

Triggering a balance of power

Has the EU triggered Russia to balance against it?

Thomas Bruno

Abstract

In 1998 Richard Rosecrance wrote that there was no attempts to balance against the growing power of the European Union. Today the statement by Rosecrance has been falsified by a balancing behaviour by the Russian Federation and CIS member states.

In this thesis I search for the trigger to this change in behaviour. The thesis builds a theoretical framework based on neorealist theory and balance of power theory through which types of actions that can cause balancing behaviour to occur is identified. Typically these actions must generate a perception of threat to trigger balancing behaviour. This set of hypothetical actions is thereafter matched with events from 2005 to 2015.

The thesis conclude that there is a balancing behaviour against the EU and that it is led by Russia. A combination of actions from the side of EU; expansion, Common Defence and Security Policy and deployment of military to the Russian-Georgian border is thought to have triggerd the balancing behaviour.

Key words: European Union, Russia, Balance of Power, trigger, threat

Words: 10123

Abbreviations

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
EAEC	EurAsian Economic Commission
EAEU	EurAsian Economic Union
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
EUBAM	European Union Border Assistans Mission
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia
EUSR BST	European Union Special Representative's Border Support Team
EUT	Treaty of the European Union
EEAS	European External Actions Service
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
HR	High Representative of the European Union
MEP	Member of European Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSCE	Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research question

In the late 1990's the observation was made that there were no tendency towards balancing the growing economic and political power of the European Union (Rosecrance 1998, p. 16). This is, according to realist theory and the *balance of power* theory, a rather unexpected behaviour on part of the states surrounding the EU. Normally they would be expected to seek to balance a growing power such as that of the EU but, as Rosecrance observes, instead the general tendency among states has been to seek association, cooperation and integration with the centre of power.

An observer will find that there is something different happening in the contemporary international politics as developments in Russia have taken a turn that wasn't expected in the late 1990's. Contemporary Russian policy towards states located in the geographic space between EU and Russia are no longer positive towards cooperation and integration with the West in general nor the EU in particular. The Russian policies towards the EU and former soviet republics' cooperation with the EU have apparently changed. Russia is today trying to form her own equivalent of the EU in a deepening partnership within the CIS-framework. A customs union and a strive towards a common market and economic union have been initiated, presumably in order to balance the growing influence of the EU, and not only economic but also military pressure is applied on states to join the Russian-based economic union.

With this thesis I will try to find the causes behind the change in Russian policies. The research question is: "What actions by the EU triggered Russia to enter a balancing behaviour towards the EU?"

1.2 Methodology

My ambition is to find the trigger behind a change in Russian behaviour vis-à-vis the EU and EU activities in countries in Russias close proximity. The study will identify events and actions taken by the EU prior to the change in Russian policy that could have had a casual effect on Russian policies and therefore have served as a trigger for the change observed.

Identification of events and actions that could be of relevance will begin with a theoretical review, where theories of international relations that relate to *balance of power* theory, mainly the realist theories, will be examined. From the theoretical framework I expect to identify actions and change in factors that are relevant as

possible triggers to a change of policy in another state. Having established both a timeline and a theoretical set of relevant actions and changes I'll compare the two with the actual events of time that were preceding the Russian policy change. Ideally I will identify one or a few actions and events that can explain, either by themselves or in combination, why the Russian policies changed and why it did so at that particular time.

As I will compare the relations between the same two political units, which have not changed much in terms of internal features, but at different times the approach of the study will draw from what Mill called *Method of difference* (Theorell & Svensson, 2007, p. 226). Most economic and political traits of Russia were the same in the two times compared – before and after the change in Russian behaviour. The same goes for the European Union which doesn't change much between the two points in time. Therefore, it is fruitful to seek explanation to the emergence of a balancing behaviour in the few changes that have occurred, which will be of relevance given the theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework for this thesis is focused on the international political system and the aim is to show that the change in Russian policy towards balancing against the EU is logical in relation to the theories that help us understand how units behave in the international political system. I shall search for explanations in the system and the systems effects on units. The reductionist approach to seek explanations through features of the individual units (Waltz, 1979, p. 18 f.) could provide interesting answers to questions like “how does action X affect actor B?” and methods for analysing change in foreign policy (Gustavsson, 1999, p. 77 ff.) could answer questions regarding the processes leading to certain decisions. The common weakness of the reductionist approaches and methods for explaining changes in foreign policy is that they do not consider the effects emanating from the system itself (Waltz, 2001, p. 35 f. and 55 ff.)

As the theoretical framework is focused on the international political system and how it can be expected to affect the units of the system a holistic approach will be used and the level of analysis (Hollis, 2002, p. 108 ff.) will be on the system level. Seeking explanations on lower levels, i.e. on the levels of bureaucracy or individuals, would take into consideration the interests and ambitions that guide sub-state actors but it would quite miss the highly important motives of national interests that often guide the actions of states.

1.3 Theoretical framework

In the article by Rosecrance theoretical focus is set on balance-of-power theory and a neorealist approach to studying the world. As the observation that there is no balancing behaviour in opposition to the European Union is the central statement made by Rosecrance (Rosecrance, 1998, p. 16) and empirical data suggest that that observation no longer holds (see chapter 6 below) this thesis builds on the same type of neorealist approach and balance-of power theory. Using a different theory or set of theories would not create a suitable ground for comparison between the arguments made by Rosecrance and those that I will make. Thus, the theoretical framework will primarily, but not exclusively, build on works of some of the most frequently cited and mentioned neorealist thinkers; Walt, Waltz and Mearsheimer.

