

The Bad Old Days Are Back?

A structural and neoclassical realist assessment of Russian foreign policy

B.L.J. van der Meulen, s4164466

Master's Thesis Political Science

April 2016

Supervisor: prof. dr. J.A. Verbeek

Second reader: dr. G.C. van der Kamp – Alons

Abstract

Modern realists are keen on using Russia's increasingly assertive foreign policy posture to argue for the realist nature of international politics. In an attempt to gauge the cogency of such claims, this research applies two contemporary realist theories, structural realism and neoclassical realism, to Russia's foreign policy from 1992 to 2014. I find that the explanatory power of structural realism remains limited as it would expect Russia to increase military spending and display balancing behavior towards its biggest objective rival: China. Instead, while mostly decreasing military spending, the vast majority of its external balancing behavior is directed towards the US. Neoclassical realism, with a focus on the filtering effect of worldviews of the country's foreign policy executive, and applied to the founding of the SCO, seems much more apt to account for such deviant behavior as it explicates how Putin's worldviews logically turned the US into Russia's antipode and thus its most objective rival.

Keywords: foreign policy, Russia, structural realism, neoclassical realism

Acknowledgements

This thesis culminates four-and-a-half of some of the most formative years of my life. It has been an arduous but fulfilling experience that has taught more about the reality of doing research than any book or paper ever has. There are three people I would specifically like to thank. Without them, this piece may have never seen the light of day.

First off, are my parents, Wilma and Jos. Without their moral and financial support, patience, and unconditional trust, none of this would have been possible. Second is my supervisor, prof. dr. Bertjan Verbeek, who taught me the virtue of pragmatism and kept me on track at times when my doubts would lead me astray. Without him, this would have easily become a three-year endeavor.

Bas van der Meulen
Nijmegen, 24 April 2016

Table of content

List of tables and figures	7
Chapter 1 - Introduction	8
1.1. From Soviet Union to Russia: back to the future?	8
1.2. Foreign policy ambivalence?	9
1.2.1. The 1990s	9
1.2.2. The 21 st century	10
1.3. Russia's conduct: a problem?	12
1.4. The approach: realism	12
1.5. Relevance	15
1.6. Structure	16
Chapter 2 – Theory	18
2.1. Realism's core	18
2.1.1. What is realism?	18
2.1.2. Realism's roots	20
2.1.3. Philosophical underpinnings	23
2.2. Modern realist theories	27
2.2.1. Structural realism	27
2.2.2. Neoclassical realism	33
Chapter 3 – Methodology	38
3.1. Research design	38
3.2. Generalizability	40
3.3. Justification and operationalization	41
3.3.1. Power	41
3.3.2. A 'great' power?	43
3.3.3. Balancing	44
3.3.4. Balance	45
3.3.5. Autonomy	46
3.3.6. Interpretation of structural effects	47
3.4. Source material	48
Chapter 4 – Empirical research	50
4.1. Developments in power	52
4.1.1. 1989 – 2007	52
4.1.2. 2008 – 2015	53
4.2. Structural realist predictions	60
4.2.1. 1992 – 2007	61
4.2.2. 2008 – 2014	63
4.3. Did Russia balance?	64
4.3.1. 1992 – 1993	64
4.3.2. 1996 – 1998	67
4.3.3. 2001 – 2005	68
4.3.4. 2009 – 2010	70

4.3.5. 2012 – 2013	72
4.5. Structural realism: a conclusion	74
4.6. Neoclassical realism: the missing link?	76
4.6.1. Vladimir Putin and his world views	77
4.6.2. The founding of the SCO and Russia's considerations	81
4.6.3. Neoclassical realism: a conclusion	82
Chapter 5 – conclusions	84
5.1. Findings	85
5.2. Reflections and discussion	86
References	91

List of tables and figures

Tables

Table 1 - Russian CINC-indicator development compared to China.....	59
Table 2 - Russian CINC-indicator development compared to the US	59
Table 3 - Russian CINC-indicator development compared to India.	60
Table 4 - Overview of Russian balancing expectations for the 1991 – 2007 period.....	62
Table 5 - Overview of Russian balancing expectations for the 2008 - 2014 period.....	63
Table 6 - Summary of structural realist conclusions	74

Figures

Figure 1 - CINC-score development for the four selected great powers for the 1989 – 2007 period..	52
Figure 2 - Annual growth percentages for total population of the four great powers for the 2008 – 2014 period.	53
Figure 3 - Annual growth percentages for the urban population of the four great powers for the 2008 – 2014 period.	54
Figure 4 - Annual growth percentages for total steel production of the four great powers for the 2008 – 2014 period	55
Figure 5 - Annual growth percentages for the total primary energy consumption of the four great powers for the 2008 – 2014 period.....	56
Figure 6 - Annual growth percentages for military personnel for the four great powers for the 2008 – 2014 period.	57
Figure 7 - Annual growth percentages for military expenditure for the four great powers for the 2008 – 2014 period.	58

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. From Soviet Union to Russia: back to the future?

The early twenty-first century might just go down in history as one of the defining periods in International Relations (IR) theory, sparking (or maybe revamping) yet another one of the so-called *great debates* - pivotal moments in the discipline's history that challenged exactly those axioms safely ensconced in the collective intellectual sub-consciousness, either with regard to underlying ontological, epistemological and methodological premises or basic shared understandings about the nature of states and interstate behavior. At least, that could be the consequence if we are to take serious and expand upon the claims made by some modern-day realists (e.g. Walt, 2014; Mearsheimer, 2014), who are reflecting on Russia's recent foreign policy endeavors in a way long deemed outdated and obsolete.

Russia and its foreign policy have been the topic of small libraries full of books¹, not in the least due to the paradigmatic role the demise of the Soviet Union (SU) played in IR theory (Fierke, 2013). Traditional theories, most notably neorealism and neoliberalism had great difficulty explaining both the timing and the sheer speed accompanying the greatest shift in power dynamics on the European continent since the end of the Second World War (WWII). The SU's dissolution signaled the end of the bipolar order that characterized most of post-war Europe's history, an order that got replaced by a new one that was initially unsure. Indeed, some authors (e.g. Mearsheimer, 1990) deemed speaking of 'order' somewhat premature as they thought the SU's withdrawal and German reunification would take Europe 'back to the future'; back to a nineteenth century Europe surrendered to the whims of the newly emancipated poles' cynical power calculi.

