

*B*_{ALANCING} *P*_{OWER?}

AN EMPIRICAL TEST OF REALIST THEORIES OF ALIGNMENT

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INTRODUCTION

State alignment decisions have historically presented a puzzle to scholars of international relations. The literature on alliances and alignment is quite expansive, covering many divergent strands of thought, each theoretical paradigm providing a seemingly different answer. Despite progress in research on this topic, a conclusive and comprehensive solution to the question “when do states ally and with whom” has remained elusive. It is thus necessary to untangle the various threads of causality and subject the hypotheses to rigorous testing in order to determine their validity. For the purpose of this study, we intend to ascertain a rigorous empirical foundation to test several prominent insights within systemic theory.

Realist literature has produced a number of varying hypotheses purporting to explain state alignment behavior. Within this literature, concepts of balancing and bandwagoning have dominated the discourse; Kenneth Waltz, in laying the foundation for neo-realist theory, argued that states balance against a preponderance of material power in any one unit in the system. Consequent work on the subject produced numerous hypotheses challenging this assertion, arguing in favor of variables that appear to wield greater explanatory power such as: threats, offense-defense balance and bandwagoning for profit, among others. The goal of this paper will be to construct an empirical test of these hypotheses. I will attempt to test prominent realist theories

of state alignment which have traditionally relied on case studies as theory testing tools. In utilizing a quantitative lens, I attempt to evaluate the congruence of theory with the empirical record while also providing additional avenues for further research. This offers us an opportunity to evaluate the explanatory capabilities of the realist paradigm in regard to alliance formation and alignment.

The following work serves as a test of the external validity of realist theories of alignment. A large-N, probit test is performed on several hypotheses derived from realist literature on alliance and alignment behavior. The theories tested include Waltzian systemic neo-realism, balance of threat theory, offense-defense balance theory and balance of interest theory, otherwise known as “bandwagoning for profit.” To provide a more complete overview, I also test a hypothesis derived from formal work on the democratic peace and dyadic explanations of conflict. This allows us to determine the conditions under which states are likely to form balances of power and to evaluate the empirical consistency of several prominent strands of thought within international relations theory.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE BALANCE OF POWER

The theoretical foundations of realism as a paradigm rest on foundations of balance of power which is at its core, a theory of state alignment. States engage in balance of power behavior through alliance mechanisms; without coalitions and alliances, balance of power would be impossible. Due to the many ambiguities surrounding the term “balance of power,” it is often unclear what exactly is meant by this term. To eliminate some of the ambiguities traditionally associated with it, the balance of power should be viewed in accordance with Hans Morgenthau’s definition as a “policy aimed at a certain state of

affairs.”¹ This state of affairs can be said to be the prevention of hegemony and the preservation of independence and secure survival of states.²

For a more specific definition, we may borrow Kenneth Waltz’s description of balancing within the sphere of alliances as the forging of alliances to prevent or deter territorial occupation or military and political domination of the state by a foreign power or coalition.³ In outlining a seminal statement of balance of power theory, Waltz argued that an anarchic international system and an instinct for self-preservation among the states are sufficient conditions for balances of power to recurrently form as an effect of state interaction within the system.⁴ This account is problematic as it deterministically predicts the formation of balances of power and upholds a universal predisposition towards balancing; we are left with no explanation for the evident historical tendency that balances of power very commonly fail to form. While balancing does take place, its occurrence is by no means an empirical law.⁵ Instead of engaging in a Sisyphean task of explaining away every instance of balances of power failure, it is more fruitful to view it as a concrete policy pursued by states under particular conditions. In this way, we can focus on ascertaining the conditions under which balances of power are likely to form and avoid the deterministic inconsistencies inherent in a systemic account.

A clear example in the historical development of this idea can be seen in the

period immediately following the defeat of Napoleon in Europe. The Napoleonic wars endangered the very structure of the European state system through French hegemony and thus forced European leaders to develop an international order that would ensure the independence and security of sovereign states. It was a reasonable assumption that the best way to maintain the independence of states was to preserve the system in which they operated, and consequently, the security of the state system and the independence of states depended on preventing any one state from achieving a preponderance of power. It was believed that imbalances of power in the state system endanger the continued survival of sovereign states, and in this way, Napoleon’s campaigns demonstrated how fragile the international order can be when faced with a powerful, unconstrained state. The primary law of the balance of power thus appeared: no one state shall dominate. Consequently, alliances became the primary means by which these goals were to be achieved and preserved. As David Hume described this tendency, “...the effects were alike, and every prevailing power was sure to meet with a confederacy against it, and that often composed of its former friends and allies.”

