.

It is important to note that this geographical element is not considered an independent variable in the international level of analysis characterised by unipolarity. Geography is not a major factor in the analysis because the unipolar leader has, by definition, the wherewithal to project its military capabilities to any region of the globe. Thus, for all practical purposes, the unipolar leader may be considered as a neighbour to all, since it can credibly threaten any state irrespective of its geographical position. Furthermore, it is important to note that in the international level of analysis, security dynamics are determined largely by the interactions of the great powers. Hence, minor-regional powers do not matter as much in the analysis.

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<sup>338</sup> In fact, Hitler was reported to castigate Czechoslovakia as a "French aircraft carrier in the middle of Europe." See Malcolm Pearce and Geoffrey Stewart, *British Political History, 1867-2001: Democracy and Decline*, 3rd edn. (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 320.

Great powers are characterised not only by their greater capabilities but also by the fact that they define their security interests more widely: *i.e.* at the international level of analysis rather than strictly at a regional level of analysis. Minor-regional powers, by contrast, define their security interests primarily from their regional security complex.

Another major difference between Buzan and Weaver's regional security complex theory and the regional framework developed in this thesis involves the "constructivist" explanatory variable. The authors use two independent variables: polarity and the omnibus Wendtian term "patterns of amity and enmity:"

Historical hatreds and friendships, as well as specific issues that trigger conflict or cooperation, take part in the formation of an overall constellation of fears, threats, and friendships that define a regional security complex. The patterns of amity and enmity are influenced by various background factors such as history, culture, religion, and geography, but to a large extent they are path-dependent and thus become their own best explanation.<sup>339</sup>

It is thus clear that the "patterns of amity and enmity" variable includes nearly everything under the sun: historical hatreds and friendships, cultures, religions, and geography. Once again, although international political outcomes at the regional level of analysis are undoubtedly influenced by some or all of these factors to a certain extent, it is not clear which variable is the most important. It is also not clear how the variable can be measured, quantified, and operationalised: it is difficult to adequately measure an emotion such as a historical hatred. Furthermore, combining such disparate elements as historical hatreds and geography into one variable is obfuscating. Although the omnibus variable may provide a descriptively rich analysis of the phenomena under examination, its explanatory and predictive powers are significantly limited.

It is more analytically illuminating to separate these concepts into separate variables. Accordingly, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing applied to the regional level of analysis has three independent variables: distribution of capabilities, geographical proximity,

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<sup>339</sup> Buzan and Weaver, *Regions and Powers*, p. 50.

and perceived intentions. The former two variables are materialist factors which are relatively easy to measure and test. The latter is the “constructivist” variable, similar to Buzan and Weaver’s “patterns of amity and enmity.” However, it differs in the way it is measured: *i.e.* a state is perceived to harbour belligerent intentions if it pursues aggressive and unilateral military policies. The best indicator for this is whether the state’s foreign and military policies are approved by the UN Security Council and legal under international law. This makes the variable of “perceived intentions” easier to operationalise and test than the protean concept of “patterns of amity and enmity.” It also makes the variable more theoretically parsimonious.

The regional framework also assumes that minor regional actors will be primarily concerned with the security dynamics within their region, causing them to fear and soft balance against any aspiring regional hegemon. On the other hand, an aspiring regional hegemon, which may also be a second-tier great power at the international level of analysis, will tend to be concerned primarily with the security dynamics at the international level of analysis and view developments in the region through this wider international lens.

In sum, the theory of tripartite balancing applied in a regional framework has three independent variables which lead to three theoretical expectations or hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that under the conditions of regional hegemony, minor-regional powers will form a soft balancing coalition against the regional hegemon. Secondly, if the regional hegemon develops a reputation for belligerent intentions, as measured by aggressive, illegal, and unilateral military policies, then the regional soft balancing coalition against it should be expected to ossify, perhaps even slipping into hard balancing. And thirdly, states that are geographically closer to the regional hegemon are more likely to employ soft balancing measures against it.

#### 6.4 Walt's Three Conditions that Favour Bandwagoning over Balancing

Although the theory of tripartite strategic balancing expects balancing behaviour to be a lot more common than bandwagoning, it is nevertheless appropriate to consider some of the conditions which may make “bandwagoning” more likely.

“Bandwagoning” is a term which first entered the international relations lexicon in Quincy Wright’s *A Study of War* in 1946 and it was subsequently popularised by Kenneth’s Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*.<sup>340</sup> Both Wright and Waltz refer to bandwagoning as the opposite of balancing, or what Wright referred to as the “underdog policy.” While balancing refers to joining the weaker side or coalition, bandwagoning refers to joining the stronger side or coalition. Stephen Walt defines balancing as “allying with others against the prevailing threat” and bandwagoning as “alignment with the source of the danger.”<sup>341</sup> Some leading realists, such as Randall Schweller and William Wohlforth have questioned the traditional preoccupation with balancing and suggest that bandwagoning is a lot more common than realists have maintained.<sup>342</sup>

There are two main motivations for bandwagoning. First, bandwagoning may be a form of appeasement. Instead of resisting the dominant power, the threatened state could realign its foreign policy to serve the interests of the threatening state, with the ultimate hope that this will delay or deflect the source of the danger.<sup>343</sup> John Mearsheimer calls appeasement an ambitious, and ultimately disastrous, strategy which violates balance of

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<sup>340</sup> Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946); Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>341</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 17.

<sup>342</sup> In particular, Randall Schweller argues that the problem with Walt’s definition of bandwagoning is threefold: “(1) it confuses bandwagoning with strategic surrender, (2) defies conventional usage and the common meaning of the term, and (3) by viewing bandwagoning solely as a response to threat, ignores the primary motivation for bandwagoning, namely, the expectation of profit and easy gains.” See Randall L. Schweller, “New Realist Research on Alliances: Refining, not Refuting, Waltz’s Balancing Proposition”, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 91, no. 4, December 1997, pp. 927-930; and William Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World”, *International Security*, vol. 24, no. 1, Summer 1999, pp. 5-41.

<sup>343</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), pp. 183-187.

power logic: it “aims to modify the behaviour of the aggressor by conceding it power, in the hope that this gesture will make the aggressor feel more secure, thus dampening or eliminating its motive for aggression...it is likely to whet, not shrink, an aggressor’s appetite for conquest.”<sup>344</sup>

Arguably the most notorious historical illustration of the perils of appeasement and bandwagoning concerned the Allied response to German designs on Czechoslovakia in 1938. The ultimate consequences of the so-called Munich Agreement are well-documented in the international relations literature, but a lesser known fact concerned Poland’s misguided bandwagoning with Germany. On 30 September 1938, the day the Munich Agreement was signed by the leaders of Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom, Poland delivered an ultimatum to Czechoslovakia demanding the annexation of the Zaolzie region along their mutual border. Czechoslovakia had no choice but to comply. The result was a diplomatic coup for Germany (and a corresponding diplomatic disaster for Poland): Germany was able to spread the blame regarding the partitioning of Czechoslovakia, further confusing the Allies regarding Germany’s intentions, and Poland was made to look like a Nazi stooge.<sup>345</sup> Most tragically, exactly eleven months later, Poland shared the fate of its southern neighbour. Bandwagoning did not pay.

The second main motivation for bandwagoning is to share in the spoils of victory. Waltz explains that “in a competition for the position of leader, bandwagoning is sensible behaviour where gains are possible even for the losers and where losing does not place their security in jeopardy.”<sup>346</sup> The classic example of this type of behaviour occurs just in the moment of victory. For instance, Italy’s declaration of war on France in June 1940 – which Franklin D. Roosevelt described as a dagger in the back of a neighbour – illustrates this type

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<sup>344</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 139, 164.

<sup>345</sup> Richard M. Watt, *Bitter Glory: Poland and its Fate 1918-1939* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1998).

<sup>346</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 126.

of bandwagoning well.<sup>347</sup> Other notable examples include the Bulgarian and Romanian foreign policy orientations during the Second World War, which swung like a pendulum following the changing fortunes of war: first tilting towards the Axis in 1940-41 and then towards the Allies in 1944.<sup>348</sup>

Perhaps most famously, Stalin's non-aggression pact with Hitler illustrates both bandwagoning motives at play: the Nazi-Soviet Pact carved up Poland and the Baltic States and arguably deflected Hitler's attention towards the West. The Soviet Union's bandwagoning with Germany bought it both time and territory, but these assets were soon squandered by Stalin.<sup>349</sup>

However, outside of unipolar or hegemonic systems bandwagoning behaviour has been historically rare, and as the above examples demonstrate, it often does not end well for the bandwagoner.<sup>350</sup> It is also usually confined to weak and isolated states. Kenneth Waltz explained that weaker states, "if they are free to choose, flock to the weaker side; for it is the stronger side that threatens them."<sup>351</sup> In a similar vein, Stephen Walt explains that the reason why bandwagoning is historically rare and confined to weak states is simple:

The decision to bandwagon requires the weaker side to put its fate in the hands of a more powerful state whom they suspect (usually with good reason) of harbouring

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<sup>347</sup> Italy's choice of alliance partners during the First World War also reflects this type of logic. See A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>348</sup> Sidney Lowery, "Rumunia" and "Bulgaria", in Arnold Toynbee and Veronica M. Toynbee, eds., *Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946: The Initial Triumph of the Axis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 285-90, 301-306.

<sup>349</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 21.

<sup>350</sup> For an insightful work which seeks to argue that unipolarity is not as historically uncommon as most realists suppose, see Stuart Kaufman, Richard Little, and William Wohlforth, eds., *The Balance of Power in World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). The authors do not necessarily argue that states prefer bandwagoning to balancing, but they do trace numerous historical instances when balancing strategies fail to prevent the rise of regional hegemonies. For another critical analysis of the role of balance of power in history see Paul W. Schroeder, "The Nineteenth Century System: Balance of Power or Political Equilibrium?", *Review of International Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1989, pp. 135-153; and Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>351</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 127. Waltz is frequently criticised for failing to recognise situations where balancing behaviour may fail and where bi- or multi-polar systems give way to unipolarity or hegemony. See Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations: Metaphors, Myths and Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 268; and Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

hostile intentions. By bandwagoning *with* the main source of danger, a threatened state in effect makes a potential adversary stronger, while hoping that its appetite is either sated or diverted.<sup>352</sup>

Furthermore, “because perceptions are unreliable and intentions can change, it is safer to balance against potential threats than to rely on the hope that a state will remain benevolently disposed.”<sup>353</sup> John Mearsheimer calls it a strategy for the weak: it is based on the assumption that “if a state is badly outgunned by a rival, it makes no sense to resist its demands, because that adversary will take what it wants by force anyway and inflict considerable punishment in the process.”<sup>354</sup> It is a strategy which is rarely employed by great powers because they have, by definition, the military wherewithal to put up a good fight with other great powers when their vital interests are at stake.

Despite the general proclivity for balancing over bandwagoning in international relations – especially among the great powers – it is nonetheless possible to specify the conditions which make bandwagoning more likely. Stephen Walt specifies three factors which affect the relative propensity for states to bandwagon.<sup>355</sup> The first condition involves relative capabilities: in general, the weaker the state, the more likely it is to bandwagon rather than balance. This is because a weak state usually adds little to the relative capabilities of either side and thus it does not greatly affect the ultimate outcome of the balancing operation. However, the weak state may nevertheless incur the wrath of the hegemon, so it has an added incentive to bandwagon. Stronger states, on the contrary, may tip the balance by turning a losing coalition into a winning one, and their decisive contribution may often be rewarded handsomely when the spoils are distributed.

Weak states, such as minor-regional powers, are more likely to be concerned primarily with events in their immediate vicinity: in other words, their security interests are

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<sup>352</sup> Walt, *Taming American Power*, p. 183.

<sup>353</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 29.

<sup>354</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 163.

<sup>355</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 29-32.

defined at the regional level of analysis and they have less of a concern with the power configurations at the international level of analysis. This adds an extra impetus for states to bandwagon with a great power. Most importantly, weak states may bandwagon with a great power at the international level as a means to balance against a potential hegemonic actor at its regional level of analysis. This is the essence of regional balancing.<sup>356</sup>

The second condition under which states will be tempted to bandwagon rather than balance involves a situation in which allies are not readily available.<sup>357</sup> As Walt points out, this proposition is not tautological because states under these circumstances always have the option to internally balance. Therefore it is necessary to have an effective system of diplomatic communication and signalling so that potential allies could realise their common interests and coordinate their policies. In fact, it has been suggested that one reason for Rome's lasting hegemony over Europe involved the lack of an effective system of diplomatic communication and coordination among her enemies in the ancient world. Once a workable diplomatic system of communication was established in Europe during the Renaissance, a durable European hegemony became impossible.<sup>358</sup>

Although states which believe there is little possibility of outside assistance to their cause will face a greater incentive to bandwagon rather than balance, an overconfidence of allied support may also discourage balancing in favour of buck-passing: if a state is certain that its partners will provide crucial military support in a moment of crisis, it will be more likely to free-ride and permit others to pay the costs of balancing. This leads to the ironic conclusion that balancing is most effective not only when there is a workable system of

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid, pp. 29-30. For regional balancing, see Walt, *Taming American Power*, pp. 187-191.

<sup>357</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>358</sup> Edward V. Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955), p. 16; Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 3rd edn. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), chapters 5 and 7.

diplomatic communication, but also when coalition members are not ultimately convinced that their allies are perfectly faithful.<sup>359</sup>

Stephen Walt explains that these two factors – the relative weakness of states and the availability (or lack thereof) of allies – helps explain the formation of spheres of influence around great powers. Small and weak neighbours of the great powers will be relatively more likely to bandwagon because they: 1) will likely be the first victims of expansion; 2) they lack the capabilities to defend themselves alone; and 3) at best, a defensive military alliance may function too slowly to defend them, or at worst, the allied cavalry might not even come over the hill.<sup>360</sup> For instance, although it was not bandwagoning *per se*, Belgium's policy of neutrality after the First World War demonstrates a commitment to this type of logic: King Leopold maintained that "an alliance, even if purely defensive, does not lead to the goal [of security] for no matter how prompt the help of an ally might be, it would not come until after the invader's attack which will be overwhelming."<sup>361</sup>

The third condition which affects a state's proclivity to balance or bandwagon involves the context within which alliance choices are made: *i.e.* states are more likely to balance in peacetime or in the early stages of war, but once a particular result appears inevitable, states become tempted to defect to the winning side. Bulgaria and Romania's defection from Nazi Germany in 1944 serves as an appropriate example.<sup>362</sup>

However, the general inclination to balance usually resumes the moment peace is restored. History is replete with examples of victorious alliances disintegrating once a common enemy is defeated: Austria and Prussia after their war with Denmark in 1864, Britain and France after the First World War, the United States and the Soviet Union after the Second World War, and China and Vietnam after the American War in Vietnam. As Walt

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<sup>359</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>361</sup> Quoted in Robert Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 111-112.

<sup>362</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 31-32.

concludes, “this recurring pattern provides further support for the proposition that balancing is the dominant tendency in international politics and bandwagoning is the opportunistic exception.”<sup>363</sup>

On a final note, there are two more circumstances in which a state may prefer bandwagoning over balancing which are not considered in Walt’s leading work on alliances. First, a state may feel compelled to bandwagon with a stronger state if it faces threats from several fronts simultaneously, and it does not have the capabilities to check all of them concurrently. In this condition, the threatened state may prioritise between the threats, balancing against the greater threat, and bandwagoning with the lesser one. This logic partly explains the British strategy of accommodating rising American power (and ultimate hegemony) in the Western Hemisphere in the early twentieth century: the United Kingdom arguably faced a greater existential and more proximate threat in Europe with a rising Germany, and it was compelled to gradually acquiesce to American preponderance through its lack of capacity to deal with both threats simultaneously.<sup>364</sup>

Secondly, states may also choose to bandwagon with the source of the threat as a short-term expedient to buy time and mobilise greater capabilities to balance in the future. This strategy only makes sense if the bandwagoning state has superior latent power which could be mobilised against the source of the threat. Arguably the best examples of this include the United Kingdom’s appeasement of Germany during the Munich Conference and the Soviet Union’s non-aggression pact with Germany. Both British and Soviet leaders believed that their countries were not prepared for a war with Germany in 1938-39, and that the balance of power (*i.e.* the balance of military capabilities) would eventually shift in their favour over time. Both sides were ultimately mistaken, as the balance shifted even further

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>364</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 164-165.

against the British and Soviets after Germany's brilliant campaigns in 1939-41, demonstrating yet again that bandwagoning is a dangerous strategy.<sup>365</sup>

## 6.5 Regional Security Complex: The European Near Abroad

The final section of this chapter will introduce the regional security complex of the "European Near Abroad." In *Regions and Powers*, Buzan and Weaver provide several examples of regional security complexes and subcomplexes. For instance, the Middle East is defined as a regional security complex. Within the Middle East there are three subcomplexes: the Gulf subcomplex (Iran, Iraq, Gulf States), the Levant subcomplex (Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan), and the Maghreb subcomplex (Morocco, Algeria, Libya). Table 6.1 enumerates which states fall within this regional security complex, including its various subcomplexes.

**Table 6.1: European Near Abroad Regional Security Supercomplex and Subcomplexes**

| Regional Security Complex            | List of Member States  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| European Near Abroad Supercomplex    | <i>The supercomplex encompasses all the states listed below (excluding the Central Asian subcomplex)</i> |
| European Frontline States Subcomplex | Finland, Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria                                     |
| Baltic Subcomplex                    | Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania   |
| New Eastern European Subcomplex      | Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova  |

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Visegrad Subcomplex       | Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary                       |
| Transcaucasian Subcomplex | Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan                                    |
| Central Asian Subcomplex  | Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan,<br>Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan |

This thesis introduces the regional supercomplex of the “European Near Abroad.” This may be thought of as a component part of an even greater “European” supercomplex which includes the remaining states in Western Europe. The European Near Abroad security complex is an amalgamation of the former Soviet Union’s republics and satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe. This region has significant overlaps with regions variously described by other authors as the “post-Soviet space,” “post-Communist space,” “new Eastern Europe,” or the “Commonwealth of Independent States.” The European Near Abroad is to be preferred, however, because it links the former Soviet republics and satellite states in Europe and excludes the Central Asian states. Treating these states as members of a common regional security complex has a myriad of geographical, strategic, historical, and cultural justifications. These justifications will become apparent below, but first it is appropriate to discuss the provenance of the term “Near Abroad.”

The Russian term for “Near Abroad” (ближнее зарубежье, *blizhneye zarubezhye*) is a post-communist term used to connote the newly independent republics which emerged in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The exact origin of the term is unclear because of the various transliterations used from Russian into English.<sup>366</sup> For instance, on 15 January 1992 *Izvestiya* cited a concept of “an abroad close at home,” on 9

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<sup>366</sup> William Safire, “On Language: The Near Abroad”, *The New York Times*, 22 May 1994, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/22/magazine/on-language-the-near-abroad.html>.

April 1992 *Tass* used the term “abroad close at hand,” and three days later the Moscow Television Network reported on “countries not far abroad.” Later that month *Interfax* described “the emergence of a new geopolitical entity, which is often referred to as the Near Foreign Countries.” One of the earliest usages of the actual term “Near Abroad” can be traced to a 9 June 1992 article in *The Russian Press Digest* entitled “Near Abroad Wants to Be Far.”<sup>367</sup>

Although there is some lack of clarity regarding when the concept actually entered the diplomatic lexicon of elites in Russia, it is widely understood that the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev (1991-1996) popularised the term. He is reported to have used the term as early as 20 August 1992. By 7 December 1992 Strobe Talbott, the US Deputy Secretary of State (1994-2001), wrote an article in *Time* magazine documenting how “many Russians have not yet been able to accept the idea that the 14 non-Russian republics of the USSR are today independent foreign countries. Russian politicians have even coined a new phrase – the Near Abroad – to distinguish the former republics from the rest of the world.”<sup>368</sup> The concept of a Near Abroad had thus entered the diplomatic lexicon before the end of the 1992.

The concept of a “*European* Near Abroad” has a geographical justification. All of the states in the region were either integral components of the Soviet Union or shared a common boundary with the Soviet Union – either directly by an adjacent territorial border or across a body of water like the Baltic and Black Sea. This spatial arrangement has various geopolitical implications.

The concept also has a strategical justification. Although the term “Near Abroad” is now only associated with the fourteen former republics of the Soviet Union, some sources

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid. The chief difficulty with the transliteration from Russian into English concerns the absence of a word for *zarubezhnye* in English: it is built around the word “rubezh”, meaning border, and the prefix “za” means beyond.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

suggest that when Kozyrev first launched the term, he referred to Moscow's special *droit de regard* in both Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>369</sup> This would not have been surprising in 1992 as Moscow had been directing the foreign policy of Central and Eastern Europe since 1945. In the 2000 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, discrimination against the "legitimate interests of the citizens of the Russian Federation in foreign states" is described as a major external threat.<sup>370</sup> This provision, reaffirmed in subsequent political and military doctrines, has become known as the "Near Abroad Doctrine," which attempts to justify Russian intervention in the post-Communist states. In September 2008, in the aftermath of the Russo-Georgian War, the US Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates, explained that "what's driving Russia is a desire to exorcise past humiliation and dominate their Near Abroad."<sup>371</sup> The concept, or doctrine, of a Near Abroad has thus become well-established in security circles.

Academic scholars of Russia have also treated the two regions in close proximity with one another in their research. For instance, S. Neil MacFarlane writes that "[Russia] is highly responsive to trends in its neighbourhood (the former Soviet Union) and in regions contiguous to what it perceives to be its own space (e.g. EU and NATO Europe and north-east Asia)."<sup>372</sup> Correspondingly, he explains that Russia places a high priority to the state of affairs in these "contiguous regions" and that it is "more than willing to resist American policy towards several former Soviet republics."<sup>373</sup>

Treating Central and Eastern Europe as one regional security complex also has a historical justification. From 1945-1989 the regional security complex was generally under

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<sup>369</sup> Kaare Dahl Martinsen, *The Russian-Belarusian Union and the Near Abroad*, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, June 2002, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/martinsen.pdf>, p. 2.

<sup>370</sup> "2000 Russia's Military Doctrine", signed by President Vladimir Putin on 21 April 2000, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000\\_05/dc3ma00](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_05/dc3ma00).

<sup>371</sup> Robert Gates, "Gates: Troops staying in Iraq regardless of election", *CNN.com*, 29 September 2008, [http://articles.cnn.com/2008-09-29/politics/gates.defense\\_1\\_iraq-troops-terror-attack/2?\\_s=PM:POLITICS](http://articles.cnn.com/2008-09-29/politics/gates.defense_1_iraq-troops-terror-attack/2?_s=PM:POLITICS).

<sup>372</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, "The 'R' in BRICs: is Russia an Emerging Power?", *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1, 2006, p. 42.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

the suzerainty of Moscow. The region roughly corresponds with the member states of the former Warsaw Pact, a hard balancing collective security organisation. Accordingly, many of the foreign and military doctrines of the states in the region were closely integrated with each other and were premised on the idea of deterring and defeating a potential NATO military operation into the region. Although the Warsaw Pact was formally dissolved in 1991, the former member states continue to harbour memories of Russian hegemony and, as the next chapters will illustrate, their current national security strategies continue to reflect this fear.

Similarly, a substantial part of the European Near Abroad security complex was also under the control of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569-1795). At its apex the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was the largest state in Europe, at one point stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.<sup>374</sup> It was a great power which constantly vied with Russia for mastery of the region. Arguably its greatest military achievement involved the conquest and occupation of Moscow (1610-1612). As the following chapters will indicate, this enduring historical Polish-Russian competition over the European Near Abroad has continued in the post-Cold War era.

Treating the former Soviet satellites and republics as part of the same regional security complex may also be justified on cultural grounds. Although the region lies at the fault line of what Samuel Huntington describes as the Western and Orthodox civilisational blocs – which may in part explain the historical turbulence of the region – there are in fact many cultural commonalities between the states.<sup>375</sup> In addition to a shared history, which unites all of the states, the overwhelming majority of them have a majority Christian population. Slavic languages are widely spoken throughout the region, and recent research

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<sup>374</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (London: Pimlico Random House, 1997), p. 554.

<sup>375</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

suggests that the Russian language may once again be growing in popularity.<sup>376</sup> Most crucially, many of the minor-regional powers in the European Near Abroad share aspirations to become western-style democracies with market economies, and all are either members of the EU or part of its Eastern Partnership Programme. This demonstrates the fact that regional security complexes are socially constructed.

These two factors, cultural commonalities and western-style political development, are also important because they serve to differentiate the *European* Near Abroad as a region from the wider Russian Near Abroad: *i.e.* the former term encompasses the ex-Soviet satellites and European frontline states while excluding Central Asia, whereas the latter term generally excludes the former Soviet satellites in Europe and includes the five states in Central Asia. While references will be made to the Central Asian states, the analyses will largely focus on the states in the European Near Abroad. The next chapters will also illustrate one more general difference between the states of the European Near Abroad and Central Asia: whereas the former states tend to balance against Russia and seek closer cooperation with the United States and Western Europe, at times the latter states seem to accept and even relish their position in Russia's orbit. This dynamic was intensified after the Bush Administration started implementing its Freedom Agenda by promoting democratic transition in the region.

Cultural commonalities and strategic considerations also serve to explain the most difficult inclusion and exclusion – of Sweden and Turkey, respectively – from the regional construct. At first sight both states may merit inclusion on geographical factors (in particular, both states share a maritime border with the Russian Federation) and both have a rich history of intervention and conquest in the region. However, in contradistinction to Turkey, the overwhelming majority of the states in the regional construct have predominantly Christian

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<sup>376</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 2011), pp. 228-231.

populations. More importantly, many of the foreign and military doctrines of the states in the region are premised on close strategic coordination with each other in order to confront what is often their primary security challenge: their relationship with a resurgent Russia. For instance, Sweden has been one of the main driving forces of the EU's Eastern Partnership Programme, whereas Turkey, which is often treated as an important regional power in the Middle East in its own right, has wider strategic considerations and reach. This factor also serves to distinguish Turkey from Azerbaijan – whose population is also predominantly Muslim – in addition to the fact that Azerbaijan was once an integral part of the Soviet Union and thus remains a part of Russia's near abroad. In the end, since the European Near Abroad is a theoretical construct, it may not be possible to perfectly and neatly carve out which states should be included and excluded on its peripheries.

In sum, the European Near Abroad includes those states which not only compromised the Soviet Union, but also many of the states behind the Iron Curtain which formed an integral part of the Soviet Empire. It primarily includes parts of North, Central, and Eastern Europe, and the Caucasus, while excluding Central Asia. Another phrase which captures the former states in the Soviet Union and Soviet Empire is the "Frontier States" because many still share a territorial or maritime border with Russia. The classification of states is summarised in Table 6.2 below.

**Table 6.2: Classification of States in the European Near Abroad**

| <b>Level of Analysis</b>                            | <b>Unipolar Leader / Hegemon</b> | <b>Minor-regional powers (17)</b>  |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Regional Subsystem:<br/>European Near Abroad</b> | Russian Federation               | Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine |

Lastly, treating the European Near Abroad as a regional security complex is justified in practice because: 1) Russia perceives it as its zone of special interest, if not sphere of influence; and 2) many of the minor-regional powers define their national security threats primarily in reference to Russia. In short, these minor-regional powers' primary security concerns are determined by security interactions within the regional – and not the international – level of analysis. This merits an examination of their geostrategic positions from the lens of a regional security complex. The next chapters will examine these two claims in more detail.

## **CHAPTER 7: RUSSIAN HEGEMONISATION OF THE EUROPEAN NEAR ABROAD**

“The collapse of the Soviet Union is the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century.”

- Vladimir Putin’s annual address to the Russian Duma, 2005

The next two chapters serve two interrelated purposes. The first is to argue that the Russian Federation is a regional hegemon which is perceived as becoming increasingly repressive at home and aggressive abroad, especially in the European Near Abroad. As Dmitri Trenin, a leading specialist on Russia, writes: although Russia is not seeking to restore its Empire, it is seeking to re-assert itself as a great power and its hegemony in the post-Soviet space.<sup>377</sup> Leon Aron, another seasoned Kremlinologist, puts it in slightly different words: “under the Putin Doctrine, [Russia’s] pursuit of regional hegemony has acquired a new dimension – an attempt at the ‘Finlandisation’ of the post-Soviet states.”<sup>378</sup> It will be argued that Russia is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to divide Eastern and Western Europe, and in a sense “hemogonise” or “Finlandise” the states of the European Near Abroad. It has employed hard and soft power to achieve these ends. The hard element was most evident during the 2008 August War with Georgia, which will be examined in depth in the next chapter, and it has also employed a variety of soft or non-military tools to achieve this feat, most notably the energy weapon. In particular, it will be argued that Russia has been engaged in a systematic campaign to subdue Europe by monopolising control of its economic lifeblood: oil and gas. It will also become apparent that Russia’s project of regional

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<sup>377</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *Post Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011).

<sup>378</sup> Leon Aron, “The Putin Doctrine: Russia’s Question to Rebuild the Soviet State”, *Foreign Affairs*, 8 March 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139049/leon-aron/the-putin-doctrine>.

“hegemonisation”<sup>379</sup> or “Finlandisation”<sup>380</sup> is inextricably intertwined with its global grand strategy of balancing against the United States, especially in Central Asia.

Whereas this chapter tends to view events from the perspective of Moscow and its project of hegemonisation, the purpose of the next chapter is to examine the reactions to Russia’s activities in the various capitals of the minor-regional powers in the European Near Abroad. These states stand in relation to Russian hegemony in the European Near Abroad as Russia and the other second-tier great powers stand in relation to American unipolarity in the international system as a whole. But whereas great powers balance primarily at the international level, regional powers balance primarily at the regional level. The next chapter argues that Poland – the region’s second strongest state – has led a soft balancing coalition in response to Russia’s regional hegemony, and that this has intensified as a result of Russia’s unilateral military policies in Georgia.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The chapter first describes how Russia is the unipolar leader or hegemon of the European Near Abroad, and secondly, it argues that Russia is seeking to continually expand its regional hegemony, just as Mearsheimer’s brand of offensive realism would predict. In particular, it is argued that although Russia is becoming more authoritarian at home and increasingly assertive abroad, it is nonetheless acting as a realist regional hegemon would be expected to act in its current geopolitical

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<sup>379</sup> “Hegemonisation” is defined herein as the process of establishing hegemony over a particular region. “Hegemony” is often used interchangeably with “unipolarity” in this thesis, but for the purposes of clarity, only the United States has been referred to as a “unipole” or “unipolar leader” whereas other regional “unipoles” or “regional unipolar leaders” have been referred to as “regional hegemons” or simply “hegemons.” Unipolarity was defined in the first chapter as a system in which one state’s capabilities are so concentrated as to preclude the formation of a (hard) counterbalancing coalition against it.

<sup>380</sup> “Finlandisation” is a term coined by German analysts during the early Cold War to describe Finland’s seemingly anomalous relationship with the Soviet Union after the Second World War. It is generally understood as a minor power undertaking a policy of neutrality with a neighbouring great power in the hope that such gestures of deference will afford the minor power a high degree of domestic autonomy. In extreme cases, the minor power may eschew its right to conduct a foreign policy entirely in return for greater domestic sovereignty. Although some analysts, such as Leon Aron, argue that Russia is engaged in a project to “Finlandise” its immediate neighbourhood, it is submitted that a project of “hegemonisation” is a more accurate term because at times the Russian project does not afford its neighbours a choice to pursue their own political and economic systems. This was most apparent during Russia’s invasion of Georgia and its alleged war aim of regime change. For an early treatment on the concept of Finlandisation, see Fred Singleton, “The Myth of ‘Finlandisation’”, *International Affairs*, vol. 57, no. 2, Spring 1981, pp. 270-285.

position. In other words, it behaves neither morally nor immorally, but rather as an amoral power-maximiser.<sup>381</sup>

The third section then briefly sets out the historical background of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the unstable transitional period under Boris Yeltsin, and the resurgence of Russia under Vladimir Putin. It argues that although Russia does not seek a new Cold War, as some scholars – including Edward Lucas and the former US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott – have suggested, its policies are increasingly marked by a return to the great power politics of the nineteenth century.<sup>382</sup> This section also indirectly continues the story of Russian global balancing against the United States, because Russia's strategy of challenging American unipolarity is inextricably intertwined with its regional strategy of preponderance. This fact demonstrates how security dynamics at the international and regional level can interact and merge. The fourth and fifth sections explore the way Russia wields the energy weapon in its bid to divide Western and Eastern Europe and cement its regional hegemony over the European Near Abroad.

## **7.1 Russian Unipolarity or Hegemony in the European Near Abroad**

The Russian Federation is the unipolar leader or hegemon in the European Near Abroad. It enjoys a large margin of superiority in every dimension of power: military, economic, technological, and arguably cultural. As Table 7.1 below illustrates, in 2013 the population of the Russian Federation was approximately 142.5 million. This is over three times the size of the next largest state – Ukraine – and nearly four times the size of Poland, the chief soft balancer in the region. In fact, Russia's population is comparable to the

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<sup>381</sup> Accordingly, this dissertation does not seek to make moral judgments or evaluations concerning the direction of Russian (or any other state's) foreign policy.

<sup>382</sup> See Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces both Russia and the West* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2008); and Strobe Talbott, "Dangerous Leviathan: Russia's Bad Philosophy", *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2009, pp. 25-26.

composite figure of all the states in the European Near Abroad. As Table 7.2 indicates, the Russian Federation's advantage in population is further compounded by its vast territorial scope. Even with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation continues to occupy nearly twice as much of the world's real estate as its next competitor: Canada. Russia is six times as large as the entire European Near Abroad.

**Table 7.1: Population of Russia and States in the European Near Abroad, 2013<sup>383</sup>**

| State                | World Ranking | Population  |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Russian Federation   | 9             | 142,500,482 |
| European Near Abroad | 7             | 189,032,145 |
| Ukraine              | 30            | 44,573,205  |
| Poland               | 33            | 38,383,809  |
| Romania              | 56            | 21,790,479  |
| Czech Republic       | 86            | 10,162,921  |
| Hungary              | 87            | 9,939,470   |
| Belarus              | 90            | 9,625,888   |
| Azerbaijan           | 91            | 9,590,159   |
| Sweden               | 92            | 9,119,423   |
| Bulgaria             | 101           | 6,981,642   |
| Slovakia             | 113           | 5,488,339   |
| Finland              | 116           | 5,266,114   |
| Georgia              | 122           | 4,555,911   |
| Moldova              | 130           | 3,619,925   |
| Lithuania            | 131           | 3,515,858   |
| Armenia              | 138           | 2,974,184   |
| Latvia               | 143           | 2,178,443   |
| Estonia              | 157           | 1,266,375   |

<sup>383</sup> *CIA World Factbook*, World Population Rankings, July 2013 Estimates, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>.

