

## ALLIANCES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

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### ABSTRACT

Little work has been done to examine, understand or predict which alliance groupings are likely to form or not. This paper will begin by focusing on the balance of power theory of alliances which is the main tool used in the discipline of international relations to explain the formation and duration of alliances between states. Contrasted with ‘balance of power’ (BoP) theory is ‘balance of threat’ (BoT) theory, which suggests that states will react to increases in other state’s capabilities. Alliances are regarded as a response to an external threat. Whether it is domestic politics or international politics, the logic and the reason of alliances and counter-alliances is quite an accepted phenomenon. Therefore they cannot be studied apart from other security policies, enmities and rivalries to which they are designed to respond. The purpose is not to review the entire alliance literature but to draw some of the themes that have played an important role in advancing the present understanding of alliances. BoT theory is applied in the context of two case studies – Pakistan and China, North Korea and China.

**KEYWORDS:** Alliances, Balance of Power, Balance of Threat, China, Pakistan, North Korea.

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### INTRODUCTION

Alliances play a central role in international relations because they are seen to be an integral part of statecraft. Alliances are formed between two or more countries to counter a common adversary. They have been an important research focus in the theory of international relations. This is understandable because one of the central foreign policy debates in every country centers on the issue of which nation to ally with and for how long. Strong and weak nations alike feel the need to form alliances. Weak states enter into alliance when they need protection against strong states i.e., they enter into alliances to defend themselves. Strong states enter into alliances to counter other strong states i.e., they enter into alliance to maintain balance of power. States expect their allies to help militarily and diplomatically during the time of conflict. The commitment entered into by the alliance may be formal or informal i.e., there may or may not be treaties between them.

This paper begins by focusing on the balance of power theory of alliances which is the main tool used in the discipline of international relations to explain the formation and duration of alliances between states. Contrasted with ‘balance of power’ (BoP) theory is the ‘balance of threat’ (BoT) theory. Stephen Walt (1987: 263) maintains that balance of threat “should be

viewed as a refinement of traditional balance of power theory". Whether it is domestic politics or international politics, the logic and the reason of alliances and counter-alliances is quite an accepted phenomenon. Therefore they cannot be studied apart from other security policies, enmities and rivalries to which they are designed to respond. The purpose is not to review the entire alliance literature but to draw some of the themes that have played an important role in advancing the present understanding of alliances. The BoT theory is applied in the context of two case studies – Pakistan and China, North Korea and China.

According to the realist theory, states are the central political actors and their actions are governed by perceptions of sovereignty, national interest and security. Realism is primarily concerned with the protection of the state and the survival of the state as a discrete actor. Before discussing the alternative theories of state's security, the related terms and concepts must be defined.

**Threat:** Threat is not an objective phenomenon. It is a perceptual concept. Capabilities and intentions of a state play an important role in determining threat.

**Security:** According to realists, concept of security is a vicious cycle. In its most fundamental understanding, to be secure is to be free from threats and dangers. States are not perfectly secure or completely insecure but rather experience either condition in degrees.

**Alliance:** Alliance is described as a process or a technique of statecraft or a type of international organization (Fedder 1968: 68). Arnold Wolfer (1968: 268) defines an alliance as 'a promise of mutual military assistance between two or more sovereign states'. Alliances are only the formal subset of a broader and more basic phenomenon, than that of 'alignment' (Snyder 1990: 105). The primary purpose of most alliances is to combine the member's capabilities in a way that furthers their respective interests.

**Coalitions:** Snyder differentiated between alliances and coalitions. According to him (1990: 106), alliances are formed in peace time and coalitions are often found during war. Coalitions lack many of the political functions, such as deterrence of attack, preclusion and restraint of the ally. Fedder (1968: 80) defined coalition as "a set of members acting in concert at x time regarding one to n issues".

**Alignment:** Formal alliances strengthen existing alignments, or create new ones. Snyder (1990: 105) described an alliance as 'a subset of the broader phenomenon alignment'. Alignment occurs when a states brings its policies into close cooperation with another state in order to achieve mutual security goals.