Subsequent developments within international relations theory have sought to reconfigure this logic and give it a more rigorous, positivist form designed to deduce an international order most conducive to peace, giving rise to classical realism as well as systemic neo-realism. Several works have also exposed some flaws within the logic of balance power theory and systemic neo-realism in its application to international politics.⁶ A significant problem faced by neo-realist theory is that certain predictions concerning state

¹ Hans Morgenthau. *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1973).

² Edward Vose Gulick. *Europe’s Classical Balance of Power* (New York: The Norton Library, 1955): 30-34.

³ Kenneth Waltz. *Theory of International Politics* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1979): 124-127.

⁴ *Ibid.*: 121.

⁵ William Wohlforth et al. “Testing Balance of Power Theory in World History” *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 13 No. 2 (2007).

⁶ See Emerson Niou, Peter Ordeshook. “A Theory of the Balance of Power in International Systems” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 30 No. 4 (1986).

behavior do not always follow from their logical foundations. In this way, realism can be said to lack a strong and logically consistent foundation from which hypotheses are derived. Furthermore, previous empirical work done on this subject has shown that balance of power considerations cannot account for the occurrence of war.⁷ Finally, realist theory in its present form suffers from a lack of agreement and theoretical consistency as to what constitutes the core assumptions and variables of a proper balance of power theory. Therefore scholars have yet to develop a strong and consistent theory of alignment that does not need to constantly resort to post hoc adjustments. Since questions raised regarding the logical consistency of a theory also place in doubt its external validity, I attempt to disaggregate the various hypotheses concerning balancing behavior produced within the realist paradigm. Furthermore, through empirical testing I intend to determine what conditions are necessary and sufficient for balancing to take place while employing a broader focus than previous work on the subject.⁸

Some examination of the concepts and terminology in use is in order. Balancing and bandwagoning are concepts that have been used widely in literature on alliance behavior. What is meant by these concepts? As discussed above, balancing has been used to describe the forging of alliances or the creation of military power to prevent or deter territorial occupation or military and political domination of the state by a foreign power or

coalition. Bandwagoning, on the other hand, describes the opposite behavior, that is alignment with the stronger coalition in order to appease and attain some measure of security. As balances of power fulfill security concerns, Waltz has argued that under conditions of anarchy, security is the highest end.⁹ We would thus expect that two states balancing against each other would belong to separate and discrete blocs of alliances.

However, this has different system-wide implications depending on the nature of the regional as well as global international system. In a multipolar system, balancing would describe joining a particular bloc with the purpose to deter another bloc or individual state. Bipolar systems would exhibit a similar tendency, although the bloc selection would necessarily be limited to two. Under conditions of unipolarity, balancing would then be aimed at the hegemon, the dominant state. Balancing and bandwagoning thus abstracts from the complex world of alliance politics and reduces alliance behavior to a dichotomous action. While this is somewhat of a simplification, neo-realism has been intended as a systemic theory of political outcomes, and has thus retained a focus on events with a system-wide effect.

Therefore, balancing and bandwagoning, as system wide effects, are necessary abstraction within the framework of the theory. Although realism has consistently posited power as the primary driving mechanism for balancing or bandwagoning, developments within the paradigm brought a number of critiques of this logic; critiques which sought to improve the original logic and explanatory power. Subsequent attempts have challenged various aspects of systemic neo-realist logic leading to a proliferation of discrete hypotheses that often contradict each

⁷ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman. "Empirical Support for Systemic and Dyadic Explanations of International Conflict" *World Politics* Vol. 41 No. 1 (1988).

⁸ See Dan Reiter. "Learning, Realism and Alliances: The Weight of the Shadow of the Past" *World Politics* Vol. 46 No. 4 (1994) for an empirical test of minor power alliance choices comparing the validity of balance of threat theory against learning theory.

⁹ Ibid.: 126.

other. Thus, as stated above, there exists little consensus as to when states bandwagon or balance and diverse theories of alliance behavior have produced numerous hypotheses to answer this question.

METHODOLOGY

How may these propositions relating to alliance behavior be tested? I developed a dataset on directed European dyad-year data from 1814-1994. This data is derived from the Correlates of War (COW), Militarized Interstate Dispute data.¹⁰ I focus on European data as I believe that the European system exemplifies many of the preceding assumptions and thus offers fertile ground for robust testing. Furthermore, other regions in this time period do not have the characteristics necessary for a fruitful test, such as a large amount of relatively equal states, multipolarity or evolving military technology. Europe thus represents the most-likely case for realist theories. Furthermore, we would expect that theories failing this test exhibit the least external validity, significantly undermining our confidence in their explanatory capabilities.