The Russian Federation (RF), the main heir to the SU after its dissolution, saw itself reduced from one of the world's two great powers to nothing but a shadow of what it once was. Problems were ubiquitous, permeating almost every aspect of human life (MacFarlane, 2006). Not only did its territory get substantially reduced, Russia was left with feeble state institutions, a crippled army and an economy that shrunk to almost half its former size (Goldgeiger & McFaul, 2003; MacFarlane, 2006). People suffered heavily from a freefall of the Russian Ruble, high unemployment and inflation. The 1990's then, despite some short-lived economic prosperity between 1995 and 1997, can best be described as a period of overall misery from a Russian point of view which had great a demoralizing effect on its citizens (MacFarlane, 2006). Furthermore, almost overnight, large groups of ethnic

¹ E.g. Nygren, 2008; Tsygankov, 2013; Lo, 2002; Thorun, 2009; O'Clery, 2011; Goldgeiger & McFaul, 2003; De Haas, 2010; Oliker, Crane, Schwartz & Yusupov, 2009.

Russians no longer lived in the SU but became inhabitants of foreign countries (Goldgeiger & McFaul, 2003).

1.2. Foreign policy ambivalence?

1.2.1. The 1990s

The issues of how to deal with this substantially reduced position on the world stage and how to best serve the interests of Russians both inside the RF and in the ex-Soviet states, which Russia refers to as *bliznjeye zaroebezje* (the *near abroad*), are issues that have always been paramount in Russian foreign policy. What is striking however is the difference in how these issues have been defined and approached ever since Russia's December 1991 'independence'. Looking back, the 1990s might be described as a period of relative Russian reticence in terms of articulating an assertive foreign policy and meddling in other countries' politics. There were a handful of notable exceptions mostly involving Russian support for rebel groups, obfuscated under the guise of peacekeeping missions, for example in the case of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian claims for independence during the Georgian Civil War (1988 – 1993). Also, Russian forces moved in to stifle Islamic oppositional forces from committing a coup in the Central Asian country of Tajikistan (Tsygankov, 2013). Another example can be found in 1991-92 rebel uprisings on the left bank of the Dniester River in Moldova (Lopez, 1999). In reaction to several language laws passed in 1990 that consolidated Romanian as the official state language in Moldova, written in the Latin instead of the Cyrillic alphabet that had been used for hundreds of years, and viable threats of Moldova unifying with Romania, several towns in the Transdniestrian region organized referenda leading to a declaration of independence for what came to be known as the Dniester Moldavian Republic (PMR). As a result, heavy fighting broke out between Moldovan forces, rebels from the PMR and Russia's Fourteenth Army. Even though Boris Yeltsin admitted to Russia's military involvement he emphasized its goal was merely to stop the continued fighting. Eyewitness testimonies contradicted this and painted an image of Russia actively taking sides with and training and supplying the PMR rebels (Lopez, 1999).

A clear example showing Russia's reticence, arguably in a case where we least expected it, can be found in its 1991 conflict with Estonia. Russia had problematic relations with Estonia right from its independence due to that country having a particularly large proportion of ethnic Russians living within its borders (Lopez, 1999). After Estonia declared independence in September 1991, it passed several laws that negatively impacted the lives of ethnic Russians. They were submitted to strict naturalization requirements that drew up enormous barriers for them to acquire full citizenship and the corresponding civil and political rights. In practice, this led to the ethnic Russian population being

marginalized and excluded from important political processes that led to a new constitution and the parliamentary elections of 1992 (Lopez, 1999). In 1993 several other laws were adopted that were viewed by many Estonian Russians as outright violations of their human rights. Already in 1992, tensions between Estonia and Russia rose because of these developments leading to several scuffles between Russian and Estonian troops in which a number of soldiers died. Subsequently, the eastern Estonian towns of Narva and Sillamae organized similar referenda and declared independence from the central government in Tallinn. Russia openly threatened Estonia that it would not stand idly by while Russian citizens were being denied their most basic rights and that it would not hesitate to step in. However, what is most striking then is that, despite Russia's discontent and the fact that it still had some 7,600 troops and 200 tanks on Estonian soil as a remainder from the Soviet days that could have easily secured the eastern parts of Latvia and backed up their claims of independence, in the end all it did was delay the withdrawal of Russian troops from Estonian soil and turn off gas supplies to the Baltic states for five days.

The Estonian example demonstrates how striking behavior not only shows in certain explicit courses of action or rhetoric, but can also, sometimes most evidently, be found in its absence. Despite security issues for Russia rising all over the former SU, Russian leaders did little to nothing to counter these, and when they did it was usually too late and only due to persistent pressure from political opposition (Tsygankov, 2013). In many ways then, Russia's first decade of foreign policy was characterized by a seemingly pro-Western stance, even though it became harder to legitimize domestically from an early stage. Where Russia did act, it was supportive of the West's international security agenda; Yeltsin for example vented no negative feelings towards expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) eastwards towards Russia's borders in 1999 when Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland joined the alliance. Russia even went as far as to sign the START II agreement in 1992 which clearly benefited the US regarding strategic nuclear capabilities and denied itself billions of dollars by passing on arms deals with countries like Yugoslavia, Libya and Iraq (Tsygankov, 2013).

1.2.2. The 21st century

Recent history portrays an entirely different picture. As relatively indulgent and cooperative as Russia might have been in the 1990s, as bitter and bellicose do they seem now. The first signs of overt Russian discontent started showing as early as 1999 with NATO's involvement in Yugoslavia, which was considered a slap in the face and turned NATO into nothing but a tool for expanding Western power in the eyes of Russian politicians and the public (Tsygankov, 2013). A few years later in 2003, Russia sided firmly with most European countries in emphasizing the need for UN approval for a US-led

military intervention in Iraq. Other examples include Russia's fierce opposition to the so-called *Rose Revolutions* in Georgia and Ukraine, which were perceived by the Kremlin as attempts by the West to accomplish regime change in its backyard (Tsygankov, 2013). Furthermore, the 21st century has seen two major escalated military conflicts so far that vastly deteriorated Russia's relationship with the West, leading some to conclude we have entered an era of a new Cold War (CW) (e.g. Lucas, 2014). In the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, also known as the *Five-Day's War*, Russian troops invaded Georgia under the pretext of protecting Russian peacekeepers and Russian nationals; an act of mere self-defense they claimed, in reaction to Georgian advancements into the separatist region of South Ossetia and the shelling of its capital Tskhinvali (Hille, 2010). Subsequently, after winning the war and consolidating their military control over the *de facto* independent republic, Russia went on to formally recognize the independence of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another breakaway republic; something it explicitly declined to do before, even though both republics had *de facto* long been independent from Georgia (Hille, 2010; Nygren, 2008). Russia's involvement was heavily criticized by the international community and even led to the complete freezing of all military and political ties between Russia and NATO (De Haas, 2009).