**Table 7.2: Territory of Russia and States in the European Near Abroad<sup>384</sup>**

| State                | World Ranking | Territory (km <sup>2</sup> ) |
|----------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| Russian Federation   | 1             | 17,098,242                   |
| European Near Abroad | 8             | 2,877,486                    |
| Ukraine              | 46            | 603,550                      |
| Sweden               | 56            | 450,295                      |
| Finland              | 65            | 338,145                      |
| Poland               | 70            | 312,685                      |
| Romania              | 83            | 238,391                      |
| Belarus              | 86            | 207,600                      |
| Bulgaria             | 105           | 110,879                      |
| Hungary              | 110           | 93,028                       |
| Azerbaijan           | 113           | 86,600                       |
| Czech Republic       | 116           | 78,867                       |
| Georgia              | 121           | 69,700                       |
| Lithuania            | 123           | 65,300                       |
| Latvia               | 124           | 64,589                       |
| Slovakia             | 131           | 49,035                       |
| Estonia              | 133           | 45,228                       |
| Moldova              | 140           | 33,851                       |
| Armenia              | 143           | 29,743                       |

The Russian Federation also enjoys a wide margin of economic superiority over its neighbours in the European Near Abroad. As Table 7.3 demonstrates, in 2013 the gross domestic product (GDP) of the regional hegemon was \$2,640 billion using the purchasing power parity method of measurement.<sup>385</sup> Once again, this is over three times the size of the next largest economy in the region. With the partial exception of Poland, all the states in the region have relatively small economies. In fact, Russia's measure is comparable to the composite figure for the entire European Near Abroad.

<sup>384</sup> CIA *World Factbook*, World Territory Rankings, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2147rank.html>.

<sup>385</sup> Nominal GDP measurements at official exchange rates reveal similar patterns.

**Table 7.3: GDP (PPP) of Russia and States in the European Near Abroad, 2012<sup>386</sup>**

| State                | World Ranking | GDP (PPP) (USD)   |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Russian Federation   | 7             | 2,504,000,000,000 |
| European Near Abroad | 6             | 3,157,280,000,000 |
| Poland               | 21            | 799,200,000,000   |
| Sweden               | 35            | 395,800,000,000   |
| Ukraine              | 39            | 335,400,000,000   |
| Czech Republic       | 45            | 286,700,000,000   |
| Romania              | 49            | 274,100,000,000   |
| Finland              | 55            | 198,100,000,000   |
| Hungary              | 56            | 195,400,000,000   |
| Belarus              | 62            | 150,300,000,000   |
| Slovakia             | 64            | 132,400,000,000   |
| Bulgaria             | 72            | 103,700,000,000   |
| Azerbaijan           | 75            | 98,160,000,000    |
| Lithuania            | 87            | 64,800,000,000    |
| Latvia               | 107           | 37,040,000,000    |
| Estonia              | 113           | 28,440,000,000    |
| Georgia              | 118           | 26,520,000,000    |
| Armenia              | 134           | 18,950,000,000    |
| Moldova              | 148           | 12,270,000,000    |

The Russian Federation also possesses superior diplomatic clout. It enjoys a special position as a veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council – a privilege that it closely cherishes and guards – and it is also a leading member of several international organisations. For instance, it is the leader of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an organisation linking eleven former republics of the Soviet Union.<sup>387</sup> It is also a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a collective security organisation connecting Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan.<sup>388</sup> Along with China, Russia is also a co-leader of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), an organisation

<sup>386</sup> *CIA World Factbook*, GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) Ranking, 2012 Estimates, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html>.

<sup>387</sup> The three Baltic states chose not to join the CIS, and Georgia eventually withdrew in 2009.

<sup>388</sup> Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan were all members in 1994, but the former two withdrew in 1999, while the latter withdrew in 2012.

oft-touted as a “Second Warsaw Pact.”<sup>389</sup> The SCO has been called an anti-hegemonic or anti-NATO alliance devoted to fostering military cooperation between the two Eurasian powers and several Central Asian states.<sup>390</sup> Russia is also at the nexus of the Customs Union – an economic organisation linking Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan – and it is at the forefront of promoting the idea of a Eurasian Union, which would unite these three countries with other post-Soviet states in Central Asia by 2015.<sup>391</sup> Finally, Russia is an observer on the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and after a prolonged struggle, it has finally joined the ranks of the World Trade Organization.

Undoubtedly the greatest gap in capabilities between the Russian Federation and the states of the European Near Abroad is in the military field. For instance, as Table 7.4 below indicates, in 2012 the Russian Federation spent nearly \$60 billion on defence expenditures, accounting for 3.06 percent of its GDP. The rate was over three percent in 2009 and analysts at the International Institute for Strategic Studies anticipate the rate to remain over three percent in the near future.<sup>392</sup> In 2012 Russia’s defence expenditures were thus five times the size of Poland’s defence expenditures, eight times the size of Sweden’s defence expenditures, and twice the size of the entire European Near Abroad’s defence expenditures. Previous years reveal similar patterns, and this is not projected to change significantly in the future. It is significant to note that no state in the European Near Abroad which is also a member of

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<sup>389</sup> Adrian Blomfield, “Putin Praises Strength of ‘Warsaw Pact 2’”, *The Telegraph*, 17 August 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1560604/Putin-praises-strength-of-Warsaw-Pact-2.html>.

<sup>390</sup> The current members of the SCO include: Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan have observer status.

<sup>391</sup> Hours before meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister in Dublin, the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton declared that the US will thwart all efforts by Russia to recreate a new version of the Soviet Union and any attempts to “re-Sovietising” the former Soviet-space. In particular, she said: “It’s not going to be called that [the Soviet Union]. It’s going to be called a Customs Union, it will be called Eurasian Union and all of that...but let’s make no mistake about it. We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it.” See Charles Clover, “Clinton Vows to Thwart New Soviet Union”, *Financial Times*, 6 December 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a5b15b14-3fcf-11e2-9f71-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2PWmMVBpc>.

<sup>392</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013*, Chapter 5: Russia and Eurasia, vol. 113, no. 1, 14 March 2013, pp. 199-244.

NATO regularly meets the required two percent spending rate. The combined defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP for the European Near Abroad is a mere 1.46 percent.

**Table 7.4: Defence Expenditures and Size of Armed Forces of Russia and States in the European Near Abroad<sup>393</sup>**

| State                | Defence Expenditure (USD millions) (2012) | Defence Expenditure as % of GDP (2012) | Number in Armed Forces (000s) (2013) | Estimate Reservists (000s) (2013) |
|----------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Russian Federation   | 59,851                                    | 3.06                                   | 845                                  | 20,000                            |
| European Near Abroad | 31,298                                    | 1.46                                   | 651                                  | 2,649                             |
| Poland               | 8,640                                     | 1.84                                   | 96                                   | 0                                 |
| Sweden               | 5,788                                     | 1.11                                   | 21                                   | 0                                 |
| Finland              | 3,596                                     | 1.45                                   | 22                                   | 354                               |
| Czech Republic       | 2,177                                     | 1.12                                   | 24                                   | 0                                 |
| Romania              | 2,176                                     | 1.27                                   | 71                                   | 45                                |
| Ukraine              | 2,057                                     | 1.14                                   | 130                                  | 1000                              |
| Azerbaijan           | 1,777                                     | 2.50                                   | 67                                   | 300                               |
| Hungary              | 1,029                                     | 0.80                                   | 27                                   | 44                                |
| Slovakia             | 1,012                                     | 1.11                                   | 16                                   | 0                                 |
| Bulgaria             | 666                                       | 1.31                                   | 31                                   | 303                               |
| Belarus              | 547                                       | 0.94                                   | 48                                   | 290                               |
| Estonia              | 434                                       | 2.03                                   | 6                                    | 30                                |
| Georgia              | 405                                       | 2.56                                   | 21                                   | 0                                 |
| Armenia              | 394                                       | 3.73                                   | 49                                   | 210                               |
| Lithuania            | 322                                       | 0.78                                   | 12                                   | 7                                 |
| Latvia               | 259                                       | 0.95                                   | 5                                    | 8                                 |
| Moldova              | 19  | 0.25                                   | 5                                    | 58                                |

This asymmetrical pattern continues when one compares the actual and potential size of each state's armed forces. In 2013, as in previous years, the Russian Federation

<sup>393</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013*, Chapter 10: Country Comparisons – Force Levels and Economics, vol. 113, no. 1, 14 March 2013, pp. 543-556.

maintained an “active” standing army of nearly one million soldiers.<sup>394</sup> The Russian Army’s potential reservists are estimated to be around an incredible twenty million. The largest standing armies in the European Near Abroad, by contrast, belong to Ukraine (130,000), Poland (96,000), and Romania (71,000). Russia thus maintains a standing army larger than the composite figure for the entire European Near Abroad and its potential pool of reservists is nearly eight times as large as the European Near Abroad’s potential pool of reservists.

Military capabilities are not only a function of quantity, but also of quality, and the Russian Federation has largely retained the Soviet Union’s world class military technology and hardware. It has a modern army, air force, navy, and special forces. It also possesses some spectacular convention weapons. For instance, the Russian Navy operates the *Shkval* (Squall) torpedo: an underwater rocket that travels in a capsule of gas created by its custom-designed cone; if fired from a stealth submarine it is one of a handful of weapons that could destroy an American aircraft carrier. The new S-400 air defence system, which has attracted immense interest in Iran and India, is a new generation surface to air missile system reported to have at least twice the range of comparable American Patriot missiles.<sup>395</sup> Russia’s intelligence agency, the FSB, is rumoured to have spying equipment of unimaginable scope.

In conventional terms, the Russian Federation is reported to have 1300 main battle tanks, 5110 modern armoured vehicles, 771 fourth-generation tactical aircraft, 184 bombers, 11 ballistic-missile nuclear-powered submarines, 24 cruisers, and one aircraft carrier. These forces are deployed in around nineteen different countries or locations around the globe.

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<sup>394</sup> The IISS defines “active manpower” as “all servicemen and women on full-time duty (including conscripts and long term assignments from the Reserves),” and “reserves” as “formations and units not fully manned or operations in peacetime, but which can be mobilised by recalling reservists in an emergency.” International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013*, Chapter 11: Explanatory Notes, vol. 113, no. 1, 14 March 2013, p. 559.

<sup>395</sup> Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War*, p. 245.

Only the United States, and perhaps China, can be considered to be in the same military class as the Russian Federation.<sup>396</sup>

However, what separates the military capabilities of the Russian Federation from every state in the European Near Abroad is Russia's strategic arsenal. As of September 2012, after the entry into force of the Obama-Medvedev New START Treaty, Russia reported it possessed 1499 nuclear warheads deployed on various delivery mechanisms.<sup>397</sup> These mechanisms include intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers. Other sources, however, have indicated that Russia usually possesses much more than it regularly declares, especially in the field of short-range tactical or theatre nuclear weapons (*i.e.* on naval platforms, land-based aircraft, and air and missile defence system).<sup>398</sup> Irrespective of the actual quantity, the Russian Federation has also been active in improving the quality of its nuclear forces and delivery mechanisms, including the advanced MIRV weapons systems.<sup>399</sup> In short, the military capabilities of the states in the European Near Abroad pale in comparison to those of the Russian Federation.

However, the military can prove to be a blunt weapon. The oil and gas weapon, on the other hand, is much more fluid. On nearly all measurements, Russia is a world leader in the energy and commodities market. According to the CIA, in 2011 Russia surpassed Saudi Arabia to become the world's leading oil producer. This complements Russia's status as the world's second-largest producer of natural gas. Russia also holds the world's largest natural gas reserves, the second-largest coal reserves, and the eighth-largest crude oil reserves. In

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<sup>396</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013*, Chapter 2: Comparative Defence Statistics, vol. 113, no. 1, 14 March 2013, pp. 44-45. Also see Richard Weitz, *Global Security Watch: Russia* (Oxford: Praeger Security International, 2010), pp. 11-52.

<sup>397</sup> US Department of State, "New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms", 1 September 2012, <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/198582.htm>.

<sup>398</sup> For instance, two scholars writing for the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in 2008 estimate that the actual numbers of Russia's operational nuclear warheads are 3113 strategic warheads (ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic bombers) and 2079 tactical warheads (on naval platforms, land-based aircraft, and air and missile defence systems). This has likely been decreased since the New START entered into force in February 2011. See Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, "Russia's Nuclear Forces, 2008", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 64, no. 2, May/June 2008, pp. 54-57, 62.

<sup>399</sup> Richard Weitz, *Global Security Watch: Russia*, p. 54.

other commodities, Russia is the third-largest exporter of steel and primary aluminium, and one of the world's leading agricultural exporters.<sup>400</sup> In sum, the Russian Federation is an energy and commodities superpower.

Russia's reliance on energy and other commodity exports makes it extremely vulnerable to changes in global commodity prices. Correspondingly, the country was severely affected by the 2008 global financial meltdown (which reached its crisis point around the same time as the Russo-Georgian August War) as oil prices crashed and the international credits that Russian banks and firms relied on dried up. According to the IMF, Russian GDP growth rates crashed to -7.8% in 2009, but have since rebounded to +4.3% with the increase in global oil prices in 2010 and 2011.<sup>401</sup>

All of these statistics strongly indicate that the Russian Federation is the unipolar leader or hegemon in the European Near Abroad. Even if all of the disparate states in the region coalesced and attempted to form a hard balancing coalition against Russia, it would not come close to matching the hegemon's superior capabilities. Moreover, the thought experiment of having all of the regional states align against Russia is a fanciful one, as there are a myriad of obstacles standing in the way of such a grand coalition, but it serves to illustrate that hard balancing amongst the regional actors is not a feasible option for dealing with the hegemon.

Most importantly, Russian leaders have repeatedly referred to the area of the European Near Abroad or the post-Soviet space as their special area of strategic or vital interests. For instance, in a remarkably frank interview in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 war with Georgia, President Medvedev explained that "Russia, just like other countries in the world, has regions where it has its privileged interests." When he was asked if these

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<sup>400</sup> All statistics according to the US Central Intelligence Agency information on the Russian Federation as of 1 January 2011. See *CIA World Factbook*, Russian Federation, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

<sup>401</sup> International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook 2012: Growth Resuming, Dangers Remain*, 15 August 2012, p. 194, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/01/pdf/text.pdf>.

“priority regions” were those that bordered on Russia, Medvedev explained “certainly the regions bordering on Russia, but not only them.”<sup>402</sup>

In sum, the Russian Federation is an energy superpower and the unequivocal unipolar leader in the European Near Abroad. As the next sections will indicate, not only is Russia the regional hegemon, it also strongly behaves as one.

## 7.2 Russia, Regional Hegemonisation, and Offensive Realism

John Mearsheimer, the architect of offensive realism, posits that all great powers are power-maximisers striving for regional hegemony.<sup>403</sup> They constantly seek to shift the balance of power – *i.e.* the actual distribution of military capabilities among the great powers – in their favour if it can be done at a reasonable price. Although the costs may at times be too great, this desire to maximise power is insatiable, condemning the international system to perpetual great power competition. However, once a great power obtains regional hegemony, the tragedy does not cease: the great power will constantly strive to solidify its regional hegemony, and it will also seek to expand into new regions of the international system. This is a tragic state of affairs because great powers do not consciously seek rivalry and war with their peers, but the structure of the international system “forces states which seek only to be secure nonetheless to act aggressively towards each other.”<sup>404</sup> According to Mearsheimer, three aspects of the international system compel states to fear each other and behave this way: 1) the absence of a central authority that can protect states from one another – *i.e.* international anarchy; 2) the fact that some states always have offensive capabilities; and 3)

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<sup>402</sup> Paul Reynolds, “New Russian World View: the Five Principles”, *BBC News*, 1 September 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7591610.stm>.

<sup>403</sup> This is in contrast to the so-called “defensive realists,” who posit that states behave more like security-maximisers than power-maximisers. This distinction is important because the power-maximisation thesis leads states to drive for regional hegemony, and therewith, great power rivalry.

<sup>404</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 2-3.

the fact that states can never be certain of each other's intentions, because intentions are constantly subject to change.<sup>405</sup>

In a historically illuminating analogy, this tragedy of great power competition and regional hegemonisation is perfectly captured by the brazen comments of the great nineteenth century Prussian statesman, Otto von Bismarck, regarding Poland's attempt to regain its sovereignty in the 1860s:

Restoring the Kingdom of Poland in any shape or form is tantamount to creating an ally for any enemy that chooses to attack us...[we should] smash those Poles till, losing all hope, they lie down and die; I have every sympathy for their situation, but if we wish to survive we have no choice but to wipe them out.<sup>406</sup>

Thus, the Prussian motto was to project power or perish. In fact, Prussia, Russia, and Austria oft-colluded to quash a nascent Polish state from forming in the nineteenth century, not for any particularly immoral or ideological reasons, but largely because of the anarchical nature of the international system and the competition among great powers.<sup>407</sup> Although it is arguable that the twentieth century, famously characterised by the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm as the "Age of Extremes" (*i.e.* ideologies), witnessed a brief interlude from this amoral nineteenth-century type of power politics, the post-Cold War era is witnessing its unabashed return.<sup>408</sup>

### 7.3 Western Betrayal and Yeltsin's Failed Strategic Partnership with the West

Given its historical uniqueness and immense geopolitical significance, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a relatively stable affair. On 6 February 1989 the Polish Round Table Talks began in earnest in Warsaw between Lech Walesa's *Solidarność* movement and

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Quoted in Lothar Gall, *Bismarck: The White Revolutionary, 1851-1871*, vol. 1, trans. J.A. Underwood (London: Unwin Hyman, 1986), p. 59.

<sup>407</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>408</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994).

General Jaruzelski's communist government. Nine days later, the last Soviet commander in Afghanistan, Boris Gromov, crossed the Friendship Bridge over the river Panj to enter Termez in what was then the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. The Polish Round Tables Talks would ultimately spark a wave of revolutions toppling communism across Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan would mark the beginning of a twenty-year hiatus where Moscow refrained from using military force against its sovereign neighbours.<sup>409</sup>

However, despite the relative stability of the Soviet implosion, it was not entirely peaceful and several "blisters" of the old order remained. The Russian leadership learned that they could skilfully put pressure on these blisters whenever they wanted to make their opponents wince. Some of these blisters of the old order include: the Azeri-Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh; the war in Chechnya (1991-2001); the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997); the war in Transdniestria (1990-1992); and the intermittent skirmishes and wars among Georgia and its regional enclaves of Abkhazia, Adjara, and South Ossetia.<sup>410</sup>

From Moscow's perspective, not only was the process of disintegration a relatively stable and peaceful one, it was also by and large a voluntary one.<sup>411</sup> This is what made the disintegration of the Soviet Union so unique: never in the history of international relations has a state relinquished so much of its territory without suffering a strategic defeat in a major

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<sup>409</sup> See Bill Keller, "Last Soviet Soldiers Leave Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, 16 February 1989, <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/world/africa/021689afghan-laden.html>; and "1989 Timeline", *BBC World Service*, 6 October 2009, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/lg/specialreports/2009/10/091006\\_1989\\_timeline\\_nonflash.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/lg/specialreports/2009/10/091006_1989_timeline_nonflash.shtml).

<sup>410</sup> Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>411</sup> Historians debate the precise causes for the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, and this debate will likely continue well into the future. As with most international political outcomes (especially large systemic ones like the collapse of a superpower), mono-causal explanations are rarely complete. The safest conclusion may be that some combination of systemic-level, state-level, and individual-level factors best explains the end of the Cold War. For instance, some of these explanations may include Reagan's arms race (systemic-level), the contradictions inherent in the Soviet command economy and the rise of nationalism (state-level), and Gorbachev's desire to reform the Soviet Union (individual-level). See Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

war. Mikhail Gorbachev presided over the division of half of his country but the USSR was neither defeated nor occupied. Accordingly, there was a real sense of hope and optimism about a “new world order” with greater strategic cooperation – or even integration – between Russia and the West.

However, the promise of closer Russian and Western cooperation proved to be a chimera. The first main issue to divide them proved to be the same issue that divided them at the start of the Cold War in Yalta: the Polish Question. The historian Alexander DePorte wrote that “there is a sense in which the Cold War, like World War II, began with a Western attempt to rescue a Poland that was beyond its reach.” He argued that the Big Three had their first great quarrel over the Polish Question, a quarrel which subsequently “coloured their early interactions.”<sup>412</sup> By the 1990s, however, the distribution of power in Europe was fundamentally different than in 1945, and Poland and its central European neighbours were suddenly no longer outside of the West’s reach. The question of NATO expansion thus came to the diplomatic spotlight.

At first it was unclear how the Russian Federation would react to the prospect of NATO expansion into its former satellite states in Central Europe. For instance, in the early 1990s Foreign Minister Kozyrev openly spoke about a strategic partnership between Russia and the West. Kozyrev saw the West as a “natural ally” for Russia, and that cooperation was necessary for Russia to “join the civilised world.”<sup>413</sup> In fact, in December 1991 President Yeltsin even raised the possibility of Russia joining NATO. He argued Russia’s membership could be akin to a “French version:” membership in the political, but not the military structure of NATO. In April 1993 Yeltsin also enumerated economic development and

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<sup>412</sup> Alexander DePorte, *Europe Between the Superpowers: The Enduring Balance* (London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 92.

<sup>413</sup> See A Konovalov, “International Institutions and European Security: the Russian Debate”, in ed. Marco Carnovale, *European Security and International Institutions After the Cold War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), pp. 119-120.

democratic transition as Russia's main foreign policy goals. Thus, foreign policy became subordinate to the goals of domestic modernisation.<sup>414</sup>

However, from 1993, when the leaders of the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) declared their interest in joining NATO, the domestic pressures on Yeltsin and Kozyrev's new direction in Russian foreign policy mounted.<sup>415</sup> Many Russian elites believed that NATO expansion to Central Europe was a gross manifestation of American perfidy: it was alleged that the US Secretary of State James Baker made a promise to Gorbachev in 1990 that if the USSR accepted German unification, NATO would not expand "one inch to the east." US officials have either denied that this promise was made or that it was the product of misinterpretation and miscommunication.<sup>416</sup> Irrespective of the veracity of the claim, the "not one inch to the east" promise had a strong resonance in Moscow.

Russian elites were divided largely into two opposing camps: the liberal "internationalists," led by Kozyrev and residing mostly at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the realist "*derzhavniks*" (from *derzhava* – great powerness), residing in the Supreme Soviet and presidential administration. The former advocated non-intervention in the Near Abroad and support for the United States, whereas the latter supported intervention in the Near Abroad (protecting ethnic Russians' interests) and balancing against the United States.<sup>417</sup> Under pressure from the realist camp, Yeltsin eventually re-defined Russia's foreign policy course. For instance, in a November 1993 report presented by Yevgeni Primakov, chief of the Russian Foreign Intelligence at the time, NATO expansion in Central

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<sup>414</sup> This would be dramatically reversed under Primakov and Putin, who subjected all of Russia's foreign policy towards the goal of *Derzhavnost*. See Leon Aron, "The Foreign Policy Doctrine of Postcommunist Russia and its Domestic Context", in ed. Mandelbaum Michael, *The New Russian Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998), pp. 25-26.

<sup>415</sup> For a treatment of the domestic influences on Russian foreign policy, see Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison, and Margot Light, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

<sup>416</sup> Bill Bradley, "History Lesson: A Diplomatic Mystery", *Foreign Policy*, Sept/Oct 2009.

<sup>417</sup> Leon Aron, "The Foreign Policy Doctrine of Postcommunist Russia and Its Domestic Context", p. 24.

Europe was declared a direct threat to Russia's national interests, in part because it would lead to "bloc politics," scuttle the reforms of the current government, and empower military circles.<sup>418</sup>

Therefore, when the Partnership for Peace programme was offered to the Central European states in 1994, the hopes for an era of strategic cooperation between Russia and the West effectively evaporated. As late as the spring of 1995 Russia still hoped NATO expansion could be averted: in a confidential report delivered to Yeltsin by a group of foreign policy advisors, the authors encouraged the government to continue to fight the West on the issue of NATO expansion. The authors argued that the West was divided on the issue and that a vocal minority was leading the way.<sup>419</sup>

By 1996-1997, NATO-Russian relations turned even more sour. Russian Defence Minister Rodionov (who reportedly hung portraits of Stalin on his office wall during his tenure as ambassador to NATO) openly declared that the West deceived Russia by breaking its personal promises to Gorbachev that the military alliance would stop at the borders of East Germany.<sup>420</sup> From Moscow's perspective, this was seen as a Western concession for Russia's unilateral withdrawal from Central and Eastern Europe and its large-scale arms reductions. NATO expansion would not only upset the balance of military power, but it was also a grand act of strategic deception.<sup>421</sup> Other analysts claimed that although the incorporation of the Polish, Czech, and Hungarian military infrastructure did little to change the military balance between the two sides, the symbolic consequences of NATO expanding

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<sup>418</sup> Quoted in A Konovalov, "International Institutions and European Security: the Russian Debate", pp. 126-131.

<sup>419</sup> *Russia and NATO: Thesis of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy*, May 1995; quoted in Elzbieta Stadtmuller, *The Issue of NATO Enlargement in Polish-Russian Relations*, Final Report for NATO Fellowship, 2000-2001, Institute of International Studies, University of Wroclaw, 2001, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/stadtmuller.pdf>.

<sup>420</sup> Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Books, 2009), p. 170.

<sup>421</sup> "Rodionov to NATO: Don't Bait a Wounded Bear", *Moscow News*, 26-31 December 1996. Other sources state US diplomats did not make this promise to Gorbachev. See Bill Bradley, "History Lesson: A Diplomatic Mystery", *Foreign Policy*, Sept/Oct 2009, p. 30; and Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War*, p. 323.

into the former Soviet space were deeply humiliating for Russia and threatened to extinguish its great power status. The Russian State Duma passed a resolution (307 to 0) declaring that NATO enlargement would lead to a crisis. The post-Cold War honeymoon between Russia and the West came to an end.

NATO expansion was seen in Russian security circles as symptomatic of a larger problem of US unipolarity and the need for a re-establishment of multipolarity. For instance, Vladimir Lukin, the Chair of the State Duma Committee for Foreign Relations, explicitly linked NATO expansion with an American project to build a unipolar world.<sup>422</sup> Furthermore, Primakov connected NATO enlargement with his desire to “correct the tilt towards the West” and build the strategic triangle.<sup>423</sup> Therefore, as NATO moved eastwards, so did Russian foreign policy.

In an attempt to assuage Russian fears, the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security was signed on 26 May 1997. This established a Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council which was intended to “provide a mechanism for consultations, coordination, and to the maximum extent possible, where appropriate, for joint decisions and joint action with respect to security issues of common concern.”<sup>424</sup> It was still a far cry from what Russia really wanted: a veto over internal NATO affairs. Thus it had little impact in improving Russian-Western relations. In fact, when the US signed the US-Baltic Charter on 16 January 1998 (despite fierce calls from Moscow that the Baltic States were now a new “red line”<sup>425</sup>), and NATO intervened in Kosovo without consulting Russia on 24 March 1999, many Russian media outlets denounced the Founding Act as a worthless

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<sup>422</sup> Vladimir Lukin, “Interview with Zerkalo RTV Program Regarding NATO Expansion and Russia’s Relations with the United States and Western Europe”, *Official Kremlin International News Broadcast*, 3 November 1995.

<sup>423</sup> “Primakov Says Russia Trying to Correct Bias Towards the West”, *BBC News*, 9 January 1997; and Yevgeny Primakov, “Moscow’s Policy is Not Dictated by Narrow Tactical Considerations”, 28 May 1997, reproduced in *What the Papers Say (Russia)*, 29 May 1997.

<sup>424</sup> “NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation”, 27 May 1997, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm).

<sup>425</sup> “Foreign Minister Ivanov Comments on Kosovo Situation, Relations with NATO”, *BBC News*, 29 October 1998.

piece of paper and yet another indication of the West's perfidy.<sup>426</sup> The hardliners in Moscow were once again vindicated, and when Primakov and Ivanov became Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, respectively, in September 1998, the chief architects of Russia's policy of multipolarisation and soft balancing were in place.

Thus, the attempted Russian-Western strategic partnership proved to be ephemeral. The *derzhavniks*, or realist camp among the Russian ruling elites, felt their country was humiliated and betrayed by the unscrupulous United States at the moment of its great weakness. Greater strategic cooperation with the West would thus be sacrificed at the altar of multipolarity and a return to great power politics. International relations were once again seen as a zero-sum game, whereby any gain for NATO (or the United States) in Central Europe must correspond to a loss for Russia. Russian foreign policy returned to a more traditional type of thinking which equated security with territory, balances of power, spheres of influences, and buffer states, especially in areas where Russia historically defined its vital interests.

#### **7.4 Putin's Consolidation: No Longer the Sick Man of Europe**

Although Boris Yeltsin handpicked his successor, the contrasts between Vladimir Putin and his predecessor could not have been starker. At first relatively little was known about Putin, other than that he was a bureaucrat-cum-spymaster from East Germany who enjoyed Judo. However, he was discernibly young, strong, and sober, and arguably the best-educated and well-travelled Russian leader since Lenin. He breezed through the elections on 26 March 2000 and set out to reverse the perceived abuses of the Yeltsin-Kozyrev years when Russia was perceived as the sick man of Europe.

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<sup>426</sup> J.L Black, *Russia Faces NATO Expansion: Bearing Gifts or Bearing Arms* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), p. 87; and V. P. Malik and Jorg Schultz, *Emerging NATO: Challenges for Asia and Europe* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers & Distributors, 2006).

The war in Chechnya provided him with a window of opportunity to consolidate his power and popularity in Russia. In the late summer of 1999 insurgents from Chechnya raided villages in neighbouring Dagestan and exploded bombs in Moscow's shopping centres and apartment blocks. Prime Minister Putin reacted by authorising a largely successful military intervention in the renegade Republic. He personally oversaw its operations and brusquely remarked that "Russia would wipe-out the [Chechen] culprits, even in the 'toilet.'"<sup>427</sup> This tough rhetoric reflected the national mood and won Putin immense popularity, contributing to his successful bid for the Presidency in the following March.

Although the domestic situation in Russia is beyond the purview of this thesis, it is instructive to note that Putin continued to consolidate both his personal power and that of the state in Russia. In fact, the two have largely become synonyms in a way reminiscent of Louis XIV's famous quip: "*L'État, c'est moi.*" Putin is accused of systematic human rights abuses, including the elimination of a free press, repression of the opposition, and expulsion of many non-governmental organisations. For the purposes of this thesis, Putin's de facto nationalisation of the energy industry is the most noteworthy.

In the early 2000s Putin set out to consolidate his power. On the domestic front, Putin waged numerous battles with the so-called media and business barons in Russia (these individuals were seen as having unscrupulously sold Russia to the West during Yeltsin's tenure), but arguably his most famous confrontation was with Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Russia's richest man and founder of Yukos, formerly the country's largest oil producer. In 2003 Khodorkovsky was arrested by FSB agents on the tarmac of Novosibirsk airport as his plane landed for refuelling. He was charged with tax evasion, fraud, and embezzlement.<sup>428</sup>

Putin's critics claimed the charges were trumped up, arguing the real motives were Khodorkovsky's close relationship with the United States, his backing of the Iraq War, and

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<sup>427</sup> Lucas, *The New Cold War*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>428</sup> "Times Topics: Michael Khodorkovsky", *The New York Times*, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/mikhail\\_b\\_khodorkovsky/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/mikhail_b_khodorkovsky/index.html).

his plans to build an independent export pipeline which threatened the Kremlin's export monopoly. In particular, it was alleged that Khodorkovsky had plans to merge his outfit with American energy companies (ExxonMobil and/or Shell), which would give the United States greater influence in Russia's natural resources industry.<sup>429</sup> After the arrest, Yukos' shares plummeted as its assets were sold off to pay the exorbitant tax bills. Its remaining assets were subsequently carved up and sold to companies close to the Kremlin at bargain basement prices.<sup>430</sup>

## 7.5 Russian Energy Pincers in Europe: Tools of Regional Hegemonisation

Once Putin consolidated the Kremlin's control over the domestic energy sector, he turned to implement the foreign elements of his grand energy strategy. Moscow has been engaged in pipeline diplomacy for several decades. During the Cold War, and especially after the energy crises during the Yom Kippur War (1973) and the Iranian Revolution (1979), Western European countries concluded they needed to diversify their supply and reduce their reliance on the Middle East. While France decided to augment its nuclear industry, Germany opted to build a network of pipelines to the Soviet Union.<sup>431</sup>

During the Cold War, Ronald Reagan understood the geopolitical risks of the joint Soviet-German decision to build pipelines straddling East-Central Europe: he feared its construction would make Germany and the rest of Western Europe hostage to Soviet demands in the future. Although his efforts to halt the development of the pipelines failed,

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<sup>429</sup> Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>430</sup> "Yukos Oil Boosts Rosneft Profits", *BBC News*, 13 February 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4708056.stm>.

<sup>431</sup> Per Hogselius argues that a confluence of political and economic factors led to a series of decisions by governments and businesses in the 1960's which paved the way to Europe's dependence on Russian energy. Despite early US attempts to sabotage the Russian pipelines, the construction of the East-West pipeline network reveals a remarkable feat of European-Russian cooperation which arguably defied the logic of the Cold War. See Per Hogselius, *Red Gas: Russia and the Origins of European Energy Dependence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

his reservations were largely prescient. This is because once a natural gas pipeline is built, and an importing country's manufacturers and households begin to incorporate that natural gas in their daily processes and routines, they are often found at the mercy of the exporting country. Any disruption in the supply is bound to have political and economic ramifications, and it serves to make the importing country think twice before challenging the foreign policies of the exporting country.<sup>432</sup>

Therefore, the Soviet Union built pipelines to Western Europe not only to earn hard currency, but also to decouple Western Europe from the United States. However, in order to achieve this twin purpose, Soviet pipelines needed to traverse the states of Central and Eastern Europe. This was largely taken for granted during the Cold War, when the countries of the region were nothing more than pliant Soviet satellite states, which also received generous energy subsidies.