**Entente:** Kann compares alliances and ententes. In case of ententes, no firm commitments exist between partners. There should be simple recognition of the fact that agreements between them will make sense only if they serve common interests. According to him, the inherent trend of an entente is in the opposite direction from that of an alliance (Kann 1976: 612). Secrecy, ideological issues etc. are well delineated in alliance treaties but not in ententes (Kann 1976: 615). Entente is more flexible associations between states (Kann 1976: 611).

Building alliances is not the only tactic states have; there are other strategies also. Balancing and bandwagoning can lead to formation of alliances. When confronted by an external threat, states may either balance or bandwagon.

**Balancing:** It is defined as allying with others against the prevailing threat. States can balance in a variety of ways. Waltz (1979) distinguished between two kinds of balancing. States could attempt to balance threats with their own resources. This is called internal balancing. Alternatively, they can seek out other states that share their fear and ally with them. This is known as external balancing.

**Bandwagoning:** If the system fails to provide a balance against an aggressor, individual nations respond differently to threat. Bandwagoning is joining the stronger side for the sake of protection and payoffs, even if this meant insecurity vis-à-vis the protecting power and a certain sacrifice of independence (Schroeder 1994: 430). According to Schweller, bandwagoning refers to joining with a rising state, either from fear or from greed (Vasquez and Elman 2003: 79). Walt defined bandwagoning as 'alignment with the source of danger'. He differentiated it into two kinds: offensive and defensive. Offensive bandwagoning is alignment with a dominant state in order to share in the spoils of victory. Defensive bandwagoning is a 'form of appeasement'; a state aligns with an aggressive state in order to avoid being attacked (Walt 1987: 21).

Balancing and bandwagoning are not the only ways, in which state's behaviour is revealed. There is a range of responses and strategies. The following concepts do not lead to alliance formation but are important to show how states are engaged.

**Hiding:** One strategy of state behaviour is hiding from threats. This could take various forms: simply ignoring the threat or declaring neutrality in a general crisis, approaching other states on one or both sides of a quarrel to get them to guarantee one's safety, trying to withdraw into isolation, assuming a purely defensive position, or seeking protection from some other powers in exchange for diplomatic services, or non-military support, without joining that power as an ally or committing itself to any use of force on its part (Schroeder 1994: 430).

**Transcending:** Schroeder defines transcending as 'trying to deal with the dangers both of concentrations of power and of concrete threats by taking the problem to a higher level, establishing norms of a legal, religious, moral, or procedural nature to govern international practice, with these norms to be somehow maintained and enforced by the international community or by a particular segment by it' (Vasquez and Elman 2003: 119).

Other factors that may affect how states respond to threat are suggested by Christensen and Snyder's analysis of chain-ganging and buck-passing, where they find that technology, geography, and perception of strategic incentives influence the way in which states respond to threat.

**Chain-ganging:** A multipolar balancing dynamic that results when interlocking alliance commitments, alliance pull states into wars that they might have avoided. Christensen and Snyder (2003: 73) argue that this dynamic is most likely to occur when states perceive that offense has the advantage over defense, since states must then lend quick and decisive support to

their allies. The result is that all the members of an alliance become hostage to the behaviour of the least restrained state, with hyperactive balancing producing unrestrained war.

**Buck-passing:** A multipolar balancing dynamic that occurs when a state refuses to balance against a rising state, hoping that another threatened state will expend the necessary blood and treasure. A mutual buck-pass could result in none of the threatened states balancing, with the consequence that the rising state could achieve hegemony (Christensen and Snyder 2003: 73). Christensen and Snyder argue that this dynamic is most likely when states perceive that defense has the advantage over offense.

Before analyzing the cases, it is important to briefly discuss theories related to the alliances in international politics. A number of scholars have attempted to develop theories of alliances. Modern alliances are distinguished from the traditional ones in terms of duration, scope etc.

## DIFFERENT THEORIES OF ALLIANCE

A range of theories has been advanced to explain alliance formation, alliance performance and their nature. Alliances differ in many ways: the circumstances under which they became operative, the type of commitment, the degree of cooperation and their scope. It also includes: ideology, size, capabilities, leadership etc. Scholars have attempted to develop comprehensive theories of alliances: the first to do so was George Liska, and his *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* published in 1962; Ole Holsti, Terrence Hopmann and John Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* was published in 1973; Stephen Walt's book *The Origins of Alliances* published in 1987 contains valuable theoretical insights.