More recently, in the wake of *Euromaidan* and the ousting of the pro-Russian president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich in 2014, Russia actively supported separatist movements on the Crimean Peninsula, eventually leading to a declaration of independence and the annexation of both the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russia (Hille, Buckley, Waever & Chazan, 2014). Even though Russia at first vehemently denied any involvement of Russian regulars, Putin later admitted that the soldiers without insignia spotted all over the island, also known as the *little green men*, or the *polite people*, were indeed Russian troops ensuring the peaceful course of the referendum ("Putin acknowledges Russian", 2014). Once again, relations between Russia and the West suffered a huge blow when the West, in reaction, devised a broad range of sanctions aimed at hurting the Russian economy and important members of its political elite, only to be met by Russian retaliatory sanctions seeking to return the favor ("Ukraine crisis: Russia", 2014). However, trouble did not stop there as in the subsequent months anti-Kiev uprisings broke out in several of eastern Ukraine's big cities, most importantly Donetsk and Lugansk, culminating in the proclamation of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) (Sengupta, 2014). Once again, tensions rose as the West accused Russia of supplying the separatist groups with weapons to fight the Ukrainian army and down Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 (McTague & Leonard, 2014). As of early 2016 this conflict is yet to be resolved and, despite several ceasefires, continues to subvert Russia's relations with the West.

What the future holds in store for the West and Russia's neighbors is subject to frequent conjecture. One could expect Russia to continue its recent path and eventually absorb the DPR and LPR into the RF and even push forward towards Moldavia. Others argue Russia is merely seeking to

turn Ukraine into a buffer state, preventing further NATO and/or European Union (EU) expansion into former SU territory. In any case, the evidence seems to clearly point towards a strong Russian wish for a new world order; one that is no longer characterized by US domination.

1.3. Russia's conduct: a problem?

As the previous account has shown, Russia's approach in foreign policy has shown quite some variation over time. During its relative short term as an independent state, Russia's foreign policy practices seem to have oscillated between two extremes. On the one hand we have seen an inert Russia, acting counter-intuitively in light of its objective national interest, right at a time when one might have expected them to act much more assertively. Russia was weak and had ample opportunity to secure its interest and broker better deals in the near abroad, should they have acted differently. On the other hand, we have seen Russia do precisely that and going to lengths about it that seem outright inimical, unscrupulous and reminiscent of concepts like hubris. The question then becomes: what causes all of this? Why has Russia gone from a seemingly indulgent and unpretentious former great power in the 1990s to a country voraciously pursuing its perceived national interest in the 21st century, regardless of the consequences in terms of relations to its neighbors or the West, despite their being no apparent substantive change in circumstances? Why now; why did this change in conduct not occur earlier or later? Desperate times call for desperate measures and in that sense, Russia *in statu nascendi*, given its precarious and disillusioned position, was left it with ample incentive to vie for whatever was left to hold on to. This would lead one to expect a much more belligerent stance vis-à-vis its neighbors and Western interests, perhaps at least to a greater extent than it seems to take now. This is the central problem occupying this thesis. It takes the broad empirical spectrum of Russia's foreign policy since 1991 and seeks to explain the previously observed shift in the light of one of the major IR paradigms.

1.4. The approach: realism

It should be clear that many possible answers to the above questions exist based on varying assumptions; different theoretical views focus on different explanatory variables. One of the approaches that may provide an answer to these questions is realism. Realism, traceable to the works of authors like Thucydides and Machiavelli, can be viewed as an umbrella term for a broader school of thought or range of theories within IR that share some fundamental assumptions about the workings of international politics (Mearsheimer, 2002). Realists assert that states are the central actors in world

politics; they operate in a system characterized by anarchy.² International politics should be viewed as a constant competition for power among states which is essentially a zero-sum game, i.e. a state gaining power will always be to the detriment of another state's power and thus its objective security. Realists diverge on the issue of why states want power (Mearsheimer, 2013). For classical realists (e.g. Morgenthau, 1948) the realist nature of international politics is essentially derivative of human nature. In an attempt to systematize realist thinking (and indeed as neorealists would claim, turn it into a *theory*), structural realists³, most notably Kenneth Waltz (1979), added to classical realist thought the notion of an international structure that could to a decisive degree account for why we discern certain patterns in international politics since the genesis of the modern state system in 1648.⁴ It is the configuration of the structure of the international system that pushes great powers in certain directions and allows us to explain and predict international politics. Under two conditions – a system characterized by anarchy, constituted by actors that seek to survive – a balance of power will always re-emerge according to structural realists like Kenneth Waltz. Should the balance of power be distorted, other states will display balancing behavior, which will ultimately lead to a new balance of power. A relatively recent strand of realism called *neoclassical* realism seeks to synthesize both structural and classical accounts of the theory by doing justice to both systemic influences and unit-level characteristics. Though they contend that analyses should depart from the international structure, they seek to explain the foreign policies of states instead of reoccurring patterns. They argue that the extent to which structural incentives translate into policy practice is mediated by intervening variables like leader's perceptions and institutionalized political arrangements (Rose, 1998). As such, neoclassical realism tries to incorporate some of the variance in policy that structural realists cannot seem to account for (Taliaferro, Lobell & Ripsman, 2009).

Being undoubtedly the most dominant theory for the better part of post-WWII history, structural realism lost much of its appeal in the wake of the CW's end. Liberal institutionalists believed that with the end of the CW dyad and subsequent US unipolarity would come the worldwide spreading

² Although nothing renders it inherently impossible, the realist conception of anarchy does not refer to a situation of all-out Hobbesian mayhem but rather to the observation that there is no authority above states in the international realm.

³ The terms 'structural realism' and 'neorealism' are in practice often used interchangeably. Even though structural realism is indeed a form of neorealism, the 'neo' part in the latter term refers to beliefs about how one should conduct research and devise theories - modeled after the natural sciences - whereas 'structural' denotes specific strands focusing on systemic influences. Although in practice this rarely forms a problem, theories that reject this idea could be called forms of neorealism, thus referring to structural realism as neorealism would be a *totum pro parte*. To be precise and to avoid any confusion, this thesis will consistently refer to the theory as structural realism, unless further explication warrants the distinction.