When the Cold War ended, the Soviet Union's pipeline infrastructure and subsidy structure largely remained intact. Moscow's grand strategic calculations remained the same as well, but its control over the states in Central and Eastern Europe slowly waned. The best soft instrument or non-military method to reassert that control was by threatening to cut off the subsidy system upon which these states had come to rely.

Arguably the most notorious use of the Kremlin's energy weapon occurred during the January 2006 Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis. Ukraine plays a vital role in Russia's geopolitical resurgence and its return to *derzhavnost*. On his grand chessboard, the former US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski described Ukraine as a geopolitical pivot without which Russia could not be a European great power.<sup>433</sup> Brzezinski's maxim – that there could be no Russian Empire without Ukraine – is oft-repeated in Russian political circles and

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<sup>432</sup> Marshall Goldman, *Oilopoly: Putin, Power, and the Rise of New Russia* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2010), pp. 137.

<sup>433</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

reflects a realisation that not only is Ukraine vital in itself for Russia's drive to re-assert its *derzhavnost* and regional hegemony, it is also crucial as a transit country for Russian energy supplies to Western Europe. Therefore, as a means to thwart Ukraine's pro-Western orientation, first adopted after the success of the Orange Revolution in 2004, Putin began threatening the country's subsidy network. He explained that Ukraine was free to choose a closer relationship with the West, but that such an approach would have consequences, namely that Ukraine would have to pay the same amount for gas as its western neighbours. Eliminating the subsidies was estimated to cost Ukraine \$3-5 billion a year, and since the United States was only providing Ukraine with \$150 million in aid, turning west would be a costly enterprise. In Putin's words, "Ukraine should think twice about any such embrace of the West."<sup>434</sup>

Russia cut off Ukraine from gas supplies in January 2006. The Russian Government insisted that the decision to stop sending gas to Ukraine was a commercial one: motivated first by a desire to bring prices more in line with the market rates being offered to Western Europe, and second as a means of combating inefficiency and profligacy in the Ukrainian energy industry. Putin became the de facto principal negotiator in Gazprom's dispute with Ukraine's western-orientated government led by President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Tymoshenko.<sup>435</sup> Putin put the squeeze on Ukraine from the onset: he started negotiating with a price of \$100 per thousand cubic meters (double the 2005 price), and ended up quoting \$230 per thousand cubic meters (the same price offered to Germany). The Kremlin believed that by cutting off Ukraine from the tap, they would put it in the unenviable position of being forced to siphon-off gas supplies heading to Western Europe. The Kremlin was right.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Goldman, *Oilopoly*, p. 144.

<sup>435</sup> Throughout his political career, Putin has been criticised for his close relationship with Gazprom. For instance, Marshall Goldman writes that "it is hard to tell where Putin ends and Gazprom begins." See Goldman, *Oilopoly*, pp. 139-144.

<sup>436</sup> Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, pp. 160-162.

At first Ukraine refused to be intimidated, and it continued to pay the lower price for the gas, citing the fact that Russia was contractually obliged to sell at the lower rate. Gazprom, on the other hand, claimed the contract had expired and sent just enough gas through Ukraine to meet its contractual obligations to customers in the rest of Europe.<sup>437</sup> With scores of its citizens freezing to death in the unusually harsh winter, Ukraine started to siphon-off gas supplies heading to Europe, which in turn triggered further winter fatalities downstream, especially in the Balkans. Some media outlets started blaming the energy crisis on Ukraine's brash policies, further contributing to its sense of isolation and weakening pro-western voices in the country. The Russian pipeline pincers had thus clamped down, and Ukraine was caught square in the middle.

However, for the most part western governments sided with the western-orientated leaders of Ukraine. They supported President Yushchenko's interpretation that this was a politically-motivated sinister move by Putin to undermine the democratically-elected government in Ukraine, especially since elections were approaching. The western press also largely supported the interpretation that Russia was flexing its muscles in a neo-imperial direction: for instance, *Le Monde* reported that "Russia has just pressed the energy button...the first war of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has been declared."<sup>438</sup>

Nonetheless, Putin's gamble was largely successful. In the 2006 Ukrainian parliamentary elections, the Moscow-backed candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, replaced Yulia Tymoshenko as Prime Minister. Although this was seen as a large victory for the Kremlin, in part because it cast some doubts on Ukraine's tilt to the western orbit, it did jolt the EU into

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<sup>437</sup> Goldman, *Oilopoly*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>438</sup> "Press Shivers from Gas Woes", *BBC News*, 3 January 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4578000.stm>.

thinking more about its common energy security policies, as the reliability of Russia as an energy partner was questioned.<sup>439</sup>

Ukraine was not the only state in the European Near Abroad which experienced the Russian energy pincers. The Baltic States have also felt the squeeze. For instance, in 2003 the Kremlin shut off shipments to the Latvian oil terminal at Ventspils, in the hope that such strong tactics would force its sale to a Russian oil company. In 2005, when Lithuania sold its oil refinery at Mazeikiai – the most important industrial installation in the Baltic States – to a Polish company rather than a competing Russian bidder, the Kremlin shut down the ironically-named *Druzhba* (“friendship”) pipeline that supplied it. The official explanation from the Kremlin was that the pipeline needed repairs, but the political overtones of the move were readily apparent.<sup>440</sup> When Lithuania offered to examine the nature of the problem, and to pay to rectify it, a visiting Russian parliamentarian is reported to have remarked: “Sorry, guys, you sold the refinery to the wrong people.”<sup>441</sup> Finally, in May 2007 a row erupted when the Estonian government attempted to relocate a bronze Soviet war memorial from the centre of Tallinn to a war cemetery. Russia’s response was predictable: cutting-off the tap. It was yet another indication of the political nature of Russia’s energy policy.<sup>442</sup>

During the Ukrainian crisis of January 2006, the Kremlin not only doubled prices to Ukraine, but also to other states in the European Near Abroad which were showing signs of tilting westwards, such as Moldova and Georgia. A strong indicator of the primacy of

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<sup>439</sup> Russia would employ similar tactics, for similar purposes, in the 2009 Russo-Ukrainian gas crisis. The former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko was eventually arrested for allegedly profiteering from these negotiations with Gazprom. See Andrew Kramer, “Judge Keeps Ukrainian Opposition Leader Jailed, Sparking Protest and Petitions”, *The New York Times*, 8 August 2011, <http://travel.nytimes.com/2011/08/09/world/europe/09ukraine.html>.

<sup>440</sup> Neil Buckley, “Moscow Seeks to Wield Petrol-Power as Political Tool”, *Financial Times*, 23 December 2005, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fe66ef0e-7357-11da-8b42-0000779e2340.html#axzz2Cqw84Ujc>.

<sup>441</sup> Quoted in Lucas, *The New Cold War*, p. 209.

<sup>442</sup> Olesya Dmitracova, “Russia to cut Estonia Fuel Transit Amid Statue Row”, *Reuters News Agency*, 2 May 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/05/02/us-estonia-russia-protest-idUSL0271267920070502>.

geopolitical calculus in Russia's energy policy is that Belarus, a loyal ally of the Kremlin, was still paying for gas at highly-subsidised rates.<sup>443</sup>

This was to change in the winter of 2007. Moscow decided to build a gas pipeline across Belarus in 1996 to reduce its reliance on – and increase its leverage over – Ukraine. Events followed a similar pattern to the crisis in Ukraine the previous year: Gazprom demanded a fourfold increase in the price of gas and ownership of Beltransgaz (Belarus' gas transport company). Belarus resisted and began siphoning-off oil. On 8 January 2007 Russia cut the taps on the *Druzhba* pipeline, the longest pipeline in the world, much to the consternation of Germany and Poland.<sup>444</sup> Belarus gradually capitulated: it agreed to lift a transit fee it was placing on Russian petroleum crossing the country and Gazprom was permitted to acquire a fifty percent stake in Beltransgaz.<sup>445</sup> By November 2011 Gazprom acquired the rest of it.<sup>446</sup>

Dmitri Trenin makes the argument that “Moscow's decision to withdraw subsidies from Minsk, however, was serious evidence supporting the basically commercial reasoning behind the ending of Russia's de facto subsidies to CIS countries.”<sup>447</sup> He argues that economics, rather than geopolitics, drives Russian energy policy. While at first sight this argument may seem plausible, it is ultimately unpersuasive, for two main reasons.

First, if Belarus was treated by the Kremlin in a strictly commercial manner, then it would not have stood alone among the states of the CIS from 2005 to 2007 in paying the same prices for gas as domestic customers in Russia.<sup>448</sup> In other words, Belarus was unique among the former Soviet states in receiving highly-subsidised gas prices for so long, and this

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<sup>443</sup> Buckley, “Moscow Seeks to Wield Petrol-Power as Political Tool.”

<sup>444</sup> “Belarus and Russia Dispute Cause of Oil Cutoff”, *The New York Times*, 7 January 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/09/world/europe/09belarus.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/09/world/europe/09belarus.html?_r=0).

<sup>445</sup> “Oil Row Hits European Oil Supply”, *BBC News*, 8 January 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/6240473.stm>.

<sup>446</sup> Denis Dyomkin, “Gazprom says Belarus Deal Agreed, No Gas Cuts for EU”, *Reuters News Agency*, 24 November 2011, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/11/24/russia-gazprom-idUSL5E7MO3IR20111124>.

<sup>447</sup> Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, p. 163.

<sup>448</sup> Jonathan Stern, *The Russian-Ukrainian Gas Crisis of January 2006*, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, 16 January 2006, <http://www.avim.org.tr/icerik/energy-gas.pdf>.

state of affairs was a reward for Belarus' bandwagoning with Russia and predicated on the basis that Gazprom would eventually acquire Beltransgaz (which it did). Secondly, Belarus under the Lukashenko regime – described by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as the “last dictatorship in Europe” – hardly had any foreign policy options other than its continued dependence on Russia. Putin would have been keenly aware of this geopolitical fact and known that he could give Belarus a *tour de force* without any serious fear that the Europeans would welcome Lukashenko with open arms.

In sum, these episodes demonstrate that the Russian Federation has been attempting to re-assert its influence in the European Near Abroad. In particular, Russia has wielded its petrol-power to great effect in the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. The following sections will further demonstrate how Russia has attempted to maximise its influence over these states by building a network of pipelines directly to their customers in Western and Southern Europe.

## **7.6 Russian Pipeline Diplomacy I: Undercutting Nabucco**

Russia's project of regional hegemonisation through the use of pipeline politics can be best surveyed through comparing and contrasting the stories of two pipelines: Nabucco and Nord Stream. As Figure 7.5 below illustrates, the former is an EU and US backed project connecting Europe with the natural gas reservoirs of Central Asia, whereas the latter is a joint Russo-German project which leapfrogs the transit states of Central and Eastern Europe. Both pipelines exemplify an important issue which is at the nexus of economic and geopolitical strategy.

**Figure 7.5: EU/US- and Russian-sponsored Pipeline Projects in Eurasia**<sup>449</sup>



The origins of the Nabucco project can be traced to one evening in 2002, when a group of executives from a handful of Central and South European states met in Vienna to discuss the construction of a new gas pipeline.<sup>450</sup> Verdi's Nabucco was playing that night, which is what they ultimately decided to call the pipeline.<sup>451</sup> The plans crafted by this consortium of companies eventually attracted wider EU backing and became the flagship project for the EU's diversification efforts.<sup>452</sup>

The project's primary purpose is to transport a planned 31 billion cubic meters of gas per year to Europe from four possible sources: Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Central Asia. The

<sup>449</sup> Source: "Pipedreams: America seems to care more than the European Union about Eastern Europe", *The Economist*, 24 January 2008, <http://www.economist.com/node/10566657>.

<sup>450</sup> This group included executives from Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

<sup>451</sup> Erkan Ergogdu, "Bypassing Russia: Nabucco Project and Its European Gas Security", *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, vol. 14, no. 9, 2010, p. 2937.

<sup>452</sup> See J.D.A. Tarasov, "The Making of Empires: Russia's Gas Exporting Pipelines v Nabucco", *Journal of World Energy Law & Business*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2011, pp. 77-87; Pavel Baev and Indra Overland, "The South Stream versus Nabucco Pipeline Race: Geopolitical and Economic (Ir)rationalities and Stakes in Mega-Projects", *International Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 5, 2010, p. 1077.

gas pipeline would parallel the recently completed BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) petroleum pipeline which traverses Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, but instead of leading towards a port on Turkey's Mediterranean coast, it would travel towards the Bulgarian border all the way towards Vienna, thereby reaching one of Europe's central gas hubs.<sup>453</sup>

If the project becomes a success it will have numerous strategic implications in Europe and Central Asia. First, it would reduce the leverage Russia has over countries in Central Asia such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan which at present supply nearly all of their natural gas through Russian pipelines. Secondly, it would break Gazprom's monopoly of supply and greatly increase Europe's bargaining power over the price of gas. And thirdly, it would reduce the leverage that Russia has over the states in the European Near Abroad.<sup>454</sup>

Putin is keenly aware of these geostrategic implications and seems to view the energy issue as a giant chess match: like a Russian grandmaster, he has systematically set out to undermine his competitors' plans. He has done this by employing a three-pronged strategy: undercutting the supply, discouraging the demand, and promoting an alternative pipeline – the so-called South Stream project.

However, Putin's concentrated efforts to stymie the European plans did not truly get underway until it crystallised that the plans were also co-sponsored by the United States. On 5 May 2006, a day after lambasting Russia for using its oil and natural gas as "political tools for intimidation or blackmail," US Vice President Dick Cheney travelled to Kazakhstan to expressly promote the construction of an alternative pipeline which would bypass Russia. He was intent on securing Kazakhstan's approval to serve as a potential source of supply for Nabucco. In particular, he envisaged the construction of a pipeline under the Caspian Sea linking Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan, thereby flanking Kazakhstan's Soviet-era pipelines which

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<sup>453</sup> "Nabucco Gas Pipeline: Gasbridge Between Asia & Europe", <http://www.nabucco-pipeline.com>.

<sup>454</sup> Lucas, *The New Cold War*, pp. 227-228.

run north to Russia. During the trip Cheney made sure to shun questions concerning Kazakhstan's human rights record.<sup>455</sup>

This circumspection was geostrategically imperative in light of the May 2005 unrest in neighbouring Uzbekistan. During that crisis Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan since 1990, ordered a violent crackdown of demonstrators in Andijan. Although the Russian and Chinese governments remained reticent, declaring that the issue was a matter of Uzbekistan's internal affairs, the US government criticised Karimov for alleged human rights abuses. Karimov punished the United States for this seeming indiscretion by expelling its military from the former Soviet base at Karshi-Khanabad, much to the delight of the Russians and the Chinese.<sup>456</sup>

It is interesting to note that the manner in which Uzbekistan terminated its basing agreement with the United States strongly suggests Russian and Chinese soft balancing dynamics were at play. For instance, on 5 July 2005 the presidents of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan officially responded to Russia's calls to end US military presence in Central Asia by signing a declaration during a SCO meeting in Astana. The choice of venue at which they decided to officially terminate the US basing agreement was significant: not only did the representatives of Russia and China attend this meeting, but so did representatives from India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan, which meant that the representatives negotiating at the table represented approximately half of humanity. In particular, the declaration stated: "as the active military phase in the anti-terror operation in Afghanistan is nearing completion, the SCO would like the coalition's members to decide on the deadline for the use of the temporary infrastructure and for their military contingents'

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<sup>455</sup> Ilan Greenberg and Andrew Kramer, "Cheney, Visiting Kazakhstan, Wades into Energy Battle", *The New York Times*, 6 May 2006,

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/06/world/europe/06cheney.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/06/world/europe/06cheney.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&).

<sup>456</sup> Jim Nichol, "Uzbekistan's Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications", *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, Wikileaks Document Release, 2 February 2009, <http://wlstorage.net/file/crs/RS22295.pdf>.

presence in those countries.” In response, Richard Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the top ranking US general, accused Russia and China of deliberately “trying to bully” Central Asian states into passing a timetable for the withdrawal of US forces, and for using the SCO as a vehicle for the attainment of this end.<sup>457</sup> As the third chapter argued, denying the unipolar leader the use of its military bases around the world is a classic indicator of non-military soft balancing.

Not only was the US base closed, but Uzbekistan terminated other military-to-military exchanges and training, including anti-terrorism cooperation, which were important elements in America’s war effort in Afghanistan. Perhaps most importantly, Karimov turned around instantly and solidified his relations with Russia and China. Unlike the United States, Russia and China were well rewarded for their reticence during the Andijan unrest. For instance, in mid-November 2005 Russia and Uzbekistan signed the Treaty on Allied Relations which called for both sides to have access to each other’s military installations and for mutual defence consultations in the event of a threat to either party. This is yet another indication of a military arrangement or compact which falls short of a formal, war-fighting alliance or hard balancing, but it nonetheless serves to limit US influence in the strategic Central Asian arena. It may be viewed as an activity akin to soft balancing against the United States. For its part, the Chinese hosted Karimov in late May 2005 and signed an accord on investment in the Uzbek energy field. Uzbekistan’s Defence Minister Qodir Gulomov, who according to US intelligence was “very intent upon Westernizing” the armed forces and increasing interoperability with NATO forces, was also sacked in late 2005.<sup>458</sup> The loss of Uzbekistan may be interpreted as a direct unintended consequence of Bush’s wider Freedom Agenda in the Middle East and the former-Soviet states.

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<sup>457</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, “Russia and China Bully Central Asia, U.S. Says”, *The Washington Post*, 15 July 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/14/AR2005071401768.html>; and Nichol, “Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad”.

<sup>458</sup> Nichol, “Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad”.

Dmitry Trofimov, a research specialist who worked in the Department of Foreign Policy Planning at the Russian Foreign Ministry, has summarised Russia's national interests in Central Asia along five main points: stability in the region based on close cooperation with the regional states; unimpeded rights of transit to reach China, India, and Iran; economic and energy integration and development; the use of the region's geostrategic potential for Russia's practical military needs; and international recognition of Russia's predominant role in the region.<sup>459</sup>

Given these wide geostrategic interests, it is unsurprising that Putin reacted to American forays into Central Asia with considerable haste by implementing the first and second prongs of his energy strategy: undercutting Nabucco's supply base and discouraging international demand for the project. He first moved to neutralise Cheney's diplomacy by personally visiting Kazakhstan in June to persuade President Nazarbayev and international investors that the Western-backed pipeline would not be financially feasible.<sup>460</sup> In September, in an attempt to undercut another potential pool of gas for Nabucco, Putin solidified Russia's relations with Turkmenistan and acceded to its request for a forty-percent price increase for natural gas from \$65 per 1000 cubic meters (tcm) to \$100 per tcm.

Saparmurat Niyazov, the President of Turkmenistan from 1990 until his death in 2006, had been gradually increasing the requested price since April 2003. This is when Putin, in geostrategic masterstroke, signed two pacts with Turkmenistan. The first pact, on security, pledged closer Russo-Turkmen cooperation to counter outside threats, and in particular, to coordinate foreign policy activities and broaden cooperation between special services.<sup>461</sup> More significantly, under the terms of the second pact on energy, Turkmenistan contracted to supply Russia with up to 2 trillion cubic meters of gas (nearly all of its gas

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<sup>459</sup> Dmitry Trofimov, "Russia and the United States in Central Asia: Problems, Prospects and Interests", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2003, p. 76; quoted in Roy Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy", *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 2, 2004, p. 284.

<sup>460</sup> Goldman, *Oilopoly*, p. 149.

<sup>461</sup> Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy", p. 289.

reserves) at a price of \$44 per tcm for the next 25 years.<sup>462</sup> It was a geostrategic triumph for Putin since he managed to shore-up Russia's southern flank in the energy war by de facto eliminating Turkmenistan as a realistic source of supply for Nabucco.<sup>463</sup>

The timing of this pact – one month after the US-led invasion of Iraq – once again suggests it was motivated by a desire to balance against increasing US expansionism in the region. Niyazev, who followed Ataturk's *modus operandi* by proclaiming himself “Turkmenbashi” (the father of the Turkmens) and successfully building a cult of personality around himself, was also undoubtedly interested in finding an ally in Moscow which would shield his domestic position from Bush's Freedom Agenda. The security and energy pacts were not formal war-fighting alliances directed against any third party, but they did serve to indicate a clear red line where expanding US influence would not be brooked.

Not only has Putin been undermining the supply base of Nabucco in the Central Asian states, he has also been destabilising potential transit states in the Caucasus. This is most evident in his systematic campaign to destabilise the Saakashvili regime since the Rose Revolution in 2003. Russia's pernicious relations with Georgia will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

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<sup>462</sup> Sergei Blagov, “Russia Bows to Turkmenistan's Gas Pricing Demand”, *Eurasianet*, 5 September 2006, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav090606.shtml>.

<sup>463</sup> However, Russia's success on the energy front needs to be assessed in the light of China's increasing involvement in Central Asia. Turkmenistan has also signed energy pacts with China and its commitments have often exceeded its capacity to supply. In fact, China has supplanted Russia as the main importer of gas from Turkmenistan in late 2009, and in September 2013 the Chinese and Turkmen presidents symbolically inaugurated the world's second-largest gas field in Galkynysh. See Marat Gurt, “China Asserts Clout in Central Asia with Huge Turkmen Gas Project”, *Reuters News Agency*, 4 September 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/04/us-gas-turkmenistan-galkynysh-idUSBRE9830MN20130904>.

**Figure 7.6: Planned Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline Project and Transit States**<sup>464</sup>



As Figure 7.6 above demonstrates, one of the crucial elements in the Nabucco strategy is to construct a supplementary Trans-Caspian pipeline skirting Russia and Iran and connecting the gas resources of Central Asia with the transit states in the Caucasus. Unsurprisingly, Russia has endeavoured to foil these plans, and it has been largely successful.<sup>465</sup> Less surprising is the method with which Russia has accomplished this task:

<sup>464</sup> Source: Catherine Fitzpatrick, "EU Seeks to Broker Trans-Caspian Pipeline Deal Between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan; Russia Finds Project 'Absurd'", *Eurasianet*, 10 August 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61716>.

<sup>465</sup> One alternative to the Trans-Caspian pipeline includes further development of the Shah Deniz gas field located off the coast of Azerbaijan. A consortium of firms led by BP and Statoil are investing in Stage 2 of the field's development which is expected to add a further 16 billion cubic meters per year (bcma) of gas production to the approximately nine bcma produced by Shah Deniz Stage 1. A newly constructed "Trans-Anatolia" pipeline would deliver the extra capacity of gas to Europe. The first deliveries to Europe are scheduled for 2019. These developments also represent a serious challenge to success of Nabucco, notwithstanding reassurances from Turkish officials that the new pipeline would "complement" Nabucco. See "Shah Deniz Stage 2", *BP Website*, <http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=9046884&contentId=7080518>; Ferruh Dermirmen, "BP-SOCAR duo deliver 'coup de grace' to Nabucco", *News AZ*, 19 December 2011, <http://www.news.az/articles/economy/51212>; Vladimir Socor, "Interest Growing All-Round in Trans-Anatolia Pipeline Project", *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, vol. 9, no. 70, 9 April 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[swords\]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx)

the force of legal argument. Russia maintains that there is an unresolved dispute as to whether the Caspian is a sea or a lake, and accordingly, which type of legal regime for demarcation of international territories applies to this body of water.

At first, the Russian Foreign Ministry espoused the notion that the body of water was actually a lake, because if it was classified as a sea under international law, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea would be the applicable legal regime, with the undesirable consequence that the majority of the Caspian's rich oil deposits would belong to other states. On the other hand, if the body of water is classified as a lake under international law, the littoral states would have a de facto veto over its economic exploitation. Eventually Russia dropped this line of argument in favour of a hybrid-condominium approach: *i.e.* the floor of the lake should be divided, but the actual water above it should be shared commonly. In any case, Moscow maintains that since the applicable legal regime is in dispute, this precludes the littoral states from constructing pipelines without the consent of the other littoral states.<sup>466</sup> This dispute on the legal battlefield serves to illustrate how the Russian Federation is willing to use international law as a tool to advance its economic interests, and if the region is viewed in zero-sum terms, then the Russian manoeuvres may be viewed as an effort to balance US interests in an area of strategic importance.

Nonetheless, Russia is prudent enough to buttress its legal arguments with a sizeable Caspian Flotilla of frigates and coastal missile systems, and in May 2007 Putin may have come close to striking a death blow to the Trans-Caspian pipeline project by implementing the third prong of his strategy: promoting alternative pipelines. He met with the heads of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and agreed to build a new gas pipeline along the coast of the Caspian. The new pipeline will carry Turkmen and Kazakh gas over land (not submerged)

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[\\_ttnews\[any\\_of\\_the\\_words\]=Nabucco&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=39244&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=fc61942e82f6a89b2d9474d9576513b5#.Ur0Fy7TzbSg.](#)

<sup>466</sup> Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, p. 166; and Timothy Thomas, "Russian National Interests and the Caspian Sea", *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1999-2000, pp. 75-96.

across Russian territory and into world markets. Although Turkmenistan was careful to declare that the Trans-Caspian pipeline project had not been ruled-out in principle, the deal cast further doubt on the political and financial feasibility of the Nabucco project.<sup>467</sup>

The following month Putin dealt one more blow to Nabucco: in June 2007 Gazprom and ENI, the Italian energy giant, signed a memorandum providing for the construction of a gas pipeline to bring gas to Southern Europe in a route paralleling Nabucco. Putin's close personal relationship with the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was instrumental in the deal's signing.<sup>468</sup> The ambitious joint venture seeks to send 30 billion cubic meters per year (bcma) from Beregovaya on the Russian Black Sea coast by a subterranean pipeline planned to make landfall at Varna on the northern Bulgarian coast. As Figure 7.7 below illustrates, the original plan was to have the pipeline traverse Bulgaria until it splintered into two heads, with one heading to southern Italy via Greece and the other to northern Italy via Romania, Serbia, Hungary, and Slovenia. The proposed project, which is an extension of the underwater pipeline connecting Russia and Turkey (Blue Stream), would make it the most expensive pipeline project in the world. The Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko explained that Russia only has one goal with its new project: "to get under Ukraine's skin."<sup>469</sup> Construction has started in December 2012 and original Russo-Italian consortium has since expanded to include France's EDF and Germany's BASF.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Kulpash Konyrova, "Putin Deal Torpedoes Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline Plans", *New Europe: The European Weekly*, issue 730, 17 May 2007.

<sup>468</sup> Baev and Overland, "The South Stream versus Nabucco Pipeline Race", p. 1076.

<sup>469</sup> "Russia to Build Most Expensive Gas Project in History", *Pravda*, 09 February 2009, [http://english.pravda.ru/russia/economics/09-02-2009/107079-russia\\_gas\\_project-0/](http://english.pravda.ru/russia/economics/09-02-2009/107079-russia_gas_project-0/).

<sup>470</sup> Elizabeth Konstantinova, "Bulgaria Signs South Stream, Gas Supply Accords with Russia", *Bloomberg*, 15 November 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-11-15/bulgaria-signs-south-stream-gas-supply-accords-with-russia-1-.html>.

**Figure 7.7: The US and EU-backed Nabucco versus Russia-backed South Stream<sup>471</sup>**



Putin has also been endeavouring to create a Russian-led cartel of gas countries structured along the lines of OPEC. This is yet another Russian strategy to solidify its control over the world's gas supply. On 22 October 2008 Alexey Miller, the chairman of Gazprom, announced that Russia, Iran, and Qatar are forming a “big gas troika” and warned that “the era of cheap hydrocarbons has come to an end.” With the three countries controlling around sixty percent of the world's supply of gas, Miller's words were not mere bluster, and the price of gas skyrocketed overnight.<sup>472</sup>

Putin has also skilfully employed divide-and-rule tactics within the states of the European Near Abroad. Hungary may serve as an apt example. At a 2006 commemoration in Budapest marking the fiftieth anniversary of Hungary's uprising against Soviet rule, Putin offered some guarded words of apology and sought to persuade the Hungarians that they should support South Stream rather than Nabucco. He promised to turn Hungary into a hub of

<sup>471</sup> Erkan Ergogdu, “Bypassing Russia: Nabucco Project and Its European Gas Security”, *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, vol. 14, no. 9, 2010, p. 2941.

<sup>472</sup> Terry Macalister, “Russia, Iran and Qatar Announce Cartel that will Control 60% of World's Gas Supplies”, *The Guardian*, 22 October 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2008/oct/22/gas-russia-gazprom-iran-qatar>.

Russian gas, and his efforts seem to have succeeded: the following year Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany, who leads the former Communist Party, declared that Hungary would support South Stream over Nabucco. In particular, he described Nabucco as “a long dream and an old plan...but we don’t need dreams, we need projects.”<sup>473</sup> Hungary would eventually vacillate and return their support to Nabucco, but the episode shows the ease with which Putin can divide Nabucco’s supporters.

The same is true of Bulgaria, where the ex-communist government is deeply influenced by Russian business interests. For instance, Russia’s Lukoil owns and operates a large oil refinery in Burgas which is among the Balkan country’s greatest taxpayers. Furthermore, in 2007 Russia’s state-owned pipeline company, Transneft, contracted with the Bulgarian and Greek governments to build a pipeline from Burgas to Alexandroupolis on the Aegean Sea. The pipeline would flank Turkish pipelines and further increase Russia’s footprint in the Balkans.<sup>474</sup> In the end it seems that both Bulgaria and Hungary would stand to benefit if both the Russian and Western projects were built through their territories, and they do not feel any pan-European sense of solidarity to ensure that Nabucco is a success.

The energy war between the backers of Nabucco and South Steam is thus well underway, and the economics of gas pipelines is relatively simple: whichever side constructs the first pipeline has a great advantage. The first side can offer the cheapest price and dissuade international investors from backing alternative projects.<sup>475</sup> Nabucco has been beset by a number of problems, and the Russians seem to have a decisive head start. Putin skilfully meets every one of his rival’s moves with an even more attractive offer. Russia’s advantage

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<sup>473</sup> Neil Barnett, “Putin’s Game in European Energy: Divide and Conquer”, *The Spectator*, 31 October 2007, <http://www.spectator.co.uk/columnists/any-other-business/313871/putins-game-in-european-energy-divide-and-conquer/>.

<sup>474</sup> Just recently the Bulgarian parliament has cancelled the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline project citing financial and environmental concerns. See “Bulgarian Parliament Cancels Finally Burgas-Alexandroupolis Oil Pipeline Agreement”, *FOCUS News Agency*, 12 March 2013, <http://focus-fen.net/?id=n301466>.

<sup>475</sup> Lucas, *The New Cold War*, p. 230.

becomes even more apparent when the trials and tribulations of the Nabucco story are contrasted with the triumph of Nord Stream.

## 7.7 Russian Pipeline Diplomacy II: Nord Stream

Nord Stream is the world's longest subterranean pipeline which connects Vyborg, Russia with Greifswald, Germany via the Baltic Sea. Gazprom is the majority shareholder in the pipeline, alongside two major partners from Germany and one minor partner each from France and the Netherlands. The pipeline seeks to send 55 billion cubic meters of Russian gas to Germany and other countries downstream each year.<sup>476</sup> From its inception the pipeline has been mired by controversy.

Edward Lucas describes Nord Stream as “the child of the most notorious diplomatic alliance in Europe’s modern history, between the previous German government headed by Mr. Schroder and Mr. Putin’s Kremlin.”<sup>477</sup> Although this statement may have more than a hint of hyperbole, it is no secret that Schroder caused much consternation in Berlin and Brussels when, a few days after leaving office, he announced he was becoming the chairman of Nord Stream. The German Chancellor had a close personal relationship with Putin, spending Christmas and other holidays with the Russian leader, and the two were directly involved in the negotiations over the pipeline’s construction.<sup>478</sup> The fifth chapter documented how each leader closely collaborated to soft balance against the United States in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. Schroder’s conflict of interest was even more apparent when it became clear that a few weeks before stepping down as Chancellor, he allegedly

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<sup>476</sup> Nord Stream Official Website, <http://www.nord-stream.com/pipeline/>.

<sup>477</sup> Lucas, *The New Cold War*, p. 215.

<sup>478</sup> Andrea Mrozek, “Playmates or Politicians? The German Media is Put Out by the Chancellor’s Conduct in Moscow”, *Central Europe Review*, vol. 3, no. 2, 15 January 2001.

guaranteed to cover a one billion euro loan for Gazprom.<sup>479</sup> The incorporation of Nord Stream in Zug, Switzerland – known for its banking secrecy laws – and the appointment of Matthais Warnig – a former senior officer in the *Stasi* who allegedly met Putin in Dresden during his days with the KGB – did not serve to improve the project’s reputation for transparency and accountability.<sup>480</sup>

Despite these inauspicious beginnings and various attempts by states in the European Near Abroad to block the construction of the project (these will be examined in the next chapter), Nord Stream officially became operational in November 2011. Angela Merkel, Schroder’s replacement as German Chancellor, and Dmitry Medvedev, Putin’s replacement as Russian President, symbolically turned a wheel to start the flow of gas at an opening ceremony on the Russian Baltic Coast.<sup>481</sup> Putin had succeeded in leapfrogging the troublesome states of the European Near Abroad.

## 7.8 Summarising Russia’s Regional Hegemonisation

This chapter has argued that the Russian Federation is the unequivocal regional hegemon in the European Near Abroad. The chapter also argued that not only is Russia the undisputed regional hegemon in the European Near Abroad – but as the dictates of offensive realism would predict – it has been seeking to consolidate and expand its influence in the area. In other words, Russia has been engaged in a project of regional hegemonisation, and it

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<sup>479</sup> Once this fact became apparent, Gazprom promised not to draw on the loan or take advantage of it in any manner. See Tobias Buck, “EU to Probe German Gas Pipeline Guarantee”, *Financial Times*, 8 May 2007, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4b16eef6-deb2-11da-acee-0000779e2340.html#axzz2PWmMVBpc>.