1.4 Delimitations

The thesis looks at the patterns in the behaviour in the relation between Russia and the European Union, as it is in those relations that a change has been noted that conflicts with Rosecrance observation. Looking at patterns in the behaviour of other major powers in relation to the EU could provide interesting insights and further support for the theories of balance of power and explain how such behaviour can be triggered. But, as the ambition is to explain the emergence of such balancing behaviour from Russia it is not very relevant to look at the behaviour of other actors, such as other BRICS-members, Japan and the USA. These actors have, to further render their irrelevance for this study, not been part in any balancing behaviour in relation to the EU. They have followed the behavioural pattern identified by Rosecrance and including them would not add value to this study.

I have left NATO out of his study, even though there is a great overlap in membership between NATO and the EU. The reason for this is partially found in the question, partially in the manner in which Russia has conducted the perceived balancing behaviour. It is, as we shall see, not a balancing against a military alliance but against a political-economical alliance.

1.5 Disposition of the thesis

Following this introduction chapter I will use chapters 2 to 4 to draw up the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 will focus on how to perceive of states and motivate why states should be considered unitary actors when we analyse the international political system. In chapter 3 I turn to the international political system in large and provide the framework for understanding the system. Here I also explain the difference between the structure of the system and the environment or milieu in which states operate – and why this difference is important for our understanding of system related constrains and effects on states behaviour. The

fourth chapter takes an in-depth approach to the causes of balancing behaviour and points out actions that states or groups of states might take that we can expect will trigger other states to balance against them.

After those three chapters we will turn our eyes towards the European Union and how to perceive it in relation to the theoretical framework. As the European Union is somewhat of an anomaly in the international system with traits of both an intergovernmental organisation and of a supranational structure, it is important for the analysis to establish a perception of the European Union that can be used in relation to both the theoretical framework and the empirical data. In the sixth chapter I present the empirical data regarding actions of a balancing nature, that can serve as indicators of an emergence of a balancing behaviour. I also identify actions and events that can have triggered such behaviour. With the theoretical framework and empirical data in place the final two chapters (7 and 8) will provide analysis and summary of the findings of this study.

2 About states

Before we enter any discussion about the international system and its effects, we must say something about the parts that make up the system – the states. States are, as we shall see in 3.2, the most important actor on the international arena and the main component of the system. Without a depiction of states that is both consistent and well thought through, it will be futile to enter any form of discussion about the system and how it affects states.

2.1 The state as a system

In the literature about international relations there are different ways to describe states. The primary difference lies between the depiction of states as systems or as unitary actors. Indeed, states are systems. They are political systems with a hierarchy between citizens, government agencies, decision making bodies, courts and organisations of various kind. They are economic systems with suppliers and consumers, resources and markets; both local and national where demand and supply for goods, services and capital vary over time. States are complex systems where the political system and the economic system interfere with each other and greatly influence the lives of the citizens, the state's agencies and the government. Some of the components of states are also active across the states borders and therefore act internationally. Most notably we recognise that firms of various size operate not only on their local or domestic market but also in neighbouring countries and on the global market. Individual citizens often freely interact with foreign firms, foreign organisations and citizens of other states.

States are also rather elusive units, much unlike such unitary actors as the individuals that constitute the citizens of the state. States are a construction of the human mind and don't have the physical traits that human individuals have. States can, in fact, cease to exist and reappear in a way that individuals cannot (Buzan, 2007, p. 65). Poland, Ukraine and Croatia are states that have had times of independent existence as well as times of non-existence. States may have physical borders in terms of the lines on maps, fences or rivers or whatever may denote their outer limits. Yet, they are not easily identified through the kind of embodiment that the buildings and machinery of a production facility is to the concept "a factory".

Also in relation to their citizens are states rather elusive. It is difficult to say what actually embodies the state, as compared to any one citizen or association within the state. It is the mere mental association between specific institutions; such as the police and courts, the military or government agencies of various sorts, and the concept of the state that makes us consider some institutions and their representatives as embodiment of the state and others as not. We do not often point

at something we see and think “there’s the state”, rather we point at a building and say “there’s the government agency of agriculture” and in part of a mental process we associate the agency’s office with the state. Walt even wrote “it does violence to one’s common sense” to speak of the state as an actor (Walt, 1987, p. 150). The elusiveness of the state certainly calls for a depiction of the state as a system with several more or less independent parts, rather than a unitary actor.

2.2 The state as a unit

There are, however, also arguments to why we should consider states as unitary actors in the realm of international politics. Primarily because governments are the only actors who actually act on behalf of the state. This is due to the concept of sovereignty that, since the Westphalian peace, has become a key concept in the relation between states. Sovereignty can be considered in three different but closely related ways; International legal sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty and domestic sovereignty (Krasner, 2004, p. 132). Legal sovereignty means that states are free to for themselves decide which treaties to enter or not. Westphalian sovereignty can be described as the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states and domestic sovereignty concerns the right for each state to form their own internal structures. Combined, these three perceptions of sovereignty make the official representatives of states interact primarily with their counterparts from other states. Since there is no higher authority that regulate the behaviour of states, sovereignty lies with the states (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 31). States have, through their sovereignty, the right to decide over matters that concern them – even though that right might be constrained in many ways (Waltz, 1979, p. 96).

States also have the ability to control, permit or impede the operations of the non-state actors who wish to operate within the state or in interaction with the state (Waltz, 1979, p. 94 f.). That is a feature of the state that allows it to regulate the way the state and its components interact with the outside world. If a state wishes to prevent firms, who are operating freely within the borders of the state, from trading with firms from other states they have the ability to do so. Firms, organisations and individuals are usually only able to interact with actors from other states as long as the governments of the states in question allow it. In relation to the outside world, the state therefore has the ability to behave as a unitary actor. States also, normally, do what their top leaders want them to do (Waltz, 2001:2, p. 150). The will of the state’s leaders is usually enforced as if it was the will of the citizens collectively. If it is not, and the state doesn’t appear to have a single will in international politics, we have arrived at a point where we should rather evaluate the actual existence of the state in question (Waltz, 2001:2, p. 152).