The unit of analysis here is the directed dyad-year. For each directed dyad we observe the initiator and target of the dispute, allowing us to determine the ways in which a target of a dispute reacts when faced with differing system and unit level variables. Furthermore, a directed dyad is more effective than a non-directed dyad for questions of alignment decisions, enabling an analysis capable of measuring shifting alliance commitments.¹¹

¹⁰ Daniel M Jones, Stuart A. Bremer and J. David Singer. "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns" *Conflict Management and Peace Science Vol. 15 No. 2* (1996).

¹¹ To generate the data, I use EUGene software v 3.100, available at www.eugenesoftware.org. See D. Scott Bennett and Alan Stam. "EUGene: A Conceptual Manual" *International Interactions Vol. 26* (2000), and

Since the theories to be tested are concerned primarily with alliances, the first step is to define a dependent variable capable of measuring alliance commitments and their similarity. Kendall's Tau-b measure thus presents itself as the logical choice.¹² Tau-b serves as a measure of ordinal rankings and may be employed to measure the similarity between alliance portfolios of states within a dyad. It is possible to determine if the two states share an affinity through the similarity of their alliance portfolios. A value of 1 indicates perfect affinity while -1 represents perfect disunity, and so balancing or bandwagoning behavior may be modeled through alliance portfolio congruity. We are thus able to define a dependent variable *balance*, which indicates whether state A is balancing against, or bandwagoning with, state B. I code a dichotomous variable with a value of 0 for all values $T_b > 0$ and 1 for all values $T_b < 0$. It is reasonable to assume that balancing states would have dissimilar alliance portfolios; the accepted definition of balancing implies the formation of discrete blocs that do not overlap. In order to measure bandwagoning tendencies, I use a similar variable *bandwagon* coded 1 for all $T_b > 0$.

SYSTEMIC THEORY

Neo-realism emerged as an attempt to cast traditional balance of power logic into a systemic mold. In attempting to examine international politics and alliance behavior through a systemic lens, it has relied on material power as an independent variable.

D. Scott Bennett and Alan Stam. "A Universal Test of an Expected Utility Theory of War" *International Studies Quarterly Vol. 44 No. 3* (2000).

¹² See Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. "Measuring Systemic Polarity" *Journal of Conflict Resolution Vol. 19 No. 2* (1975), and Curtis Signorino and Jeffrey Ritter. "Tau-b or Not Tau-b: Measuring the Similarity of Foreign Policy Positions" *International Studies Quarterly Vol. 43 No. 1* (1999).

Viewed in this way, states within the international system respond to systemic stimuli in the form of imbalances of power and seek to redress these imbalances through balancing. In defining structure, Waltz turns to anarchy as the factor conditioning state behavior. Thus, the international system may be viewed as existing within an anarchic structure; units within the system are therefore arranged on the organizing principle of anarchy, generating patterns of distributions of capabilities. In this way, the distribution of capabilities is considered to be a systemic variable, distinct from individual capabilities possessed by states.¹³

As systemic phenomena, imbalances of power pose a threat to the security of states within the system, compelling them to balance with the weaker coalition. The expectation which results is that balances of power recurrently form and balancing is the dominant behavior. One example of this tendency can be seen in the Crimean War. Britain and France, concerned by Russian expansion to the Bosphorus straits and the imminent collapse of the Ottoman Empire, went to war against Russia to balance Russian power and to preserve the Ottoman Empire as a unit in the international system. Balance is defined through the material capabilities of states forming the measures of the scale. Within this framework, states will balance against material power and we can expect to see balancing behavior when there is a significant imbalance in power present in the international system. From this, we may assume several hypotheses:

H1: Balancing is more prevalent than bandwagoning

H2: States are more likely to balance against an imbalance in material capabilities, less likely to balance when material capabilities are evenly matched

These hypotheses indicate certain expectations of state behavior, that is, states will balance when they perceive a potential for one state to achieve domination of the system. Material capabilities thus play the central role in determining alignment decisions. Some simple descriptive statistics of the dependent variable data are sufficient to test H1. To test H2, I employ the COW material capabilities index. This index measures a state's material power in the system based on total population, military expenditure, energy consumption, military personnel and urban population. These factors are then combined into a composite index.¹⁴ To more accurately measure the relative power of the two states in a dyad, I develop the following ratio: $cap_1/(cap_1+cap_2)$. This ratio allows the measurement of similarity between the material capabilities of the two states and how this relationship affects alliance choices. Additionally, I use a second measure, $ratio^2$, designed to offer a further test of the relationship of power imbalances. A probit regression is performed for this and for all subsequent tests as probit is the appropriate regression method for a dichotomous dependent variable. Results may be seen in Table 1 and 2 below. Mean tau-b scores show little support for the claim that balancing is the dominant tendency. Our data indicates that states are as likely to balance as they are to bandwagon, undermining the idea that balancing is the dominant tendency. We also find little evidence for H2. The power ratio variables are statistically insignificant. It is

¹³ Barry Buzan, Charles Jones and Richard Little. *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993): 51-53.