<sup>480</sup> Warnig denies these allegations, explaining that he met Putin for the first time in St. Petersburg in 1991. Lucas, *The New Cold War*, p. 219.

<sup>481</sup> Gerrit Wiesmann, “Russia-EU Gas Pipeline Delivers First Supplies”, *Financial Times*, 8 November 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/51ea636e-0a14-11e1-8d46-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2PWmMVBpc>; “Controversial Project Launched: Merkel and Medvedev Open Baltic Gas Pipeline”, *Spiegel*, 8 November 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/controversial-project-launched-merkel-and-medvedev-open-baltic-gas-pipeline-a-796611.html>.

has been defining its national interests in terms which would be very familiar to a nineteenth century Russian Tsar: spheres of influence, balances of power, buffer states, and realpolitik.

However, although the current regime's diplomatic objectives may look strikingly familiar to the great statesmen of the nineteenth century, its tools have radically changed: although the Tsars of Imperial Russia and Chairmen of the Soviet Union were willing to use hard power to achieve their goals on the Continent, contemporary Russian leaders have been relying on oil and gas as their main weapon of choice. The energy race between Russia and the West has thus become the new great game, and the battlefield has largely been in the European Near Abroad.

Thus far Putin has played the game masterfully, employing a comprehensive divide-and-conquer strategy to consolidate Russia's influence in its neighbourhood. However, although Putin clearly stands out as a brilliant Russian chess player – meeting every one of his opponent's moves with an even more brilliant response – he did inherit Russia's penchant for regional hegemonisation from his predecessors. In fact, writing as early as 1997, Russia specialist S. Neil MacFarlane explained that:

Russia has clear hegemonic aspirations in the former Soviet space. Although a wide array of opinions is expressed on Russian policy in the newly independent states in the media and in parliament, a dominant consensus appears to have emerged among foreign policy influentials on the need for active presence and influence in the area. Such views have been widely expressed in official statements, influential statements by independent policy groups, and by advisers to the president, influential political figures, and the president himself. The hegemonic component of Russian policy in the 'near abroad' is evident in its efforts to restore Russian control over the external borders of the former Soviet Union, to reassume control over the Soviet air defence network, to obtain agreements on basing Russian forces in the non-Russian republics, and by its obvious sensitivity to external military presences (including multilateral ones) on the soil of the former Soviet Union. To judge from Russian policy on Caspian Sea and Central Asian energy development, it extends beyond the political/security realm and into the economic one.<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, "On the Front Lines in the Near Abroad: the CIS and the OSCE in Georgia's Civil Wars", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1997, p. 521.

However, although the ultimate goal – regional hegemonisation – may be the same, the energy weapon has increasingly become the weapon of choice during Putin’s reign. It is the sword of Damocles which dangles over the head of the European Near Abroad every winter. As Ariel Cohen aptly summarises, Russia creates political dependency in Europe by “*locking in demand* with energy importers, *consolidating the supply* of oil and gas by signing long-term contracts with Central Asian energy producers, and *securing control of strategic energy infrastructure* in Europe and Eurasia.”<sup>483</sup>

It is apparent how Russia “locked in demand” by signing long-term contracts with European countries, and how Russia’s preferred *modus operandi* has been to deal bilaterally with states (such as Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, and Italy) rather than through the common institutions in the EU. It is also apparent how Russia “locked in supply” by signing long-term contracts with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, and flanked Western attempts to build a Trans-Caspian pipeline through a combination of legal arguments and alternative pipelines. Russia has also been consolidating its strategic control over energy infrastructure in Europe, including pipelines and downstream assets. This was seen in the dispute over the oil terminal in Latvia, oil refinery in Lithuania, various manoeuvres by Gazprom to purchase stakes in national energy companies, and most vividly, with the construction of Nord Stream and South Stream. Most importantly, all of these moves reflect a strategic calculus in Moscow to divide Eastern and Western Europe and solidify Russian hegemony over the European Near Abroad. The next chapter will examine the region’s responses to Russia’s hegemony.

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<sup>483</sup> Ariel Cohen, “Europe’s Strategic Dependence on Russian Energy”, *The Heritage Foundation*, 5 November 2007, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/11/europes-strategic-dependence-on-russian-energy>.

## **CHAPTER 8: TRIPARTITE STRATEGIC BALANCING IN THE EUROPEAN NEAR**

### **ABROAD AND THE 2008 RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR**

“Russia is a great power that has expanded for four hundred years. Four hundred years of foreign policy indicate a certain proclivity. Our problem is to encourage Russia to stay within its borders.”

- Henry Kissinger, Speech at Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom, 1995<sup>484</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to test the theory of tripartite strategic balancing in one specific unipolar regional system: the European Near Abroad. It examines how the states of the region have been reacting to Russia’s regional hegemony. It explores how well the three independent variables – unipolarity, perceived intentions, and geographical proximity – explain international political outcomes in the region since the end of the Cold War. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War, which was a watershed moment in the international relations of the region, will receive appropriate elucidation. The analysis will be centred largely on the foreign policies of Poland – the region’s second strongest state. It will be argued that Poland has led a soft balancing coalition against the Russian Federation in the European Near Abroad. This soft balancing intensified during the August War – which was seen as an aggressive, unilateral military policy by the region’s hegemon – and it correspondingly slipped into traditional hard balancing of both the internal and external variants.

This chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first section briefly sets out the region’s historical background since 1989, when Soviet suzerainty began to crumble, and it describes Poland’s early attempts at soft balancing, primarily through its role in the Orange Revolution and its energy policy. The second section examines the road to the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and the third discusses the outbreak of hostilities. Sections four and five examine the war’s consequences: namely the intensification of soft balancing and a return to

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<sup>484</sup> Quoted in Martin Sieff, “President’s Policy on Russia Faulted as Too Optimistic”, *Washington Times*, 5 March 1995.

traditional hard balancing. The sixth section discusses the legacy of the war: *i.e.* the institutionalisation of soft balancing through the Eastern Partnership Programme. The last section evaluates how well the theory of tripartite strategic balancing explains international political outcomes in the European Near Abroad with specific reference to the August War.

### **8.1 European Near Abroad Since Independence: Early Balancing**

As the previous chapter illustrated, the region of the European Near Abroad underwent a profound geopolitical transformation at the turn of the twenty-first century. It changed from being a de facto appendage of one superpower – the Soviet Union – to one characterised by several independent states and one hegemonic state.

Although a detailed discussion of the region's road to NATO and EU membership is beyond the purview of this dissertation, it is instructive to note that the region's first decade since independence could largely be characterised as an attempt to anchor itself in western military, political, and economic institutions. Many states in the region viewed the 1990s as a historic window of opportunity to accomplish this – a window that might not be open indefinitely. By 1999 Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary became the first members of the former Soviet bloc to be formally accepted into NATO.<sup>485</sup>

However, the region's quest to join NATO was not complete. In May 2000, the remaining group of NATO-aspirant countries formed the Vilnius Group (V-10) and pledged to work together towards NATO enlargement. The Vilnius Group consisted of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (seven states in the European Near Abroad).

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<sup>485</sup> For a discussion of the region's road to NATO membership see Janusz Bugajski and Ilona Teleki, *Atlantic Bridges: America's New European Allies* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

Dariusz Wisniewski, a senior official at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explains that Poland played a seminal role in the formation and promotion of the V-10. He described the V-10 as a “soft balancing tool designed to undermine Russian influence in Europe.”<sup>486</sup> The ten member states used the Vilnius Group as an institutional framework to meet regularly and adopt common security positions, such as supporting the United States and balancing against Russia.

For instance, they used it to adopt the so-called “Vilnius letter” – a joint statement of ten foreign ministers in support of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. The V-10 also pledged military assistance to the US war effort.<sup>487</sup> In fact, the region’s seemingly unwavering support for the United States won it a new sobriquet in Washington: “New Europe.” At a briefing to the foreign press in January 2003, the US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld responded to a question over the Iraqi crisis with the following remarks:

You’re thinking of Europe as Germany and France. I don’t. I think that’s old Europe. If you look at the entire NATO Europe today, the center of gravity is shifting to the east...you look at vast numbers of other countries in Europe. They’re not with France and Germany on this, they’re with the United States.<sup>488</sup>

However, arguably the most important legacy of the Vilnius Group framework is that it served to facilitate its members’ eventual transition to NATO. At the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague, the alliance officially welcomed the three Baltic States, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia to start accession talks. The Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski stated that “these were countries that had been forced into the Soviet Empire after 1945. Now they were joining NATO as sovereign states. It honestly brought tears to

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<sup>486</sup> Interview with Dariusz Wisniewski, Senior Director at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 28 December 2011.

<sup>487</sup> “Statement of the Vilnius Group Countries”, *Novinite.com*, 5 February 2003, [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=19022](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=19022).

<sup>488</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, “Secretary Rumsfeld Briefs at the Foreign Press Center”, United States Department of Defence, 22 January 2003, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1330>.

my eyes.”<sup>489</sup> Dariusz Wisniewski explained that “the underlying, though unspoken, purpose behind Poland’s promotion and support for the Vilnius Group was to balance Russia and increase its geopolitical security.”<sup>490</sup> With the sole exception of the Republic of Macedonia, all of the member states have become fully-fledged members of the security alliance.<sup>491</sup> Thus, by March 2004 the western half of the European Near Abroad had largely integrated into the military, political, and economic institutions of Western Europe. The V-10, a soft balancing organisation promoted and supported by Poland, ultimately paved the way for membership in a hard balancing organisation – NATO.

With the western half of the region secured, the world’s attention soon swung to the eastern part of the region. In particular, a political battle was looming in Ukraine. The Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma’s term in office was coming to an end in 2004, and the upcoming election was destined to become a watershed moment in modern Ukrainian history. The leading candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, sought to re-orientate Ukraine towards the West through NATO and EU membership. He was opposed by the Moscow-backed candidate Viktor Yanukovich. Given Ukraine’s strategic importance to Russia’s status as a great power, Putin invested a substantial amount of political capital by travelling to Kiev on several occasions before the election and sent his official advisors.

Despite having his face horribly disfigured by poisonous dioxin in an assassination attempt on his life a few weeks before the election, Yushchenko still led the opinion polls. Thus, when the official results indicated Yanukovich was the true victor on 21 November 2004, many observers suspected widespread electoral fraud. It also did not help that Putin personally called Yanukovich to congratulate him on the victory before the results were

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<sup>489</sup> BBC Interview with Aleksander Kwasniewski, *Putin, Russia and the West: Democracy Threatens*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 26 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

<sup>490</sup> Interview with Dariusz Wisniewski, Senior Director at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 28 December 2011.

<sup>491</sup> The Republic of Macedonia’s application for membership in 2009 was blocked by Greece due to a naming dispute.

counted. Yushchenko called on his supporters, who were draped in orange cloths, to march on Kiev's Independence Square. The Orange Revolution had begun.<sup>492</sup>

For the next five days the country was turned into a diplomatic battleground between the forces of Russia and the West. External influences were instrumental in the success of the democratic revolution.<sup>493</sup> Poland's role in its success –through both official and societal channels – was particularly noteworthy.<sup>494</sup>

After a few days of widespread strikes, sit-ins, and marches, a political impasse was reached and Kuchma decided to call outside assistance. He called Putin first and was appalled to hear the Russian leader “drop hints about putting tanks on the streets.” Kuchma responded that he “would not use force to clear the square. There are children there. How would that end?” He then called Kwasniewski and invited him to Kiev to diffuse the situation.<sup>495</sup>

The Polish President, along with Valdas Adamkus, the President of Lithuania, arrived in Kiev on 26 November. As part of a deliberate strategy to buttress their negotiating position, they brought along a reluctant Javier Solana, the foreign policy chief of the European Union. The current US Ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, explains that although representatives from the United States were taking an active role in the crisis, they preferred to stay behind the scenes and gave Poland the lead role.<sup>496</sup> Kwasniewski suggested that the two parties hold round table talks – modelled on the 1989 Polish Round Table Talks

<sup>492</sup> For an account of the Orange Revolution, see Anders Aslund and Michael McFaul, eds., *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of the Ukrainian Democratic Breakthrough* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

<sup>493</sup> See Michael McFaul, “Ukraine Important Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution”, *International Security*, vol. 32, no. 2, Fall 2007, pp. 45-83; and Andrew Wilson, “Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the Role of the West”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2007, pp. 21-32.

<sup>494</sup> For instance, the Polish-American-Ukrainian Cooperation Institute (PAUCI), which is funded by USAID, was very active in assisting the demonstrators. For a discussion of Poland's role in the Orange Revolution see Olga Barburska, “The Role of Poland in Shaping EU Policy towards Ukraine”, *Yearbook of Polish European Studies*, no. 10, 2006.

<sup>495</sup> BBC Interview with Leonid Kuchma, *Putin, Russia and the West: Democracy Threatens*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 26 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

<sup>496</sup> McFaul, “Ukraine Important Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution”, p. 80; and Taras Kuzio, “Poland Plays Strategic Role in Ukraine's ‘Orange Revolution’”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 1, no. 144, 9 December 2004, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=27278](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=27278).

in Warsaw. He also vetoed Putin's suggestion that Boris Yeltsin should represent Russia at the table.

The Ukrainian Round Table Talks of 26 November were attended by Kuchma, the two candidates, and the representatives from Poland, Lithuania, the European Union, and Russia.<sup>497</sup> With over 40,000 Yanukovich supporters set to stage a counter-march on Kiev's Independence Square, the interlocutors knew they had to reach a solution that night or risk the possibility of large-scale civil strife. Kuchma and Boris Grizlov, the Speaker of Russian Parliament, initially resisted attempts to overturn the result, but Yanukovich made a crucial negotiating mistake which broke the deadlock: he suggested that Yushchenko also rigged the results. Kwasniewski capitalised on this error by saying that "if we rigged the elections, and you rigged the elections, then the result was totally rigged, and we need a re-election."<sup>498</sup> Both sides resolved to remit the matter to the Ukrainian Supreme Court, which declared a re-run was necessary two days later. Yushchenko won the re-run election a few weeks later by a wide margin. Ukraine seemed destined to join the western camp.

Poland's motives for intervening in the Orange Revolution had a strong element of balancing Russia. In fact, Dariusz Wisniewski explains that Poland had several motives. For instance, he says that part of the rationale was "emotional": there was a feeling that "our brothers across the border were facing the same problems we had in 1989. There were economic motives as well, but the most important one was strategic."<sup>499</sup> Reflecting a zero-sum philosophy, Wisniewski explained that "the more 'West' there was in Ukraine, the less 'East' [*i.e.* Russia] there will be." This dynamic will be explored further in the final section of the chapter.

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<sup>497</sup> "Polish President Joins Ukrainian Round Table", President of Poland Official Website, 26 November 2004, <http://www.president.pl/en/archive/news-archive/news-2004/art,45,polish-president-joins-the-ukrainian-round-table.html>.

<sup>498</sup> BBC Interview with Aleksander Kwasniewski, *Putin, Russia and the West: Democracy Threatens*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 26 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

<sup>499</sup> Interview with Dariusz Wisniewski, Senior Director at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 28 December 2011.

Poland's energy policy also has an element of balancing Russia in it. This is most apparent by an examination of Poland's attempt to "securitise" energy policy through the common institutions of the EU, and its policies on Nord Stream, White Stream, the Brody-Odessa pipeline, and LNG (liquefied natural gas) and shale gas expansion.

There is a very high degree of "securitisation" in Polish energy discourse. In its simplest terms, this means that energy policy in Warsaw is largely seen through the prism of strategic issues. For instance, in an address to the Polish Parliament, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski explained that when "energy becomes an instrument, *or even weapon in international relations*, it ceases being an economic issue and becomes a matter of national security." Sikorski also called for common European responses to "blackmail from energy providers outside the Union" – in other words, from the Russian Federation.<sup>500</sup> The securitisation of Poland's energy policy reflects the country's geopolitical and historical sense of vulnerability vis-à-vis Russia.<sup>501</sup> Poland attempts to manage its sense of strategic vulnerability by securitising energy policy in the institutions in the European Union (such as attempting to create an "Energy NATO" and enshrining the words "energy solidarity" in treaty documents) and by calling on states to take common approaches to Russia.

In particular, Mathias Roth argues that Poland, motivated by its own geopolitical interests against Russia, attempts to "upload its preferences" on the EU in a variety of ways.<sup>502</sup> One way involves the creation of an "Energy NATO."<sup>503</sup> At the 2006 World Economic Forum in Davos (which coincided with the Russo-Ukrainian gas crisis), the Polish Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz warned Europe against politically-motivated

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<sup>500</sup> Radoslaw Sikorski, *Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych na temat polityki zagranicznej RP w 2008 roku*, Speech to the Polish Parliament, 7 May 2008 (Warsaw: Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008), <http://wiedn.msz.gov.pl/resource/5c97b86d-14c7-4838-b998-3a90111e6dde>.

<sup>501</sup> For greater details, see Stefan Bouzarovski and Marcin Konieczny, "Landscapes of Paradox: Public Discourses and Policies in Poland's Relations with the Nord Stream Pipeline", *Geopolitics*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1-21.

<sup>502</sup> Mathias Roth, "Poland as Policy Entrepreneur in European External Energy Policy: Towards Greater Energy Solidarity vis-à-vis Russia", *Geopolitics*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2011, pp. 600-625.

<sup>503</sup> K. Niklewicz and J. Pawlicki, "Mr Tusk's Energy Pact", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 7 October 2008, <http://wyborcza.pl/2029020,86871,5777809.html>.

supply cuts from, and overreliance on, the Russian Federation. On 10 February 2006, the day the Polish President Lech Kaczynski was visiting Washington, Marcinkiewicz published an article in the *Financial Times* which criticised Europe for failing to understand the geopolitical elements of energy policies. He proposed a common European policy on gas production and supply diversification. Most significantly, he called for the formation of an “Energy NATO” which would create a crisis reaction mechanism whereby each member state would come to the assistance of another in the event of an energy crisis: in other words it would establish a “Musketeer’s Pact: all for one – one for all.”<sup>504</sup> It envisaged the development of a common energy infrastructure that would send oil or gas to threatened member states in the event of a crisis with Russia.

Poland officially submitted a proposal on what became known as the “European Energy Security Treaty” (EEST) to the Council of the European Union in March 2006. The proposal made specific references to Russia’s recent energy disputes with Ukraine and Belarus, and it was clear that this was a direct Polish response to Russia’s hegemonisation of the European Near Abroad through the use of the energy weapon.

The Polish proposal was an attempt at soft balancing Russia. The proposal started with the following declaration:

The European Energy Security Treaty (EEST) will be the first political instrument linking states in the area of mutual energy security guarantees. The need for the Treaty stems from ... [*inter alia*] *political pressure exerted with the use of energy instruments*... In such situations, we need to have a crisis management mechanism that would allow us to assist the countries affected in a fast, effective and coordinated manner. This mechanism could be based on a political agreement that would imply mutual security guarantees...[which stipulated that] *a threat to the energy security of one [Party] will be considered a threat to the energy security of all [parties]*. Consequently, in the event of a threat to the energy security of one or more [parties], the other parties – acting together or separately – will afford the parties threatened all aid and assistance at their disposal.<sup>505</sup>

<sup>504</sup> Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, “Europe’s Energy Musketeers Must Stand Together”, *Financial Times*, 10 February 2006, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9ac41306-99da-11da-a8c3-0000779e2340.html#axzz2QTIItMpvm>.

<sup>505</sup> Polish Delegation, *Proposal for a European Security Treaty*, Document addressed to Council of the European Union 7160/06, (Brussels: Council of the EU, 2006). <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st07/st07160.en06.pdf>.

The primacy of geostrategic considerations in Poland's energy proposal is thus clearly evident. Poland's quest to create an "Energy NATO" was a bold attempt to build a pan-European or pan-Western soft balancing coalition against Russia. In a sense, it was an attempt to create an innovative hybrid *soft-external* balancing organisation: it would function as a classical external balancing treaty in the sense that assistance would be triggered automatically in the event of an energy crisis between Russia and one of its member states, but the response would be a collective turning on the taps rather than rolling out the tanks.

It is also clear that the Polish initiative was directly designed in reaction to Russia's use of the energy weapon in Ukraine in January 2006. Although Russia did not deploy its actual tanks and bombers during this crisis, the energy weapon is Russia's new primary weapon of choice in the European Near Abroad. It has clear military implications and the Kremlin understands that it is more fungible than hard power. By proposing this rapid defence mechanism, Poland sought to reduce the likelihood that Russia would employ its energy weapon (or even its military) in the European Near Abroad in future crises. In case Russia did use its energy weapon against its neighbours, the Polish-designed organisation sought to mitigate the effectiveness of such Russian unilateralism, and thereby it hoped to reduce the appeal of such unilateralism to the leaders in Moscow.

Ultimately, the nascent soft balancing organisation proved stillborn. In particular, its "Energy NATO" epithet was perceived as being too anti-Russian. While the frontier states such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania expressed some support, the inner core states of the European Union (such as France, Germany, and Italy) scuttled the "inappropriately named" initiative as "too confrontational" with Russia. The inner core states also doubted the technical feasibility of the treaty's mutual guarantee clause.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Roth, "Poland as Policy Entrepreneur in European External Energy Policy", pp. 612-616.

Despite the defeat of its “Energy NATO” proposal to balance Russia’s energy predominance in Europe, Poland soon became embroiled in another diplomatic battle to upload its geopolitical preferences on the EU by getting the words “energy solidarity” enshrined in European treaties. This time Poland used more diplomatic tact in accomplishing its soft balancing objective.<sup>507</sup>

Once again, Germany proved to be the main opponent to this initiative. Mathias Roth explains that German officials allegedly translated the word “solidarity” as “costs” when it was raised in the context of the energy security debates in Europe.<sup>508</sup> Nonetheless, the inner core European states eventually dropped their opposition in 2007. The Russian-Belarusian energy dispute of 2007 provided the original impetus for a common European approach towards energy policies.

Three factors merged to make the second Polish initiative a success. First, compared to the rest of Europe, Germany and Poland suffered the most from the disruption of services across Belarus in January 2007, and this served to convince many in Berlin that a common European approach to energy security was increasingly necessary. Secondly, Poland managed to build a wider coalition of support among EU members: in addition to the traditional support from the Baltic States, Austria and Hungary also supported the second initiative. The lynchpin to the entire enterprise was in Paris and Berlin. Although France and Germany were originally the greatest skeptics of the original EEST, in the summer of 2007 they were keenly engaged in soliciting support for the EU-wide Lisbon reform treaty, and

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<sup>507</sup> Andrew Rettman, “Polish Energy Solidarity Plan Gains Support”, *EU Observer*, 27 February 2006, <http://euobserver.com/economic/21004>.

<sup>508</sup> Telephone interview with former high-ranking Member State Official, Brussels-Warsaw, 19 May 2008, in Roth, “Poland as Policy Entrepreneur in European External Energy Policy”, p. 615.

they dropped their opposition to the Polish initiative as a quid-pro-quo for Polish support on the reform treaty.<sup>509</sup>

This example of the Franco-German and Polish quid-pro-quo appropriately illustrates the difference between genuine balancing behaviour and policy bargaining which critics of the soft balancing argument identify. Since France and Germany made the deal with an eye to securing Poland's support on the reform treaty – and not due to any desire to balance Russian influence in the European Near Abroad – it cannot be said that France and Germany were balancing Russia in this instance. Poland, on the other hand, which constantly seeks to explain to its European partners that the issues of energy security and national security are inextricably intertwined, and that the chief energy culprit is Russia, was engaged in soft balancing behaviour in this instance. Polish leaders overtly connected the issue of European energy solidarity to Russia's heavy hand in the European Near Abroad.

Thirdly, the second Polish initiative was a greatly watered-down version of the original “Energy NATO” pact. It replaced the original “musketeer principle” with references to a “spirit of solidarity” in two articles in the 2007 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). In particular, Article 122 stated that the Council would act “in a spirit of solidarity with Member States” to find appropriate measures if difficulties arise in the energy sector; and Article 194 stipulated that energy policy should be pursued “in a spirit of solidarity between Member States” in order to “a) ensure the functioning of the energy market, b) ensure security of energy supply in the Union...and d) promote the interconnection of energy networks.”<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Roth, “Poland as Policy Entrepreneur in European External Energy Policy”, p. 617; also see Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, “EU Member States’ Energy Relations with Russia: Conflicting Approaches to Securing Natural Gas Supplies”, *Geopolitics*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 574-599.

<sup>510</sup> Consolidated Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 326, vol. 55, 26 October 2012, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:326:FULL:EN:PDF>.

Therefore, it is clear that the original references to an “Energy NATO” and the establishment of a rapid collective mechanism to assist countries involved in an energy dispute with Russia was dropped and replaced by a commitment to act in solidarity in the event of *any* unspecified energy crisis. Despite its diluted form, the initiative represented a key success for Poland by bringing the debate about energy security to the fore and enshrining the principle of energy solidarity in the founding treaties of the EU. Although the final product dropped all references to Russia, it is clear that the original intention for the energy solidarity clause – *i.e.* to serve as a pan-European balancing tool against Russia – is nonetheless the same. A few months after successfully inserting the solidarity clause into the EU treaties, Poland agreed to drop its veto on EU-Russia treaty talks that were imposed as retaliation to Russia’s ban on Polish agricultural products.<sup>511</sup>

Despite successfully inserting the energy solidarity clause into the Lisbon Treaty, the Polish soft balancing effort nonetheless had little tangible effect in the subsequent energy crisis between members of the European Near Abroad and Russia. The common theme of Gulliver breaking his ropes is becoming apparent. For instance, during the next major gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine in January 2009, the European Union failed to offer substantial assistance to the countries most affected by the dispute. For instance, Bulgaria was forced to shut down operations at thousands of companies and tens of thousands of its citizens were left without heating. Bulgaria claimed the supply cut cost it \$333 million per day.<sup>512</sup> Other countries in the European Near Abroad faced similar crises, and Slovakia even had to declare a state of emergency.<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>511</sup>Although Poland agreed to drop the veto at this date, Lithuania filled the void and continued to threaten to veto EU-Russia talks until the summer of 2008. Andrew Rettman, “Poland Clarifies Conditions for Dropping Veto on EU-Russia Talks”, *EU Observer*, 4 April 2007, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/23842>.

<sup>512</sup>Simon Pirani, Jonathan Stern, and Katja Yafimava, *The Russo-Ukrainian Gas Dispute of January 2009: A Comprehensive Assessment*, Working Paper (Oxford: Oxford Institute for Energy Studies 2009).

<sup>513</sup>“Slovakia to Call State of Emergency over Gas”, *Reuters*, 6 January 2009, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2009/01/06/russia-ukraine-gas-slovakia-idUKL661291820090106>.

The energy solidarity clauses in the Lisbon Treaty also failed to help Poland's attempt to scuttle the Nord Stream proposal. For instance, when the Polish Prime Minister Tusk met the German Chancellor Merkel for the first time in December 2007, he emphasised the need to view the pipeline through the energy solidarity framework. Earlier in the year Sikorski, Defence Minister at the time, wrote in the *Financial Times* that Nord Stream would be a "geopolitical disaster for the EU":

Geopolitically, Nordstream secures for Russia not just increased EU subservience in energy. Russia gains the ability to decouple *old and new members* by differentially turning off the tap, as done to Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine and more recently to Estonia and Lithuania. For this principal reason Poland, Estonia and Lithuania are vehemently opposed.<sup>514</sup>

At other times the Oxford-educated Minister used even more scathing words, likening Nord Stream to the Nazi-Soviet Pact which carved up Poland, the Baltic States, and Moldova in 1939.<sup>515</sup>

Many states in the European Near Abroad also opposed the creation of Nord Stream. These include the littoral states of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, and Sweden. However, these states chose more diplomatically appropriate ways to express their opposition. For instance, all five littoral states have challenged the pipeline on environmental grounds, arguing that the subterranean construction would likely alter sea currents and disrupt toxic dioxins in the sea bed. Others are concerned for the Baltic Sea's flora and fauna.<sup>516</sup>

In a more direct manner, Estonia, Finland, and Sweden have also insisted that the pipeline has military implications and poses a security threat in the Baltic Sea. Sweden, in particular, has been very forthright on this point. Michael Odenberg, the Swedish Defence

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<sup>514</sup> Radoslaw Sikorski *et al.*, "Russian Gas Pipeline would be Geopolitical Disaster for EU", *Financial Times*, 28 May 2007, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/db259cf2-0cb7-11dc-a4dc-000b5df10621.html#axzz2QTItMpvvm>.

<sup>515</sup> "Polish DM Likens Pipeline Deal to Nazi-Soviet Pact", *Radio Free Europe*, 30 April 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1068062.html>.

<sup>516</sup> Anthea Pitt, "Nord Stream hits Swedish hurdle", *Upstream: The International Oil and Gas Newspaper*, 31 October 2007, <http://www.upstreamonline.com/live/article1148360.ece>; "Latvia Set to Propose Alternative to Nord Stream", *Ria Novosti*, Moscow, 17 April 2009, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20090417/121186949.html>; "Baltic Sea Gas Pipeline Meets European Resistance", *DW*, 17 February 2007, <http://www.dw.de/baltic-sea-gas-pipeline-meets-european-resistance/a-2345720-1>.

Minister, explained that the pipeline could be used as a pretext to justify a greater role for Russia's navy in Sweden's economic zone. This concern was arguably vindicated when Russia announced that the safety of the pipeline would be secured by the Russian Baltic Fleet. Odenberg also insisted that the Russians could use the pipeline as a post for renewed spying on Swedish military dispositions in the region. There was particular concern over the planned 30-by-30 meter service platform scheduled to be erected off the coast of Gotland. Officially Sweden is not a member of NATO and it retains its traditional policy of neutrality. However, it maintains close military and political cooperation with NATO members, and there are reports that the Swedish military has contingency plans to destroy or sabotage the pipeline if required.<sup>517</sup>

All the littoral states also insisted that there were strong economic reasons to have halted the construction of the pipeline in favour of a land-based alternative which would have traversed Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland – the so-called Amber pipeline. It would have been a fraction of the cost of Nord Stream – the most expensive pipeline in the world. Finally, Estonia also made an innovative argument that the subterranean pipeline would disrupt Soviet war memorials from the Second World War. Andres Tarand, an Estonian member of the European Parliament, produced a Soviet military map from 1985 which indicated that the planned route went through “the biggest marine cemetery in the world.” Given Russia's sensitivity to war memorials, as evidenced by the row over the bronze statue in Tallinn in 2007, Estonia hoped the Russians would reconsider the project.<sup>518</sup>

Poland has also implemented other countermeasures in response to what it sees as Russia's attempts at hegemonisation through the energy weapon. These include the

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<sup>517</sup> Alex Bakst, “Baltic Sea Pipeline: Sweden Afraid of Russian Spooks”, *Spiegel Online*, 15 November 2006, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/baltic-sea-pipeline-sweden-afraid-of-russian-spoons-a-448652.html>; “Defence Minister Pushes ‘No’ to Nord Stream”, *ERR News: Estonian Public Broadcasting*, 23 October 2012, <http://news.err.ee/politics/c8119ddf-fc1d-41c1-813b-b204be064526>; Marshall Goldman, *Oilopoly: Putin, Power, and the Rise of New Russia* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2010), p. 160.

<sup>518</sup> “Dead Souls: A Gas Pipeline and Soviet War Graves”, *The Economist*, 15 May 2008, [http://www.economist.com/node/11376692?story\\_id=11376692&CFID=9227864&CFTOKEN=23116655](http://www.economist.com/node/11376692?story_id=11376692&CFID=9227864&CFTOKEN=23116655).

expansion of the Odessa-Brody pipeline, the construction of White Stream, the building of a LNG port at Swinoujscie, and increased exploration of shale gas deposits.

Poland has tried to mitigate Russia's energy stranglehold over the European Near Abroad by expanding the Odessa-Brody oil pipeline. On 10 October 2007, the presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine met in Vilnius to form the so-called "Caspian Pipeline Pact": a consortium of countries in the European Near Abroad which seeks to connect Caspian crude oil to Poland. They planned to expand the existing north-south Ukrainian pipeline from the port city of Odessa to the Polish port city of Gdansk.<sup>519</sup>

**Figure 8.1: European Near Abroad-sponsored White Stream<sup>520</sup>**



<sup>519</sup> Anthea Pitt, "Vilnius unveils Caspian Pipe Pact", *Upstream: The International Oil and Gas Newspaper*, 10 October 2007, <http://www.upstreamonline.com/live/article1147475.ece>.

<sup>520</sup> Source: "White Stream Considers Georgian Link", *Pipelines International*, 5 May 2010, [http://pipelinesinternational.com/news/white\\_stream\\_considers\\_georgian\\_link/040569/](http://pipelinesinternational.com/news/white_stream_considers_georgian_link/040569/).

In another round of the energy battle in the European Near Abroad, Poland has also been a lead supporter of the so-called White Stream gas pipeline project. As Figure 8.1 above demonstrates, White Stream is meant to be a direct challenge to the Kremlin's South Stream project by transporting gas from the Caspian Sea via Azerbaijan, Georgia, and a subterranean pipeline under the Black Sea. Instead of making landfall in Bulgaria – which some critics denounce as Russia's Trojan Horse in the EU – White Stream would make landfall at either the Ukrainian Crimea or Romania.<sup>521</sup> From there it would carry gas to Poland and the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. It will transport eight or sixteen billion cubic meters of natural gas per year (depending on the selected diameter of the pipeline), and it is scheduled for completion by 2018.<sup>522</sup>

The original plan for the project was proposed by Ukraine's Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and it was officially sponsored by the EU Commission in May 2008.<sup>523</sup> The governments of Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania have also sponsored the project. The White Stream consortium has been registered in London, but the exact composition of it is unknown. The consortium has announced that it should be seen as a complementary – and not a competing – pipeline to Nabucco.<sup>524</sup>

Poland has also begun constructing a LNG terminal in the seaport town of Swinoujscie. The LNG installation is located just off the German border and is only 70km away from Greifswald – the terminal point of Nord Stream. The location is symbolic, as Polish officials have stated that the decision to build the LNG terminal was made in direct reaction to the construction of Nord Stream. Germany originally opposed the project on

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<sup>521</sup> The current plan seems to favour a direct route to Romania.

<sup>522</sup> White Stream Official Website, <http://www.white-stream.com/#!clients/c1a4e>.