States also has another function, most vital to their citizens and for the understanding of the states’ function in the international realm. They are a means of security. The state both serves as a means of security against other people and against other states. The former is achieved through the authoritarian way in which

the state upholds certain order and wanted behaviour through a monopoly of legitimate use of force (Buzan, 2007, p. 50 f., Waltz, 1979, p. 103 f.). At the same time, the state can also be a source of threat when ideology, the quest for power or mere tyranny is allowed to reign within the state (Buzan, 2007, p. 55-57). The latter is assured through the collective effort when the people of a state join their resources to the defence of each other and the state they share (Buzan, 2007, p. 58). The image of the state as a means of security in regards to domestic concerns is well worth a further debate. For the sake of this thesis and in the perspective of international relations, however, the state will primarily be a means of security for its own citizen – but also a threat to those of other states. In that context the state will behave and be perceived of as a unitary actor.

2.3 Conclusion

States are troublesome and elusive units. They are not easily perceived in physical form. They are systems of many different actors and not at all unitary in relation to their citizens. States are, on the other hand, also able to act as units and in unitary ways and provide their citizens with security and act as a threat towards them as a unit. In relation to other states, either as political units or as potential threats, they will normally appear as unitary actors. When analysing international politics, it therefore appears to be far more fruitful to treat states as unitary actors than to see them as systems in a greater system.

3 The international system

The international political system is even more elusive than the states that make up the system. The system is nowhere formalized in any universal treaties nor are there any formal structures that form the system. Instead, it is the interactions of the parts that make up the system. In this chapter we will look at how to perceive a system, what parts the system is built up by and the character of the system.

3.1 The system and system theory

Thinking about systems and system effects is essential, regardless of if you want to understand the functioning of a computer, an economy or a polity. As any system is built up by both component units and a structure (Waltz, 1979, p. 79) we need to both have an idea about the units and the structure. Before looking at either units or the structure I will outline a few principal thoughts about system theory.

System theory takes upon it as its task to explain how the characteristics of the units and the structure in which the units operate affect the behaviour of the units. When constructing a system theory, we must avoid the errors that comes from considering the qualitative aspects of the interactions between units (Waltz, 1979, p. 38-41). It simply doesn't matter for the system if the relations between units is benign or malign, if it is cooperative or competitive, hostile or friendly. The system will have the same impact on the actions of the units regardless of these qualitative aspects. A description of the system that focuses on the qualitative aspects of the relations between the units of the system will provide a description of the environment or milieu in international relations. It will, however, not say much about either the system as such or the structure of the system (Waltz, 1979, p. 53). States form the environment in which they operate and can affect it by the way they chose to interact with each other regardless of the structure of the system. When describing the system, we must therefore look at the characteristics of the units and the structure of the system and not let us be confused by cooperative or competitive patterns.

3.2 The dominant units

Kenneth M. Waltz argues that systems theory must be built on basis of the dominant unit of the system (Waltz, 1979, p. 93). This is because it is the dominant units that form and shape the system. Other units may play important roles in carrying out

certain functions within the system. They are, however, secondary to the dominant units when it comes to defining the system and its structure.

In all that happens in the world many different actors are active but one type of actor can be singled out as the most important – the states. The importance of other actors is in some cases substantial (Waltz, 1979, p. 94). Many firms buy and sell goods and services in several countries and some have offices in more than a hundred different states. International organisations coordinate and overview various activities such as shipping, aviation, telecommunications or production of nuclear energy. Criminal networks smuggle drugs, guns and people across borders and terrorist networks go to countries outside of their domestic sphere to carry out bombings or killings. These interactions between people, organisations, firms and other sub-state actors make up the vast majority of the international transactions and events. Yet, since states are the political units that can control, impede or allow the interactions of sub-state actors it is the states that also become the key component of the international political system.

Even the small and relatively weak states appear to be able to regulate the actions of even the strongest sub-state actors (Waltz, 1979, p. 94 f.). States are also rather persistent in their existence. Few states, unlike firms, die and disappear and they certainly do not either die nor disappear without involvement of other states. Poland disappeared from the maps of the world several times at the hands of Prussia (Germany), Russia (the Soviet Union) and Austria. Yet, Poland has re-emerged in a way that no sub-system actors have showed ability to do. For sure, some states have disappeared but only to be swallowed by or incorporated into other states – never to become part of a firm, no matter how big or strong the firm.

3.3 The structure

The general perception of the international system in realist or neorealist theory is that it is a system of *like-units* who enjoy sovereignty and interact with each other under anarchy (Waltz, 1979, p. 95-97, Waltz 2001, p. 141). The main units are the states, as we covered above in 3.2, and they are alike in the sense that they have the same functions in the system.

What matters when we define the structure of a system is the relation between the units in terms of their position in relation to each other and how functions and tasks are distributed (Waltz, 1979, p. 97-99). In a national political system there is a hierarchy between the different units and each unit carry out specific tasks. In the international system, however, the units are not organised in any hierarchy and they, for the most part, perform the same tasks (Waltz, 1979, p. 96). This gives the international system a distinctively different layout from any national polity. The units of the international system all operate on the same level and to a high extent they have the same functions; a legislature, a police, courts, military forces or public welfare services of some sort. This also means that there are no units in the system that regulate the behaviour of other units.

The great difference between the units does not lay with the functions they possess but with their capabilities to carry out these tasks (Waltz, 1979, p. 97). Each unit carries out its functions to the best of its capabilities and in accordance with its interests. Even though there is a great difference in capabilities between France and Luxemburg we still see them doing roughly the same things and they interact as like units. This doesn't mean that there isn't a difference in how they carry out these functions and with what ability they do so.