¹⁴ J David Singer. "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States" *International Interactions Vol. 14 No. 2* (1987).

clear that state alliance decisions are not driven by considerations of material power alone and imbalances in material power cannot be expected to produce balancing coalitions

An alternative outlook is proposed by Balance of Threat theory. It proposes that states do not balance against material capabilities alone, but instead against threats.¹⁵ Balance of threat theory is given as an adjustment, designed to improve on the insights of structural realism and to provide greater parsimony. Thus, where material capabilities were previously treated as the major indicator of system imbalance, we should consider that “It is more accurate to say that states tend to ally with or against the foreign power that poses the greatest threat.”¹⁶ Walt indicates that alliance behavior is motivated by threats, in contrast to Waltzian claims as to the predominance of material power. Walt retains the primacy of security concerns for state interests and defines the variable threat as threats to the security of the threatened state, much as Waltz has described balancing as the necessary action in order to prevent any one state from attaining a preponderance of power, thus threatening the security of other states.

While material power may be considered as a source of threat, additional factors also play a role. Threat as a variable is believed to be composed of secondary factors, such as geographic proximity, offensive intent as well as material capabilities. When states perceive a potential threat emanating from a particular state, they are likely to form balancing alliances against it. If two states are contiguous, we may expect the threat perceived to be greater than if the two states are far apart. Likewise, a state broadcasting benign intentions while having few offensive

weapons will not be considered a threat, whereas a state espousing dangerous ambitions and building up offensive capacity will be considered threatening by its neighbors. Perceptions of intent may even trump other factors; states with modest capabilities that broadcast aggressive intentions will find themselves encircled by balancing coalitions.

We are thus given a description of state behavior that predicts that states respond to “imbalances of threat,” balancing against states or coalitions that appear especially dangerous. Walt suggests that we can observe this behavior in action in the collapse of Pan-Arabism in the Middle East. Walt argues that Arab states such as Syria were threatened by Egyptian hegemonic aspirations and consequently balanced against Egypt, causing the dissolution of the United Arab Republic. In operationalizing such behavior, aggressive intent presents itself as a subjective concept that offers resistance to attempts to reduce it to an ordinal value. We are forced to turn to a possible alternative that may communicate offensive intent and revision demands serve to fill this niche. A state demanding significant revisions would undoubtedly be considered threatening. In keeping with balance of threat logic, threatening states are likely to have few allies as balancing coalitions can be expected to arise in order to counter them. Furthermore, threat is assumed to be a necessary and sufficient condition for balancing to occur. We are thus led to assume the following hypothesis.

H₃: States are more likely to balance against threatening states, less likely to balance against non-threatening states.

To test H₃, I use the variables specified by Walt as constituting threat, those being material power, contiguity and offensive

¹⁵ Stephen Walt. *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 21.

intent. Contiguity is measured by a dichotomous variable from the Correlates of War project and indicates whether a dyad is contiguous on land or not.¹⁷ Material power utilizes the above defined variable *ratio*. In order to measure offensive intent, I use revision demand type, indicating the severity of revision demands. Thus, a demand for regime revision would be considered very threatening, while a more limited demand is considered less threatening; this variable is ordinal, ranging from 0 to 3, with a value of 3 indicating a regime revision demand and 1 indicating a territory revision demand.

Test results show some support for this hypothesis. We find that geographical contiguity does have a significant effect on alliance behavior, and states sharing borders are in fact more likely to balance against each other. This lends credence to the idea that checkerboard patterns tend to form in the international system and to the idea that “the neighbor of my enemy is my friend.” It is likely that states sharing borders are more sensitive to signs of threat from their neighbor and will thus balance more often. Revision demand type also performs strongly and states seem to respond by balancing if demands are considered threatening.