<sup>523</sup> Vladimir Socor, "White Stream can De-Monopolize the Turkish Transit of Gas to Europe", *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, vol. 6, no. 199, 29 October 2009, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=35667&cHash=df027de50e](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35667&cHash=df027de50e); and "White Stream will be Cheaper, More Efficient than Nabucco – Tymoshenko", *Interfax*, 29 January 2009, <http://business.highbeam.com/407705/article-1G1-173989517/white-stream-cheaper-more-efficient-than-nabucco-tymoshenko>.

<sup>524</sup> White Stream Official Website, Project Support, <http://www.white-stream.com/#!clients/c1a4e>.

ostensibly environmental grounds (and it opposed the fact that the EU contributed €80 million EUR for the terminal's construction), but it has since altered its position.<sup>525</sup> The terminal is expected to become operational in 2014.<sup>526</sup>

The Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk explicitly links the construction of the LNG terminal to Poland's geostrategic standing. He expects the terminal will cover "one-third of Poland's demand for gas...one-third would [come] from Poland's traditional supplier – Russia – and one-third from local output." Tusk noted that "these proportions would alter in favour of local production" if estimates on Poland's shale gas deposits were confirmed.<sup>527</sup>

Arguably Poland's greatest weapon in its energy competition with Russia is its potential for shale gas development. The past decade has witnessed an energy revolution in the United States. The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects that the US will surpass Russia as the largest exporter of natural gas by 2015 and Saudi Arabia as the largest exporter of oil by 2017.<sup>528</sup> The report suggests that the US will become energy self-sufficient in the next two decades and would become a net exporter of oil and gas.<sup>529</sup> As a proportion of the country's overall gas production, shale gas has increased from four percent in 2005 to twenty-five percent in 2012 (and this pattern shows no signs of abating).<sup>530</sup> This has been made possible largely due to advancements in "fracking" technology and America's vast shale gas deposits. It is a finding which has great implications for international relations and US foreign policy.

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<sup>525</sup> "Germany Drops Opposition to Swinoujscie Terminal", *Natural Gas Europe*, 4 October 2010, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/germany-drops-opposition-to-swinoujscie-terminal-2>.

<sup>526</sup> Michal Budzanowski, Polish Minister of the Treasury, "Swinoujscie LNG terminal ready in 2014", *Polskie Radio Dla Zagranicy*, 24 January 2013, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/125097,Swinoujscie-LNG-terminal-ready-in-2014>.

<sup>527</sup> "Germany Drops Opposition to Swinoujscie Terminal", *Natural Gas Europe*.

<sup>528</sup> Elisabeth Rosenthal, "U.S. to Be World's Top Oil Producer in 5 Years, Report Says", *The New York Times*, 12 November 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/13/business/energy-environment/report-sees-us-as-top-oil-producer-in-5-years.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/13/business/energy-environment/report-sees-us-as-top-oil-producer-in-5-years.html?_r=0); International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2012* (Paris, 2012), <http://iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/English.pdf>.

<sup>529</sup> Anthony Fensom, "America: The Next Energy Superpower?", *The Diplomat*, 23 January 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/01/23/america-the-worlds-new-petrostate/>.

<sup>530</sup> "Shale of the Century", *The Economist*, 2 June 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21556242>.

This explains why there was immense excitement in Poland when various reports, including from the US Department of Energy, indicated the Central European country possessed significant shale gas deposits. At a press conference in June 2010 Foreign Minister Sikorski remarked “shale gas is already revolutionising the global gas market...and in ten to fifteen years, Poland has a chance to become a second Norway.”<sup>531</sup> When a 2011 US report suggested Poland may have nearly ten times more than original estimates and the largest shale gas deposits in Europe, the fever grew even more intense.<sup>532</sup> International energy companies – mostly American – started pouring into the country seeking exploration and production licences. So far Poland has granted over one hundred exploration licences and Prime Minister Tusk expects commercial production to start in 2014.<sup>533</sup>

It is too early to tell if Poland’s dream of becoming a “second Norway” will materialise (especially since recent surveys suggest that the original reports on shale deposits from the US Department of Energy may have been exaggerated). There are also many technical and political obstacles to overcome. For instance, there is a growing number of countries in the European Union, including France and Bulgaria, which are lobbying for an EU-wide ban on fracking. Both states have recently prohibited fracking nationally due to environmental concerns.<sup>534</sup> A high-level Polish official has insisted that Poland will veto any attempt to legislate against fracking at the EU level; in fact, he even jokingly suggested that “if worst came to worst, and we could not get our way, we would be prepared to leave the European Union if we were assured we would become the next Norway.”<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>531</sup> “Poland the Second Norway”, *Natural Gas Europe*, 9 June 2010, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/poland-the-second-norway>.

<sup>532</sup> “Fracking Heaven: Other Europeans Fear Fracking, Poland is Steaming Ahead”, *The Economist*, 23 June 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/18867861>.

<sup>533</sup> Katarzyna Klimasinska, “European Fracking Ban Opens Market for U.S. Gas Exports”, *Bloomberg News*, 23 May 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-05-23/european-fracking-bans-open-market-for-u-s-gas-exports-1-.html>.

<sup>534</sup> France has a traditionally strong nuclear sector and Bulgaria has a traditionally strong relationship with Russia – the player with the most to lose if the fracking revolution spreads to Europe. See Klimasinska, “European Fracking Ban Opens Market for U.S. Gas Exports”.

<sup>535</sup> Interview with unnamed senior official, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, December 2011.

Despite this hyperbole, the strategic implications of the recent discoveries are not lost on Poland's top officials. The shale gas deposits hold the potential not only to extirpate Poland from its dependence on Russian gas, but also to make it a net exporter of energy in the region. This could potentially change the energy balance of power in the European Near Abroad.

Pawel Grotowski, a senior official at the Eastern Affairs Division in the Polish Foreign Ministry, notes that Poland's energy policies should be viewed within the context of its "strategic competition" with Russia. He explains that "Poland cannot balance Russia alone – we are too small – so we limit Russian influence in Eastern Europe by enlisting the support of allies and using the institutions of the EU to help us in the energy competition. But we do not always say these things in these ways."<sup>536</sup> Andrzej Kindziuk, another official from the Ministry's Department of Strategy, confirms that "since Poland is not capable of balancing Russia alone, we give our ideas to the EU on energy security, and we accomplish this job together."<sup>537</sup>

In sum, this section has illustrated numerous instances where Poland has led a soft balancing coalition against Russia since the European Near Abroad attained its independence in 1989-1991. These efforts have included: 1) forming and supporting the "Vilnius Group;" 2) decisively intervening in Ukraine's Orange Revolution on the side of the western-leaning Yushchenko; and 3) crafting a highly-securitised energy policy which seeks to balance Russia through institutions of the EU and various pacts with states in the European Near Abroad. However, the soft balancing against Russia intensified and broadened during the August War in 2008.

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<sup>536</sup> Interview with Pawel Grotowski, Counsellor to the Foreign Minister, Eastern Affairs Division, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 29 December 2011.

<sup>537</sup> Interview with Andrzej Kindziuk, Second Secretary at the Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy Planning, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 22 December 2011.

## 8.2 The Diplomatic Road to War Goes Through Munich, Pristina, and Bucharest

As Henry Kissinger's quote at the start of this chapter suggests, Russia under the Tsars and communists often needed to rely on the use of force in its international relations. But since 1991, although the Russian Federation has been soft balancing against the United States globally and employing its energy weapon to bully and blackmail its neighbours regionally, it has always refrained from employing decisive military force to accomplish its foreign policy objectives. This changed in the summer of 2008, when for the first time in its history the Russian Federation employed military force in a major combat operation outside of its borders.

The 2008 Russo-Georgian War is a classical case of a post-Soviet frozen conflict which heated up. The modern crisis started in 1989-1990 when the Ossetians – a Christian people speaking a language similar to Persian – clashed with Georgians over the region's future political orientation. The dispute led to South Ossetia's declaration of independence from Georgia in 1990 and it eventually resulted in the 1991-1992 South Ossetian War. The war ended with many casualties, refugees, and a Russian-brokered ceasefire in June 1992. Most crucially, it reintroduced Russian peacekeepers into the region, which froze the conflict further, because Georgia never regarded Russia as an impartial party and suspected it of arming South Ossetia. Another civil war was fought between Georgia and Abkhazia in 1992-1993 with similar results: many casualties, even greater amounts of refugees, and the introduction of Russian peacekeeping forces in 1994.<sup>538</sup>

Mutual hostilities and low-level skirmishes have continued ever since, but for the most part, the Russian Federation was very cautious by not employing unauthorised military force beyond its borders. This would eventually change. The first hints of Russia's drastic

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<sup>538</sup> Per Gahrton, *Georgia: Pawn in the New Great Game* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), pp. 55-77; Richard Weitz, "Georgia" in *Global Security Watch Russia: A Reference Handbook* (Oxford: Praeger Security International, 2010).

change of tone were displayed at the 2007 Security Conference in Munich. The format of the conference permitted Putin to rail against US foreign policy in what subsequently became known as the “New Cold War” or “Anti-Unipolarity” speech.<sup>539</sup> Putin lambasted American unipolarity as “pernicious”, “unlawful”, “without moral foundation”, and leading to an

uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts...The United States has overstepped its national borders in every way...and of course *this is extremely dangerous*. It results in the fact that no one feels safe...[and] of course, such a policy stimulates an arms race...I am convinced that we have reached that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security.<sup>540</sup>

Putin enumerated three issues of contention in particular: plans for a ballistic missile defence shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, the ongoing uncertainty regarding Kosovo’s final status, and NATO’s ongoing eastward expansion. He explained that the expansion represented a “serious provocation.” A few months later Foreign Minister Lavrov wrote an article praising Putin’s Munich speech. He similarly castigated the “unipolar world,” called for a “realistic correction – or reduction – of the U.S. role in world affairs,” and explained that “international institutions, most importantly, the United Nations - offer ways for solving the governability problem in the contemporary world” – *i.e.* the problem of US unipolarity.<sup>541</sup> The US Senator John McCain subsequently described Putin’s speech as “the most aggressive remarks by a Russian leader since the end of the Cold War.”<sup>542</sup> It was a sign of things to come.

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<sup>539</sup> For instance, see Rob Watson, “Putin’s Speech: Back to Cold War?”, *BBC News*, 10 February 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6350847.stm>; Thom Shanker and Mark Landler, “Putin Says U.S. Is Undermining Global Stability”, *The New York Times*, 11 February 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/11/world/europe/11munich.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>540</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy”, President of Russia Official Website, 10 February 2007, Munich, [http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138\\_type82912type82914type82917type84779\\_118123.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914type82917type84779_118123.shtml).

<sup>541</sup> Sergey Lavrov, “The Present and the Future of Global Politics”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 2, April/June 2007, [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_8554](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_8554). Lavrov also made the academic argument that unipolarity encourages greater unilateral uses of force in international relations, and stated it is “absolutely groundless to suggest that multipolarity increases the likelihood of confrontation.”

<sup>542</sup> Stephen Fidler and Demetri Sebastipulo, “Putin Rails Against US Foreign Policy”, *The Financial Times*, 11 February 2007, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b4eef8e6-b91d-11db-a5bc-0000779e2340.html#axzz2QqEwyqJl>.

Despite Putin's warning, on 17 February 2008 the Kosovar Assembly in Pristina declared independence, and the Bush Administration officially recognised it the next day. It was a decision fraught with unintended consequences. Five days later Putin hosted a CIS Summit in Moscow and revealed Russia's official reaction to the declaration. In *A Little War that Shook the World*, Ronald Asmus writes that Putin pulled Saakashvili – Georgia's President – to the margins of the meeting and said: "You know we have to answer the West on Kosovo. And we are very sorry but you are going to be part of that answer." Putin then lectured Saakashvili on the perils of joining NATO with the following warning: "You think you can trust the Americans, and they will rush to assist you? Nobody can be trusted. Expect me. I'll provide what I promise."<sup>543</sup> That evening Putin made an official televised address warning the West that its decision to recognise Kosovo was a "terrifying precedent" and a double-edged sword which would "come back to knock them on the head."<sup>544</sup> In a televised hookup from NATO headquarters in Brussels, Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's Ambassador, was even sterner, warning the alliance not to overstep its mandate in Kosovo and adding that Moscow might be compelled to use "brute military force in order to be respected" on the world scene.<sup>545</sup>

The final stop on the road to war was in Bucharest. On 2-4 April NATO members met in the Romanian capital to discuss the possibility of granting MAP (Membership Action Plan) across the Black Sea to Georgia and Ukraine. The alliance would soon fragment along familiar lines, as the Franco-German pact seen during the Iraqi crises was resurrected.

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<sup>543</sup> Conversation recorded in Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 106-107.

<sup>544</sup> Mike Eckel, "Putin Warns West over Kosovo Dispute", *Associated Press*, 22 February 2008, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-02-22-769010842\\_x.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-02-22-769010842_x.htm).

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*

The United States and Germany had been the original driving forces of NATO expansion in the first and second rounds of enlargements to Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>546</sup> However, by 2008 the unity of the alliance was profoundly changed. Perhaps most crucially, Germany was now encircled by a host of friendly states, and it became a geostrategically satiated power. Its emphasis switched to cultivating its special relationship with Russia. France had also become a staunch opponent of further NATO expansion, which it perceived as simultaneously diluting NATO's power and expanding America's influence within the organisation. France and Russia were also the chief soft balancers against the United States in Iraq. Nonetheless, while Germany followed France's lead in balancing against the US during the Iraqi crisis, France returned the favour and followed Germany's lead in opposing the US plan on NATO expansion in Bucharest. Thus, the scene was set for a "diplomatic shootout" between the United States and several states of the European Near Abroad on one side, and the inner European core of states (France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries) on the other.<sup>547</sup>

During the summit, hosted in the Ceausescu regime's Palace of Parliament – the second largest administrative building in the world after the Pentagon – negotiations eventually hit stalemate. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recalls how "the Eastern Europeans were quite emotional, coming very close to saying to the Germans 'you of all people' shouldn't be standing in the way,"<sup>548</sup> and the German Foreign Minister Steinmeier revealed that "things were said I never want to hear again: we were accused of appeasement, like Munich 1938."<sup>549</sup> As the remainder of the chapter will illustrate, historical analogies to

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<sup>546</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (1997-2000) stated that the Germans were in fact "sceptical and privately opposed to Baltic membership in the European Union and NATO."

<sup>547</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>548</sup> BBC Interview with Condoleezza Rice, *Putin, Russia and the West: War*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 2 February 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

<sup>549</sup> BBC Interview with Frank-Walter Steinmeier, *Putin, Russia and the West: War*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 2 February 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

seminal events in modern European history were repeatedly made by many states in the European Near Abroad.<sup>550</sup> At one stage the Americans and Germans appeared to achieve a compromise by deferring the question of MAP for another eight months, but Stephen Hadley, the US National Security Advisor, explained that “the Eastern and Central Europeans went ballistic.” The Polish, Lithuanian, and Romanian Presidents huddled together at one end of the negotiating table and decided to reject the compromise. Kaczynski declared that “we cannot let Russia have a veto. This is not fair to Georgia and Ukraine. This is not how NATO works.”<sup>551</sup> Merkel walked over to the three presidents, and while she was cogently explaining her position that Georgia was not ready – in part because it had unsecured borders and could draw NATO into a conflict – the Romanian President, Traian Basescu, posed the question: “do we agree that these countries should become NATO members?” Merkel responded affirmatively, but said the real question was a matter of timing. The three presidents spontaneously replied: “Then let’s write that down.”<sup>552</sup>

The final compromise offered Georgia and Ukraine the unprecedented declaration that they would become alliance members one day, but MAP was not granted. The next day Putin – the first Russian President invited to a NATO Summit – made a statement criticising the decision as a direct threat to Russia and ominously questioned the artificial nature of Ukraine’s borders.<sup>553</sup> In fact, an unidentified delegate at the summit told Russia’s *Kommersant* newspaper that Putin told the US President: “You don’t understand, George,

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<sup>550</sup> For an insightful work on the endurance and significance of historical analogies on decision making in international relations, see Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>551</sup> There were reports that Kaczynski hinted at resurrecting Poland’s threat of a veto over EU-Russia strategic treaty talks if Georgia and Ukraine did not receive MAPs. See “Poland Ups Ante over Georgia, Ukraine MAP”, *Civil Georgia*, 10 April 2008, [http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=901&Itemid=65](http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=901&Itemid=65).

<sup>552</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, pp. 130-133.

<sup>553</sup> Putin began his diatribe with the issue of Kosovo’s recognition: “this policy puts us into a very complicated position in the post-Soviet space, because we have there enough situations similar to that with Kosovo – it is Transnistria, Southern Ossetia, Abkhazia, Karabakh.” See Vladimir Putin, “Text of Putin’s Speech at NATO Summit”, *Unian*, 2 April 2008, <http://www.unian.info/news/247251-text-of-putins-speech-at-nato-summit-bucharest-april-2-2008.html>.

that Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? Part of its territories is Eastern Europe, but the greater part is a gift from us.”<sup>554</sup> Ronald Asmus writes that in a sense the compromise reached at Bucharest was the worst of all worlds: “it did not reassure the Georgians nor did it avoid provoking the Russians.” The result showed the Russians how divided the alliance was and how American influence within it was on the wane.<sup>555</sup> Russia’s attention turned to Georgia.

### 8.3 The Break-out of Hostilities

Three weeks after the NATO Summit the skirmishes in South Ossetia and Abkhazia intensified. But this time there was a significant escalation as the Russian Air Force was directly involved: according to the Georgian Ministry of Defence, a Russian MiG-29 shot down an Israeli-made reconnaissance drone flying over Abkhazia on 21 April. Saakashvili denounced the Russian move as an “aggressive” and “illegal” attack on Georgian sovereignty.<sup>556</sup> Four days earlier Putin had signed a decree establishing direct legal and diplomatic relations with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.<sup>557</sup> On 31 May, Russia deployed four hundred railroad troops to Abkhazia to “rehabilitate the region’s railway.”<sup>558</sup> Any student of European or military history would quickly realise how portentous this Russian move appeared.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> James Marson, “Putin to the West: Hands Off Ukraine”, *Time*, 25 May 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1900838,00.html>.

<sup>555</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, p. 138.

<sup>556</sup> “Russia Shot Down Georgia Drone”, *BBC News*, 21 April 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7358761.stm>.

<sup>557</sup> “Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Press Department Commentary on Legal Aspects of Recent Russian Initiatives Regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 April 2008, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/0f953b7ef62c2363c3257441001cd4ff?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/0f953b7ef62c2363c3257441001cd4ff?OpenDocument).

<sup>558</sup> “Russian Railroad Troops Enter Abkhazia to Help Rebuild Roads”, *Ria Novosti*, 31 May 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080531/108953337.html>.

<sup>559</sup> For instance, the renowned historian A.J.P. Taylor believed that the logic of railway construction and timetables created an inexorable momentum which pushed the states of Europe into the First World War. See A.J.P. Taylor, *War By Timetable: How the First World War Began* (London: Lee Cooper Ltd, 2005).

Saakashvili eventually became convinced that war was becoming inevitable – a conclusion he made shortly after his final meeting with Putin during the CIS Summit in Moscow – and he began studying instances of successful pre-emptive strikes in military history (including Israel’s Six Day War in 1967 and Croatia’s Operation Storm in 1995).<sup>560</sup> On 9 July Condoleezza Rice visited Tbilisi and tried to convince Saakashvili to accept a non-use-of-force pledge, but he insisted he would only do so if it came as part of a comprehensive package on other issues. He believed accepting the non-use-of-force pledge would be tantamount to accepting Russia’s creeping annexation over the two autonomous regions. Thus, once the skirmishes in South Ossetia escalated further in the first week of August, and Georgian intelligence reported even greater concentrations of Russian armour moving towards the region, Saakashvili seemed to face a dilemma: either acquiesce to Russia’s encroachments into the territories and run the risk of being overthrown by domestic opponents, or engage in a (hopefully) quick pre-emptive attack and run the risk of a decisive military defeat. At 23:35 on 7 August 2008 he chose the latter by issuing the command to “restore constitutional order” in South Ossetia.<sup>561</sup>

There are discrepancies regarding the events of the night of August 7-8. The first major academic work on the August War was published in June 2009 by Svante Cornell and Frederick Starr. In *The Guns of August: Russia’s War in Georgia*, the editors support the thesis that – as the title suggests – Russia planned and prepared for the war well in advance, and that it was largely responsible for its outbreak. However, an official EU-backed fact finding mission submitted a report (commonly known as the Tagliavini Report) a couple of months later which stressed that although Russia violated international law by pushing its armed forces deep into Georgia proper, Georgia was mostly responsible for the war’s

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<sup>560</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, p. 142.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

outbreak.<sup>562</sup> Roy Allison also suggested that Russia used international law as an instrument to advance state policy.<sup>563</sup> Ronald Asmus takes a slightly different, geopolitical approach to the question: he argues that the real *casus belli* was 1) Tbilisi's desire to break free from Russia by joining NATO and 2) the concurrent desire in Moscow to contain (or even rollback) the expansion of Western institutions into its traditional sphere of influence. In 2012, on the fourth anniversary of the war, a short documentary film of unclear origin was posted on YouTube which contained interviews with top Russian generals. The Chief of Staff Yuri Baluyevski accused Medvedev of indecisiveness and cowardice, and claimed that Putin pre-planned the decision to invade before Medvedev was inaugurated as President in May 2008.<sup>564</sup> Although the details of the night of August 7-8 are beyond the purview of this thesis, it seems that an emerging view in the literature is that although Saakashvili started the war, he may have fallen into a strategically-sprung trap.<sup>565</sup>

This dissertation will describe the conflict as either the Russo-Georgian War, the August War, or the Five Day War in order to keep impartiality regarding the ultimate legal causes and justification for the war's outbreak. What is important for the purposes of this dissertation is not whether the war was legal under international law in an objective sense, but whether the states of the European Near Abroad perceived it as such.<sup>566</sup> The following

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<sup>562</sup> The major works on the August War include: Svante Cornell and Frederick Starr, *The Guns of August: Russia's War in Georgia*, (New York: M.E. Sharp, 2009); Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Tagliavini Report, September 2009, <http://www.ceiig.ch/>; Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and Ruslan Pukhov, ed., *The Tanks of August* (Moscow: Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, 2010).

<sup>563</sup> Roy Allison, "The Russian Case for Military Intervention in Georgia: International Law, Norms and Political Calculations", *European Security*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2009, pp. 173-200.

<sup>564</sup> Pavel Felgenhauer, "Putin Confirms the Invasion of Georgia Was Preplanned", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 9, no. 152, 9 August 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=39746&cHash=177fd31d57370a96ac7da644dc280014#.Ua32PJxYu9Y](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39746&cHash=177fd31d57370a96ac7da644dc280014#.Ua32PJxYu9Y).

<sup>565</sup> For instance, Pavel Felgenhauer, a well-connected defence correspondent for the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, explained that the war was prepared well in advance and that the Russian government was seeking a pretext to invade. He argues that even if Saakashvili did not fall into the trap, a pretext would have been found to proceed with the planned invasion. Quoted in Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>566</sup> For a discussion of the war's legality according to international law, see Allison, "The Russian Case for Military Intervention in Georgia", pp. 173-200.

sections will demonstrate that they almost unanimously regarded the war as illegal and many states soft (and hard) balanced against the Russian Federation.

#### **8.4 Soft Balancing During the August War**

As the conflict escalated during the night of 8 August 2008, an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council was called in the middle of the night in New York City. At first there was widespread confusion among the Members of the Council. Interestingly, the meeting was held at the initiative of Vitali Churkin, Russia's Ambassador to the UN, and he used the occasion to inveigh against Georgia for its "treacherous and massive attack" against Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia. Irakli Alasania, the Georgian Ambassador, replied that Georgia was acting in self-defence and he condemned Russia's direct military involvement. During the Security Council meeting – and in accompanying private meetings in the Council Consultations Room (where the majority of deals are negotiated) – the Council Members could not even adopt a common position condemning the use of violence.<sup>567</sup>

As the fog of war gradually dissipated in the coming hours, the Security Council held another emergency meeting. This time the meeting was requested by the representatives of Georgia and the United States, and this time, the Georgian delegation was well prepared. It rolled out a massive map of the region (one not dissimilar to the map provided below in Figure 8.2) and started enumerating the various places where the Russian military was infringing Georgian sovereignty. Ambassador Alasania concluded:

The world is witnessing a direct and open violation of universally recognised norms and principles of international law. Russia is openly challenging the international community and jeopardizing established international order and stability in the wider

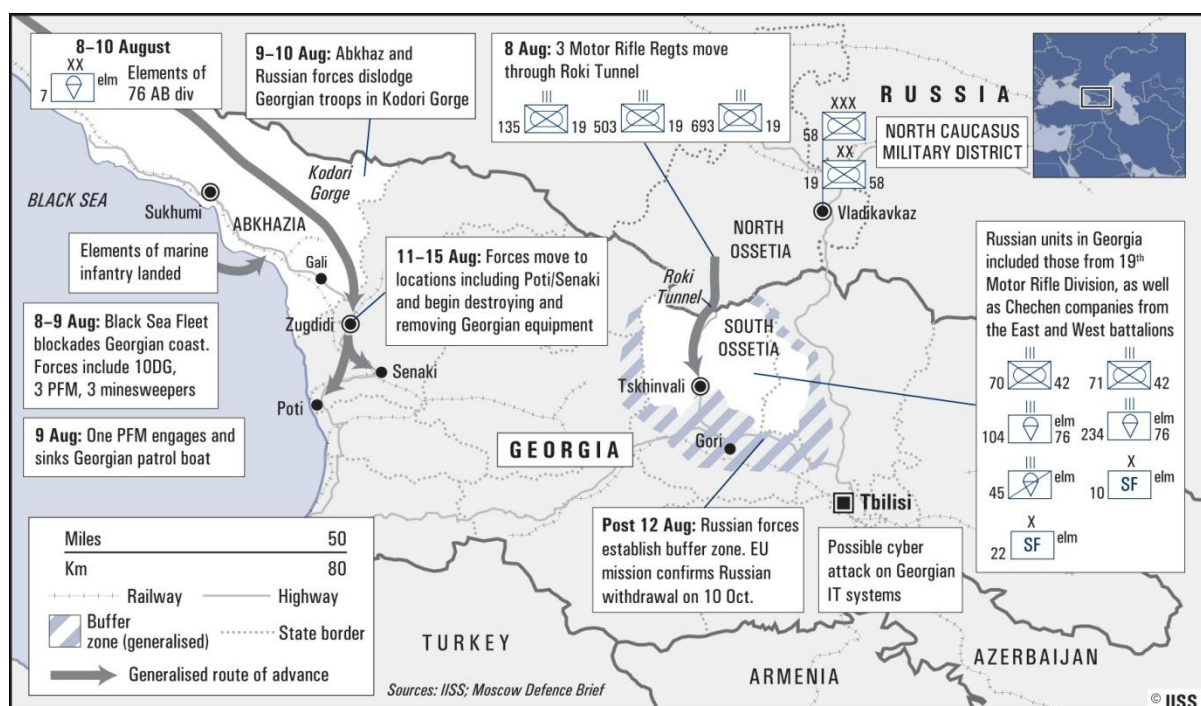
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<sup>567</sup> 5951<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 8 August 2008, New York City, S/PV.5951, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5951](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5951).

trans-Caucasus. The *Russian military aggression is intended to subdue Georgia and make it give up its Euro-Atlantic aspirations.*<sup>568</sup>

Ambassador Churkin retorted that the conflict had been made possible by various “foreign states” which had been arming Georgia and that the war was being conducted “against the backdrop of the flag of the European Union.”

**Figure 8.2: Military Disposition During the 2008 Russo-Georgian War**<sup>569</sup>



While Churkin was addressing the Council, Alasania received a phone call from the Georgian Foreign Minister, and he relayed further distressing news to the Council that Russian bombers were currently in the air deep over Georgian air space and that further civilian casualties were likely. He asked two questions. One was posed to the Russian Ambassador, and the other to the Council as a whole: he asked if the Ambassador would turn

<sup>568</sup> 5952<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 8 August 2008, New York City, S/PV.5952, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5952](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5952).

<sup>569</sup> Source: International Institution for Strategic Studies, “Georgia-Russia Dialogue: Analysis of the Russian-Georgian War”, <http://www.iiss.org/programmes/russia-and-eurasia/about/georgian-russian-dialogue/analysis-of-the-russia-georgia-war/>.

the bomber around, and asked the Council what they were going to do about the fact that Georgia was facing a full-scale military invasion. After all, the *raison d'être* of the Security Council is to safeguard international peace and security – defined at its most basic level as the preservation of each state's territorial integrity and political independence – and both of these were being challenged at the moment by a Member of the Council. Churkin raised his hand and responded to the first question by brusquely remarking that the Security Council was not an appropriate venue to discuss matters of military tactics. No Member of the Council responded to the second question.<sup>570</sup>

Two days later the Council convened once again at the behest of Georgia and the United States, and Alasania delivered another impassioned appeal for the Security Council – which he called “the highest legitimate international authority in the world” – to act as it became increasingly clear that Russia's military was cutting his country in half. He also reprimanded the Russian Ambassador for making statements reminiscent of the “propaganda by the Soviet Union when it invaded Afghanistan, Prague and Budapest.” A high-level US diplomat would later privately accuse Russia of practising “Stalinist diplomacy” (perhaps missing the irony that Stalin was a Georgian) and announced that “history repeats itself: Russia wants to send Georgia a message that the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are back.” Nonetheless, the Council remained at an impasse.<sup>571</sup>

These diplomatic manoeuvres at the Security Council were clear attempts by the Georgian delegation to soft balance or frustrate Russia's (perceived) unilateral use of force. The Georgian Ambassador framed his opposition to Russia by describing the war as an aggressive violation of international law aimed at disrupting the international and regional order. The fact that no one answered his second question was unsurprising, since everyone

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<sup>570</sup> 5952<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 8 August 2008, New York City, S/PV.5952, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5952](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5952).

<sup>571</sup> 5953<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 10 August 2008, New York City, S/PV.5953, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5953](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5953).

knew the Council was deadlocked when a security issue concerned one of the permanent members. Although Alasania knew a Security Council Resolution condemning Russia was impossible, he hoped for a strongly-worded (non-legally binding) Security Council Presidential Statement which only required a consensus. Even this proved to be a bridge too far.

Giorgi Tskhakaya – the Deputy Minister of Justice and former Deputy Mayor of Tbilisi who served as a senior advisor to Saakashvili in 2008 – confirms that Georgian policy at the UN, and in general, sought to balance Russia. He criticised “those in the opposition who favoured bandwagoning with Russia for failing to remember how Georgia’s government under Shevardnadze was highly penetrated by Russian agents.”<sup>572</sup> However, Tskhakaya explained that Georgia’s motives were also “greater and more complex” than just a simple balancing of Russia: “we were trying to join a community of values which we believed in and we think are important to develop in our country.” Tskhakaya was referring not only to military integration within NATO, but also greater political, economic, social, and legal integration with the West through the EU. Nino Shekrladze, an official from the Georgian Foreign Ministry, also confirmed that Georgian foreign policy sought to balance Russia, but she revealed that officials preferred to describe the policy “in the positive way” as integrating with Europe rather than “in the negative way” as balancing against Russia.<sup>573</sup>

Poland also emerged as a chief soft balancer during this crisis. It did this by creating a *mini-Entente* with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Poland’s soft balancing was so intense that it eventually slipped into classical hard balancing, as the next section indicates. The Polish delegation at the UN also attended all of these emergency Security Council

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<sup>572</sup> Interview with Giorgi Tskhakaya, Deputy Minister of Justice (Senior Advisor to Saakashvili during the summer of 2008), Tbilisi, 29 September 2012.

<sup>573</sup> Interview with Nino Shekrladze, Official at the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tbilisi, 29 September 2012.

meetings – a departure from their routine practices – but since Poland did not have a seat at the Security Council, its soft balancing efforts were concentrated elsewhere.

Poland started paying very close attention to the situation in Georgia in the summer of 2008. On 25 June it hosted a summit meeting of foreign ministers in the informal “New Group of Friends of Georgia” in Warsaw.<sup>574</sup> This is an informal alliance of states in the European Near Abroad devoted to promoting Georgia’s domestic reforms and its political and military integration with the EU and NATO. It is called the “new” group of friends to distinguish it from the original “Group of Friends of Georgia” which comprised of France, Germany, the UK, and the US. The “old” group became effectively dysfunctional after it was subsumed as the “UN Secretary-General’s Group of Friends of Georgia” because it allowed Russia to become a veto-wielding member. The desire to create another organisation in its lieu, and without Russian membership, is another indication of the balancing motive in the foreign policies of the states of the European Near Abroad.<sup>575</sup>

One of the Group’s goals, according to press releases from the Lithuanian and Georgian foreign ministries, was to urge for “the removal of Russian bases and troops from Georgia” and elevating this issue on the EU agenda. Although the Group does not explicitly declare balancing Russia as one of its goals, if one views the region in zero-sum terms, nearly all of the Group’s efforts are devoted to this objective. The main issues discussed during the Warsaw Summit in June 2008 included Georgia’s NATO prospects, the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the East, and European participation in conflict resolution in the Caucasus. Representatives from the United States also attended the summit.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>574</sup> Its membership includes nine states from the European Near Abroad: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, and Sweden.

<sup>575</sup> See Vladimir Socor, “New Group of Georgia’s Friends Founded”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 26, 6 February 2005, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=27489](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=27489).

<sup>576</sup> Ibid, “The New Group of Friends of Georgia Meets in Warsaw”, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 June 2006, <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/760>.