Liska's work was the first in the sphere of theory of alliances. In his words: "It is impossible to speak of international relations without referring to alliances; the two often merge in all but name" (Liska 1962: 3). His *Nations in Alliance* emphasizes the relevance of traditional alliance patterns in the contemporary international system. Affirmatively, states enter into alliances with one another in order to supplement each other's capabilities. Negatively, an alliance is a means of reducing the impact of antagonistic power, perceived as pressure, which threatens one's independence. He further states that "In economic terminology alliances aim at maximizing gains and sharing liabilities. The decision to align, in what form, and with whom or not to align, as part of a deliberate policy- is made with reference to national interests" (Liska 1962: 40).

Alliance as a military compact is also described by the scholars of international politics. For many regimes, maintaining an adequate military capability against external and internal enemies is a paramount objective to which many other needs must be subordinated. Wolfer (1968: 268) notes that 'an alliance is a promise of mutual military assistance between two or more sovereign states'. William Fox and Annette Baker Fox (1967: 6) reinforce the assertion of alliance as an instrument to rationalize diverse foreign military policies.

But alliance formation or alliance duration is complex. The oldest explanations of alliances are derived from BoP theory. The most important motive is to prevent any nation or combination

of countries from achieving a dominant position.

## **BALANCE OF POWER AS AN ANALYTICAL METHOD**

Theory of BoP is a useful point of departure for understanding alliance policies. According to realist conception, power must always be determined and measured relative to the power of someone else. In the global context, BoP is useful as an analytical concept for assessing the overall power capabilities of states and coalitions. Liska (1962), Morgenthau (1960), Kaplan (1957) etc. are of the BoP school. They assume that alliances are coalitions whose behaviour is posited upon rationally motivated agreement. According to BoP theory, nations should be more likely to join the weaker coalition to prevent formation of a hegemonic one i.e., 'balancing' rather than join the dominant one in order to increase the probability of joining the winning sides i.e., 'bandwagoning'. This concept was advanced by Waltz in 1979. He states (1979: 121), "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".

According to Morgenthau (1973), in the BoP theory, nations form alliances to offset growing powers and restore the balance. To him, an alliance is always a means to an end of maintaining equilibrium. He discusses alliance in terms of means/ends, costs/rewards calculations. Another scholar, Quincy Wright (1942: 254) stated that the BoP is a system designed to maintain a continuous conviction in every state that if it attempted aggression, it would encounter an invincible combination of the others.

A fundamental objective of creating a system of BoP is to protect the security and independence of the particular nations. No single entity within the system should be allowed to gain dominance over the others. Thus BoP becomes an analytical device. Although BoP theory does not prescribe a preferred model of global or regional stability, it does facilitate description of the principal power configurations that have existed in the past. The theory enables to demonstrate graphically the power relations of major states and groups of states, whether their relation is global in interaction or limited to a region of the world.

However, scholars trained in international relations have paid little attention to perceptions. The power of belief and perception, of ideas and of ways of thinking has sown the seeds of rivalry and competition in a very effective way, as states clashed with each other for dominance in international politics.

## **THEORIES BASED ON PERCEPTION**

A system of ideas or belief or even a single slogan or mobilizing phrase can effect significant change in the definition of interests, which in turn can influence both individual and group behaviour (Biersteker 1995: 174-175). Ideas and the conceptual frameworks that accompany them help to frame issues and define what an important problem is. According to Peter Hall (1989: 390), "Ideas have real power in political world, but they do not acquire political force independently of the constellation of institutions and interests already present there".

Perceptual theorists distinguish among three components of perception: values, beliefs and cognitions. A value is a preference for one state of reality over another. Values do not specify what is but rather what ought to be. A belief is a conviction that a description of reality is true, proven or known. A belief is not the same as a value. Cognition is a data or information received from the environment. Cognitions are key elements in establishing perpetual systems and in changing these systems.