⁴ The 1648 *Peace of Westphalia*, is generally considered to have established the modern state system in Europe by introducing principles like sovereignty and territorial integrity.

of democracy, free market economies, human rights and institutions which would socialize even growing world powers like China into this model (Walt, 2014; Mearsheimer, 2014). Social constructivists, focusing on the role of norms, ideas and identities in international politics, also keenly used the spread of liberal democratic values as a way to render realist claims null and void (Fierke, 2013). Shared norms, ideas, values, identities, et cetera were used as a way of accounting for a lack of conflict between nations.

Still, it seems that increased globalization, institutional embedment and the spread of norms regarding peaceful interstate conduct have not been enough to repudiate the overriding importance of power considerations in international politics, not even on the European continent, one of the most densely institutionalized regions in the world and this is precisely the point that realists like Stephen Walt (2014) and John Mearsheimer (2014) try to make. “You may not be interested in power politics, but power politics is interested in you” is Walt’s way of summarizing his argument, which he seeks to illustrate by pointing towards Russia’s current behavior. By paraphrasing Leon Trotsky (substituting ‘war’ for ‘power politics’) he tries to show that no matter how much emphasis we place on the importance of institutions and norms, in the end, power will always remain the central organizing concept in international politics (and should thus remain the central analytical concept). Without it, we are simply unable to expound the workings of international relations. Russia’s current behavior is grist to the mill of those realists keen on illustrating that realism has not become “obsolete” (Waltz, 2000, p. 1) or has “gone the way of the dinosaurs” (Mearsheimer, 2002, p. 23). The crisis in Ukraine should be interpreted as the result of genuine Russian security concerns as a corollary of perceived changes in the balance of power.

We should not be too quick to acquiesce in realist analyses of the story though. Even *if* realism could provide an answer to Russia’s behavior in the past 1,5 decade or so, to what extent can it also account for Russia’s prudent and apparent self-defeating behavior during the 1990’s? In fact, talking about Russian foreign policy in terms of a clear distinction from the 1990s the 21st century might be premature from a realist perspective. Realist theories posit clear expectations in terms of behavior displayed in reaction to changes in the balance of power, but whether the above observed ‘change’ actually constitutes balancing and realist behavior in general remains to be seen. This requires a comprehensive analysis of the development of power dynamics throughout the RF’s history. Still, it seems only fair to take realist’s considerations seriously and the fact that, *prima facie*, this issue seems to be a puzzle from a realist perspective and that realist theories seek to posit general statements about great power politics, makes realism a suitable theoretical approach in order to analyze Russian foreign policy.

To be clear, this thesis takes structural realism as first set out by Kenneth Waltz (1979) as its point of reference. Many articulations of balancing and balance of power theory have since followed

but a comprehensive account of these developments is beyond the scope of this piece. The aim then, it to gauge the extent his conception of balancing and the balance of power still provides relevant information today.

A much heard critique of structural realism is that, in accounting only for reoccurring patterns over longer periods of time, it has little to say about actual foreign policies of states which can deviate significantly from what might be expected based on the system structure. Neoclassical realists have taken it upon themselves to try and fill this lacuna by devising a realist account of foreign policy that stays true to the structural realist's primacy assigned to the international system and its incentives. This makes neoclassical realism a particularly suitable approach which will also be used in this theory. Should structural realism fail to provide a convincing account of Russia's foreign policy, neoclassical realist theory might provide the missing link that rounds off the realist story.

This thesis seeks to capture the above by posing several questions. The central question answered in this thesis is:

To what extent can structural realism and neoclassical realism account for Russia's foreign policy from the 1990s into the 21st Century?

This question will be answered through positing several sub-questions: (1) what are structural realism and neoclassical realism? (2) What are the structural and neoclassical realist conceptions of balancing behavior? (3) Which empirical implications of these theories are visible in the case of Russia? Furthermore, this thesis will follow up with a discussion: are these theories even suitable for assessing these kinds of questions? What alternative ways of approaching such issues are there? How and why would they approach these questions differently, what are their pros and cons and do we have reason to believe such theories would provide important answers?

1.5. Relevance

To a large extent, the motivation for this thesis stems from the bold case made by some modern-day realists about the nature of Russia's foreign policy. Ultimately, this thesis can be said to assess the truth of claims made by people such as Stephen Walt (2014) when they say that indeed, *the bad old days are back*; whether great power politics must once again be understood through a lens many scholars were once more than happy to denounce. Few will be shocked that the apparent grim nature of contemporary international politics, starkly contrasting the hopes and dreams put forward by those believing that the end of the CW would lead to the spread of liberalism, peaceful values or even 'the end of history' (See Fukuyama, 1992), sparks in many a renewed interest in the possible

primacy of seemingly bygone concepts like power and security. However, whether this truly warrants a 180-degree turn in IR theory remains to be seen and this is exactly where this thesis seeks to contribute to scientific debates. It seeks to determine if there is any substance to such claims by subjecting realism to renewed scrutiny in a classical case of great power politics and see if its contemporary variants still have something relevant to say in the modern world like some now claim it they do.

From this, some societal relevance can be derived as well. Much of the current policies devised to counter Russia are based upon an understanding of the nature of the threat that displays little reflective capability. The West seems to be stuck in discursive patterns focusing on Russia as the evil 'other', of Putin's regime as the epitome of modern autocracy acting irrationally and with nothing but its own interest in mind. The truth is that getting behind Russia's true motivations is very unlikely to happen. A more pluriform understanding however might lead to a better thought-out policy spectrum with which to engage Russia than the presently pursued myopic strategy of confrontation. Currently, debate is taking place in the US on whether or not it should arm Ukraine in its fight against Russia(n backed separatists). Whereas some describe it as nothing short of a moral obligation, many realists vocally disagree with such a strategy on the grounds of it only intensifying a battle that Russia will ultimately win, simply because it has great advantages and more to lose (Trust, n.d.; Walt, 2015). If realism indeed has something to say about Russia's policies, such views can be taken into consideration and guide policy makers when questions that can have such far-reaching consequences are on the table. Of course the opposite may prove to be true, but that too will provide useful insight that might be used to substantiate certain policy convictions.