A few days after the Warsaw Summit, the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania flew to Batumi, Georgia to participate in a summit of another informal grouping of states which has a strong element of balancing Russia in it: GUAM. A Georgian Ambassador to the United States described GUAM as “a strategic alliance of countries with common problems and common threat perceptions.”<sup>577</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane explains that GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) is “an informal regional grouping established in the mid-1990s by former Soviet republics unhappy with cooperation in the CIS framework and wishing to establish a distinct cooperation framework *to balance* the Russian Federation.”<sup>578</sup> Ever since the attacks of 11 September 2001 the United States has intensified its cooperation with this organisation, allocating \$46 million to the organisation for joint projects in May 2002.<sup>579</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver also describe GUAM as “an indicator of the [region’s] degree of dissatisfaction with Russian dominance” and explain that its primary objective is to serve as a multilateral forum for cooperation on security issues (including frozen conflicts and terrorism) on the basis of the “inviolability of internationally recognised borders.” GUAM is against “dividing lines and spheres of influence” and seeks to promote the region’s integration to NATO and the construction of an energy corridor to Europe.<sup>580</sup> The one thing all of these goals have in common is that they seek to undermine Russia’s dominance of the region.

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<sup>577</sup> Tepo Japaridze, Ambassador of the Republic of Georgia to the United States, 17 May 2000, Washington. Quoted in: Tomas Valasiek, “Military Cooperation Between Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova in the GUUAM Framework”, *Belfer Center for Sciences and International Affairs*, JFK School of Government, Harvard University, [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/3102/military\\_cooperation\\_between\\_georgia\\_ukraine\\_uzbekistan\\_azerbaijan\\_and\\_moldova\\_in\\_the\\_guam\\_framework.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/3102/military_cooperation_between_georgia_ukraine_uzbekistan_azerbaijan_and_moldova_in_the_guam_framework.html).

<sup>578</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, “The United States and regionalism in Central Asia”, *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 3, May 2004, p. 453.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>580</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 412-413; GUUAM, Statement of Presidents of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Uzbekistan, Washington, 1999, <http://guam-organization.org/en/node/448>; and Hafiz Pashayev, “Ambassador Hafiz Pashayev’s Presentation at ‘GUUAM and the Geopolitics of Eurasia’ Seminar”, 17 May 2000, United States Senate, Washington.

During the Batumi Summit of 3 July the Presidents of the GUAM states, along with the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania, once again discussed the region's conflicts, joint energy projects (such as the Odessa-Brody-Gdansk pipeline), and reaffirmed Georgia's territorial integrity. Saakashvili also used the occasion to liken Russia's conduct in Abkhazia to Nazi Germany's conduct in Czechoslovakia in 1938. Once again, representatives from the United States were present at the meeting.<sup>581</sup>

Despite all of these early soft balancing efforts, the war still erupted, and on 9 August Poland, knowing that a conventional response involving hard power against the region's hegemon was neither possible nor desirable, decided to escalate their soft balancing efforts. President Kaczynski accomplished this by issuing a scathing joint statement on the Georgia-Russia War with the Presidents of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.<sup>582</sup> It was essentially a joint statement on soft balancing Russia. It declared that

We, the leaders of the former captive nations... strongly condemn the *unilateral military actions* of the Russian military forces, [and] we will *use all means available* to us as Presidents to ensure that aggression against a small country in Europe will not be passed over in silence or with meaningless statements equating the victims with the victimizers.<sup>583</sup>

The statement continued with the assertion that the Presidents will raise this and other relevant European-Russian issues (such as the "visa facilitation" programme and negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement<sup>584</sup>) in the European Union and North Atlantic Council. This linkage with wider European-Russian relations was designed to

<sup>581</sup> Mikheil Svanidze, "GUAM Summit Wraps Up in Batumi", *Georgian Daily: Independent Voice*, 3 July 2008, [http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3779&Itemid=65](http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3779&Itemid=65).

<sup>582</sup> It was not the first and last time the Presidents would issue joint statements regarding the situation in Georgia. For instance, the Presidents also issued a joined statement on 22 May 2008 urging Russia to respect Georgia's territorial integrity after tensions spiked. "Poland, Baltic's urge Russia to Respect Georgia's Integrity", *Georgian Daily: Independent Voice*, 22 May 2008, [http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2423&Itemid=65](http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2423&Itemid=65).

<sup>583</sup> Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Valdis Zatlers, Valdas Adamkus and Lech Kaczynski, "Joint Statement on Georgia-Russia War by Presidents of Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania", 9 August 2008, *Georgia Update – A Service of the Government of Georgia*, [http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=5572&Itemid=65](http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5572&Itemid=65).

<sup>584</sup> The original Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA), in force since 1997, regulates Russia's trade and investment relations with the European Union. A new treaty was supposed to be negotiated in 2006, but it was vetoed first by Poland until April 2007, and then by Lithuania until the summer of 2008. The war in Georgia proved another serious obstacle in the negotiations for a new PCA.

explicitly raise Russia's costs for using military force unilaterally. The statement concluded with the assertion that the "The Russian Federation has overstepped a red-line...[and] the EU and NATO must take the initiative and *stand-up against the spread of imperialist and revisionist policy in the East of Europe.*" On the same day Foreign Minister Sikorski called for an emergency meeting of the Council of the European Union to convene, and the next day the Presidents of the Parliaments of the three Baltic States issued another joint declaration condemning "Russia's military aggression" and its new military doctrine of protecting its citizens abroad.<sup>585</sup>

In short, Polish and Baltic leaders tried to use every (non-military) channel available at the European level to undermine the Russian war effort. However, the Polish-led mini-Entente was not satisfied. In an audacious manoeuvre, Kaczynski convinced the leaders of mini-Entente to fly into Tbilisi during the middle of the war as a show of solidarity for Georgia (and simultaneously, as a show of defiance to Russia). On 11 August Kaczynski consulted with President Bush over the phone and was given the green light for the operation.<sup>586</sup> The next day the Polish and Baltic Presidents boarded Polish Air Force One in Warsaw, collected President Yushchenko in Kiev, and proceeded en route to Tbilisi.<sup>587</sup> As they approached Georgian airspace, Russian fighters were scrambled and denied them permission to land. The delegation was forced to land in Azerbaijan and to travel the long way to Tbilisi, but once the Presidents arrived, they received a heroes' welcome at a mass rally on Georgia's Freedom Square. The moment they arrived Saakashvili was negotiating the terms of a ceasefire with Sarkozy (who had been permitted to land by the Russian Air Force) and Kaczynski addressed the crowds by denouncing Russian hegemony in the region.

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<sup>585</sup> Ene Ergma, Gundars Duadze and Ceslovas Jursenas, "Declaration of Presidents of Parliaments of the Baltic States", The Parliament of Estonia, 10 August 2008, <http://www.riigikogu.ee/index.php?id=50815>.

<sup>586</sup> "President of RP speaks on the phone to the President of United States", President of Poland Official Website, 11 August 2008, <http://www.president.pl/en/archive/news-archive/news-2008/art,116,president-of-rp-speaks-on-the-phone-to-the-president-of-united-states.html>.

<sup>587</sup> The President of Latvia was in Beijing for the Olympic ceremonies. The Prime Minister of Latvia Ivars Godmanis met the four Presidents in Tbilisi.

He declared that “Russia had shown its true face...[and that] we came to fight since our old neighbour thinks it can fight us.” However, Kaczynski was surprisingly frank in describing the real motive behind his denunciation of Russia: “what has befallen Georgia today may befall Ukraine tomorrow, the Baltic States a day later, and then perhaps my own country: Poland.”<sup>588</sup>

Leaked US diplomatic cables reveal a similar story of Polish-led soft balancing efforts and how the West was split between a “Russia-friendly” and “Russia-hostile” club. They describe an emergency meeting of NATO ambassadors on 12 August with the heading “NATO allies lack cohesion during the first meeting on Georgia crisis” and a subsequent meeting with the heading “Allies divided down the middle.” The cables paint a picture of how a Polish-led coalition of states (including the Baltic States, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, and the United Kingdom) attempted to make NATO issue a “Russia-hostile” statement and to suspend the NATO-Russia Council. In fact, Latvian officials suggested a list of sanctions on Russia, including its expulsion from the G8, the cancelling of the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, and even potentially sending military aid to Georgia. Polish officials also reportedly asked the United States if it would airlift Polish air defence missiles to assist Georgian forces. The other camp, led by France and Germany, resisted these calls. The cables revealed that “a number of allies – especially Germany – are parroting Russian points on Georgian culpability...[and that] the German-led side is unlikely to support anything more than a slap on the Russian wrist.” The cables indicated that the same coalition of states were pitted against one another in the 12 August EU foreign ministers meeting in Brussels.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Lech Kaczynski, “President of RP Sets off to Visit Georgia”, President of Poland Official Website, 12 August 2008, <http://www.president.pl/en/archive/news-archive/news-2008/art,119,president-of-rp-sets-off-to-visit-georgia.html>; “Five Eastern European Presidents Head to Georgia”, *Associated Press*, 12 August 2008, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-12-presidents-georgia\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-12-presidents-georgia_N.htm); and Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, p. 205.

<sup>589</sup> Andrew Rettman, “US Cables Shed Light on EU ‘Friends of Russia’ in Georgia War”, *EU Observer*, 01 December 2010, <http://euobserver.com/news/31400> and [http://rusrep.ru/article/2010/11/29/wikileaks\\_docs\\_02](http://rusrep.ru/article/2010/11/29/wikileaks_docs_02).

A senior official at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Brussels confirmed that such a divide exists within the alliance. On the one side, “you have an ‘anti-Russian side’ which consists of the United States, United Kingdom, Poland, and the Baltic States; and on the other you have a ‘pro-Russian side’ which consists of France, Germany, and Italy.” He explained that France and Germany adopted pro-Russian positions during several meetings because they did not want to isolate Russia any further, and that they also often served as an obstacle during debates on expanding US ballistic missile defence systems in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>590</sup>

Poland and Estonia also employed a type of soft balancing during this conflict which has been hitherto unidentified. In the last decade it has become commonplace among military strategists to proclaim that modern warfare has entered a fifth dimension: in addition to land, air, sea, and space, the cyberworld is increasingly becoming a new military battleground. During the August War, internet users in Russia hacked the Georgian Presidential website and portrayed Saakashvili as a modern-day Hitler. Georgia’s Parliament and Foreign Ministry sites were also attacked and this greatly hampered the country’s ability to communicate with the outside world.<sup>591</sup> Russia employed similar tactics against Estonia during the May 2007 row over the Soviet war memorial.<sup>592</sup> In response to these cyber attacks, the governments of Poland and Estonia allowed the Georgian government to use their websites as a platform to communicate with the outside world.<sup>593</sup>

The issue arises as to whether this type of balancing behaviour is hard or soft. If cyberspace is considered the fifth frontier of warfare, and these types of actions clearly have military implications, an argument may be made that it is another form of hard balancing.

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<sup>590</sup> Interview with unnamed senior official (Director-level) at NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Brussels, 4 November 2011.

<sup>591</sup> Neil Arun, “Caucasus Foes Fight Cyber War”, *BBC News*, 14 August 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7559850.stm>.

<sup>592</sup> “Estonia Hit by Moscow Cyber War”, *BBC News*, 17 May 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6665145.stm>.

<sup>593</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, p. 167.

However, the better view would be to consider this another form of soft balancing. Internal hard balancing has traditionally involved concrete physical entities, such as tanks, battleships, bombers, and even satellites. The use of electronic information does not fit neatly into this traditional category, especially since it can be conducted by private hackers who have no affiliation to a state. Therefore, Poland and Estonia's manoeuvre to assist Georgia in its electronic war may be considered another instance of soft balancing.

Ukraine also proved to be a particularly strong soft balancer against Russia during the crisis. When the war broke out the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry released a cautious statement calling on the Russian Federation to pull its troops out of Georgia and bring Tskhinvali back to the bargaining table.<sup>594</sup> However, two days later the Ministry released a more confrontational statement that Ukraine reserved the right to bar Russian warships and vessels which took part in the conflict from returning to port.<sup>595</sup> The Russian Foreign Ministry criticised this warning as a "hostile" action against Russia, but this did not deter Yushchenko from issuing a presidential decree on 13 August which required all Russian naval ships, aircraft, and personnel to request permission seventy-two hours in advance of any movements in Ukrainian territory and waters. Yushchenko also hinted that he might revoke an agreement that allowed Russia to use the port at Sevastopol until 2017 if Russian commanders defied his decree. By denying Russian forces the permission to freely use their military and naval facilities in the Crimean Peninsula Yushchenko hoped it would frustrate Russia's military intervention in Georgia and send a clear signal that the region's borders could not be altered

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<sup>594</sup> "Ukraine Calls on Russia to Pull Troops from Georgia", Statement of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, *Unian*, 8 August 2008, <http://www.unian.info/news/266149-ukraine-calls-on-russia-to-pull-out-its-troops-from-georgia.html>.

<sup>595</sup> "Ukraine Threatens to Bar Russian Warships", *Reuters*, 10 August 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/08/10/idUSLA480092>.

by force. The Russian authorities once again denounced this as a “new serious anti-Russian step.”<sup>596</sup>

However, Ukraine preferred to defer to Poland’s leadership of the soft balancing camp. Yushchenko’s presidential decree came a day after his participation in the joint show-of-solidarity operation in Tbilisi. During that event Yushchenko preferred to have Kaczynski deliver the most pugnacious elements of speech denouncing Russian aggression and imperialism. The fact that there was a real prospect for military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine likely explained his relative reticence.<sup>597</sup>

Most of the other states in the European Near Abroad also took various steps to challenge Russia’s military intervention in Georgia, but with the surprising exception of Sweden, the other states were decidedly milder in their approach compared to the Polish-led mini-Entente of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. On 9 August Sweden’s Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt, issued a statement that “the Russian offensive against and in Georgia is an act of aggression that is incompatible with international law” and that its justification based on protecting Russian citizens is “deeply ominous.”<sup>598</sup> Bildt was surprisingly undiplomatic in his comments regarding Russia’s new doctrine: “attempts to apply such a doctrine have plunged Europe into war in the past...and we have reason to remember how Hitler used this very doctrine little more than a century ago.”<sup>599</sup> Bildt also strongly supported Sikorski’s call for an emergency meeting of the Council of the European Union. As the following sections of this chapter will indicate, this Polish and Swedish cooperation against

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<sup>596</sup> Damien McElroy, “Ukraine Imposes Restrictions on Russian Navy”, *The Telegraph*, 13 August 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/2552925/Ukraine-imposes-restrictions-on-Russian-navy.html>.

<sup>597</sup> Jan Maksymiuk, “Is Ukraine Prepared to Maintain Its Stand Against Russia?”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 15 August 2008, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Is\\_Ukraine\\_Prepared\\_To\\_Maintain\\_Its\\_Tough\\_Stand\\_Against\\_Russia/1191251.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Is_Ukraine_Prepared_To_Maintain_Its_Tough_Stand_Against_Russia/1191251.html).

<sup>598</sup> Carl Bildt, “Russia’s Justification of its Offensive Deeply Ominous”, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 August 2008, <http://www.government.se/sb/d/587/a/109203>.

<sup>599</sup> “Sweden Invokes Hitler in Condemning Russian Assault”, *The Local: Sweden’s News in English*, 9 August 2008, <http://www.thelocal.se/13596/20080809/#.UXdyNspYuZw>.

Russian interests in the European Union was decisively strengthened as a result of the Georgian conflict.

On 11-12 August Bildt also decided he would travel to Tbilisi to show solidarity with Georgia. He used his post as the Chairman of the Council of Europe to soft balance against Russia. He made the argument that since the Russian Federation and Georgia were both members of the Council of Europe, they both had submitted to resolve all conflicts by peaceful means, and thus the Russian Federation was legally obliged to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia.<sup>600</sup>

Bildt also expressed support for the work of his Finnish counterpart, Alexander Stubb, who would ultimately play a relatively important role in bringing the conflict to an end. On 9 August, Stubb and Bernard Kouchner, the French Foreign Minister, travelled to Tbilisi to represent the OSCE and the EU, respectively. After Stubb and Kouchner met with Saakashvili the following evening, they wrote the first draft of a ceasefire agreement which included Georgian input and contained a commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity. Unfortunately for Georgia, the final Medvedev-Sarkozy six-point ceasefire draft made no reference to Stubb's original commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity, and it added a sixth point which left a question mark over the future status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>601</sup>

Unlike Bildt, Stubb proved to be much less vocal in his criticism of Russia. As the chairman of the OSCE Stubb had a limited scope to reveal his true position. This dynamic was further compounded by the fact that he was negotiating alongside a very conciliatory French-led EU delegation which, in the final analysis, had the ultimate power and authority to negotiate the ceasefire. Thus, Stubb saved his fiercest condemnations until Russia officially recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states on 26 August: he said the

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<sup>600</sup> Carl Bildt, "Carl Bildt to Georgia", Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 August 2008, <http://www.government.se/sb/d/587/a/109223>.

<sup>601</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, pp. 193-201.

international community could not accept “unilaterally established buffer zones” and called on Russia to withdraw its troops from Georgia and correctly implement the ceasefire agreement.<sup>602</sup>

Other states in the European Near Abroad also criticised the Russian intervention and called for a ceasefire, but they decided to sit back and support the European approach. For instance, the Romanian President Basescu called for Russia to respect Georgian sovereignty, stated his intention to send humanitarian aid to Georgia (especially medicines and health products), and declared his support for the EU-led efforts to find a ceasefire.<sup>603</sup> In a similar vein the Bulgarian Foreign Minister also made an official statement calling for a ceasefire which reaffirmed Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>604</sup> However, both Romania and Bulgaria were careful in not identifying Russia as an aggressor.

The Czech political scene was somewhat divided during the war. At the outbreak of hostilities the Czech Foreign Ministry released a statement “fully supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia” and regretting Russia’s “military steps against Georgia.”<sup>605</sup> The Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek used strong balancing language and likened the war to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia:

There’s a parallel with 1968 in that it’s practically the same country [Russia], with the same interest – not to allow a country that it thinks belongs to its sphere of influence to leave that sphere. That was the position of the Soviet administration, and I think Russia’s position today is similar...[Russia’s] *neo-imperialist policy* and desire to return to being a global superpower is very strong.<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> “OSCE Chairman Condemns Russia’s Recognition of South Ossetia, Abkhazia Independence”, OSCE Press Release, 26 August 2008, <http://www.osce.org/cio/50011>.

<sup>603</sup> Traian Basescu, President of Romania Press Statement, 12 August 2008, <http://www.presidency.ro/?lang=ro>.

<sup>604</sup> “Georgia and South Ossetia in Fierce War”, *Monitor*, 9 August 2008, <http://www.monitor.bg/article?id=165944>.

<sup>605</sup> “Prague Worried by Escalating Conflict in Georgia, Calls for Talks”, *CTK*, 9 August 2008, [http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=5592&Itemid=65](http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5592&Itemid=65).

<sup>606</sup> Mirek Topolánek, “Czech PM Says Georgian Conflict ‘Worse Than’ 68 Soviet Invasion”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 21 August 2008,

[http://www.rferl.org/content/Czech\\_PM\\_Says\\_Georgian\\_Conflict\\_Worse\\_Than\\_68\\_Soviet\\_Invasion/1192858.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Czech_PM_Says_Georgian_Conflict_Worse_Than_68_Soviet_Invasion/1192858.html).

However, when Topolanek was specifically asked about his discernible absence in the mini-Entente's expedition to Tbilisi, he explained that he thought it was "a bit of a photo opportunity" and that the Czech Republic's position throughout the conflict was consistently clear in support of Georgia.<sup>607</sup> One of the main reasons why he did not partake in it was due to the fractured nature of the Czech domestic political scene. The Czech President Vaclav Klaus vocally condemned analogies to the 1968 invasion and refuted "such simplified interpretations which paint the Georgians as the victims and the Russians as the villains." He explained the Russians and Georgians were equally at blame and that he did not support the positions of the mini-Entente.<sup>608</sup>

The Hungarian political scene was also divided. Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany preferred to defer the issue to the European Union and to follow its lead on the reaction to the war. He waited for an emergency summit of the European Council on 1 September before he issued his own measured response and condemned the aggression. However, Viktor Orban, the leader of the opposition, vocally denounced Russia's "imperial military action" and drew parallels with the 1956 Soviet occupation of Hungary.<sup>609</sup>

Slovakia also followed a careful approach to the war: while the Slovak Foreign Minister Jan Kubis criticised the "excessive inappropriate use of force by the Russian Federation," he also criticised Saakashvili for various "provocations." The Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico explained that he "did not see the situation as all black and white as

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> Declaration by the Czech Republic to the Escalation of the Conflict in Georgia's South Ossetia, Czech Foreign Ministry, 8 August 2008, [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti\\_a\\_media/prohlaseni\\_a\\_stanoviska/archiv\\_prohlaseni\\_a\\_stanovisek/prohlaseni\\_a\\_stanoviska/prohlaseni\\_ceske\\_republiky\\_k\\_eskalaci.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti_a_media/prohlaseni_a_stanoviska/archiv_prohlaseni_a_stanovisek/prohlaseni_a_stanoviska/prohlaseni_ceske_republiky_k_eskalaci.html); and Daniela Lazarova, "Czech Political Scene Split Over Georgia", *Radio Praha*, 15 August 2008, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/czech-political-scene-split-over-georgia>.

<sup>609</sup> "The Russian Army Operations Reminded Orban of 56", *Index*, 14 August 2008, <http://index.hu/belfold/ovgruzorsz08/>; Anna Porter, "Hungary: No Georgia on Their Minds: Domestic Politics are Dividing This Eastern European Country", *Macleans*, 17 September 2008, [http://www.macleans.ca/world/global/article.jsp?content=20080917\\_19971\\_19971&page=1](http://www.macleans.ca/world/global/article.jsp?content=20080917_19971_19971&page=1).

some do” and supported the position of the Foreign Ministry which he described as “balanced.”<sup>610</sup>

Moldova also turned to the European Union to find a solution to the situation in Georgia, but it was extremely careful not to provoke Russia. Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin was deeply perturbed by the prospect that Moscow might officially recognise Transdniestria, which had issued a statement on 12 August officially severing relations with Moldova unless it condemned Georgia’s aggression in South Ossetia. In fact, Medvedev directly warned Voronin not to repeat Saakashvili’s mistake by trying to retake the region by force when the two leaders met in Sochi on 25 August. Voronin “thanked God [that] we had enough brains” to prevent the situation from spiralling out of control.<sup>611</sup>

At first sight it seems that Azerbaijan also pursued a “balanced” approach to the crisis. However, a closer examination reveals that they actually implemented a strategy of *surreptitious soft balancing*. Although the majority of Azeri public opinion strongly sympathised with the Georgians, the government was forced to publicly walk a strategic tightrope in its relations between Russia and the West. Anar Valiyev explains that Azerbaijan had to “tread lightly” and pursue a “strategy of *soft support* for Georgia while refraining from making harsh statements about Russia.”<sup>612</sup> On 8 August the Azeri Foreign Ministry spokesman Khazar Ibrahim stated Georgia’s actions were “in compliance with international law” and that a solution to the crisis should be formed on this basis, but he was

<sup>610</sup> Press Conference with Slovak Foreign Minister Jan Kubis, Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 October 2008, [http://foreignminister.gov.au/transcripts/2008/081020\\_jpc.html](http://foreignminister.gov.au/transcripts/2008/081020_jpc.html); “Slovak Prime Minister Knows Who Provoked this War in the Caucasus”, *HN Online*, 13 August 2008; <http://hnonline.sk/news/c1-26396000-slovak-prime-minister-knows-who-provoked-this-war-in-the-caucasus>.

<sup>611</sup> “Russia Warns Moldova Against ‘Georgian Mistake’”, *Reuters*, 15 August 2008, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Russia\\_Warns\\_Moldova\\_Against\\_Georgian\\_Mistake/1193614.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Russia_Warns_Moldova_Against_Georgian_Mistake/1193614.html); Vladimir Socor, “Russia in Moldova: A counter-example to Ukraine and Georgia”, *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, vol. 5, no. 185, 26 September 2008, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=33973&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=166&no\\_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=33973&tx_ttnews[backPid]=166&no_cache=1); Dmitry Medvedev met with President of Moldova Vladimir Voronin, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2008, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/9560CACC6F1AAEE5C3257523003F9DD2](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/9560CACC6F1AAEE5C3257523003F9DD2); Bridget Kendall, “Russia’s Neighbours Go Their Own Way”, *BBC News*, 21 August 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7575813.stm#blq-nav>.

<sup>612</sup> Anar Valiyev, “Victim of a ‘War of Ideologies’: Azerbaijan After the Russia-Georgia War”, *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 17, no. 3, Summer 2009, p. 271.

careful not to identify either side as an aggressor.<sup>613</sup> President Aliyev continued this soft approach by meeting with US Vice President Dick Cheney on 4 September – a strong diplomatic statement – but at the same time he tactfully neglected to refer to the war in his press statement.<sup>614</sup>

While publicly refusing to pick sides, Azerbaijan implemented a series of soft balancing measures during the war. For instance, as indicated above, Aliyev permitted the five Central and Eastern European leaders to land in Baku after Russian fighters expelled them from Georgian airspace. Moreover, during a meeting with Andrew Inglis, CEO of British Petroleum, Aliyev explained that he did not publicly support the Georgians because “it would have made no difference” but added that he was quietly finding ways to support his western neighbour. In fact, Aliyev claimed Azerbaijan provided more aid to Georgia than anyone else by using its people within the country (*i.e.* Azeri Georgians) to do “real things” of military and strategic significance, such as repairing a critical rail bridge after it was destroyed by Russian forces.<sup>615</sup> The goal of these non-military measures was to softly undermine Russia’s military activities while maintaining an ostensibly neutral policy in the public eye.

Azerbaijan adopted this careful approach because it feared incurring the regional hegemon’s wrath. In particular, it did not want Russia to respond with reprisals against Azeri oil and gas interests or against ethnic Azeris living in Russia. The government also wanted to avoid giving Russia another pretext to solidify its support of Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute – arguably Azerbaijan’s most important foreign policy concern. At the

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<sup>613</sup> Shahin Abbasov, “Azerbaijan: Baku Eyes Georgia Violence With Caution”, *Eurasianet*, 14 August 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081408.shtml>; “Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry: ‘Georgia’s Actions Comply with International Law’”, *Today.az*, 8 August 2008, <http://today.az/news/politics/46850.html>.

<sup>614</sup> “President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev Meets US Vice-President Dick Cheney”, *Azerbaijan.az*, 4 September 2008, <http://www.azerbaijan.az/cgi-bin/client/archive.cgi?action=GetFullNews&ldid=2005-07-26&ltid=21:41:54&ndid=2008-09-04&nid=1>.

<sup>615</sup> “Wikileaks: Ilham Aliyev Talks on Why He Didn’t Support Georgia Publicly in August 2008”, *Azadliq*, 14 September 2011, <http://www.azadliq.info/english/347-meqaleen/8546-wikileaks-ilham-aliyev-talks-on-why-he-didnt-support-georgia-publicly-in-august-2008.html>.

same time Azerbaijan hedged its position by developing a strong relationship with the West ever since the signing of the so-called “contract of the century” with western energy companies in 1994. Valiyev argues that having a staunchly pro-Western government in Georgia is vital to Azerbaijan and its efforts to export oil and gas without relying on Russia’s monopoly of infrastructure.<sup>616</sup>

Armenia also found itself in a geopolitically precarious position during the war. Although Armenia is oft-described as a Russian outpost in the Caucasus due to its close diplomatic and military connections with Moscow (which are imperative for Armenia’s continual control over Nagorno-Karabakh), in many ways a war between Russia and Georgia was a nightmare scenario for Armenia. This is because Georgian territory is the main conduit through which Armenia trades and communicates with the outside world. This explains why at first the Armenian Foreign Ministry released a surprisingly even-handed statement on 8 August which called on both sides to halt the military operations.<sup>617</sup> However, at a CSTO meeting in Yerevan a month later the Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan revealed that Armenia did in fact support Russia’s “active role in contributing to peace and cooperation in the region” and he blasted Georgia for starting the war.<sup>618</sup>

Belarus is Russia’s closest ally in the European Near Abroad. Both states formed a Union State in the late 1990s, a Customs Union with Kazakhstan in 2010, and are currently spearheading the campaign to form a Eurasian Union modelled on the European Union. Therefore one might have expected Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to be a fervent supporter of Russia’s cause during the August War. This is why many observers were surprised when Maria Vanshina, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry’s spokeswoman, released a statement on 8 August deploring the use of force and calling for a ceasefire but,

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<sup>616</sup> Valiyev, “Victim of a ‘War of Ideologies’, p. 270.

<sup>617</sup> “Armenia Concerned About South Ossetia Fighting”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 8 August 2008, <http://asbarez.com/58362/armenia-concerned-about-south-ossetia-fighting/>.

<sup>618</sup> “CSTO Backs Russia’s Actions in S. Ossetia, Condemns Georgia”, *Ria Novosti*, 4 September 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20080904/116549751.html>.

like Armenia, she did not single out support for one side or the other.<sup>619</sup> In fact, Moscow subsequently scolded Lukashenko for his lukewarm support and the Russian Ambassador in Minsk admitted Russia was “perplexed by the modest silence from the Belarusian side.” On 19 August Lukashenko would eventually fall in line and declare that Russia acted “calmly, wisely and beautifully” during the war and he pledged to send humanitarian aid to South Ossetia.<sup>620</sup> Nonetheless, Russia was decidedly irked by the lack of support from its “closet ally.”

Although the states of the European Near Abroad displayed a wide variety of responses to Russia’s intervention in Georgia – ranging from intense soft balancing by the mini-Entente at one end to neutrality or lukewarm support by Belarus and Armenia at the other – there is one policy which was common to all: non-recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Medvedev signed a decree officially recognising the two entities as independent states on 26 August and even Belarus has refused to recognise them. Each state’s soft balancing efforts – or lack thereof – during the Russo-Georgian war are summarised in section 8.7. The next section describes hard balancing.

## **8.5 Hard Balancing in the European Near Abroad and the August War**

Not only did many states in the European Near Abroad soft balance against the Russian Federation during the August War, but some also employed hard balancing measures. The first chapter proposed three indicators for internal balancing: 1) quantitative and qualitative military augmentation; 2) military transfers to/from a unipolar leader’s

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<sup>619</sup> Maria Vanshina, “Deputy Head for Information, Responding to Media Questions with Regard to the Developments Unfolding in South Ossetia”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, 8 August 2008, [http://www.mfa.gov.by/en/press/news\\_mfa/e1b9a9a6020af566.html](http://www.mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/e1b9a9a6020af566.html).

<sup>620</sup> Ron Popeski, “Belarus, Chided by Russia, Offers Ossetia Sympathy”, *Reuters*, 13 August 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/08/13/us-georgia-ossetia-belarus-idUSLD27910920080813>; “Belarus Leader Applauds Russian Response to South Ossetia Crisis”, *Ria Novosti*, 19 August 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20080819/116132622.html>.

opponents; and 3) support for non-state actors, such as terrorists or guerrilla fighters, which confront the unipolar leader. The indicator for external balancing is the creation of formal war-fighting military alliances as articulated in bilateral and multilateral treaties. According to these indicators, Georgia and Poland emerged as major hard balancers of the Russian Federation in the period leading up to and during the August War. Ukraine, the Baltic States, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria could be classified as minor hard balancers.

It is clear that Georgia hard balanced against Russia during the period leading up to and during the August War. Since the Rose Revolution in 2003 Georgia has been substantially and consistently increasing military spending both as a total expenditure and as a percentage of its GDP until the outbreak of the war. In fact, Georgia nearly doubled its defence expenditures from \$573 million in 2007 to \$1037 million in 2008. Between 2003 and 2008 Georgia also consistently upgraded and modernised its military forces, with the ultimate objective of making them NATO-compatible.<sup>621</sup> In particular, the United States has been involved in modernising and training Georgia's forces. At the outbreak of the war the US had 130 military trainers in Georgia and on 10 August US Air Force used its massive C-17s to airlift 2000 Georgian soldiers from Iraq to the frontline in Georgia.<sup>622</sup>

Throughout this period Georgia has also been receiving substantial arms transfers from Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Israel, Bulgaria, Poland, and the United States. These include, *inter alia*, heavy tanks, attack aircraft, air defence missiles, radar, heavy artillery, and sophisticated drones.<sup>623</sup> Russia also alleged that in the early 2000s Georgia covertly supported (or turned a blind eye towards) various international armed groups in the Pankisi Gorge which were using the territory as a springboard to launch attacks into Russia's

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<sup>621</sup> However, by 2009 Georgia's defence expenditure shrunk by half its size and it has remained at this reduced level consistently up to 2012. See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2002-2013*, Chapter 10: Country Comparisons – Force Level and Economics, vol. 113, no. 1, 14 March 2013, p. 549.

<sup>622</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2002-2013*, Chapter 10: Country Comparisons – Force Level and Economics, vol. 111, no. 1, 14 March 2011, p. 472.

<sup>623</sup> Pukhov, ed., *The Tanks of August*, pp. 139-141.

Northern Caucasus. It is this presence of international armed groups which brought US military advisors into Georgia.<sup>624</sup> Lastly, Georgia was also vigorously trying to join NATO during these years, which is a traditional external hard balancing organisation. In sum, between the years of 2003 and 2008 Georgia met all of the conditions for both internal and external hard balancing.

Poland was also a chief hard balancer in the lead-up to the August War, but its hard balancing measures were more covert. During the same period Poland has also been substantially and consistently increasing military spending as a total expenditure and spending circa two percent of its GDP on defence per year (the minimum NATO standard). In particular, in 2008 Poland increased its total military spending by thirty percent from the previous year.<sup>625</sup>

Although the United States sent Georgia utility helicopters, it consistently refused Georgia's request for man-portable air defence systems (or MANPADS) which are indispensable in modern warfare: American "stingers" proved instrumental in bringing down the Soviet Air Force during the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The United States refused the request because it feared the stingers could proliferate into the wrong hands. In 2007 Poland filled the void: using a Lebanese arms trader as a middle-man, Poland supplied the Georgian army with 30 highly-advanced GROM MANPADS equipped with 100 missiles. Kaczynski personally oversaw the rapid deployment of the MANPADS, and according to Polish sources, out of the twelve GROM missiles fired during the Five Day War, nine hit their targets.<sup>626</sup> On the morning of 9 August – only a few hours after Ambassador Alasania's

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<sup>624</sup> Neil Arun, "Russia's Reach Unnerves Chechens", *BBC News*, 16 January 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7189024.stm>.

<sup>625</sup> IISS, *The Military Balance 2002-2012*, Chapter 10: Country Comparisons – Force Level and Economics, vol. 111, no. 1, 14 March 2011, p. 471.