Stein (1988: 246) categorizes threats in international relations into two kinds. When leaders use strategies like deterrence for, example, they signal their commitment and resolve in part by issuing threats to a would-be challenger. This kind of threat is conditional. What is relevant to the success of the strategy is not the threat itself but its perception. There is a gap between the intentions of the leaders who issues the threat and its perception by another. Leaders perceive not only those threats that are communicated by another party but also those that inhere in the environment. This is termed as situational threats. Accuracy in the perception of situational threats is even more problematic for policy makers to achieve and for scholars to establish.

According to Thomas J. Christensen (1997: 81), before the two world wars, security policies were largely driven by the degree of threat perceived by political and military leaders. Before World War I (1914), when leaders felt they or their allies were relatively vulnerable to offensives, most European nations built weapons and tightened formal or informal alliances. Alternatively, before World War II (1939), when defense was believed to have the advantage in continental warfare, tight alliances did not form. Where loose ones existed, they were quickly abandoned e.g., the case of France and the Little Entente in Eastern Europe (Christensen 1997: 81). In 1914, both beliefs about the offense-defense balance and the balance of power affected the security policies of the major powers. To him (1997: 92), sensitivity to perceptions and misperceptions of basic security conditions may be especially important in analyzing the stability of a rapidly changing Cold War East Asia. In the Cold War East Asia, multi-polarity is affected by various factors- the collapse of Russian influence, the rise of China, the possibility of unified Korea, the uncertainties of Japanese militarization, the level of US deployments etc.

Goldstein (1995: 48) believes that balance of power theory suggests that states can counter perceive threats by internal means i.e., by increasing their own capabilities or by external means i.e., by forming alliances. Bipolarity altered the relative importance of these two balancing techniques, and in different ways for states of different capability. States face conflicting incentives when deciding whether and how much, to rely on allies for security. When the middle powers like China confronted salient threats from one superpower (with the outbreak of the Korean War, the subsequent sequence of events during the decade clarified the seriousness of the military threat the US posed to Chinese national interests.), balance of power logic led them to seek assistance from the other in countering the common foe.

Within BoP theory of alliances, there are basically two positions – the classical position and the revisionist position, associated with the work of Stephen Walt. The classical theorists are of the opinion that alliances are an outcome of BoP among nations. The revisionist scholars argue that states use alliances to increase their security by balancing against threats posed by (potentially) powerful challengers represented by Waltz (1979); Morgenthau (1985); Walt (1987, 1988); Niou, Ordeshook, and Rose (1989), Christensen and Snyder (1990).

From the above review it may be seen that there are various theories, each focusing on a particular aspect of alliances or approaching them from a distinctive perspective. Although different theories of alliance are available, this paper will focus on Stephen Walt's theory of alliance. By focusing solely on capabilities, BoP cannot explain why balances often failed to form. Thus BoT narrows this gap. This deficiency can be corrected by recognizing that states form alliances in order to balance against threats, and power is only one element in their calculations.

## **STEPHEN M. WALT: BALANCE OF THREAT**

Walt's BoT theory represents an important contribution to neorealist thought. His research on alliances tends to emphasize state's desire to balance against security threats. BoP theory predicts that states ally in response to imbalances of power. It includes distribution of capabilities based on population, economic capacity, military power, and political cohesion. Walt modifies Waltz's account of alliance formation by claiming that states do not balance against power but rather against threats. He brought the notion of perception and made the shift from BoP to BoT. It is not necessarily the strongest neighbour who can be a threat; the weaker nation can also pose a threat. He tested his BoT theory by examining patterns of alliances in the Middle East.

According to Walt, nations do occasionally cooperate but when they do so, the cooperation is meant to face a powerful threat from one or more states. When the threat is terminated, the cooperation also comes to an end. According to him, "when there is an imbalance of threat, states will form alliances or increase their internal efforts in order to reduce their vulnerability". Several case studies, including Middle Eastern states were studied by Stephen Walt during 1955-1979, found support for the 'balancing' hypothesis. Walt defined an alliance as "a formal or informal arrangement of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states". It includes both formal treaties and informal commitments because states may be willing to cooperate but unwilling to sign a formal treaty. The presence or absence of a formal treaty often says relatively little about the actual level of commitment between the parties (Walt 1987: 12, 13).