A yet alternative theory of state behavior may be derived from offense-defense balance theory. Offense-Defense Balance theory hinges on the security dilemma proposed by Robert Jervis.¹⁸ Jervis argues that the evolution of military technology creates a perception of the dominance of offense or defense and affects expectations regarding the ease of conquest. Offensive advantage

indicates that it is easier to destroy the enemy’s forces and take territory than it is to defend one’s own, while defensive advantage lends greater ease to protecting and holding one’s holdings. In discussing the ebb and flow of wars, Carl von Clausewitz noted that defense is often easier than offense: “If the form of defense is stronger than that of offense, as we shall hereafter show...Now, being convinced that the superiority of the defense (rightly understood) is very great, and much greater than may appear at first sight...”¹⁹ This perception may be offset by the development of military technologies or offensive weapons that erode the edge offered to the defender. When the “cult of the offensive” is dominant, conquest is perceived to be easy and war is more likely to occur. Offensive dominance may be defined as the perceived ease with which an army may defeat its opponent and take his territory relative to the ease of defending one’s own.

My conception of the offense-defense balance differs from some previous work on the offense-defense balance, which concentrates on technological factors prevalent within a given era.²⁰ This contention suffers from a misinterpretation of the issue at hand. It is not the technological characteristics that ought to be the focus of analysis, but instead perceptions.²¹ History is replete with examples of leaders misperceiving the technological

¹⁷ Douglas Stinnett, Jaroslav Tir, Philip Schafer, Paul F Diehl and Charles Gochman. “The Correlates of War Project Direct Contiguity Data, Version 3” *Conflict Management and Peace Science Vol. 19 No. 2* (2002): 58-66.

¹⁸ Robert Jervis. “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma” *World Politics Vol. 30 No. 2* (1978).

¹⁹ Carl Von Clausewitz. *On War* (London: Penguin Classics, 1968): 114.

²⁰ Jack S Levy. “The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis” *International Studies Quarterly Vol. 9 No. 1* (1984).

²¹ Jervis, in describing policies that led to WWI, states that, “Because of the *perceived* advantage of the offense, war was seen as the best route to gaining expansion and to avoiding drastic losses of influence...Of course the war showed these beliefs to have been wrong on all points.” (Emphasis added.) Robert Jervis (1978): 191. Also see Stephen Van Evera. “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War” *International Security Vol. 9 No. 1* (1984).

character of a given period and relying on outdated tactics. The most often cited example of this tendency is the perception of offensive advantage that led to the development of the Schlieffen plan at the outset of WWI. German military command assumed that conquest was easy and thus designed a plan that relied on lightning quick maneuvers. Instead, the development and use of the machine gun, trenches and other technology that made defending easier negated the offensive advantage, causing the German offensive to stall and bog down in trench warfare.²²

In this way, it is not central if technological factors are conducive to the offensive or not; perceptions of an offensive advantage alone are assumed to be sufficient to cause an increase in the likelihood of conflict. An analysis relying solely on technological factors ignores the psychological perceptions of leaders and focuses on an incomplete theoretical foundation. Furthermore, the picture resulting from such an analysis would be an ex-post description that tells us little of the factors affecting the decision of a particular leader. We cannot know ex ante if a weapon is advantageous to the offense or the defense and it is furthermore problematic to make a distinction between offensive and defensive weapons in the first place. An analysis focusing on perceptions is thus the proper one and is also consistent with previous work on the security dilemma, the theoretical foundation of offense-defense balance theory.

Viewed in this way, offense-defense balance may provide an insight into alliance dynamics. Perceptions of technological advantage will cause states to pursue particular foreign policy directions. Under conditions of multi-polarity, nations can be assumed to form discrete "poles," or clusters of

alliances. Two problems thus dominate alliance politics; chain ganging and buck passing. As Waltz suggests, "The approximate equality of alliance partners makes them closely interdependent...because the defeat [of a major ally] would have shaken the balance, each state was constrained to adjust its strategy and the use of its forces to the aims and fears of its partners."²³ Under such conditions, states are forced to maintain cohesion between their foreign policies, in effect "chain-ganging" themselves to each other, causing balancing behavior to be dominant. On the other hand, buck-passing prevails when cohesion among cluster members is low. Thus states bandwagon with a rising threat, "passing the buck" in order to avoid costly balancing while expecting others to engage in balancing behavior.²⁴

The offense-defense balance plays a direct role in affecting state behavior and promoting either chain ganging or buck passing. A perception of offensive dominance makes states more wary of possible war and causes high degrees of cohesion among alliance partners. If conquest in war is seen as being easy, there is a higher probability that states will act recklessly and with little restraint. War is thus seen as more likely, exacerbating the security dilemma. We can also expect chain ganging to occur as a consequence of offensive dominance. On the other hand, we may expect bandwagoning to prevail when perceptions of defensive advantage are dominant. If conquest is viewed as being difficult to achieve due to a defensive advantage, the belief that technology favors defense would lead states to adopt more

²² See Jack Snyder. "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984" *International Security* Vol. 9 No. 1 (1984), and Van Evera (1984).