<sup>626</sup> Michal Majewski, "Polska Bron w Sluzbie Gruzynskiej Armii (Polish Weapons at the Service of the Georgian Army)", *Dziennik.pl*, 10 October 2009, <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/156916,polska-bron-w-sluzbie-gruzynskiej-armii.html>; "Rosjanie Porazeni Polskim Gromem (Russians Stunned by the Polish GROM)", *Wprost*, 10 October 2009, <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/168741/Rosjanie-porazeni-polskim-Gromem/>.

failed bid in New York City to have the Russian bombers reverse course – one of the GROM missiles struck down a Su-24M frontline bomber.<sup>627</sup>

Arguably the most important manifestation of Polish hard balancing occurred immediately after the Five Day War. On 14 August 2008 Poland and the United States reached an agreement to install ten ground-based ballistic missile defence interceptors (similar to the systems in California and Alaska) in northern Poland. In Buzan and Weaver's words, this was a significant act of US "penetration" into the regional security dynamics of the European Near Abroad. Although the missile deal was publicly described as an anti-Iranian measure, the significance of its timing was not lost on Moscow.<sup>628</sup>

The details of the deal were signed on 20 August when Rice visited Sikorski in Warsaw. Sikorski was adamant to include two (somewhat unusual) conditions for the deal. First, he insisted that the deal had to be part of a comprehensive military package for the modernisation of Poland's armed forces. Not only did this entail further financial assistance, but it also included the provision of US Patriot missiles which would have to be operated by US forces (at least temporarily), leading to the uncomfortable conclusion that US soldiers would staff air defences in Poland which could only realistically have Russian (and not Iranian) planes as their intended targets.

After the missile defence agreement was signed, the other unusual condition required the signing of a second document establishing a bilateral "US-Polish strategic partnership" which included a mutual security guarantee between Poland and the United States. The United States explicitly guaranteed the "security of Poland and any US facilities located on

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<sup>627</sup> Ruslan Pukhov explains footage of the bomber being struck and going down in flames was captured by mobile phone cameras and was soon available on the internet. See Pukhov, ed., *The Tanks of August*, p. 101, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5Mh2DeC2JE>.

<sup>628</sup> Thom Shanker and Nicholas Kulish, "US and Poland Set Missile Deal", *The New York Times*, 14 August 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/15/world/europe/15poland.html?pagewanted=all>.

the territory of the Republic of Poland.”<sup>629</sup> Prime Minister Tusk said “we have crossed the Rubicon” and explained that the deal included a “mutual commitment” between the two states to come to each other’s assistance “in cases of trouble” – in other words, it was a war-fighting alliance.<sup>630</sup>

This supplementary bilateral mutual security guarantee (*i.e.* external balancing pact) is curious because it is not immediately clear why it is necessary. Poland and the United States are already committed to militarily assist one another in the case of an armed attack via the collective security measures in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. One may reach the disquieting conclusion that this bilateral pact actually undermines NATO. For if NATO’s collective security is reliable, then this bilateral pact is unnecessary; and if this bilateral pact is necessary, then NATO is inadequate to address the security needs of all of its members.<sup>631</sup>

Jacob Wisniewski, Director of the Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy Planning at the Polish Foreign Ministry, explained that Poland insisted on this bilateral pact for historical reasons: “we have historical reasons not to believe in Article 5 and there is an understanding in Moscow that the new NATO states do not fall under the Article 5 umbrella. This is why we wanted a direct security guarantee from the United States.”<sup>632</sup> Miroslaw Cieslik, an official in the Department of Security in the Foreign Ministry, concurred by explaining that historical analogies of “the ‘Great Betrayal’ still influence thinking in the Foreign Ministry, especially among the top echelon.”<sup>633</sup> This term is used to recall how

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<sup>629</sup> Declaration on Strategic Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland, US Department of State, 20 August 2008, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/aug/108661.htm>.

<sup>630</sup> Vanessa Gera and Monika Scislowska, “US, Poland Reach Agreement on Anti-missile Defence Deal”, *Associated Press*, 14 August 2008, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2199&dat=20080815&id=7KgyAAAIBAJ&sjid=IOcFAAAAIBAJ&pg=4246,2723655>.

<sup>631</sup> Henry Kissinger followed this logic of thinking when he described how the (ironically-celebrated) Locarno Treaty actually served to undermine the League of Nations and the post-Versailles international order. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 275.

<sup>632</sup> Interview with Jakub Wisniewski, Director of the Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 16 December 2011.

<sup>633</sup> Interview with Miroslaw Cieslik, Department of Security at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 29 December 2011.

Poland, despite its military alliances with Britain and France, failed to receive any meaningful assistance after it was attacked by Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939. There is a pervasive understanding in the foreign policy establishment in Poland that the United States is the only country which could meaningfully assist it in a confrontation with the regional hegemon.

Polish officials hoped that the bilateral pact, along with the approximately 500-600 US troops stationed to operate both the ballistic missile shield and Patriot air defences would serve as an ultimate “tripwire” which would immediately bring US military assistance to Poland in the event of a Russian invasion. It was always clear to Warsaw that the intended target of the military cooperation was Russia, and not Iran.<sup>634</sup> In fact, on 15 August Anatoly Nogovitsyn, one of Russia’s top generals, raised alarm bells by declaring that by hosting the US missile shield, Poland was exposing itself to a nuclear strike “100 percent” and that “such targets are destroyed as a first priority.”<sup>635</sup> In order to neutralise the US-Polish threat, Moscow announced it was moving short-range Iskander missiles to the Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad in November 2008.<sup>636</sup> US-Russian relations had not seen such nuclear brinkmanship since the Cuban missile crisis. However, the incoming Obama Administration cancelled the original plans in favour of a more flexible four-staged European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) in September 2009.<sup>637</sup> Warsaw saw the move as an appeasement of Russia, which had been strongly objecting to the Bush system as a threat to

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<sup>634</sup> Interview with unnamed official from the Department of Security at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 30 December 2011.

<sup>635</sup> “Russia May Strike Nuclear Blow on Poland in Case it Deploys US Patriot Missiles”, *Pravda*, 15 August 2008, [http://english.pravda.ru/russia/kremlin/15-08-2008/106113-russia\\_poland-0/](http://english.pravda.ru/russia/kremlin/15-08-2008/106113-russia_poland-0/).

<sup>636</sup> Ironically Polish officials were not too concerned with this “largely symbolic” move for two reasons: first, officials could not confirm that there were no strategic missiles in Kaliningrad in the first place; and more importantly, it is already common knowledge that Russia possesses enough long and medium range nuclear weapons which could target Poland from any location. Interview with Mirosław Cieslik, Department of Security at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 29 December 2011.

<sup>637</sup> Robert Gates, “A Better Missile Defense for a Safer Europe”, *The New York Times*, 19 September 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/20/opinion/20gates.html?pagewanted=all>.

its strategic arsenal. It was the opening move in the wider policy of “reset” in US-Russian relations.<sup>638</sup>

The first phase of the EPAA became operational in 2011 when US Aegis naval vessels armed with SM-3 Block IA ballistic missile interceptors started patrolling the Mediterranean Sea around Turkey. The second phase, scheduled for completion in 2015, envisages the construction of ground-based SM-3 Block IB interceptors in southern Romania. The third phase involves the deployment of more advanced ground-based SM-3 Block IIA interceptors in northern Poland. The fourth phase, which involved the deployment of even greater capability SM-3 Block IIB interceptors in Europe, was abandoned in 2011 in favour of expanding anti-ballistic missile capabilities in Alaska against a potential North Korean threat.<sup>639</sup>

Polish officials have alleged that the newer comprehensive system may ironically threaten Russia’s strategic arsenal even more because: 1) it involves a sea-based component which adds maximum tactical flexibility, and 2) it involves a far greater amount of interceptors than the original ten ground-based interceptors. Moreover, since the chief strategic objective of Polish negotiators was to “get US boots on the ground” to serve as a tripwire, the newer system should accomplish its aim of hard balancing against Russia.<sup>640</sup>

It is no coincidence that the remaining countries which have agreed to host the revised Obama shield also sent arms to Georgia. For instance, the Czech Republic initially agreed to host a radar site which would service the ten ground-based interceptors in Poland under the

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<sup>638</sup> Dean Wilkening, “Does Missile Defence in Europe Threaten Russia”, *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2012, pp. 31-52.

<sup>639</sup> Frank Rose, “Implementation of the European Phased Adaptive Approach”, US Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, Briefing in Warsaw, 18 April 2013, <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/2013/207679.htm>.

<sup>640</sup> Interview with unnamed official from the Department of Security at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 30 December 2011. Although Polish officials have recently sought to indicate that the newer, scaled-down system serves the same purpose as the Bush-era missile defence plan, in truth the original plan envisaged much greater strategic cooperation between Poland and the United States.

Bush plan. This agreement was extended under the new EAPP in October 2009.<sup>641</sup> The Czech Republic also sent copious amounts of heavy arms to Georgia in the years leading up to the August War. These included 82 heavy tanks (11 T-55AM2s and 71 T-72M1s), 12 Su-25K attack aircraft, 66 heavy and medium howitzers, 6 self-propelled multiple rocket launchers, and scores of small arms such as mortars.<sup>642</sup> However, unlike Georgia and Poland, although the Czech Republic has been consistently increasing its total military expenditures since 2003, its military expenditure as a percentage of GDP has stayed relatively constant and it actually fell in 2008.<sup>643</sup>

Romania and Bulgaria also sought to host the US SM-3 missiles after the August War, but the US eventually chose a location in Romania. Both countries have been steadily increasing their defence expenditures since 2003, but like the Czech Republic, defence expenditures actually dropped as a percentage of GDP in 2008. Bulgaria sent a dozen 23mm anti-aircraft guns, scores of mortars, and amphibious landing craft to its neighbour across the Black Sea in the lead-up to the August War.<sup>644</sup> Romania, along with Poland, has also been accused of hosting secret detention facilities for CIA operations since 2003.<sup>645</sup>

Lastly, Ukraine also employed hard balancing measures in the lead-up to, and during, the August War. Ukraine's defence expenditures largely fluctuated since the Orange Revolution, and although the country reduced defence expenditures in 2008 and 2009, it did send significant amounts of heavy arms to its partner in GUAM. These included: 110 heavy tanks (T-72A/Bs) between the years of 2005-2009, approximately 200 armoured vehicles (including BMPs and BTRs), 17 heavy howitzers, 2 types of SAM systems (including Buk-

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<sup>641</sup> Peter Baker, "Czechs Accept Modified Missile Shield Role", *The New York Times*, 23 October 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/24/world/europe/24biden.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/24/world/europe/24biden.html?_r=0).

<sup>642</sup> Pukhov, ed., *The Tanks of August*, pp. 139-141.

<sup>643</sup> IISS, *The Military Balance 2002-2012*, Chapter 10: Country Comparisons – Force Level and Economics, vol. 111, no. 1, 14 March 2011, p. 471.

<sup>644</sup> Pukhov, ed., *The Tanks of August*, pp. 139-141.

<sup>645</sup> Mark Tran, "EU Rebukes Poland and Romania over Rendition Role", *The Guardian*, 22 February 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/22/poland.eu>.

M1 and Osa-AK), and radar and electronic warfare equipment.<sup>646</sup> Most significantly, Russia accused Ukraine of directly participating in the Five Day War: in October 2008 Putin suggested that Yushchenko authorised weapons supplies to Georgia before and during the war, that Ukrainian “specialists” operated some of these weapons, and that Ukrainian-supplied SAMs ultimately shot down four Russian warplanes – which he described as a “crime.” A year later the Russian Prosecutors Office claimed to have evidence that “soldiers from Ukraine’s regular Defence Ministry detachments and at least 200 members of the UNA-UNSO nationalist organisation took part in the armed aggression against South Ossetia.” Konstantin Sadilov, a spokesman from the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, denied that members of the regular army fought in the war but he did not rule out the possibility that other Ukrainians took part.<sup>647</sup>

## 8.6 The Eastern Partnership Programme’s “Unspoken, Hidden Agenda”

Despite the French-brokered ceasefire signed on 15 August 2008, the Russo-Georgian War continued to have a lasting legacy, especially in the international affairs of the European Near Abroad. The Poland-led mini-Entente immediately continued their soft balancing efforts at the NATO- and EU-level. For instance, at an emergency meeting of NATO foreign ministers on 19 August 2008, the United States, supported by leaders from Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Baltic States, pleaded for the alliance to threaten Russia with unspecified “consequences.” The leaders of the mini-Entente wanted a strong response because they questioned the credibility of NATO’s Article 5 commitment to collective defence. However, the alliance eventually released a relatively tepid statement describing Russia’s use of force

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<sup>646</sup> Pukhov, ed., *The Tanks of August*, pp. 139-141.

<sup>647</sup> “Putin Accuses Ukraine of Having Assisted Georgia During the War”, *The New York Times*, 2 October 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/02/world/europe/02iht-ukraine.5.16655766.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/02/world/europe/02iht-ukraine.5.16655766.html?_r=0); “Russia Accuses Ukraine on Georgia”, *BBC News*, 24 August 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8219171.stm>.

as disproportionate and incompatible with the principles set out in the Helsinki Final Act and other cooperative agreements. The alliance called on Russia to completely withdraw from Georgia proper – and thereby implement the provision of the ceasefire – and, most significantly, it suspended bilateral talks with Russia through the NATO-Russia Council. Russia responded by suspending all peacekeeping operations and exercises with NATO and its participation in NATO’s Partnership for Peace Programme. Nonetheless, six months later NATO’s foreign ministers decided to resume formal dialogues, even though Russia had arguably not complied with the armistice’s plan to remove all of its forces from Georgia.<sup>648</sup> The alliance’s tepid response can be attributed to the divide within the organisation between the states of “new” and “old” Europe, or in other words, between the states of the European Near Abroad and the states of Western Europe.<sup>649</sup>

A major impetus for the Polish-led soft balancing coalition came from Medvedev’s speech on 31 August 2008 when he recapitulated Russia’s commitment to multipolarisation and protecting its citizens abroad. In what subsequently became known as the Medvedev Doctrine, the Russian President announced that he will make five principles the foundation of Russia’s foreign policy. The first principle recognised the “primacy of international law,” which is Russia’s codeword and favourite tool to balance US unipolarity. The second explicitly stated that:

*the world should be multi-polar. A single-pole world is unacceptable. Domination is something we cannot allow. We cannot accept a world order in which one country makes all the decisions, even as serious and influential a country as the United States of America. Such a world is unstable and threatened by conflict.*

After denouncing US unipolarity, the third principle then curiously explained that Russia did not seek “confrontation,” and the fourth principle ominously confirmed that Russia was

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<sup>648</sup> Statement made at the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Foreign Ministers Held at NATO Headquarters, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Brussels, 19 August 2008; and Helene Cooper, “NATO warns Russia, No ‘Business as Usual’”, *The New York Times*, 20 August 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/20/world/europe/20iht-20diplo.15442796.html>.

<sup>649</sup> Interview with unnamed senior official (Director-level) at NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Brussels, 4 November 2011.

committed to “protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens, *wherever they may be.*” The fifth principle explicitly confirmed that Russia had regions of “privileged interests” and that it will “pay particular attention” to its policies in these spheres.<sup>650</sup>

Two features of the Medvedev Doctrine stand out. First, for all practical purposes, the doctrine is a declaration of Russia’s return to nineteenth-century power politics, spheres of influence, and balances of power. However, one notable difference from the classical nineteenth-century realpolitik is that Medvedev implicitly recognises that the world is unipolar and that Russia will have to employ soft balancing measures – *i.e.* international law and the UN Security Council – to promote its multipolarisation. Secondly, although the doctrine declares Russia will promote multipolarisation on the global stage, at the same time, it hints that Russia will promote hegemonisation in its area of privileged interests. The doctrine can thus be summed up as multipolarisation globally, hegemonisation locally.

In response to the August War (and the Medvedev Doctrine, which served as the war’s post-facto intellectual justification) Poland escalated its soft balancing efforts. In particular, Poland attempted to institutionalise soft balancing against Russia through the creation of a new programme in the European Union – the Eastern Partnership Programme.

Even before Poland joined the EU in 2004 it submitted various proposals on the Union’s relationship with its Eastern neighbours. However, it was not until Poland and Sweden co-submitted a proposal in May 2008 that the European Union started to deepen its relationship with the East of Europe.<sup>651</sup> During the extraordinary meeting of the Council of the European Union on 1 September 2008 – called by Sikorski in response to the August War

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<sup>650</sup> Dmitry Medvedev, Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channel One, Russia, NTV, 31 August 2008, Sochi, President of Russia Official Website, [http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/31/1850\\_type82912type82916\\_206003.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/31/1850_type82912type82916_206003.shtml).

<sup>651</sup> Michael Natonski, “National Concerns in the EU Neighbourhood: Spanish and Polish Policies on the South and Eastern Dimension”, in Laure Delcour and Elsa Tulmets, eds., *Pioneer Europe? Testing EU Foreign Policy in the Neighbourhood* (Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands: Kluwer Law International, 2009), pp. 57-75.

– the Council concluded that “it was more necessary than ever” to support regional cooperation initiatives like the Eastern Partnership Programme.<sup>652</sup>

The official goal of the Eastern Partnership Programme is to deepen cooperation between the European Union and six former Soviet republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) in five general areas: political and security, borders and trans-border movement, economic and financial, environmental, and social. In particular, the European Commission specifies that the goals include crafting comprehensive free trade agreements, facilitating visa liberalisation, promoting democracy and the rule of law, strengthening energy security, encouraging people-to-people contacts, and promoting development.<sup>653</sup> However, as Andrzej Dudzinski – an official in the Polish Foreign Ministry’s Department of Security – reveals, “there is an unspoken, hidden agenda to the Eastern Partnership.”<sup>654</sup>

This fact has not been lost on Russia. In March 2009 Foreign Minister Lavrov warned that Russia was against the Eastern Partnership: “we 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, including to Belarus?” Lavrov also criticised the Czech Presidency of the EU for pressuring Belarus with sanctions if it officially recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia: “is this promoting democracy, or is this blackmail?” Carl Bildt, the Swedish Foreign Minister who co-authored the proposal, replied that

The Eastern Partnership is not about spheres of influence. The difference is that these countries themselves opted to join....The fact that Russia sees the European Partnership as a zero-sum game proves wrong those who believe that giving up

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<sup>652</sup> Extraordinary European Council Presidency Conclusions, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 1 September 2008, 12594/2/08 REV 2, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/102545.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/102545.pdf).

<sup>653</sup> Eastern Partnership, European Union External Action, [http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index_en.htm).

<sup>654</sup> Interview with Andrzej Dudzinski, Third Secretary at the Department of Security, NATO Division, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 22 December 2011.

NATO aspirations would solve the problems with Moscow. Appeasing Russia will not work.<sup>655</sup>

Nonetheless, Lavrov was not convinced.<sup>656</sup> Neither was he alone, as Konstantine Kosachev, the head of the Duma Foreign Affairs Committee, also denounced the project as one which aims to “separate the post-Soviet countries from Russia” and President Medvedev said that EU officials have “failed to persuade” him that the partnership would not be harmful to Russian interests: “what confuses me is that some states...see this partnership as a partnership against Russia.”<sup>657</sup>

Despite the assurances from Brussels, the Russian leadership is right to hold such reservations. Andrzej Dudzinski confirmed that the “unofficial, unstated purpose” of the Eastern Partnership Programme is to balance against Russia. This is especially the case if the world is viewed as a zero-sum game: “right now the six ex-Soviet republics are in Russia’s zone of influence...if these states intensify their relations with the EU, then they might be taken out of the Russian zone.” Other officials at the Polish Foreign Ministry, including Monika Izydorzyc and Pawel Grotowski, also confirm that the organisation has a “balancing element” to it, but they also maintain that there are multiple motives, including a desire to “civilise the East.”<sup>658</sup> Sikorski admits that the Eastern Partnership could be used as a vehicle for the six states to eventually join the EU (thereby prying them out of Russia’s zone), but he also suggests that Russia could benefit from the programme. Sikorski hopes that the Eastern

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<sup>655</sup> Valentina Pop, “EU Expanding its ‘Sphere of Influence,’ Russia Says”, *EU Observer*, 21 March 2009, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/27827>.

<sup>656</sup> Lavrov responded: “we heard an announcement from Brussels that this is not an attempt to create a new sphere of influence and that it is not a process which is directed against Russia. We want to believe in this guarantee but I won’t deny that some comments on the initiative made by the EU have concerned us.” See “EU’s Eastern Partnership Programme Not Against Moscow”, *Ria Novosti*, 28 April 2009, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090428/121350475.html>.

<sup>657</sup> James Marson, “Putin to the West: Hands Off Ukraine”, *Time*, 25 May 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1900838,00.html>.

<sup>658</sup> Interview with Pawel Grotowski, Counsellor to the Foreign Minister, Eastern Affairs Division, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 29 December 2011; and Interview with Monika Izydorzyc, Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy Planning, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 29 December 2011.

Partnership will be akin to the Visegrad Group (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia) which paved the way to eventual NATO and EU membership.<sup>659</sup>

Although the Eastern Partnership has the potential to be used as a soft balancing tool against the Russian Federation, and to potentially carve out a sphere of influence for the EU in the former Soviet space, it is still in its nascent stages and its success is not assured. Although most countries in the EU support the shared goals of promoting democracy and good governance in the East of Europe, many states in Western Europe would vociferously oppose the “hidden agenda” of balancing Russia.

## **8.7 Assessment of the Theory of Tripartite Strategic Balancing and the August War**

This final section will summarise the chapter and evaluate how well the theory of tripartite strategic balancing explains international political outcomes in the European Near Abroad with specific reference to the August War. It will also examine how effective Poland’s soft balancing coalition has been.

The third and sixth chapters argued that the theory of tripartite strategic balancing (when applied to regional unipolar systems) has three independent variables which correspondingly lead to the following three hypotheses or expected outcomes: 1) soft balancing will be a feature of the interactions between the minor-regional powers and the regional hegemon (polarity); 2) that the soft balancing dynamic will be intensified if the regional hegemon develops a belligerent reputation as manifest by aggressive or unilateral security policies (perceived intentions); and 3) that the closer the minor powers are to the regional hegemon, the more likely they are to employ soft balancing measures against it

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<sup>659</sup> Renata Goldirova, “Eastern Partnership Could Lead to Enlargement, Poland Says”, *EU Observer*, 25 May 2008, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/26211>.

(geographical proximity). However, before the soft balancing dynamics are analysed, a discussion of any potential hard balancing is warranted.

The first two empirical case studies examined in this dissertation on the US-led wars in Kosovo and Iraq revealed that the concept of hard balancing was of limited utility in explaining international political outcomes among the great powers during these crises. However, in a regional unipolar system, the traditional concept of hard balancing retains a little bit more analytical utility. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the majority of states in the region have been attempting to join the external hard balancing organisation of NATO. The western half of the region has largely succeeded, whereas the eastern half has not. To a large degree the August War was essentially a Russian attempt to stymie – or even rollback – this process, and it largely succeeded.

Several states in the European Near Abroad also engaged in limited hard balancing (internal and external) in the lead-up to, and during, the August War. After the Cold War many countries in the western half of the European Near Abroad formed soft balancing organisations (such as the Vilnius Group and Visegrad Group) which eventually paved the road to membership in NATO. Furthermore, Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria sent various amounts of heavy and small arms to Georgia, and Ukraine was even accused of directly participating in the war. The arms supplied by these states had a discernible impact on the Russian military's ability to wage war and they increased Russia's costs of using military force. Poland and Georgia also internally balanced the Russian Federation by consistently increasing their defence expenditure and converting their economic capabilities into military capabilities. Finally, as a direct consequence of the war, Poland and the Czech Republic (and eventually Romania) finalised their agreements with the United States to host various elements of a ballistic missile shield on their territories.

Poland's deal also came as a package which included the provision of US-staffed Patriot missiles.

Poland also engaged in external balancing in the immediate aftermath of the Five Day War. It curiously insisted on signing a bilateral strategic partnership with the United States, even though its security was already theoretically guaranteed by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Historical analogies – of Western Europe's failure to meaningfully confront Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939 – play a vital role in the formation of Polish foreign policy, and they explain why Poland chose to implement this external balancing (with the United States) strategy.

These findings demonstrate that the first two prongs of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing – namely internal and external hard balancing – are still useful in explaining international political outcomes in the European Near Abroad, especially when the regional hegemon resorts to the use of force. One main reason for this is that the region is not a closed political unit. In their historical treatment of balance of power theory, Wohlforth and Little explain that one of the main conditions under which the (traditional) balance of power fails to operate properly is “when the boundaries of an international system remain stable and no new major powers emerge from outside the system.”<sup>660</sup> This is true for the global international system, and partly explains why there is a lack of hard balancing against the United States, but at the same time, it is not the case in the European Near Abroad. The European Near Abroad is a theoretical construct, and in practical terms, the states of the region may call on states from outside of the region – such as the United States – to act as an off-shore balancer against the regional hegemon. Therefore, the first two prongs of the theory are still analytically useful in understanding the security dynamics of the region.

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<sup>660</sup> See William Wohlforth, Richard Little, Stuart Kaufman, David Kang, Charles Jones, Victoria Tin-Bor Hui, Arthur Eckstein, Daniel Deudney and William Brenner, “Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History”, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2007, p. 159; and Stuart Kaufman, Richard Little, and William Wohlforth, eds., *The Balance of Power in World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Nevertheless, as in the global level of analysis, the most prevalent form of balancing in the European Near Abroad is soft balancing. The chapter demonstrated how early attempts at soft balancing the Russian Federation – through the formation of the Vilnius Group and the Visegrad Group – eventually led to membership in hard balancing organisation of NATO. It also demonstrated how Poland has attempted to soft balance against Russia's energy policies by creating an "Energy NATO" or "Energy Solidarity" pacts at the European level. Poland was only able to muster a limited coalition of support for these early soft balancing endeavours. As the first variable of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing predicts, the mere presence of regional unipolarity will encourage states to employ some soft balancing measures against it. However, as the second variable predicts, the level of soft balancing should intensify (and perhaps even slip into limited hard balancing) if the regional hegemon develops a belligerent reputation and unilaterally uses military force. This occurred in the lead-up to and during the August War.

During this conflict, Poland led a larger soft balancing coalition of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Ukraine, and arguably Azerbaijan and the Czech Republic. These states pulled every non-military lever at their disposal to undermine and frustrate Russia's military intervention in Georgia. They petitioned the North Atlantic Council, OSCE, and the various organs of the European Union to take action against Russia (or in the least to issue a hostile statement about the invasion); they tried to link Russia's invasion with wider European-Russian relations such as a new EU-Russia Partnership Agreement, Russia's membership in the G8, and even Russia's right to host the 2014 Olympics; and most dramatically, Kaczynski spearheaded an ambitious expedition by the leaders of the "former captive nations" to land in Tbilisi as a strong sign of solidarity in the midst of the war. Most significantly, the leaders of this soft balancing coalition consistently denounced Russia's attempt to subdue a minor state in its purported area of "privileged interests" by using a variety of terms which ranged from

“aggressive and imperialistic” at one end to “unilateral and contrary to international law” at the other. All states called for greater “multilateralism” through the EU, OSCE, and (for some) even NATO. These were all codewords for soft balancing.

The Polish-led soft balancing coalition would have preferred to challenge the Russian Federation even further – for instance, the joint Polish and Baltic declaration hyperbolically called for the use of “all means available” – but the leaders of the coalition were cognisant of the limits of their power and they were aware (unlike the Georgians) that the US Calvary was not coming over the hill to save them if they overplayed their hand. This is why more pronounced hard balancing measures, including overt transfers of arms or even the formation of war-fighting alliances with each other were not seriously entertained, and even suggestions to covertly transfer more arms to Georgia during the conflict were first passed by the US leadership and coupled with request for US airlifts. In other words, the Polish-led coalition knew that its response to the regional hegemon’s use of force could only be limited to, for the most part, soft balancing measures.

While some states in the region employed strong soft balancing language and behaviour against the Russian Federation during the August War, other states were more circumspect. For instance, Finland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Moldova all expressed concern for the situation in Georgia and reaffirmed Georgia’s sovereignty, but they largely deferred to the European Union’s role in resolving the dispute. At first even Armenia and Belarus, Russia’s closest allies in the European Near Abroad, came out with relatively tepid positions, by expressing concern with the situation and calling for a halt to military operations. However, both sides eventually fully supported the position of the Russian Federation.

Armenia and Belarus’ seemingly exceptional position is explained by Walt’s three conditions that favour bandwagoning. As argued above, Walt explained that: 1) the weaker

the state, the more likely it is to bandwagon; 2) states will be more likely to bandwagon when allies are not readily available; and 3) states are more likely to balance at the start of a conflict, but once a particular result becomes clear, they may choose to bandwagon with the winner. Armenia and Belarus were both relatively weak militarily and their prospects for membership in NATO were marginal if not non-existent. The third condition in particular explains why both states exhibited such tepid reactions at the start of the conflict, only to reverse course and become strong supporters of Russia once its military victory became apparent.

In sum, including Georgia, nine states in the European Near Abroad strongly soft balanced Russia, six states generally tilted towards Georgia by supporting its sovereignty but deferred to the (French-led) European Union's role in resolving the crisis, and only two states – after some early reluctance – supported Russia's position. No state has recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The third variable of the theory offers an explanation for this pattern of soft balancing. In particular, it predicts that the closer the minor powers are to the regional hegemon, the more likely they are to soft balance. With the exception of the Czech Republic, all of the nine states in the Polish-led soft balancing coalition share a territorial border with Russia and Sweden shares a maritime border with Russia. By contrast, the states which are geostrategically tucked away in the centre of Europe and do not share a territorial border with Russia were less likely to be vocal proponents of soft balancing. This was evident in the foreign policies of Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Moldova. These states had the relative geostrategic luxury of being able to take a more objective and even-handed approach to the war.

The geographical variable also explains Azerbaijan's covert opposition to the Russian intervention (which is surprising given the country immense geostrategic vulnerability) and

the relative support given to the Russian position by Armenia. The one significant outlier in this pattern is Belarus, since it is a territorially adjacent state which did not soft balance. However, even Russia's staunchest ally exhibited some hesitation in supporting the regional hegemon at the outbreak of the war. The fact that even nominal allies and strategic partners demonstrated some hesitation in their support for the regional hegemon's use of force suggests that under the surface of the partnership there may be a repressed urge to soft balance.

The geostrategic element also explains why the minor powers soft balance against the regional hegemon, and not the unipolar leader. Minor powers define their interests and threat perceptions regionally, and this is why the Russian Federation is perceived as the state worthy of balancing behaviour, even though the United States is the global hegemon. The states of the region preferred to bandwagon with the global hegemon and attempted to invite it into their region to serve as an offshore balancer. It is unsurprising that nearly all of the states in the European Near Abroad were strong supporters of the US wars in Iraq. In sum, whereas great powers balance primarily at the international level, minor powers balance primarily at the regional level.

Moving beyond the European Near Abroad into the wider European region, the geostrategic element also helps to account for the strong divisions in Europe on matters pertaining to Russia. As the various debates and dialogues at the EU and NATO levels revealed, Europe is largely divided between the geostrategically insulated states such as Germany, France, Italy, and the Benelux countries on the one hand, and the frontier states such as Poland and the Baltic States on the other. The third variable once again demonstrates that Kautilya's ancient and parsimonious proverb that "your neighbour's neighbour is your friend" offers insights into contemporary international relations. This lends some credence to Robert Giplin's provocative statement that "in honesty, one must inquire whether or not

twentieth-century students of international relations know anything that Thucydides and his fifth-century BC compatriots did not know about the behaviour of states.”<sup>661</sup>

In a way, this chapter also reaffirmed the enduring salience of the systemic level of analysis in international relations. For instance, when France and Germany formed a soft balancing coalition against the United States during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, both countries were led by leaders who were often accused of being anti-American. Jacques Chirac revelled in the Gaullist tradition of standing up to the United States and appointed the man who first coined the term *hyperpuissance* – Hubert Vedrine – as his Foreign Minister; whereas Gerhard Schroder made anti-Americanism a platform for his re-election bid in 2003 and he held a strong personal relationship with leaders in the Kremlin. The same could not be said of Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel.

Sarkozy, the son of a Hungarian immigrant, entered the French political scene with the unflattering epithet “*L’américain*.” He had a very different attitude towards the United States and Central and Eastern Europe, and he criticised Chirac for telling the Central and Eastern Europeans to “shut up” when they supported the US-led war in Iraq. Merkel was also strikingly different than Schroder. She grew up in communist East Germany and thus had no illusions about communism or Russia – some observers even described her as almost “Eastern European” in her disdain of Russia.<sup>662</sup>

Nonetheless, despite all of these personal differences at the individual level of analysis, the Georgian case study demonstrated how impersonal systemic forces drew Sarkozy and Merkel together into another coalition which clashed against a US-led coalition of Central and Eastern European states. This was manifest during the debates in the North Atlantic Council and in the various institutions of the European Union, on both matters

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<sup>661</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 354.

<sup>662</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, pp. 118-122.

pertaining to the war in Georgia and, at first, to the US attempt to install a ballistic missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic.

It is useful to summarise the case study in relation to the four indicators of soft balancing enumerated earlier: 1) territorial non-complicity, 2) entangling diplomacy, 3) economic strengthening, and 4) signals of resolve to balance. First, Ukraine issued a decree which threatened to deny Russian ships, planes, and personnel the use of its territory and waters, and Azerbaijan permitted the leaders from the five Central and Eastern European states to land in Baku after they were chased away by Russian fighters. Secondly, a Polish-led soft balancing coalition of eight states in the European Near Abroad attempted to pull every diplomatic lever at their disposal at the EU, OSCE, and NATO levels to try to moderate Russia's resort to force. Thirdly, the countries in the European Near Abroad have been solidifying their economic relations with one another, most notably through membership in the European Union, GUAM, and the Eastern Partnership Programme. Fourthly, several countries have repeatedly demonstrated their resolve to (soft) balance Russia, most notably during the Kaczynski-led expedition to Tbilisi.