The structure of the international political system is defined according to the distribution of capabilities between the units of the system – just like how a market structure is defined (Waltz, 1979, p. 94, 97-98). Where a low number of firms with relatively equal strength dominate a market we talk about an oligopolistic market. It doesn't matter how many small actors there are on the market as long as the market to a very high degree is dominated by a very small number of actors. Should the market be completely dominated by a single firm, we would be inclined to talk about a monopoly. When we have two units of the international system who possess enough power to dominate the system the system will be referred to as bipolar. Should we have three or more major powers we talk about a multi-polar system, even if the powers would line up to form two balancing alliances (Waltz, 1979, p. 98). It is the relative strength between the units of the system that makes all the difference and the structure is categorised by the number of units who possess a major advantage over the other units.

3.4 Implications of the structure

To say that the international system has a certain structure doesn't tell us much about its implications on the behaviour of states unless we give it some thought. What might those implications be?

The first implication of the system is the lack of regulating units, which creates a system of anarchy and self-help. When there is no superior authority to turn to for regulation of other states behaviour states will depend on their own capabilities to ensure their survival (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 32, Waltz, 1979, p. 102). Each state must by herself (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 33) – or in alliance with others (Walt, 1987, p. 17 f.) – ensure its own survival and survival is guaranteed only by the availability of power. It follows by pure logic that in a system, where like units under anarchy compete for survival, it will be the relative strength that will matter as the ability to survive will depend on your ability to counter the strength of others. Since great powers will always possess some offensive capacity (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 32) and there is no universal law or regulator prohibiting the use of force among states we must recall the words of Clausewitz: “War is an instrument of policy; [...] the conduct of War, in its great features, is therefore policy itself” (Clausewitz, 1968, p. 326). States will therefore have to be ready to resort to the use of military force, either to defend themselves or to achieve goals of necessity to them, that they cannot otherwise achieve.

Another implication is that the system makes cooperation between states rather difficult. Walt takes note of the thoughts of Kant and that the moral behaviour of men is made possible only through the establishment of a civil state that can, by violence, enforce laws of moral guidance upon its citizens (Walt, 1987, p. 142). In the international political system there is no power comparable to the police and legal system of the civil state. Hence, moral behaviour in the sense that we have come to expect from men can't be expected by states. Rather, states are left to their own when it comes to achieving their goals and to do that they must first make sure to tender to their security. We can also recall Rousseau's stag-hunt and how cooperation between men can appear to be futile. They can't trust each other not to abandon their common effort for the possibility of an easier reward as opportunity presents itself (Walt, 1987, p. 145 ff.). For states this is a continuous problem as states might all gain from cooperation in trade, security or environment but, as any one state might be tempted to abandon the mutual effort for quicker, easier and unilateral rewards all runs the risk of counting losses rather than gains. Thus, cooperation for universal benefit will be very hard to achieve.

Also the fact that relative strength matters more than absolute strength makes cooperation among states troublesome. Whenever two states enter a cooperation they will have to consider the distribution of gains from the cooperation (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 44). Should the other party gain more than the first from a cooperation, the other party will grow stronger and increase his ability to either threaten or respond to threats from the first. This risk could also be enhanced long term effects of cooperation. When nations of different levels of economic development enter cooperation, there is a risk that the industries of the less developed country fail in the hardened competition, which in turn makes it difficult to uphold a production of the means for maintained security – advanced weaponry (Buzan, 2007, p. 113-115). The risk of falling behind in ability produce the means for protection can be a very strong motivator for states to shy away from economic cooperation.

That said, the system doesn't make cooperation impossible. In many situations the system will rather encourage and inspire states to cooperate in order to achieve mutual rewards. This cooperation will, however, be limited to a lower number of states and consist only of states that have reason to trust each other.

4 Alliance formation and balancing

Consider two men meeting each other on a lonely road in the middle of nowhere. Both of them carry a substantial amount of cash and both are lightly armed. They can both see that the other has both wealth and arms but they know nothing about the intentions of the other. In the absence of certain knowledge of the other man's intention one of them moves his hand closer to his sidearm. The other one is likely to do the same in order to defend himself. None of them has the intention of pulling his gun and robbing the other but in the absence of certain knowledge, a regulating force like a police each of the men will rely on his own capability for his security and try to increase his security by countering the moves of the other.

As the international system is characterised by being a self-help system, where states primarily focus on their security, it is not difficult to see the causes behind states efforts to counter the strengths of other states by improving their own strength and capabilities. In fact, it is the behaviour we expect. In this chapter balancing behaviour and the theoretical reasons behind it will be presented.

4.1 Balance or bandwagon?

The formation of alliances between states can sometimes appear to be illogical or confusing. Walt has presented a thorough theoretical analysis of the formation of alliances based on the formation of 36 different alliances in the Middle East after the second World War that help us understand the mechanisms behind alliance formation, both in terms of why, how and with whom alliances are formed.

Walt picks up an analogy from game theory that is quite fitting for the way states need to look at their interactions with other states: "One who wants to win a simple card game, in fact any game with two or more players, must follow a strategy that takes into consideration the strategies of the other player(s)" (Walt, 1987, p. 201). States constantly need to be ready to adjust their behaviour in order to ensure that they remain on top of events and don't act in a way that may give other states a notable advantage. Here one may object that international politics is not a *simple game* and that there might not be such a thing as victory in the end. That might very well be true. Not even a global hegemon can be certain to have won in the long perspective. There is, however, a way to lose the game of international politics that remains obvious to all statesmen: defeat in war or, possibly even worse, annexation by a stronger opponent. Survival is a common goal to all states (Walt, 1987, p. 203) and losses needs to be avoided in order to ensure survival in the long term perspective.