²³ Waltz (1979): 167.

²⁴ Thomas J Christensen and Jack Snyder. "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* Vol. 44 No. 2 (1990). Thomas J Christensen. "Perceptions and Alliances in Europe, 1865-1940" *International Organization* Vol. 51 No. 1 (1997).

relaxed postures and be more willing to “pass the buck.” Consequently, strong defense allows states to feel more secure and take greater liberties with their alliance commitments, as high degrees of cohesion are no longer necessary to ensure security.²⁵ Offense-Defense Balance may thus be used as an explanatory variable of alliance behavior from which the following hypothesis may be derived:

H4: Balancing is more likely when offense is dominant, bandwagoning more likely when defense is dominant.

When viewed in terms of perceptions and not solely military technological advantages, offense-defense balance theory provides a testable hypothesis that acts to explain alliance behavior. In order to test this hypothesis, I created an ordinal independent variable *odbalance*. Since the definition of offense-defense balance utilized here is based on prevailing perceptions, I define the variable on the basis of perceptions of prevalent tactics within a given time period. I code the variable 0 in a deterrence dominated era (1946-1994), 1 in eras where defense was perceived to be dominant (1816-1849, 1915-1933) and 2 in eras where offense was perceived to be dominant (1850-1914, 1934-1945). Clausewitz, in stating that “the form of defense is stronger than that of offense,” was demonstrating the prevalent belief of the time in the superiority of the defense. As military technology changed little in the period 1816-1849, we would expect that the military perceptions and tactics remained the same. The introduction of new weaponry in the form of new rifles in 1849 led to a change in strategy and a belief in the power of the offense.²⁶ Consequently, military tactics began

to reflect this belief, causing belief in the offense to dominate until the outbreak of the First World War.²⁷ The interwar period internalized the lessons of WWI and nations relied on defensive fortification, firm in their belief in defensive superiority. Development of armored warfare and doctrines of mobility warfare led to a return of the “cult of the offense.”

Based on these measurements, we find little evidence in support of this hypothesis. Even though the low p-values indicate high statistical significance, the coefficients are negative when we would expect them to be positive. The offense-defense variable displays a tendency in the opposite direction, suggesting that states seem to be less likely to balance as the offense gains in dominance and are in fact more likely to bandwagon when offense is dominant.

UNIT LEVEL THEORY

While the preceding discussion was concerned largely with systemic variables, unit level variables may also be utilized in explaining alliance formations. It is important to note that balance of threat theory accepts a number of assumptions that have been challenged by subsequent works. One such assumption is that states are willing to pay high costs to protect their security but are not willing to take risks to improve their status and standing. This assumption has been challenged on the basis of a historical record of states bandwagoning for profit.²⁸ Whereas bandwagoning has been used to describe behavior that is very similar to capitulation,

²⁵ Jervis (1978).

²⁶ Karen Ruth Adams. “Attack and Conquer? International Anarchy and the Offense-Defense-

Deterrence Balance” *International Security Vol. 28 No. 3* (2004).

²⁷ Christensen (1997).

²⁸ Randall Schweller. “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In” *International Security Vol. 19 No. 1* (1994).

this usage has implied that states only bandwagon for security reasons.

However, as Schweller argues, we cannot assume that all states within the system are satisfied with their current holdings. As EH Carr has noted, the international system is often divided into the “haves” and the “have-nots.”²⁹ Thus, we must account for the possibility that a state may seek to revise the status quo. Schweller describes this tendency when he suggests that “Calling for a new order, dissatisfied states are attracted to expanding revisionist powers.”³⁰ In such cases, revisionist states can be expected to ally with the stronger coalition, to bandwagon, in order to attain some gain.