The final point to consider is whether or not the soft balancing tactics were successful. In the Kosovo and Iraq cases, the soft balancing tactics did not ultimately prevent the United States from employing its military force unilaterally. However, it did deprive the US-led invasions of a sense of legitimacy, and it arguably cost the US more in terms of blood and treasure. In the Georgian case study, on the other hand, the soft balancing tactics may have had a greater impact on the policies of the regional hegemon. Although the soft balancing measures did not ultimately prevent the Russian Federation from resorting to the use of force in the first place, they did deprive Russia of a sense of legitimacy (as evidenced by the fact that hardly any state has recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and also cost it more in terms of blood and treasure.

However, according to President Kaczynski, the soft balancing measures played an even more significant role during the war: they prevented regime change in Tbilisi and hastened the signing of the ceasefire. In an interview with *Newsweek* magazine, Kaczynski explained that the joint intervention by the leaders of the five Eastern European states, along with “some engagement from the United States,” prevented the Russians from marching on Tbilisi and brought them to the negotiation table.<sup>663</sup> Although Kaczynski’s analysis was self-serving, it is not necessarily incorrect. The Russian Federation repeatedly made calls for Saakashvili’s removal<sup>664</sup> and this could have been the Kremlin’s optimal outcome, but the joint show of solidarity in Tbilisi drew a red line which the Russian leadership believed it could not cross. However, the key element in the success of the Polish-led soft balancing coalition is that it was ultimately backed-up by the approval and support of the global unipolar leader.

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<sup>663</sup> Andrew Nagorski, “Lech Kaczynski: How the West Got Georgia Wrong”, *Newsweek*, vol. 152, no. 14, September 2008.

<sup>664</sup> For instance, Zalmay Khalilzad, the US Ambassador to the UN, embarrassed the Russian Federation at the 5953<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Security Council by revealing a telephone conversation that occurred between Condoleezza Rice and Sergey Lavrov in which the Russian Foreign Minister allegedly said that “Saakashvili must go.” Rice allegedly replied: “Sergey, the American Secretary of State and Russian Foreign Minister do not have a private conversation about overthrowing a democratically-elected President.” Lavrov explained that all he said was “we’d never deal with him [Saakashvili] again” and he criticised the US for breaking diplomatic protocols by publishing private conversations. 5953<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 10 August 2008, New York City, S/PV.5953, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5953](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5953); and BBC Interview with Condoleezza Rice and Sergey Lavrov, *Putin, Russia and the West: War*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 2 February 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION – THE WAY OF THE FOX

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.

- Karl Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852

This dissertation has sought to develop and operationalise the concept of soft balancing in international relations by articulating a theory of tripartite strategic balancing applicable to both unipolar international and regional systems. It has employed the three case studies of the Kosovo Crisis (1999), the Iraqi Crises (1991-2003), and the Russo-Georgian War (2008) to examine if the theory's predictions match the empirical reality of post-Cold War great power (and regional power) relations. The final chapter summarises the argument, enumerates the analytical strengths and weaknesses of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing, and explores its numerous theoretical and practical implications.

### **9.1 Summary of the Argument and Comparison of the Balancing**

The first chapter sought to conceptualise and operationalise the concept of soft balancing in a way which distinguishes between policy bargaining and routine diplomatic friction on the one hand and genuine balancing behaviour on the other: *soft balancing is undertaken by a state seeking to establish a more balanced system in a way which does not directly challenge the unipolar leader's military preponderance but rather utilises non-military tools to constrain its most aggressive and unilateral military policies*. These soft balancing measures may include informal ententes or other diplomatic arrangements short of formal war-fighting alliances, international institutions, and economic statecraft directed against the interests of the unipolar leader. The ultimate purpose of soft balancing is to

constrain the unipolar leader's aggressive and/or unilateral use of force and to perhaps one day lay the foundations for a more multilateral international system based on international law, such as multipolarity. Currently several second-tier great powers have a preference towards multipolarity in the system but are as of yet unwilling to engage in traditional hard balancing dynamics – formal war-fighting alliances and rapid military buildups – because each fears incurring the wrath of the unipolar leader. Soft balancing offers these second-tier great powers a subtle strategy to challenge the United States' preponderant position “on the cheap.” The first chapter also explained the methodology used in the thesis.

The second chapter explicated the intimate relationship between soft balancing and balance of power theory. It argued that the phenomenon of soft balancing preceded the development of the concept itself; in other words, soft balancing is a new concept for an ancient phenomenon. The chapter sought to demonstrate that soft balancing may be a more general phenomenon than a mere soft balancing against the US in the unipolar post-Cold War international system by enumerating some activities akin to soft balancing which have occurred before the end of the Cold War in multi- and bi-polar international systems. A critique of the current soft balancing literature – including its conceptual indeterminacy and the dearth of empirical case studies – was also offered.

The third chapter articulated a theory of tripartite strategic balancing applicable to unipolar international (and regional) systems. The theory has two independent variables: the distribution of capabilities across the international system (polarity), and perceived intentions (which range from benign to belligerent). Subsequent chapters argued that the international system is best characterised as one of unipolarity and that the inauguration of the Bush Doctrine of preventive war in 2002 gave the United States a reputation for belligerency, even among its closest allies. The theory's dependent variable is the extent to which second-tier great powers soft balance against the unipolar leader, and the theory's assumptions are: 1) the

international system is anarchic; 2) states are unitary and rational actors; and 3) states primarily seek survival as independent entities. It became apparent that it is soft balancing's integral connection to balance of power theory which gives the concept its explanatory power. This theory leads to two hypotheses: 1) in a unipolar international system soft balancing will be a feature of the interactions between second-tier great powers and the unipolar leader; and 2) that the soft balancing dynamic will be intensified if the unipolar leader develops a reputation for belligerent intentions as manifest by aggressive or unilateral military policies. The subsequent two chapters examined the extent to which the great power dynamics during the Kosovo Crisis (1999) and the US-led interventions in Iraq (1991-2003) could be explained by the theory of tripartite strategic balancing.

The fourth chapter on Kosovo indicated that although there was no soft balancing among members of the NATO alliance, a Russian-Chinese-Indian soft balancing coalition emerged in opposition to the US-led war. Russian leaders explicitly linked their opposition to US policies in Kosovo to their apprehension of US unipolarity and preference for a multipolar world based on multilateralism through the UN and international law. Russian leaders, such as Sergey Lavrov and Igor Ivanov, explicitly stated that Russia's position was not based on concerns for Serbia or Kosovo itself, but rather on the emerging structure of the international system. This is clear balancing behaviour. Although Chinese and Indian leaders were less vehement in their criticism of US unipolarity, they also directly linked their opposition to a preference for multipolarity and multilateralism through the UN Security Council. Both sides also strongly supported the norm of non-intervention as the best means with which to challenge US hegemony in the post-Cold War era.

The fifth chapter demonstrated the evolution of soft balancing against the United States in relation to its policies in Iraq from 1991, when no soft balancing occurred, to 2003, when a soft balancing coalition led by France and Russia emerged. It discussed how Russia,

China, and India fell out of the Grand Coalition soon after the Second Gulf War, how France dropped out in the late 1990s, and how the second-tier great powers reacted to the Bush Doctrine. The French Foreign Minister Viedrine vocally called for a “new tactic” to challenge US unipolarity. Soft balancing turned out to be that “new tactic.” French and Russian leaders unambiguously tied their opposition to the US military policies in Iraq in 2003 to their preference for multipolarity and multilateralism. Chirac and Putin vociferously promoted multipolarity as the best means with which to safeguard international peace and security, and both leaders explicitly stated that their position was not meant to “shield Iraq” but rather to promote a multipolar international order. Germany and China also engaged in some soft balancing against the United States. Although Germany did not officially and publicly frame its opposition to American policies in Iraq in the language of creating a more balanced international system, it did frame it in the language of multilateralism and respect for international law. Moreover, in a sense, Germany engaged in *de facto* soft balancing because it followed France’s lead in the coalition against the United States. China falls within a similar category: although Chinese leaders were not vehement critics of US unipolarity during the crisis, they did frame their opposition using the codewords multilateralism and international law. Moreover, they also engage in *de facto* soft balancing against the United States at the UN by silently following in France and Russia’s footsteps. India followed a similar position to China, but it was even more reticent. Although it was publicly against the war, its official policy was to “criticise, not condemn” the United States, and since it did not have a seat on the Security Council, it preferred to watch the other great powers balance against the United States and incur its wrath.

The sixth chapter adapted the theory of tripartite strategic balancing to suit conditions for regional security complexes characterised by a regional hegemon. The regional level of analysis adds a third unit of analysis or independent variable to the theory of tripartite

strategic balancing: geographical proximity. This independent variable generated a third hypothesis applicable in regional systems: 3) states that are geographically closer to the regional hegemon are more likely to engage in soft balancing against it.

The next chapter argued that the Russian Federation is the regional hegemon of the security complex of the European Near Abroad. It argued that Russia follows the dictates of offensive realism by seeking to further consolidate its hegemony over the region. However, although Russia's contemporary foreign policy goals would be similar to the ones held by the Tsars of the nineteenth century, its method for augmenting its control over the region is not: with the notable exception of Georgia in 2008, for the most part Russia has eschewed the use of hard power in favour of wielding the oil and gas weapon as a means to achieve its foreign policy objectives. This chapter also demonstrated how Russia's goal of regional hegemonisation goes hand-in-hand with its goal of balancing the United States globally.

The last chapter examined the reaction to Russia's hegemonisation in the states of the European Near Abroad. It argued that there was a limited amount of soft balancing against the Russian Federation in the region after the end of the Cold War. However, in the lead-up to the August War, the soft balancing intensified, as Poland led a soft balancing coalition consisting of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Ukraine, and arguably Azerbaijan and the Czech Republic. Most notably, Poland assembled a mini-Entente of "former captive states" which landed in Tbilisi as a show of solidarity with Georgia in the middle of the conflict. This symbolic manoeuvre, along with other soft balancing tactics at the EU and NATO levels, arguably prevented the collapse of the Saakashvili regime. Many states also engaged in limited hard balancing measures against Russia during the conflict. Poland once again led the opposition, by consistently augmenting its military spending, transferring arms to Georgia, and curiously signing a bilateral mutual security pact with the United States. Rather than participating in a strong soft balancing coalition, a handful of states – which mostly do

not share an adjacent territorial boundary with Russia – preferred to indirectly express disapproval of Russia by reaffirming Georgia’s sovereignty and deferring to the leadership of the European Union. At first even Russia’s closest allies in the region – Armenia and Belarus – displayed some hesitation before they eventually supported the Russian position.

It is fruitful to compare the balancing against the United States with the balancing against the Russian Federation. As the theory of tripartite strategic balancing predicts, second-tier great powers and minor-regional powers, respectively, should be expected to employ soft balancing measures against the preponderant global/regional power. This largely occurred in the three case studies. However, although there were some hard balancing (internal and external) measures adopted against Russia in the regional level of analysis, for the most part, such hard balancing measures against the United States were absent in the international level of analysis. This can be explained in three ways which relate to each of the independent variables: first, it is arguable that the United States enjoys a greater margin of superiority over its second-tier rivals in the international system than the Russian Federation enjoys over its regional rivals in the European Near Abroad. In short, the more the system approaches the archetypal unipolar system, the less likely it will exhibit patterns of hard balancing, and vice-versa.

Secondly, it is arguable that the states of the European Near Abroad perceive Russia’s intentions in a dimmer light than the second-tier great powers perceive the intentions of the United States (even under the Bush Doctrine). This is because although the Bush Doctrine threatened some particular medium-ranked powers like Iran and Iraq, for the most part it did not directly threaten the territorial integrity and political independence of the great powers. The same cannot be said of Medvedev’s Doctrine to protect Russian nationals abroad in respect to the states of the European Near Abroad. Moreover, the identity of the preponderant power also matters: for the most part, states like France and Germany view the

United States as an ally and a fellow democracy, and thus they predominantly engage in the softer, diplomatic form of balancing rather than hard balancing. On the other hand, states such as Poland and Ukraine, which have a troubled history with the regional hegemon, are more likely to view Russia as a former imperial overlord, and thus limited hard balancing measures are taken if feasible. In this light Yuen Foong Khong argues that a state's historical experiences and behaviour form its identity in the eyes of its neighbours, and while the United States has a "relatively" peaceful history with the second-tier great powers, the same cannot be said of the more difficult history between Russia and the states of the European Near Abroad.<sup>665</sup>

The third reason why some degree of hard balancing is more likely to occur against Russia rather than the United States involves two geographical factors. First, the United States, unlike Russia, is physically separated from Eurasia by two vast bodies of water, and threats travel more easily across shorter distances. Secondly, although the United States is the global unipolar leader, and thus its military footprint extends to every region of the world, the same cannot be said of Russia, which largely enjoys and closely protects its hegemony in the European Near Abroad. Since the European Near Abroad is a regional level of analysis – *i.e.* a theoretical construct – in practice the states of the region can invite other states to "penetrate" the region's security dynamics and help them balance against the regional hegemon. This makes hard balancing more likely in regional unipolar systems rather than global unipolar systems.

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<sup>665</sup> Yuen Foong Khong, "Coping with Strategic Uncertainty: The Role of Institutions and Soft Balancing in Southeast Asia's Post-Cold War Strategy" in J.J. Suh, Peter Katzenstein and Allen Carlson, eds., *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 171-208.

## 9.2 Evaluating the Theory of Tripartite Strategic Balancing

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing has various strengths and weaknesses. It captures a central feature of the security strategies that second-tier great powers employ to deal with America's preponderance of power in the post-Cold War era. The theory anticipated that the great powers would soft balance against the unipolar leader by virtue of its structural predominance, and also that the number of soft balancers would grow if the unipolar leader developed a reputation for belligerent intentions. The Kosovar and Iraqi case studies confirmed this pattern. Robert Pape argues that "strikingly, from 1990 to 2000 no significant instances of balancing occurred against the United States."<sup>666</sup> As the fourth and fifth chapters demonstrated, this was not the case: France took some early steps towards soft balancing against the United States in the late 1990s by withdrawing its support from the joint US-UK military operations in Iraq and framed its criticisms in the language of American "*hyperpuissance*" and a preference for multipolarity; Russia, China, and India also soft balanced against the United States in Kosovo in 1999. These soft balancing measures were employed before the belligerent Bush Doctrine was articulated and put into practice during the Third Gulf War. However, as the theory anticipated, the number of soft balancers grew after the US articulated a bellicose national security strategy: the original Russian, Chinese, and Indian countercoalition in Kosovo was joined by France and Germany and a host of other minor powers to soft balance against the United States.

On the regional level of analysis the theory suggested that 1) minor-regional powers would soft balance against Russia; 2) that this soft balancing dynamic would be intensified if Russia developed a belligerent reputation for using military force unilaterally; and 3) that the states territorially adjacent to the Russian Federation would be most likely to soft balance.

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<sup>666</sup>Robert Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States", *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 01, Summer 2005, pp. 20-21.

The eighth chapter demonstrated that Poland pursued a modest strategy of soft balancing Russia through its energy policy and role in the Orange Revolution. However, Poland could not always count on the support of its allies in these endeavours. Once the Russian Federation implemented its ominous “protect nationals abroad” doctrine, the soft balancing coalition against Russia expanded, and as the third variable indicated, states which were territorially adjacent to Russia were likely to be among the strongest soft balancers.

But the theory of tripartite strategic balancing does not adequately describe all the security strategies of the second-tier great powers. For instance, it does not account for why Britain and Japan have elected not to soft balance against the United States. It also does not explain why some states soft balance in certain matters but cooperate in others. For instance, the theory does not explain why France chose to cooperate with the unipolar leader in Kosovo in 1999, but resisted its policies in Iraq a year earlier. It also cannot account for the about-face in Russian foreign policy under Putin after the attacks of 11 September 2001: Russia went from soft balancing against the US in Kosovo in 1999, to closely cooperating with the US war on terror in Central Asia in 2001. The theory may explain why Russia did not soft balance against the US-led war against Afghanistan – because it was not viewed as an aggressive or unilateral transgression of international law but rather as a legitimate act of self-defence – but the theory cannot explain why Russia cooperated to such a degree.<sup>667</sup> Other theories – including sub-systemic ones which open up the “black box” of state foreign policymaking – are required to explain the security behaviours of great powers which fall outside the scope of the soft balancing argument.

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<sup>667</sup> Other explanations would have to be invoked to account for the closer degree of cooperation: such as Putin’s desire to frame the domestic conflict in Chechnya as part of the global war on terror. In fact, the Russian Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov said with a grin that the United States gave Putin a real “birthday present” when it commenced Operation Enduring Freedom against Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. See BBC Interview with Sergey Ivanov, *Putin, Russia and the West: Taking Control*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 19 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

The theory of tripartite strategic balancing also does not completely explain all the security strategies of the minor-powers in the European Near Abroad. Although it explains why states such as Poland and the Baltic States are consistently strong balancers of Russia, it does not explain why Belarus bandwagons with the regional hegemon. Other theories of bandwagoning – such as Walt’s theory explained in the sixth chapter – are required to explain this behaviour.

In a similar vein, big and small powers may have a myriad of motives in constructing their security strategies – balancing against the unipolar leader need not be the most important concern. For instance, the increasing cooperation between Russia and China, especially in the forum of the SCO, may also be explained as a regional organisation to combat terrorism and promote regional economic integration rather than challenge US unipolarity. Geopolitics may also play an important role in determining a great power’s security strategy: some great powers may fear a closer neighbour more than a unipolar leader separated by a vast body of water. This seems to capture the security relationship between Japan and the United States vis-à-vis China. Geopolitics is also one of the potential obstacles to the formation of a genuine Russo-Chinese-Indian hard balancing coalition against the United States: each state may have more reasons to fear the other rather than fear the unipolar leader.<sup>668</sup>

Moreover, there may be a myriad of non-strategic motives that drive a great power’s foreign policies on any given matter. For instance, French and Russian opposition to the war in Iraq was at least partly explained by the extensive economic ties that both states had to Iraq. Schroder’s intense opposition to the war in Iraq was greatly influenced by the German election and his need to pander to the anti-war German public. Similarly, Russian opposition

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<sup>668</sup> This is especially true in light of China’s rise to power and the bleak demographic realities in the Russian Far East.

to the US-led war in Kosovo was motivated by a variety of factors: historical, domestic, and ideological.

Finally, the line between hard and soft balancing may sometimes become blurred. This was apparent during the Russian dash to Pristina airport, the alleged Russian transfers of military equipment to Iraq in contravention of UN sanctions, and the expanding Russo-Chinese and Russo-Indian arms deals. China seems to be pursuing a dual strategy of internal balancing and soft balancing: it has been gradually building up its arms capacities while concurrently soft balancing against the US in international institutions such as the UN.<sup>669</sup> Moreover, the August War was marked by instances where minor-regional powers such as Poland were simultaneously engaged in internal, external, and soft balancing against the Russian Federation.

Nonetheless, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing offered in this dissertation does explain some of the security behaviours of the second-tier great powers in the post-Cold War era. It is a systemic theory, which by definition makes it exceedingly general and parsimonious, and no general theory can reasonably be expected to explain every subtle shift in every state's strategic behaviour. Security strategies often reflect a multiplicity of motives, and the theory of tripartite strategic balancing captures only an (important) part thereof.

### **9.3 Soft Balancing During the Obama Administration and the Ongoing Arab Spring**

Robert Pape explains that the principal cause of soft balancing is the perception of threat emanating from the United States. In particular, he argues that the 2002 National Security Strategy – which articulated the Bush Doctrine – is the principal cause of soft

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<sup>669</sup> T.V. Paul's definition of soft balancing as inclusive of "limited arms buildups" seems to capture China's dual approach to balancing.

balancing and the principal solution is expunging the doctrine of its most aggressive and unilateral elements. The theory of tripartite strategic balancing would predict otherwise.

Since the Obama Administration came to power, it has significantly revised the US National Security Strategy. It has attempted to tone down the most aggressive and unilateral elements of the Bush Doctrine. For instance, Bush's National Security Strategy maintained that "we do not rule out the use of force...we cannot afford to stand idly by," whereas Obama's document reflected a more multilateral language: "while the use of force is sometimes necessary, we will exhaust other options before war whenever we can."<sup>670</sup> Pape's conception of soft balancing would thus lead to the prediction that soft balancing against the United States would also dissipate.

However, the theory of tripartite strategic balancing predicts that although the soft balancing coalition against the United States might abate in intensity, it will not completely cease by virtue of the explanatory power of the first variable – unipolarity – which has remained a constant despite the switch from the Bush to the Obama Administration. The diplomatic events surrounding the 2011 crisis in Libya and the ongoing crisis in Syria suggest that soft balancing has in fact not completely desisted.

In March 2011 the Security Council passed Resolution 1973 which authorised the use of "all necessary measures" to protect civilians in Libya.<sup>671</sup> However, the resolution was passed by the narrowest of margins (10-0-5), and given the composition of the abstaining states (Brazil, China, India, Germany, and Russia), it is arguable that this was the closest vote authorising force in UN Security Council history. Moreover, Prime Minister Putin condemned the use of force as a "medieval crusade" and stated he was concerned that

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<sup>670</sup> United States National Security Strategy, May 2010, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf); Paul Reynolds, "Obama Modifies Bush Doctrine of Pre-emption", *BBC News*, 17 May 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10178193>.

<sup>671</sup> Security Council Resolution 1973, Adopted at the 6498<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 17 March 2011, S/RES/1973, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1973%20%282011%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1973%20%282011%29).

interference in other countries' internal affairs was becoming an alarming trend in US foreign policy. He compared it to a long list of American interventions in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and quipped "now it's Libya's turn."<sup>672</sup> However, President Medvedev, who had the ultimate authority to conduct foreign policy under the Russian constitution, criticised Putin in a rare rebuke for drawing the inappropriate "clash of civilisations" parallel.<sup>673</sup> After Russia abstained from voting on the resolution, the focus of its criticisms turned to the resolution's implementation, which Foreign Minister Lavrov characterised as misguided and claimed that Russia was "cheated" over the details of the no-fly zones.<sup>674</sup> China and India were also concerned with protecting Libya's sovereignty and feared that the ambiguities in the resolution's wording could pave the road for a ground invasion.<sup>675</sup>

Russia and China have also arguably been soft balancing against the United States over the ongoing crisis in Syria.<sup>676</sup> In recent years the two countries have used their powers of veto at the Security Council on three occasions (5 October 2011; 4 February 2012; and 19 July 2012) to quash any sanctions against the Assad regime.<sup>677</sup> During an interview in the *Charlie Rose Show*, Lavrov once again explained that – as in Kosovo and Iraq – what motivates Russia's policy in Syria is not an interest in shielding the Assad regime but rather

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<sup>672</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin comments on the situation in Libya during a meeting with workers at the Votkinsk plant in Udmurtia", Archive of the Official Site of the 2008-2012 Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, 21 March 2011, <http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/14542/>.

<sup>673</sup> "Putin Tones Down Libya Rhetoric, Laments Use of Force", *Ria Novosti*, 23 March 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20110323/163168280.html>.

<sup>674</sup> Sergey Lavrov, Interview in the Charlie Rose Show, 25 September 2012, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/AA2717B6D3A06B8944257A870046FDB1](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/AA2717B6D3A06B8944257A870046FDB1).

<sup>675</sup> 6498<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council, 17 March 2011, S/PV.3474, [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.6498](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.6498).

<sup>676</sup> Hosam Matar, "Syrian Crisis: Soft Balancing Against US", *Al-Akhbar*, 17 September 2012, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/12309>.

<sup>677</sup> "China and Russia Veto UN Resolution Condemning Syria", *BBC News*, 5 October 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15177114>; "Russia and China Veto Resolution on Syria at UN", *BBC News*, 4 February 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-16890107>; and Rick Gladstone, "Friction at the UN as Russia and China Veto Another Resolution on Syria Sanctions", *The New York Times*, 19 July 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/20/world/middleeast/russia-and-china-veto-un-sanctions-against-syria.html>.

“what the world order is going to be like: whether we are going to respect the United Nations Charter or [whether] it would be a free for all.”<sup>678</sup>

#### 9.4 Theoretical and Practical Implications of Soft Balancing

There are several important theoretical implications if soft balancing is in fact occurring in the post-Cold War era. First, it suggests that there is an inherent logic behind what has been occurring in the international system since 1991 and that the theory of tripartite strategic balancing may be invoked to explain international relations since then.

Second, the concept of soft balancing is a useful supplement to theories of realism because it provides a more nuanced understanding of how states pursue balancing strategies in unipolar systems: this is an area where there is a considerable gap in the realist literature. It is also an important theoretical development because during the 1990s realism appeared to be in crisis prompting some scholars to pose the provocative question: is anybody still a realist?

Third, soft balancing is a useful amendment to traditional balance of power theory. In addition to the two hard balancing strategies – internal and external – states also have a third

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<sup>678</sup> Most recently, in May-June 2013, the Russian Federation announced it would sell sophisticated S-300 air defence missiles (comparable to the US Patriot missiles) and the advanced Yakhont anti-ship cruise missiles to Syria. The Russian deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov explained that the missiles are meant “to deter some hotheads from considering scenarios that would turn the conflict international with the involvement of outside forces.” Although the sale of the S-300s could significantly affect the capacity of western forces to institute a no-fly zone in Syria, it could also conceivably be viewed as a deterrent to increased Israeli intervention in the Syrian civil war. However, the sale of the offensive anti-ship missiles seems to be more specifically targeted to western naval forces in the Mediterranean and it could affect their ability to institute a naval embargo or supply Syrian rebels with weapons. Furthermore, Russia has also symbolically announced it would send around a dozen warships to its Tartus naval base in Syria. These are important developments because they indicate yet another instance of soft balancing paving the road to eventual hard balancing. See “Russian Arms ‘to Deter Foreign Intervention in Syria’”, *BBC News*, 28 May 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22688894>; Michael Gordon and Eric Schmitt, “Russia Sends More Advanced Missiles to Aid Assad in Syria”, *The New York Times*, 16 May 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/17/world/middleeast/russia-provides-syria-with-advanced-missiles.html?hp&pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/17/world/middleeast/russia-provides-syria-with-advanced-missiles.html?hp&pagewanted=all&_r=0); Anatoly Medved, “Russian Navy to Send Permanent Fleet to Mediterranean”, *Ria Novosti*, 17 March 2013, <http://rt.com/news/fleet-mediterranean-russia-ships-390/>; and Lavrov, Interview in the Charlie Rose Show.

strategy of soft balancing available to them. Soft balancing shares similar goals with hard balancing, but it does not require overt military buildups or formal alliances, which could be prohibitively costly and dangerous in a unipolar system. It is also important to note that soft balancing, or balancing in general, is only one out of a family of different strategies that states may employ to deal with a unipolar leader.

The fourth theoretical implication of soft balancing is that it introduces a constructivist or ideational element into realist analysis: namely the second variable of perceived intentions. Thus, the concept of soft balancing is particularly amenable to Walt's balance of threat theory.

Perhaps most importantly, the concept of soft balancing lends some credence to the neorealist argument made after the Cold War which anticipated an eventual return to multipolarity: for example, Waltz explains that realist theory clearly expects that "balances disrupted will one day be restored," but it cannot predict when national governments will respond to these structural pressures.<sup>679</sup> The existence of soft balancing suggests that the trend towards multipolarity has already begun in the non-military realm.

The final theoretical contribution concerns the transportability of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing into other unipolar systems. It has been argued that not only is the theory useful in explaining international political outcomes at the level of the international system, but the theory is also capable of being transplanted (with the addition of a third independent variable of geographic proximity) into regional levels of analysis such as the European Near Abroad. This implies that the theory of tripartite strategic balancing may be employed as a framework to analyse other unipolar regional systems, and this suggests a way forward for future research.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, vol. 25, no. 1, Summer 2005, p. 27.

<sup>680</sup> For instance, Yuen Foong Khong argues that despite the United States' perceived global unipolarity, the states of Southeast Asia have elected to soft balance against China because it is the "resident power" on the

There are also several practical implications of soft balancing. For one, soft balancing against the United States may point to the type of international system that has been slowly evolving since the end of the so-called bipolar world. Most importantly, states that cooperate in soft balancing measures may develop the trust and understanding which is required for more formal military alliances. In this sense, soft balancing today can pave the road for hard balancing tomorrow, as was seen with the Vilnius Group of 10 in the European Near Abroad.

Second, soft balancing also has implications for American and Russian foreign policymaking. Stephen Walt writes that the United States must account for soft balancing if its foreign policy is to be successful. As the Kosovo and Iraq case studies have indicated, soft balancing may increase the costs of using US military power in terms of blood and treasure: for instance, by denying the US forward bases in strategic countries and the legitimacy associated with a UN-sanctioned intervention, the soft balancers made it more difficult for the US to exercise its military power in Kosovo and Iraq.

The same is true for the Russian Federation: as the Georgian case study demonstrated, the soft balancing by the states of the European Near Abroad can delegitimise Russia's foreign policies and increase its costs of using military force. Currently only six states recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and even Russia's closest allies in the CSTO and SCO do not recognise these entities. Russia's diplomatic isolation over this issue can spill over into its wider relations with Europe and the United States.

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continent and future US engagement in the region cannot be taken as guaranteed. In particular, when US negotiations with the Philippines on access to Clark Air Force Base and Subic Naval Base bogged down, the US military "found itself welcomed by Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia through a series of MOUs that gave the US access to a variety of 'places' instead of 'bases' for port calls, repairs, and military exercises." Khong explains that the "MOUs and VFAs that were negotiated in the 1990s are acts of soft balancing in the sense that they were meant to encourage the United States to maintain a strong presence in Southeast Asia (thus deterring would-be aggressors); they also signalled the intention of key ASEAN states to align themselves more closely with the United States. The target of the soft balancing was China." Khong also employs the constructivist element of identity in Walt's balance of threat approach to explain why these states chose to balance against China rather than the global unipolar leader. An application of the theory of tripartite strategic balancing to this regional level of analysis would suggest similar conclusions. See Khong, "Coping with Strategic Uncertainty", pp. 192-198.

Finally, the concept of soft balancing can also have implications for policymaking among minor-regional powers. For instance, one senior Polish diplomat vividly explained that “when you are stuck in the same cage as a Russian bear, you don’t poke him with a stick do you?”<sup>681</sup> In a famous animal metaphor, Machiavelli once counselled that a Prince should “know well how to use the beast,” and he advised studying the fox and the lion: “because the lion does not defend itself from snares, and the fox does not defend itself from wolves.”<sup>682</sup> In a sense, in the contemporary strategic arena, hard balancing is the way of the lion, and soft balancing is the way of the fox. States such as Poland are not strong enough to use the way of the lion, so they must, for the most part, rely on the fox. Georgia, which arguably concentrated too much on the way of the lion, did so at its peril, because it did not realise when the Russian snare was set up, and it was effectively trapped. In fact, Sikorski specifically warned Saakashvili not to needlessly provoke the Russians and fall into a trap because Georgia’s image as “the victim in the situation” was its “strongest asset” against the regional hegemon.<sup>683</sup>

This dissertation has sought to conceptualise and operationalise the concept of soft balancing by articulating a theory of tripartite strategic balancing which is applicable to both international and regional systems. It has also sought to demonstrate that Robert Pape overestimates the importance of the Bush Doctrine in accounting for the impetus behind soft balancing – since there was soft balancing during the 1990s – and that he underestimates the role of US structural preponderance in general. This suggests that the United States has the capacity to decelerate the pace of soft balancing, but as Marx’s famous quip above implies,

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<sup>681</sup> Interview with Andrzej Braiter, Polish Ambassador to Brazil, Director in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Professional Development Centre, Warsaw, 7 January 2012.

<sup>682</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 2nd edn., trans. Harvey Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 69.

<sup>683</sup> Interview with Radosław Sikorski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 7 January 2012; BBC Interview with Radosław Sikorski, *Putin, Russia and the West: Democracy Threatens*, BBC Documentary, first broadcast 26 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01b434y/episodes/guide>.

the United States (and other unipolar leaders) will never be completely free from it; and it remains to be seen how long Gulliver's "unipolar moment" will continue to seemingly defy the laws of both history and theory. For the time being, however, the Lilliputians should study the way of the fox.

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#### 4) Interviews:

Interview with Andrzej Braiter, Polish Ambassador to Brazil, Director in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Professional Development Centre, Warsaw, 7 January 2012.

Interview with Andrzej Dudzinski, Third Secretary at the Department of Security, NATO Division, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 22 December 2011.

Interview with Andrzej Kindziuk, Second Secretary at the Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy Planning, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 22 December 2011.

Interview with Archil Gegeshidze, Senior Fellow at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi, 28 September 2012.

Interview with Dariusz Wisniewski, Senior Director at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 28 December 2011.

Interview with George Kelashvili, Project Director of Graduate Programmes, Faculty of Social and Political Studies, Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, 28 September 2012.

Interview with Giorgi Tskhakaya, Deputy Minister of Justice (Senior Advisor to Saakashvili during the summer of 2008), Tbilisi, 29 September 2012.

Interview with Hamid Al-Buyati, Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations (2006-), United Nations Secretariat, New York City, 30 July 2008.

Interview with Inder K. Gujral, Indian Prime Minister (1997-1998) and Minister of External Affairs (1989-90/1996-98), New Delhi, 26 September 2012.

Interview with Jakub Wisniewski, Director of the Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 16 December 2011.

Interview with Jean-Maurice Ripert, French Ambassador to the United Nation (2007-2009), United Nations Secretariat, New York City, July 2008.

Interview with Miroslaw Cieslik, Department of Security at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 29 December 2011.

Interview with Monika Izydorczyk, Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy Planning, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 29 December 2011.

Interview with Naresh Gujral, Member of the Parliament of India (2007-), New Delhi, 26 September 2012.

Interview with Nino Shekriladze, Official at the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tbilisi, 29 September 2012.

Interview with Pawel Grotowski, Counsellor to the Foreign Minister, Eastern Affairs Division, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 29 December 2011.

Interview with Satinder Lambah, Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation (1998-2001), New Delhi, 25 September 2012.

Interview with Shivshankar Menon, National Security Advisor of India (2010-), Prime Minister's Office, New Delhi, 27 September 2012.

Interview with unnamed official from the Department of Security at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 30 December 2011.

Interview with unnamed senior official, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, December 2011.

Interview with unnamed senior official (Director-level) at NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Brussels, 4 November 2011.