States want to avoid domination by stronger powers, both to ensure their ability to pursue their own goals and to ensure their long-term survival (Walt, 1987, p. 17). States will have two options when facing a stronger power; balance against that power or bandwagon with it. Balancing will typically mean forming an alliance with other powers in order to reach a relative strength that will be sufficient to counter that of the stronger power (Walt, 1987, p. 21). Bandwagoning will mean an alignment with the stronger power in order to appease that power (Walt, 1987, 18-20). The risk in balancing is that you'll create a situation where you end up with two opposing blocks who come into open conflict with each other. The risk in bandwagoning is that you'll be dominated by the greater power and dragged into a conflict with states you never wanted to alienate.

Walt notices that the most common pattern is to balance against perceived threats (Walt, 1987, p. 149 ff.) while bandwagoning only takes place under very specific conditions; close proximity to and dependence on the stronger power and a notable shortage of capable allies (Walt, 1987, p. 173 ff.). The tendency towards balancing was most notable and we can conclude that balancing against threats is the typical behaviour of states who can reasonably do so. Walt also notices that the global balance of power did not significantly influence the formation of alliances in the Middle East. The powers of the region simply did not care much for the global perspective but remained focused on the regional conditions (Walt, 1987, p. 179.) When the Soviet Union didn't provide the support Egypt felt it needed to regain the strength to counter that of Israel, to a cost that was acceptable, Egypt changed her strategy and realigned and befriended the USA (Walt, 1987, p. 226 f.). The realignment gave Egypt both the means to defend herself and it lowered the threat from Israel. The effects on the global balance of power was not one of Egypt's concerns.

4.2 Causes of balancing behaviour

States can't normally be expected to trust each other and since the same means that provides security for one state also provides insecurity for other states (Waltz, 1979, p. 64) any state with the capacity to defend itself also has the capacity to threaten other states. Instead we anticipate that states shall fear each other and the destructive forces that any great power have (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 32). When states fear other states they will seek to counter that threat to ensure their own security and balance against the threat. The means to balance any threat depends on both the nature of the threat and the means available to the state under threat.

There are different types of threats that a state can perceive. The most obvious, and most often referred to, is the threat of military aggression. Military threats are also the most troublesome as they threaten not only to harm parts of a society but the society in all aspects (Buzan, 2007, p. 107). A military attack can knock out the means of government as well as ripping apart the underlying social structures of a society. The first is mainly a problem for the more highly developed states but the second can ruin the fundamental basis of any society. Economic threats, on the other

hand, might be much more difficult to understand or perceive. This even more so in a world dominated by market-economy, where the threat of bankruptcy is at the very heart of the model and a motivator for any firm to constantly do better (Buzan, 2007, p. 112-113). At the same time, the economy with the means of production is part of the very core of the state and fundamental for the states capacity to produce the means for defence against military threats. Defending economic actors against more competitive actors from other states might therefore be a policy easily adopted by any government (Buzan, 2007, p. 113).

Returning to the examination of alliances in the Middle East, Walt noticed that states balance against perceived threats, in terms of offensive power and hostile intent, and not against aggregate power as such (Walt, 1987, p. 165-168). We should therefore expect states to balance against actions and developments that could be seen as either an increase in offensive capacity or a sign of hostile intent. An increase in offensive capacity could be very difficult to separate from an increase in aggregate power but acquirement of primarily offensive weapons, development of new technology and alliance with strategically located but weak partners could be perceived as primarily offensive. Hostile intent is probably somewhat easier to identify. The tone and content of direct diplomacy will give some hints. As will military deployments. Walt also help us notice the impact of transnational penetration – when states try to influence the population or élites of other states (Walt, 1987, p. 46 f.). Walt comes to the conclusion that transnational penetration in terms of education, lobbying and propaganda didn't have any noticeable positive effect on a state's willingness to align with the penetrating state. It did however, when the propaganda was hostile against the ideology or legitimacy of the government, tend to create a sense of hostility and cause the target state to consider it a sign of hostile intent (Walt, 1987, p. 242 f.).

4.3 Conclusion

We should, on the basis of what's been discussed above, expect states to form alliances with other states in order to balance against greater powers who they percieve as potential threats. Bandwagoning only occurs under very specific circumstances and can't be expected to be a preferable strategy. The perception of threat from other states is more important than the mere existence of greater power when states consider forming alliances. Offensive capabilities and hostile intent are the two primary sources behind a perception of threat.

5 The *sui generis* of the European Union in international politics

The European Union is an anomaly in the international system as there are no other alliances or international organisations that can show the same traits as those we see in the European Union. The EU has supranational traits that can't be seen even when we compare to the UN. The EU has a court of justice where the commission can sue member states for damages should they not comply with the treaties. Non-compliance with the rulings of the European Court of Justice can lead to cancellation of voting rights in the European Council, exclusion from financial benefits or withdrawal of rights that follow from the treaties.

The European Union also holds functions that we normally only see as capabilities of states. In its internal political system, we see a hierarchy that is quite unusual for intergovernmental organisations but typical for states with a federal structure. The European Parliament is elected directly by voters in the Member States in a coordinate manner across the entire union. The legislative capability of the European Union is such that it can adopt laws that become applicable in all member states without approval of the national parliaments (Hix and Høyland, 2011, p. 78, Kulin-Olsson, 2011, p. 152). Also in relation to the surrounding world the European Union is something quite different from other cooperation between states. The existence of a High Representative of the Union and the European External Actions Service provides the European Union with a diplomatic capability (EUT articles 18 and 27, EU 2010/427/EU art. 1) that we normally only see states have. The European Union has also developed both a common foreign and security policy and, more lately, a common security and defence policy of which the mutual assistance and solidarity clause in the Lisbon treaty is a cornerstone (EEAS, 2015).