## **BALANCE OF THREAT THEORY**

Walt finds that it is the general tendency of states to "balance" against the most threatening state or coalition, rather than "bandwagoning" with it. States are said to balance against the strongest state or coalition. In fact, they balance against the state that poses the greatest threat. The level of threat a state poses to others is a function of its power, geographic proximity, offensive military capabilities and perceived aggressiveness, though the precise weight attached to each factor will vary across cases. Aggregate Power is the total power of states. The greater a state's total resource e.g., population, industrial and military capability, and technological prowess, the greater a potential threat it can pose to others. The ability to project power declines with distance; states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away. States are more likely to make their alliance choices in response to nearby powers than in response to those that are distant. Offensive power is the ability to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state. States with large offensive capabilities are more likely to provoke an alliance than are those that are incapable of attacking. States that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them. Perceptions of intent play a crucial role in alliance

choices. Intention, not power is crucial. Walt also discussed other factors that may encourage alignment, particularly when it is not obvious which state or states pose the greatest threat. Ideology is one factor among many that may encourage alignment. Other things being equal, states will prefer to ally with governments whose political outlook is similar to their own (Walt 1997: 168). Ideology is a weaker cause of alliance formation. Offering or accepting aid is one way that states with different capabilities can respond to a common threat. To Walt, a large aid relationship is more often the result of alignment than a cause of it. Economic ties can create or reinforce strong alliance relations, particularly when one partner is heavily dependent on the other.

Thus, Walt advanced five hypotheses: States ally against states that threaten them i.e., they balance. States ally with states that threaten them i.e., they bandwagon. States choose allies of similar ideology. Foreign aid attracts allies. Political penetration facilitates alliance. To test these hypotheses, Walt used the following determinants: In deciding whether or not to balance, states look at aggregate power (more is more threatening), geographical proximity (closer is more threatening), offensive capabilities (more is more threatening), and offensive intentions (states that have them are more threatening).

## **BALANCING VERSUS BANDWAGONING**

Walt contends that balancing should be more common than bandwagoning and supports his contention with a survey of alliances in the Middle East from 1955 to 1979. States seek to counter threats by adding the power of other states to their own. Although states choose allies to balance against threats, such behaviour is not universal. He (1987: 28) argues that potential bandwagoners are aware that increasing the capabilities of a threatening state carries great risks, and will opt to balance against them. According to Walt, balancing is more common than bandwagoning because an alignment that preserves most of a state's freedom of action is preferable to accepting subordination. Intentions can change and perceptions are unreliable, it is safer to balance against potential threats than to hope that strong states will remain benevolent (Walt 1985: 15).

The tendency for states to balance against threats helps to explain why the United States was able to lead a coalition whose combined capabilities were far greater than the Soviet alliance network, contrary to the predictions of simple BoP theory. He shows that if states were really concerned with power, then they would not have allied so extensively with the US. Such a coalition was a result not of the power of the USSR but of its perceived threat (Walt 1987: 273-281). Thus, BoT theory also explains why states in the developing world usually seek allies against local dangers, and not in response to shifts in the global balance of power. Walt's study suggests that as a superpower, the US was interested in global balance of power, but it had to react to the regional threats posed by the adversaries like China. US would attain global and regional balance by responding to the situation from countries that provided a threat. He also observes that every state in modern Europe that attempted hegemony was near to states it threatened, possessed offensive capabilities, and had malign intentions.



## IMPACT OF MULTIPOLARITY

Walt also talked about the impact of multipolarity on alliances. The gradual emergence of a multi-polar system implies a diffusion of power. It will be difficult to determine which states pose the greatest threats, and international alignments will be more flexible and less durable than they were during the Cold War. Because states balance against threats and not just against power, how they evaluate each other's intentions will become more important as power becomes more evenly distributed (Walt 1993: 245). Dealing with the efficiency of balancing behaviour in a multipolar world, he wrote that although states usually balance against threatening powers, the speed and effectiveness of the balancing process can vary considerably. Weak states are more likely to "bandwagon". The end of the Cold War also means the end of superpower competition in the developing world and hence new alliance options were created for great and small powers alike.