1.6. Structure

This introductory chapter has attempted to illustrate the empirical discrepancies we are confronted with in the case of Russia's foreign policy. Furthermore, realist theory has broadly been introduced as a theoretical framework that might provide the answers that many are now looking for. From this, several questions have been derived that will be answered in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. Also, this chapter has tried to illustrate the relevance of such questions, both for scientific debates and on a societal level. Chapter 2 will follow up with a substantive account of realist theory; it will contextualize the strand, address its most relevant proponents, provide some criticism and previously conducted research, and, most importantly, see what predictions they would pose regarding balancing. From this, two theoretical hypotheses will be distilled that will be used to gauge the theories' explanatory power in the case of Russia's foreign policy. This will clarify the theoretical expectations; what are we expecting to observe in Russia's foreign policy should the theory be

relevant? Chapter 3 will operationalize the most important theoretical concepts and introduce the methodology used in order to assess the theories. Based on the theoretical explication and the indicators it produces, specific elements from Russia's foreign policy will be chosen that will eventually determine whether both theories hold up to scrutiny. Chapter 4 will contain the empirical research. Based on what we are expecting to see, Russia's policies will be assessed. Chapter 5 will end up with conclusions and an answer to the central question based on chapter 4. Here the verdict will be given as to whether realists indeed have a point when they say that power should reclaim its place as central analytical concept in IR. Also, it will introduce the discussion touched upon earlier in this chapter with regard to realism's usefulness compared to other approaches. The thesis will then round off with suggestions as to how this piece might be used for further research regarding this topic.

Chapter 2 - Theory

The first chapter briefly introduced the reasons why this thesis is written. Looking at Russia and its foreign policy, many realists now proclaim the revival of power as central in understanding international politics. However, when we look at the broader context of Russia's foreign policy since the 1990s, some irregularities seem to arise when arguing from a realist perspective. These mainly pertain the country's ambiguous approach in pursuing its national interest, or, put in theoretical terms, its balancing behavior, deviating from what we might have expected given objective incentives. Whether this behavior is indeed irrational from a realist point of view, remains to be seen however and requires broad understanding of realism's views and expectations regarding foreign policy.

As we have seen, realists assume international politics is defined by a constant battle for power resulting in a balance of power. What we are thus looking at when assessing Russia's foreign policy, is the way it balances against changes that occur in the balance of power. This concept, balancing, is thus crucial in answering the central question in this thesis. Ultimately then, this chapter seeks to develop a theoretical answer to the question: under which conditions states will seek, or refrain from, balancing behavior? It will start off by setting out the core of the realist approach, both in terms of theoretical foci and ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, and its historical roots. It will follow up by sketching the development of realist theory, discerning and comparing the different strands developed over time. The subsequent focus will be on the current state of the debates: what do the different strands of realism say about the balance of power and balancing behavior? What kind of research has been done in the past based on these assumptions? Some critiques of the realist tradition and theories will also be presented to pinpoint certain weaknesses or topics of discussion. The chapter will then end up with theoretical expectations and concrete hypotheses for both of the realist strands that will later serve as guiding tool for the empirical analysis.

2.1. Realism's core

2.1.1. What is realism?

Realism is best described as a philosophy or paradigmatic belief about the nature of international politics that has evolved over many centuries and that has formed the creed for several more elaborate and specific theoretical accounts articulated throughout the twentieth century. Its core can be summed up in four principal assumptions (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). *First*, realism asserts that states are the principal and dominant actors in an anarchic world meaning there is no authority above states that can determine what they can or cannot do; they are the highest form of political authority

and thus, in such a world, states remain the ultimate jurors. As a corollary, they are also the central analytical unit within the realist approach. Non-state actors such as international organizations (IOs) are not considered completely irrelevant in international politics but they are not independent actors. Their actions tend to reflect the international distribution of power and are mostly just an extension or expression of power projection, or another arena in which the international struggle for power takes place.

The *second* assumption is the unitary actor assumption. According to realists, when we engage in analysis, states should not just be considered the central, but also unitary actors in the sense that no matter what goes on inside the state, it will always pursue a coherent self-interested strategy. This has often been referred to as the black box assumption; when trying to understand state behavior, we need to look at the state as a single integrated actor; it will always speak with one voice regardless of political idiosyncrasies. It does not matter whether we deal with pluralist, democratic countries or heavily centralized, more authoritarian regimes. Realists will not deny that debate takes place domestically, however, when issues are important enough (i.e. related to national security), authorities will ultimately disregard domestic pressures and pursue whatever policy they deem most productive. This assumption has been critiqued by liberals and foreign policy scholars who argue that that policies cannot be assessed without accounting for differences in, for example, political systems, leaders, or the relative power of different interest groups. Realists however are happy to contend that in reality these aspects do matter but that that it makes sense to start from this assumption for the sake of theory building as it allows for the deduction of testable propositions.

The *third* assumption relates to the last point and pertains presuppositions regarding the nature of state behavior. When trying to understand state action, realists argue, states should be considered rational actors. When acting within the realm of international politics, states are able to (and will) engage in a process by which they articulate objectives and consider and weigh the different policy options available based on the extent to which they maximize the utility related to those goals. They are able to rank the different policy alternatives and make a rational choice based on a cost-benefit analysis. This assumption too has been widely criticized as being empirically incorrect. Realists will however not suggest that decision procedures always take place under optimal conditions. This process can be subverted in many different ways, for example due to human imperfections, which may lead to policies that are in fact not value maximizing. Still, even when the decision making process leading up to the choice has been undermined, states will opt for those alternatives that are at least satisfactory in terms of the goals that have been set. States can thus also be called satisfiers or optimizers.

The *fourth* and final assumption relates to the ordering of issues that states deal with. Realists state that within this hierarchy, issues related to security, both domestic and international, are of

paramount importance. This harks back to the anarchy assumption which Mearsheimer has called the *911 problem* (Mearsheimer, 2001). Because there is no authority above states, because, unlike citizens of countries, in times of conflict states cannot call 911, their survival demands that they provide for their own security. What this inevitably leads to, according to realists, is a constant battle for power (Viotti & Kaupi, 2012). Only by acquiring power can states create security and thus assure their survival in both the short and the long run. Power then, in the realist perspective, is based on material capabilities (e.g. economic or military might, resources, etc.) and what matters most is not how much of these capabilities we have in absolute terms, but relative to other states. This ultimately determines how powerful in relation to others, and thus how secure we are. Ultimately, this constant strive for power is what defines world politics and interstate relations according to realists.

It is this set of assumptions and its related concepts that define the realist paradigm; that form the fundamental axioms that ground all understanding of the social reality that realist international relations scholars engage with.