Schweller’s usage of such terms as revisionist and status quo is unclear. Although Schweller makes several attempts to define his terms, his definitions lack theoretical rigor and we are left making assumptions as to what “revisionist state” actually means; “They [Revisionist states] want to increase, not just preserve, their core values and to improve their position in the system.” “Status quo states seek self-preservation and the protection of values they already possess... In contrast, revisionist states... will employ military force to change the status quo and increase their values.”³¹

While these definitions shed some light on state behavior, they are lacking in concrete content and we are thus unable to use these terms to operationalize any meaningful variables. It is for example not always possible to make a distinction if a particular conflict was initiated by a state for the purpose of increasing its values or protecting them; the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan could be said to be both. We also find that Schweller is essentially restating the general hypothesis of

power transition theory, holding that a dissatisfied state or states will attempt to challenge the dominant state in the international system and fight for control of the status quo.³²

However, unlike power transition theory, Schweller’s “balance of interests” suffers from severe theoretical opacity with none of the more rigorous empirical refinements developed for power transition theory. Furthermore, Schweller appears to deviate from the structural logic of balance of threat theory that he is critiquing. Whereas threat may be viewed as a systemic variable, much as the distribution of capabilities is, status quo or revisionist are unit level variables and thus necessitate a wholly different set of assumptions. Furthermore, since Schweller does not consider the international system to be hierarchical, as is supposed in power transition literature, the terms in use lose verifiable content when applied to an anarchic international system. In testing the hypothesis derived from this theory, it will be necessary to devise more rigorous measures of the variables than those provided by Schweller.

H₅: Status quo states are more likely to balance, revisionist states are more likely to bandwagon

We may expect to see more instances of balancing when disputes involve satisfied, status quo states that are prepared to fight in order to defend their possessions or security. Likewise, unsatisfied, revisionist states are more likely to bandwagon when they see the potential to improve their position and reap

²⁹ E.H. Carr. *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (New York: Palgrave, 1981).

³⁰ Schweller (1994): 87, 105-104.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Schweller makes one reference to power transition theory although much of his theoretical foundation bears striking similarity to that of the literature on power transition. See Douglas Lemke. *Regions of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). A.F.K Organski. *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958).

spoils from aligning with a more powerful revisionist state.

Operationalizing whether a state is revisionist or not and testing H₅ poses a problem. Schweller's definition implies that revisionist states are those who seek out gain and wish to improve their position. While it is possible to code if the initiator is revisionist based on the definition of revision found in power transition theory, deciding *ex ante* if the target is revisionist while remaining faithful to Schweller's definition of revision is problematic. To resolve this issue, I code a variable *trevis* that measures time since target state last engaged in a militarized dispute. It is plausible to assume that status quo states are less likely to engage in conflict, being bound by the status quo, while revisionist states can be expected to enter into conflict more often.³³ Thus, *trevis* is coded 1 if a state has engaged in conflict within 180 days and is to be considered revisionist, while a state that has not engaged in conflict for 180 days or longer is to be considered status quo. This variable shows insignificant results, suggesting that considerations of revision or status quo play little role in affecting state decision to balance or bandwagon.

In counting the discussion of unit level variables, recent developments in the democratic peace literature also shed a light on possible alliance choices that countries may undertake. The concept of audience costs and conflict selection suggests that the domestic regime of a particular state affects the way that state behaves on the international stage.³⁴ Audience costs affect leaders in democratic

states and force them to act especially carefully when deliberating the escalation of conflicts.

Conflicts play out in front of an audience, whether it is domestic or international. Audience costs thus represent the costs a leader accrues before his domestic population as the conflict escalates. Different types of regimes can be assumed to build up audience costs at different rates owing to the political structure of a particular regime. Thus, democracies build up audience costs faster, as a democratic leader will bear more responsibility before the domestic population due to the constraints placed on him coupled with numerous mechanisms for removal. In this way, audience costs serve as a measure of resolve or signaling. Also a democratic leader can demonstrate his commitment more credibly since democratic leaders have to pay larger costs in the event that they back down, and are more susceptible to removal for their failures.

What does this indicate for alliance behavior? We may assume that audience costs affect both sides of a dyad, the initiator and the target. A democratic initiator is likely to select his conflicts, as audience costs make losing or backing down in a conflict an unattractive proposal. As audience costs make democracies unable to issue insincere threats or bluff, equilibrium behavior would force democratic leaders to be highly selective when entering conflicts. Also, democracies are forced to avoid entering into conflicts where an embarrassing loss is likely, as only states with low audience costs are likely to incur them.³⁵ Furthermore, the target, being cognizant of audience costs and the credible resolve of the democratic initiator will be more likely to back down without escalating the conflict to the level of force usage. An implication follows that suggests democracies enter into conflicts when

³³ This argument draws on the concept of "conditional anarchy" found in power transition theory literature. See Douglas Lemke and William Reed. "Power is Not Satisfaction: A Comment on De Soya, Oneal and Park" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 42 No. 4 (1998).

³⁴ James D Fearon. "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes" *American Political Science Review* Vol. 88 No. 3 (1994).