It is clear that the European Union is not a state and it is also not an intergovernmental organisation as we normally think of them. This calls for consideration regarding how to think of the EU in relation to other states and theory about international relations. Clearly the union does have some state-like features and it appears to act as a state, and be seen as a state in some aspects. To be able to analyse the behaviour of the EU and compare with the theoretical framework considering alliance formation and balancing behaviour it will be fruitful to treat the EU as a state-like unit. To think of the EU as an intergovernmental organisation or an alliance, on the other hand, would not allow for the analysis that will follow in chapter 7.

6 A timeline of some events

A balancing behaviour – or war – is not something that is automatically generated by the international system. They are results of actions by states who affect other states (Walt, 1987, p. 156 f.). The system only allows for them to happen by providing a structure where each will follow his own notion of what's in their best interest. In this chapter I will present some events and actions taken by Russia that indicate a change in behaviour vis-à-vis the European Union in order to establish a time frame for the change in policy. I will also present actions and events from the European Union that might have caused the perceived change in policy.

6.1 Development of a Common Defence and Security Policy

After the wars in the Balkans in the 1990's voices were raised that the EU should be able to shoulder responsibilities in terms of conflict prevention and crisis management. Through the Treaty of Amsterdam the post as High Representative of the EU was established (EU, 1997). HR Javier Solana was in 2003 tasked to develop a security strategy for Europe. Part of that strategy was a identification of five threats to the EU: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, organised crime (EU, 2003). Among the suggested actions to be taken to counter these threats were mentioned peacekeeping missions under EU-flag, increased and improved border control and a “mutual assistance and solidarity clause”, which was implemented through the Lisbon treaty in 2009 (EEAS, 2015).

6.2 EU Border control missions in Georgia

Starting with the appointment of an EU Special Representative to South Caucasus, in September 2003, the European Union maintained personnel in Georgia tasked with helping Georgian authorities controlling the borders of the former soviet republic. Following the closure of the OSCE Border Monitoring Team on the 1st of September 2005 the European Union deployed the EUSR Border Support Team in Georgia (EU 2007). The EUSR BST in Georgia meant a EU presence of military personnel with the objective of both gather intelligence and to facilitate better relations between Georgia and Russia (EU, 2005/582/CFSP, art. 2).

In the motivation paragraphs of the resolution 2005/582/CFSP the European Council, in delicate diplomatic language, expresses a concern that the situation along the border between Russia and Georgia might “deteriorate and could harm the objectives of the Common Foreign and Security Defence Policy”. The deployment of the EUSR BST in Georgia can be seen as means to the end of upholding the security of the European Union rather than a mere support to a friendly nation.

6.3 EU support for Yushchenko and Tymochenko

Following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine 2004, EU clearly sided with the west-orientated new president, Viktor Yushchenko, and the new premier, Julia Tymochenko against the pro-Russian candidate Viktor Janukovich (EU, 2005). Yushchenko and Tymochenko had been the two top candidates to challenge outgoing president Leonid Kuchma’s candidate. After a fierce fight between the top candidates – Janukovich and Yushchenko – in which the former emerged as winner of the election. A popular uprising, inspired by accusations of election fraud and poisoning of the latter, followed. The European Parliament quickly sided with Yushchenko and many MEPs supported the demands for Yushchenko to be installed as president. The Supreme Court of Ukraine found that the election had been rigged and annulled the result, leading to a re-run of the election in which Yushchenko won (BBC, 2010).

6.4 EU Border Assistance Mission

After a joint request from the presidents of the republics of Moldova and Ukraine the European Union initiated a mission to help the two states control their common border. The mission was launched on the 30th of November 2005 and EUBAM works to increase effectiveness in border control, customs and to prevent smuggling, trafficking and customs fraud (EUBAM, 2015). The mission is based in Odessa, consists mainly of civilian personnel and operates on a technical-advisory basis. The EUBAM personnel draws both from EU Member States and the two pattern states, with about half the staff from each country.

The reasons behind the joint request from Moldova and Ukraine is the Russian-backed separatist activities in the Moldovan region of Transnistria that made it impossible for the Moldovan government to conduct an efficient border control in the region (EU, 2015). The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements and Association Agreements between the EU and Moldova and Ukraine respectively has increased the perceived need to uphold the standard of border controls to a level that matches the EU standard (EUBAM, 2015).

6.5 War in Georgia

In August 2008, following a gradual build-up over the previous months (Reuters, 2008:1 and 2008:2), Russian troops entered Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and drove out whatever Georgian troops that were present in the northern parts of the small, former soviet republic. Russia claimed it intervened in order to protect a Russian minority in the regions from harassment from the Georgian government.

Following the cease-fire agreement, the parties, after EU mediation, reached a six point in which Georgian troops were to be withdrawn to their regular bases outside Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russian troops, on the other hand, were also meant to be withdrawn to positions held before the outbreak of hostilities but Russia was allowed to keep troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia for “peace keeping” (EU, 2008).

6.6 EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia

Following the short war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 the EUSR BST in Georgia was replaced by the civilian-profiled EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia. The EUMM is, and has throughout the time since its establishment been led by diplomats and the mandate for the EUM does not, unlike the EUSR BST, include any reference to the EU CFSP and it is outspokenly manned by civilians (EU 2008/736/CFSP).

6.7 The Eastern Partnership

In 2008, under the Polish presidency, the European Union initiated a programme to integrate countries in its eastern proximity with the EU. The programme came to be named “the Eastern Partnership” and was officially launched in May 2009, during the Prague summit (Duleba, 2015, p. 60). The Eastern Partnership included Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and aimed at a further political and economic integration of the partner countries (EU, 2009).