2.1.2. Realism's roots

Realism has a long and rich intellectual history going back some two and a half millennia. It is generally agreed upon that the theory's genesis must be located in the works of the Greek historian Thucydides (471 – 400 B.C.) (Votti & Kauppi, 2012). Other intellectual precursors in the realist pantheon include Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Carl von Clausewitz. The first comprehensive realist accounts of international politics however, were written by what are now known as the classical realists. The classical realist view on international politics emerged during the first great debate in international relations, in the wake of the First World War (WO I), between the realists and the utopists, or idealists (Kurki & Wight, 2013). According to the idealists, human nature was essentially good and people shared the same interests. Peaceful international conduct was being undermined only by human ignorance; a lack of understanding of international processes. We should use reason (i.e. science) to advance; to create better institutions and to get control of our environment. The most famous idealist project was Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations; an international institution meant to prevent large-scale wars like WO I from ever happening again.

The classical realists strongly opposed this view. In 1948, Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* was published, the most famous and seminal classical realist work to date. Still operating from the idealist-realist polemic, he rejected utopian optimism regarding the outlook of international politics. There is no harmony of interests; international politics will never to be an expression of the inherent good and pacifist nature of mankind, simply undermined by a lack of knowledge, for such a

view of human nature is wrong. In the 1978 edition of his book, he summarized his view on international politics by formulating his six principles of political realism (pp. 4 – 15):

1. Politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.

Morgenthau believed, in contrast to the idealists, that international politics was not some potentially peaceful and cooperative realm merely waiting for human kind to enlighten itself. Instead, all politics was inherently conflict prone because it reflected human nature. Human beings seek to survive by gathering the scarce goods available on this planet. In order to do so, they need power which is essentially a social relation; it is something one has over someone else and allows one to influence someone's conduct to his or her liking. Politics is merely an extension of this battle for survival; a constant search for survival and thus for power over one another. There is no harmony of interests which is precisely why we see conflict returning throughout history.

2. The concept of interest is defined in terms of power.

This is the principle that discerns the political sphere from, for example, the economic sphere where interest is defined in terms of wealth. In politics, the pursuit of self-interest is always a pursuit for power and as such should the conduct of statesmen be interpreted. According to Morgenthau such a definition safeguards us from making two mistakes. First, we prevent a focus on specific motives. Focusing on motives is useless for they are hardly determinable, and even if they were made explicit, we cannot know for sure if they are true. Morgenthau uses the famous example of appeasement during the Munich Conference in 1938. Chamberlain thought he knew Hitler's motives and hoped he could prevent war by appeasing him. However, as became apparent, Hitler wanted more. Secondly, it prevents a focus on ideology. Certain policies or ideologies can be very desirable but we should always look at what is feasible (realistic). This is what makes classical realism an amoral theory in essence. Still, Morgenthau ascertains, we see irrational policies being implemented all throughout history and all over the world. He ascribes this to psychological factors such as cognitive dissonance; imperial overstretch, for example as a result of focusing on the spreading of democracy; and demonology: using specific persons as the epitomization of all things negative. We should start off with a rational actor perspective: actors are able to rank their options (the third realist assumption) and choose the one that, in terms of costs and benefits, maximizes their power.

3. The concept of interest defined in terms of power is universally valid but its specific interpretation is contingent upon cultural and political contexts.

Ideas about what defines interests are not set in stone. During the nineteenth century having colonies could be in one's interest because it increased power whilst nowadays the opposite would likely be true. However, even though such ideas about what constitutes power might change the attractiveness of certain policy options, they do not determine them (as a constructivist might argue). No matter how it is defined, states(men) will still pursue their own interests, defined in terms of power.

Positive change, according to Morgenthau, can only be acquired once we accept the fundamental role of power. We should not assume some abstract ideal and sign charters, rather we should pursue piecemeal progress.

4. *Political realism is aware of the tension between moral commandments and the requirements of successful political action.*

Morgenthau's book was in many ways a handbook for political leaders based on what he thought to be the reality of international politics. As such, he has often times been accused of advocating a Machiavellian leadership style, seemingly void of any moral considerations. This is not completely true however, just like in the case of Machiavelli. Morgenthau advocates one important moral rule: prudence. Actions have to be carefully assessed and balanced in terms of their impact on the distribution of power. Prudence is necessary in the pursuit of state survival, the highest moral commandment for any state towards its citizens. Morgenthau defines morality in consequentialist terms: that which is morally right is that which advances the ultimate goal of state survival, or put more concrete: successful policies (once again defined in terms of state survival) are good policies.

5. *Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.*

We judge every nation equally; based on the criterion of the pursuit of self-interest. All nations try to present themselves as moral heroes but in here lies the danger of underestimating the other (because he or she is no good). The national interest of states is never based on universally valid moral laws. We should judge the other's actions based on its influence on the distribution of power.

6. *Realism assumes the autonomy of the political sphere.*

Invasions might seem immoral and they might breach charters but actions in the political realm should always solely be judged in terms of their influence on the distribution of power. That is the question politicians should ask themselves. If an invasion does not negatively alter the balance of power, one should not respond in any military manner, even if this is at the expense of certain peoples. Still, prudence remains the norm.

These principles captured the essence of international politics according to Morgenthau. From here, he derived many important assumptions that are still central concepts in modern realist theory. One of these concepts is the so-called balance of power. The absoluteness of power, its defining influence in all forms of social relation, means that a balance of power exists in all layers of social reality. According to Morgenthau the balance of power in international politics was merely a specific form of a generic principle, namely that balance is focused on maintaining the stability of the system without destroying a multitude of units. The biggest misunderstanding in this regard is that states have any choice in the matter. It pertains a general law related to the nature of the units; it is not the result of conscious policies which would imply that law to be impermanent. However, policies advancing the

balance of power are essential if there is to be any stability which is where Morgenthau's moral rule once again plays a role. Instability in the balance of power is the result of specific conditions under which the balance is to function in a society of sovereign states.

The general principle is based on two assumptions. First, the autonomous units are needed for the whole and secondly, if there were no balance, one unit would gain force majeure and destroy the others. The relative stability of the Westphalian system testifies to the working of this principles; since its onset relatively few countries have completely disappeared of the map.⁵ Given the lack of international checks and balances, two patterns have allowed us to ascertain how far we can go in expanding our power. First is direct confrontation by which Morgenthau refers to the kind of arms race we witnessed between the US and the SU during the Cold War. Second is competition between third (non-great power) states. Both present prejudicial, instable prospects.

2.1.3. Philosophical underpinnings

Our knowledge of realism can be further contextualized by briefly reflecting upon the approach's philosophy of science. Meta-theoretical presumptions are important because they provide answers to the questions that are always implicitly or explicitly asked before setting up any research project. Such questions relate to the fundamental believes scholars have about our world in relation to the way one conducts research. These questions pertain ontology (what does the world consist of? What are the objects that we study?), epistemology (how then do we come to have knowledge of that world?) and methodology (what are the methods we employ to acquire data and evidence?) (Kurki & Wight, 2013).