Thus, the BoT theory more accurately describes the primary dynamics of alliance formation. For Walt, alliances are defensive and are driven by fear. With the changing global scenario both politically as well as economically, Walt's theory finds a strong recommendation. Although the tendency for states to balance against threats has been widely recognized by scholars, some suggest limits on the relevance of Stephen Walt's work.

## ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

According to Randall Schweller, Walt does not offer a theory of alliances so much as a theory of how states respond to external threats. Schweller looked at how unthreatened states respond to opportunities in their environment and found that bandwagoning is a common form of behaviour, especially among dissatisfied states. He agreed with Walt's conclusion that states typically respond to threats by balancing against the source of danger. Because states align for reasons other than security, he disagreed with Walt's claim that states usually balance and rarely bandwagon. To Schweller, alliances are responses not only to threats but also to opportunities. He views alliances as tools to make gains, as well as to avoid losses. Schweller's "balance of interests" theory suggests different account of state's motives, fear and greed. His argument is that unthreatened revisionist states, overlooked by Walt, often bandwagon with the stronger revisionist state or coalition for opportunistic reasons. He (1994: 93) wrote that 'balancing is an extremely costly activity but bandwagoning rarely involves costs'.

In his analysis of Walt's theory, Schroeder finds difficulty with the definition of the terms, balance and threat. He argues that by focusing on perceptions of threat, Walt's balance of threat theory makes it virtually impossible to distinguish between balancing and bandwagoning or to determine the real motives of actors, since any bandwagoning state is likely to claim that it is actually balancing against a threatening enemy. He (1994: 119) emphasizes the difficulties involved in using perceptions and motivation to explain state actions, because policy makers often have an incentive to lie. He argues that states followed a number of strategies, including trying to share in the profits, working out some accommodation or grouping.

According to Sorokin (1994: 422), theories of alliances which support the argument that states use alliances to increase their security by balancing against threats are incomplete. He

demonstrated that states often rely on their own military capabilities and acquire additional arms if necessary. Sorokin (1994: 423) defined alliances as “formal agreements between sovereign states for the putative purpose of coordinating their behaviour in the event of specified contingencies of a military nature”. He showed that states often balance against threats without alliances.

To Snyder, Walt’s *The Origins of Alliances* does not fill the alliance theory void but it makes an impressive start. To him (1991: 126), all the three factors, distribution of power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and the perceived intentions of others appeared to be components of ‘power’ or ‘capability’. He finds Walt’s concept of disaggregating these variables and then reintegrating in the concept of threat, a useful theoretical clarification. However, Snyder is puzzled over the point that if ‘threat’ is balanced rather than ‘power’, what does the balancing consist of?

Keohane finds that Walt supported Waltz’s theory, reformulated it and applied it to another domain. He (1988: 175, 176) admits that Walt’s theory provides a favourable test from the standpoint of the neorealist theorist. He (1988: 174) points out that without the use of neorealist theory it is difficult to imagine that he would have formulated his propositions about balancing, bandwagoning, and role of ideology so clearly.

In his review of *The Origins of Alliances*, Siverson points out that Walt should have stated a set of Waltzian assumptions about the necessity of alliances in international system. Then these assumptions should have been interacted across considerations of national power, ideology and penetration. He (1988: 1045) found that Walt considered these three functions in the formation of alliances without a well-formed consideration of how the constraints and imperatives of the international system interact with the three identified factors.

Barnett (1996: 400-447) argues that Walt’s ideas about BoT do not fit with the core of neo-realism. He notes that if states balance threat and not power, one has to ask where threat comes from. In his case study of Arab politics, he argues that conflict and threat come from their mutual conception of identity and not power. For him, alliance formation and perceptions of threat do not derive from material factors, but from ideas and social constructions. States find each other threatening and form alliances against each other not because of differences in power, but because they believe in different things.