³⁵ Kenneth Schulz. "Looking for Audience Costs" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 45 No. 1 (2001).

the probability of the other side backing down, or bandwagoning, is high.³⁶ The following hypothesis may be derived:

H6: Targets are more likely to bandwagon when the initiator is a democracy

In order to test H6, I utilize Polity III data on regime types.³⁷ Variable *dem* is used in measuring whether a state is democratic or autocratic and ranges between 10 when dyad initiator is a democracy and -10 when it an autocracy. We find that domestic regime types play a role in alignment decisions as well, and the tendency confirms this. States are thus less likely to balance if the dispute initiator is a democracy. Furthermore, states are more likely to balance if the initiator is a major power. These results show that unit level variables and types of states engaged in disputes have an effect on the decision to balance or bandwagon. Further research is needed to determine if unit-level variables deserve greater attention than systemic variables in approaching the question of alignment.

What have these tests indicated for systemic and unit level theories of alignment? Waltzian neo-realism has been shown to be inconsistent with the empirical record. Not only is balancing not more prevalent within the international system, considerations of material power balance do not play a role in affecting state alignment decisions. As the cases utilized reflect most-likely case logic, we can assume that Waltzian hypotheses carry the least external validity and these results are therefore especially significant.

³⁶See Patricia Lynne Sullivan, Scott Sigmund Gartner. "Disaggregating Peace: Domestic Politics and Dispute Outcomes" *International Interactions Vol. 32 No. 1* (2006) for an empirical evaluation of these hypotheses.

³⁷ Keith Jagers and Ted Robert Gurr. "Tracking Democracy's Third Wave with Polity III Data" *Journal of Peace Research Vol. 32 No. 4* (1995).

However, balance of threat theory has performed well. This merits further research as empirical results indicate that variables such as threat and contiguity make it more likely that states will balance. Although revision demands are an imperfect indicator of threat, it is nevertheless evident that such perceptions influence state behavior. Offense-defense-deterrence balance also has an impact on alliance choices, even though the results run contrary to the literature on this theory. While the conventional view expects that states will be more likely to balance when offense is perceived to be dominant due to tightening bloc cohesion, we find the opposite to be the case. Thus, we would expect that states are in fact less likely to balance when offense dominates, and we do observe that there is a greater tendency to bandwagon instead. This finding undermines the parsimony of offense-defense theory and necessitates further investigation in order to determine the correct direction of causality.

Our findings also encourage no confidence in balance of interest theory. The poor statistical significance of the revisionist variable suggests that it is of little importance if the state is revisionist or status quo in affecting its alliance choices. We also find that domestic regime type of the dispute initiator plays a role in affecting state behavior, and although domestic regimes are not a sufficiently significant predictor in cases of bandwagoning behavior, regimes do have an effect on balancing behavior. The target state in a dispute is less likely to balance when the initiator is a democracy, a result that is consistent with our hypothesis. It is also evident that there is a tendency to balance when the dispute initiator is a major power.

Overall, the performance of realist theories in this test was less than satisfactory. Only one theory out of 5 tested demonstrated results consistent with the literature. The fact

that European dyads are a most-likely case, our confidence in these theories has been significantly undermined. Realist and balance-of-power logic is insufficient for the development of a comprehensive theory of alignment. Furthermore, due to the nature of the case selection, even those hypotheses which had performed strongly do not demonstrate a significant level of validity and ought to be subjected to tests that are more robust, such as cases chosen on the basis of least-likely logic, or "Negative Cases," where the presence of the independent variable did not cause the dependent variable.

Table 1: Observed Values of Balancing

	Balancing	Bandwagoning
Mean	.3864209	.2324104
Std. Dev.	.4869313	.4223713

Table 2: Bandwagoning and Balancing behavior

	Balancing Coefficient	P > z	Bandwagoning Coefficient	P > z
Capabilities Ratio	-.0178366	0.711	.9588265	0.269
Ratio ²	.0147135	0.753	-.7532667	0.356
Contiguity	.2161048	0.000*	-.0619903	0.840
Revision Demands	.2268204	0.003	-.1691271	0.195
Offense-Defense Balance	-.1283709	0.000*	.2559065	0.002
Revisionist State	.0136897	0.955	.1114162	0.289
Domestic Regime Type Initiator	-.0178199	0.004	-.0131842	0.051
Initiator is Major Power	.2993215	0.022	.0116558	0.931

* - P < 0.01

N = 843

P-value > .05 = Statistically insignificant

P-value < .05 = Statistically significant