Ontology. With regards to ontology it is useful to identify realism as a strand within the rationalist tradition. Rationalist approaches share what is called an individualist ontology (Fierke, 2013). This means that whatever the unit of analysis (which differs across the different rationalist theories), it needs to always be treated as if it were an individual actor acting rationally on its own behalf. The world consists of such 'individuals', this is the starting point, and based on the specific theoretical objects of interest, theories are then devised. The realist ontology has not been static over the course of its existence. Even though both agreed on the essential nature of international politics, the 'world' of classical realists such as Carr and Morgenthau consisted of much more than that of later realists such as Waltz. Whereas the 'individuals' in Waltz's story were states, Morgenthau's scope of objects of analysis was much broader. Neoclassical realism, the most recent strand, seeks to synthesize the systemic accounts of structural realists and the classical focus on the practice of foreign policy and

⁵ The most notable exemption being Poland which disappeared in 1795 during the Third Partition of Poland and again in 1939 as the result of German and Soviet invasions.

statecraft (Taliaferro, Lobell & Ripsman, 2009). They consider themselves occupying the middle ground between rationalists and constructivists. Though neoclassicals start from objective systemic influences, they argue that states hardly ever understand that reality for what it is. 'Anarchy is', albeit only partially, 'what states make of it' (see Wendt, 1992). The realist ontology is also an objective ontology in the sense that the objects of study are thought to exist independently from us, as opposed to social ontologies that stress the socially constructed nature of the objects of study.

Epistemology. Epistemology is the field where some of the more substantial debates have taken place within realism. Classical realists engaged in more historically informed research, giving thick accounts of international politics. Morgenthau did not believe we could come to general laws and predictions based on generalizations (Lebow, 2013). According to him, social reality was too complex and actors' decisions too often irrational to grasp through such abstractions. Only by referring to the nature of human kind can we start understanding international politics. It should be clear though that even though politics is governed by general laws, social reality, according to Morgenthau, has no logic of its own; he did not construct a theory of international politics in that sense. Rather, the sources of social regularities are to be found in biology; they reflect tendencies assumed to be innate to human nature such as the will to survive (Kurki & Wight, 2013). All theory could do was show the likely consequences of one alternative opposed to another and conditions under which one alternative is more likely than another.

The 1960s saw the advent of the second of the great debates in IR which specifically revolved around issues of the philosophy of science. In the spirit of the behavioral revolution, IR scholars started rejecting historicist approaches and adopted a method built on the natural sciences known as positivism. Positivism is essentially a form of empiricist epistemology, usually associated with scholars like Francis Bacon and Auguste Comte, which entails the belief that scientific knowledge can only be acquired through sensory experience. Positivism, a specific and evolved form, can be summed up as follows (Kurki & Wight, 2013, p. 21 - 22): for positivists, science centers around systemic observation. It seeks to develop meticulous ground rules for the proper conduct of science, both in terms of methodological techniques and criteria for sound observations. Second, positivism believes that the social world consists of laws indicated by regularities, which can be ascertained through observational collection of an appropriate amount of data. What is important, is that these laws relate only to that which is observable; non-observable elements play no part, as they are, by the approach's definition, unscientific. The focus on patterns through observation relates to the need for establishing causality in order to explain phenomena, which is the positivist goal. Third, observability, for positivists, is an inherent quality of that which is considered to exist, of that which is real. This is why positivists refrain from constructing conceptual frameworks around social ontologies. The positivist motto is *esse est percipi*; to be is to be perceived. They believe in a world *out there* for scientists to observe but not in

the metaphysical sense of the word; it does not exist independently of human cognition, or at least not in the way that it could coherently be engaged through science. Logically inferred from this is the positivist inclination to accentuate the instrumental aspect of knowledge, as opposed to its truthfulness.

The notion of causality proved an essential change in the approach to acquiring knowledge. From here on out, hypothetico-deductive modeling and parsimony became the norm. In realism, this was reflected in the shift from classical realism to neorealism. Neoclassical realists too tend to adhere to the positivist epistemology.

Methods. The methodological changes in realism somewhat paralleled the changes in epistemology. Although empiricists, the classical realist historicists had a much more narrative and interpretive focus, whereas the positivist model adhered to by neorealists prescribed an emphasis on the formulation of general laws through the identification of patterns in observable data (Kurki & Wight, 2013). On a theoretical level, parsimony and abstraction became the norm. Empirically, measurement can be said to have been the keyword for the new generation of realists. The new realist epistemology based on the natural sciences, heralded a new shift to the quantification of social reality and an upsurge in quantitative research.⁶ Still overall, case-study research is the most prominent research template employed by realists and IR scholars in general. Neoclassicals, owing to their classical precursors, have reintroduced theoretically informed narratives into IR research, combined with modern techniques to identify the causal processes that link structural influences and foreign policy. Parsimony and abstraction are the starting point and rigorous guidelines are then provided to enrich the model (Rose, 1998).

Criticisms. Positivism has been widely criticized because of the related issues of its premise that we can, and should, establish causality, and its assumption that the empirical realm can be used as the anvil upon which the faith of theories can be decided. These questions have been thoroughly intertwined with debates within the philosophy of science regarding the ‘truth’ of scientific knowledge. David Hume (1979), in arguing that all knowledge is essentially uncertain, first showed the problems related to establishing causality; the idea that there are certain laws in nature. Karl Popper (2002), though essentially agreeing with Hume, rejected Hume’s psychological explanation for our inclination to observe causality. Rather than the believe in laws being a consequence of us witnessing repetition, it is the primacy of laws, which ultimately originate in congenial expectancies, that allows us to identify repetition for what it is. Still, Popper concurred with Hume that, because causality can never be independently ascertained, indeed, because all observations are theory-laden, empiricist methods are

⁶ The behavioral revolution of 1960s too saw a shift to the quantification of social reality. However, as opposed to the positivist’s deductive logic, here the focus was much more on inductive reasoning, i.e. gathering data, looking for correlation and building theories based on those observations.

only useful in so far as scholars agree, by means of convention, on what can be considered unproblematic background knowledge that forms the basis for the judgment of theories. Still, it is not hard to see how this qualifies science in terms of statements regarding truth. Thus, though positivists may reject truth claims and adhere to an instrumental view of scientific knowledge, they do so for different, non-epistemic reasons, whereas others would disqualify, or at least question the positivist way of coming to meaningful, scientific knowledge at all, based on its view on how we come to have that knowledge.