Much of the Eastern Partnership ambitions are clearly aimed at integrating the partnership countries in the economic and political sphere of the European Union without any actual promise of membership in the EU. Instead the focal end-point of the partnership is what they call Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements and Association Agreements.

6.8 The CIS Free Trade Agreement

In October 2011 a Free Trade Agreement between the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States was signed in St. Petersburg, Russia (Russia, 2011). The signatory states were Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation and Ukraine - all the former Soviet Republics except for the Baltic states. The treaty mirrors much of the early stages of the European Economic Community (EEC); cancellation of customs duties and tariffs (CIS FTA, art. 1, 3 and 5), removal of trade barriers (CIS FTA, art. 1, 3, and 7), coordination of economic policies in areas such as agriculture, transport, finance, investment and development of fair competition (CIS FTA, art. 1). The CIS FTA also includes the establishment of an Economic Court of the CIS (art. 19). The ambitions of the treaty, as presented in the preface, is to promote economic growth, mutually beneficial cooperation, an increase in living standards among the population and to serve as a further step in the creation of an economic union.

A notable difference between the CIS FTA and the early treaties of the EEC is that even though the CIS FTA does include free movement of goods and services, it does not include free movement of either people nor capital. The treaty is also formulated in a very vague language and the exceptions are vague in a manner that will allow a very broad inclusion of what could be considered as an acceptable exception under the treaty. Any common grounds for establishing what will constitute an acceptable exception under the treaty is not clarified nor is a clearly defined process for settling disputes over such matters defined.

6.9 The Eurasian Economic Union

A centrepiece in Russian foreign policy following Putin's re-election as president has been the creation of an economic community comparable to the European Union. By setting up the EurAsian Economic Union Russia and her allies have taken a large step towards copying the concept used in Europe. The Preface of the treaty outline the purpose of the EAEU to strengthen the economies of the signatory nations by steady growth, balanced trade and fair competition (EAEU, 2014). The treaty also outlines how free movement of goods, services, people and capital is meant to be assured within and between the three states. The treaty is in many parts a mirror of the Maastricht treaty by including regulation of levels of debt-to-GDP, budget deficit and inflation (Gidadhubli, 2013, p. 38).

The most notable differences between the Eurasian and the European economic unions lies in the role of supranational organisations. In the EU the commission has a strong and active role both as an executive and as an initiator of legislation (Tallberg, 2007, p. 52, 94-98) and is given a large independence as commissioners are not representing their member states on the commission. The EurAsian Economic Commission, on the other hand is very much an intergovernmental organ composed of three government ministers from each of the member states and it

mainly fills a consultative role (EAEC, 2015). The EAEC has 23 departments that to a wide extent mirrors the 33 Directorate-Generals of the EU. The similarities in aims, objectives and vocabulary used by the EAEU is a clear indicator that the ambition is to mirror the EU but only in a manner that will maintain the independence of the member states by not providing any actual powers to a supranational body.

7 Analysis

In the previous chapter a number of events and actions that have had effect on the relations between the European Union and Russia were presented. They were, however, never analysed or considered against the theoretical framework from the earlier chapters in order to evaluate if they were actions that could indicate or trigger a balancing behaviour. In this chapter we shall run that theoretical test and present arguments to why some of these actions could be seen as part of a balancing behaviour and why others should be seen as possible triggers.

To analyse the actions correctly I have categorised them into two types of actions; Russian actions and EU actions. The first are actions where Russia is a main actor or initiator, the latter are actions where the EU is a main actor or initiator.

Russian actions

War in Georgia
The CIS Free Trade Agreement
The Eurasian Economic Union

EU actions

Development of CDSP
EUSR BST in Georgia
Support for Orange Revolution
EUBAM
EUMM
Eastern Partnership

Table 1- Events and actions

7.1 Russian actions

7.1.1 War in Georgia

The war in Georgia followed a time of tension between the two Georgian separatist regions and the Georgian government. Russian troops were already present in the area before the outbreak of hostilities between Russian and Georgian troops, though the Russian build-up had been gradual over time starting at some point during the spring of 2008. It is not clear if there were any ethnical clashes between the Russian majority in the northern Georgian regions and the Georgian minority. The effect of the short war was a further establishment of Russian peacekeepers on Georgian territory and a withdrawal of EUSR BST from Georgia. Thereby military personnel from the EU was withdrawn and replaced by a civilian team. Removal of a threat by military means does not match the theoretical framework for a balancing behaviour but Russia could be seen to have removed a threat. There are clear relative gains for Russia as the outcome of the short war and clear relative losses for the EU.

7.1.2 The CIS Free Trade Agreement

The European Union is a political-economical alliance aimed at supporting economic development in the member states through free trade, including free movement of goods, services, people and capital. The CIS FTA appears to mirror part of the treaties that lie at the core of the EU. Through the establishment of the CIS FTA Russia creates an economic partnership with countries with similar economic development. The differences between the CIS FTA and the Treaty of Rome is mainly composed of the level of supranational institutionalism and the magnitude of exceptions.

As a counter-alliance in response to the EU the CIS FTA appears rather weak. It only counters minor parts of the parts of EU that allows EU to generate power resources. At the same time it ties the signatory states closer to economic cooperation with Russia and generates legal issues complicating an integration into the European Union for the signatory parties. The move could be seen as a way to counter EU expansion and to generate economic benefits for Russia at the same time as it creates obstacles for the EU to take advantage of the markets of the signatory states. The CIS FTA fits quite well as a counter-alliance aimed at balancing the economic strength and growth of the EU.