To summarize, the neorealist interpretation of alliances propounded by scholars like Walt, Christensen, Snyder etc. has emerged as a established school of thought. Though there are differences in the finer details of their theories on alliances, the broader premises of their themes that alliances are distribution of power, remains same. Despite the counterarguments put up by various writers about the relevance of Walt’s *The Origins of Alliances*, it can be said that Stephen M. Walt is the first to look at alliance behaviour in the Middle East and presented empirical evidence that states do not balance power per se, but balance against threat. Walt’s theory is valuable and can help its reader to reconsider the value of theory in contemporary international relations. The following section explains why Pakistan-China and North Korea-China be good studies of BoT theory.

## CASE STUDIES ON ALLIANCES

The two cases raised here are: (a) alignment between Pakistan and China and the informal alliance between them i.e. no written agreement and (b) North Korea and China, having formal alliance i.e. written agreement between them. Both cases may indicate the same community of interests among the parties. Pakistan and North Korea aligned with China despite the fact that these two countries are neighbours of China which is relatively more powerful. They should be balancing against China. Nevertheless they entered into alliance with it.

In the case of Sino-Pak alliance, Pakistani threat perception came from India. Pakistan and India negotiated bilateral agreements from time to time, like the Indus Water Treaty (1960), the agreement to submit the Rann of Kutch dispute (1965) to international arbitration and the acceptance of the award of the tribunal (1968), the Simla Agreement (1972) etc. The resolution of specific disputes did not lead to peace; new disputes arose to take the place of those that were resolved (Rajagopalan: 1998: 1261). The 1971 Indo-Pak war had tilted the balance of power in South Asia in favour of India. It suited neither Pakistan nor China. Pakistan felt threatened when India exploded a nuclear device on 18 May 1974. India continued to be Pakistan's principal security concern. The imbalance of power between India and Pakistan, and the resulting Pakistani insecurity became the main cause for the Indo-Pak conflict. Thus, Pakistan's search for security has one main target- augmentation of security against external threat primarily from India and counterbalancing India's military superiority. To secure itself, it aligned with China.

In the case of Sino-North Korean alliance, North Korean threat perception came from South Korea and the US alliance. The armistice of 1953, which has never been concluded in a formal peace agreement, preserved two Koreas along a border near the thirty-eighth parallel. The economic expansion of South Korea also created difficulties for North Korea. North Korea also perceived threat from a distant country, which is also a superpower. The US, has attempted to influence North Korea to contain the latter's potential threat to the security of East Asia in general and South Korea in particular. North Korea has viewed the South Korea as heavily dependent on foreign powers. To balance these threats North Korea opted for ideological development with the support of People's Republic of China and became an ally of China. Pyongyang's primary concern was to prepare itself against military provocation from the US and South Korea. In addition to the adversarial system of the US and its "puppet" South Korea, Japan also joined Pyongyang's enemies. The continuing presence of US forces in South Korea is felt in North Korea as a formidable and direct threat to the security of the region (Park 2000: 507). To secure itself it aligned with China.

A close examination of factors described by Walt guiding an alliance in case of Pakistan-China vis-à-vis India, including India's aggregate power, with better and constantly increasing offensive capability, and geographical proximity with Pakistan, having potential offensive intentions against Pakistan, was perceived as a potential threatening nation by Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan's foreign policy naturally inclined towards balancing the threat perception from India and allying with a stronger neighbour China becomes an obvious choice. A similar set of factors are determinant of North Korea tilting towards China to hedge its national and security interest from the threat by South Korea-US alliance.

## SUMMARY

This paper has been directed at evaluating the theories of BoP and BoT to account for the alliance building. Starting with the argument that realism provides to the concept of security, it moves to the neorealist perspective of security. In this effort, different theories focusing on different perspectives have been examined, each focusing on a particular aspect of alliances or approaching them from a distinctive perspective. It is found that Walt assumes that state behaviour is based on the priority of security in an anarchic international system whereas BoP theory predicts that states will respond to any changes in the system, wide distribution of power. Walt argues that states respond to changes in the BoP only when there is a perceived increase in the threat from such changes. The BoT offers a reasonable explanation for the alliance formation. One implication of this theory is that states confront threats. Walt finds that states react to threats rather than simply to power. They take proximity, offensive capability, and perceived intentions into account as well as aggregate power. This theory provides a better means of accounting for alliances.

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