7.1.3 The Eurasian Economic Union

With far-reaching similarities between the treaty of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Treaty of Maastricht it is difficult to avoid a perception of the treaty as a balancing move. With aims and objectives that are very similar to those expressed in the Treaty of Maastricht, the expansion of free movement to also include people and capital makes it a very likely candidate to a balancing alliance. The lack of supranational structures does make the EEU more of an inter-governmental organisation. That, however, does not in itself mean that the EEU would be any less efficient as an instrument of supporting economic development, growth and generation of resources that could be used to counter the relative advantage that EU member states have over Russia and the CIS FTA members.

7.1.4 Conclusions from the Russian actions

It is clear that Russia aims to counter the economic development of the EU by copying the methods used in western Europe to generate economic resources. As we learned from Buzan economic strength is a means to acquire military resources. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the establishment of the CIS FTA and EEU are meant to generate such resources. These actions also combines relatively similar economies into a greater market where the Russian economy will be the biggest. Russia can be expected to gain, in relative terms, more from this union than from a cooperation with the EU. Only the establishment of the EEU is, by itself, a clearly balancing move in relation to the EU. The three actions combined, however, show a distinct pattern of trying to weaken the influence and importance of the EU and to balance against the EU.

7.2 EU actions

7.2.1 Development of a Common Defence and Security Policy

Through the establishment of the CDSP and the CFSP the European Union takes steps to become more active in the regions outside the borders of the EU. This is outspokenly in order to strengthen the security of the EU. As security for states is relative any strengthening of security for EU has to come at a cost for other major powers in the region. Russia is one of few major powers in the proximity of the EU and therefore a likely loser when EU gains. The mutual assistance and solidarity clause does signal a stronger community between the EU Member States and its articulation does not rule out the inclusion of military force.

7.2.2 Border Control Mission in Georgia

The Border Support Team was composed of military personnel under military command along the Russian border. Placing military personnel close to another state's border is an offensive move that could be perceived as potentially threatening to the state in question. The presence along the Russian border was never significant, but still a military presence along her southern border. The intelligence gathering part of the mission enhances the perception of potential threat.

7.2.3 Support for Yushchenko and Tymochenko

Expressing support for one candidate over another in another states political election is a way of conduction transnational penetration. In this case the EU did so with a very clear ambition of supporting the ascent of a pro-western president in a country neighbouring to, and historically closely tied to Russia. The impact of EU's support for Yushchenko is very difficult to assess but it is not unlikely that it caused resentment in Moscow and the result proved to weaken Russian influence in Kiev and strengthening the influence of EU.

7.2.4 EU Border Assistance Mission

EU's response to a joint request by two sovereign republics for aid in upholding a border should normally not have any negative effects on Russia. In the case of Transnistria the separatists are, however, seeking closer ties to Russia, which is made more difficult when EU is assisting in controlling the border. The action can hardly be considered a threat to Russian security but to Russian political interests.

7.2.5 EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia

The replacement of EUSR BST by EUMM must be considered a gain for Russian interests as a military deployment was replaced by a civilian mission. The EUMM reasonably poses a smaller threat to Russian interests than its predecessor and would have very little effect as a potential trigger to a balancing behaviour.

7.2.6 The Eastern Partnership

This was a move through which EU raised its influence in the participating countries by offering and providing political and economical advisors and suggesting reforms to be conducted in exchange for economic gains for the partner countries. It also offered DCFTAs to the partner countries which would give EU firms and citizens access to the markets of the partner countries. The Eastern Partnership would strengthen EU involvement in partner countries and lower Russian influence.

7.2.7 Conclusions from the actions of the EU

Placing military personnel along one of Russia's southern borders is an increase in offensive capacity and potentially threatening move against Russian security. The other actions have generally been of economic and political character but still had negative impact on Russian interests. None of the economic or political actions can reasonably be seen as triggers for a balancing behaviour by themselves. Combined, however, they form a pattern of small actions who gradually generates political and economic gains for the EU at the expense of Russian influence, economic potential and in the longer perspective also security. In total these actions have negative impact on Russian security and is a reasonable trigger for a balancing behaviour.

8 Summary and conclusions

The international political system is composed of states who operate under sovereignty and anarchy. Due to the non-existence of any regulatory units the system is a self-help system where each state must, by its own capacities, look after its interest. The use of violence between states is an expected feature of the system and therefore states are under constant threat by other states.

In such a system formation of alliances in order to either balance or appease stronger power is an expected and frequent behaviour in order to strengthen the security of states. In his survey covering alliance-formation in the Middle East Walt has showed that balancing is the favoured and dominant behaviour against stronger states. Balancing is, however, primarily conducted against states who are perceived as a potential threat. Threat is in these circumstances identified through offensive capacity and hostile intentions – not through aggregate power as such.

Until the late 1990's there was no obvious example of balancing behaviour against the growing power of the European Union, even though the EU expanded and increased its capacities relative to those of the surrounding world. At some point over the past ten years something has changed that has triggered Russia to balance against the EU, at least when it comes to political and economical influence. Russia has initiated both a free trade area and a Eurasian economic union who share many of the features of treaties between the Member States of the EU but lack the supranational structures that EU has.

In the light of a theoretical framework on alliance formation a set of activities indicating balancing behaviour and being possible triggers have been identified. It is the conclusion of this thesis that Russia's balancing behaviour, through the creation of the CIS Free Trade Agreement and the Eurasia Economic Union, was triggered by a series of actions from the EU that have gradually had a negative impact on Russian political and economic influence in former soviet republics. Most notably the Eastern Partnership, support for the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, deployment of a military border support team in Georgia and the development of a common Defence and Security Policy for the EU have triggered balancing. None of these activities is likely to have triggered it single handedly but the combination of them has generated a pattern that Russia could have perceived as threatening.

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