Regarding ontology, some have critiqued realism's objectivism: the idea that there is indeed such a thing as an independent social reality; a social world that is directly accessible and neutrally observable to scholars. Several different positions have emerged that have criticized the rationalist assumption, all with different ramifications in terms of epistemology and methodology. Social constructivists for example adhere to a social ontology; the idea that, yes, there is such a thing as a reality but it is not objective (Boghossian, 2007; Fierke, 2013). Rather, reality is socially constructed in the sense that it does not exist prior to our cognition; reality is constructed by us, the objects constituting that social reality. As a consequence, because we are part of that reality, in the process of studying it, we influence and create that reality. This in turn leads to not only a different theoretical focus but also different notions regarding the nature of objects.⁷ Constructivists tend to reject many of rationalist assumptions such as rational choice and methodological individualism. Instead, they problematize and endogenize concepts realists take for granted, such as state interests, or neglect, such as identities. These are not given or 'out there' but rather mutually constituted; created through a process by which actors collectively assign meaning to them. As a consequence, if we want to understand international politics, we have to incorporate concepts like norms, identities and ideas into our analyses. Given the radically different nature of the objects of study it is useless, according to constructivists, to assume that the objects are fully rational or that outcomes are never more than simply the sum of individual parts.

Other IR approaches reject positivism based on the claim of there being no neutrally observable reality at all. Interpretivists (e.g. Geertz, 1993), stemming from sociology, employ interpretive methods in order to understand⁸ phenomena in their given context. Behind this lies the belief that there is no objective social reality possessing some kind of logic graspable through law-like

⁷ Constructivists tend to focus on the role of identity, norms and ideas in IR. For an overview see Ruggie, 1998; for a conceptualization of the role of norms, see Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; for a conceptualization of the role of ideas, see Bieler & Morton, 2008. Alexander Wendt (1999), in devising a constructivist, system theory explicitly aligned himself with structural realists like Kenneth Waltz. Combining a social ontology with a positivist epistemology has not gone uncriticized however (see Fierke, 2013).

⁸ Understanding as in Max Weber's *Verstehen* as opposed to *Erklären* - explaining.

statements. All we can do is interpret in order to see how, through reciprocal engagement and constant reproduction, phenomena give meaning to, and are given meaning by the actors relating to it. Post-structuralism, most accurately described as an ethos or critical approach, too focuses on social ontologies such as discourses, subjectivity and identity, but rather in a way that exposes how these different elements constitute structures that legitimize a set of assumptions about being, acting, and knowing the world (Campbell, 2013). Because language is ultimately a tool embedded in social structures, using it to speak of ‘facts’ and ‘objectivity’, becomes problematic because it is itself not a neutral point of reference. As such, they reject the positivist search for facts to ground knowledge, but rather reconceptualize the object-subject debate in a way that the two construct each other. Epistemically, this prohibits separations that positivists take for granted, such as separations between fact and value or empirical claims versus normative matters (Campbell, 2013).⁹

2.2. Modern realist theories

Realism’s intellectual precursors paved the way for what has evolved into an extensive modern realist research program.¹⁰ Today, this program can broadly be divided into two forms of realist theory: structural realism and the relatively new neoclassical realism. Both theories share the common assumptions set out earlier in this chapter but differ regarding important issues, most notably the relative significance of system-level components versus unit-level idiosyncrasies (Taliaferro et al., 2009). This sections deals with both theories separately; it sets out the theoretical assumptions, their differences, some criticisms, some previously conducted research and it eventually ends up with hypotheses: what do the different theories have to say about the theoretical question: under which conditions are states more likely to engage in, or refrain from, balancing behavior?

2.2.1. Structural realism

The theory of structural realism grew out of discontent with the classical accounts of realist international politics and can be seen as the realist epitome of the behavioral revolution within IR and the rest of the social sciences. This revolution was embodied in the second great debate and spawned the ‘neo’ theories in IR (neorealism and neoliberalism). The most famous structural realist work to date is *Theory of International Politics* by Kenneth Waltz released in 1979.

⁹ For examples, see Smith (2003), Cox (1981) and Nayak & Selbin (2012).

¹⁰ Research programs, a term usually associated with Imre Lakatos, set out certain core theoretical assumptions which serve as a framework for further theoretical articulation. These assumptions cannot be abandoned as this would contradict the research program as a whole (Lakatos, 1978). Hence the shared realist assumptions set out earlier.

Epistemics. In the spirit of the behavioral revolution, Waltz criticized Morgenthau's way of approaching theory. Morgenthau argued that social reality was too complex to try and reduce to a set of law-like statements; only by referring to human nature could any rationality be discerned. Theories should merely explicate the conditions under which certain policy options were more likely than others, and show the results should such options be chosen. He illustrates his ideas by making use of historical examples. Waltz rejected the historicist method and adopted positivism. For Waltz, the goal of theory was more than just observing. Rather, theories are statements that clarify the relationship between the different laws we observe and should as such be able to both explain and predict phenomena (Waltz, 1979). Theories provide us with the necessary assumptions and explanatory mechanisms from which we can derive empirically testable hypotheses. Without theory, searching for correlation between variables is like shooting at an invisible target: you might need an infinite amount of chances and, even worse, you will not even know if you have hit it. This is what Waltz called the "inductivist illusion" (1979, p. 4). Inductively ascertained law-like regularities are meaningless without the appropriate theoretical concepts to explain the relationship between them.

As we have seen, the structural realist way of approaching theory has not gone uncriticized. Plenty have, from a philosophy of science point of view, denounced positivism as an untenable approach to social science. Some (e.g. Duncan, 2006), have pointed out the fact that positivism is just part of a phase as different such paradigms were prevalent throughout the discipline's history. This may be true, in fact many of these criticisms may be just but in the end, as Mearsheimer (2004) argues, in empirical studies we are inclined to judge theories based on the extent to which they are able to explain empirical phenomena, in this case state behavior. I agree. As empirical scientists, we should be critical of (implicit) meta-theoretical assumptions but denouncing theories should primarily proceed based on their strength in terms of explanatory power. In that sense, positivism is a useful approach because it asks us to be explicit about what we want to explain and concrete on how it should be established, which provides plenty opportunity for rejection. So too does structural realism provide handles for the verification and rejection of its predictions. This not only makes it a useful theory for assessing Russia's foreign policy, it also provides ample opportunity for assessing the theory's continued usefulness as proclaimed by its adherents.

Why do states want power? So what then defines structural realism? Structural realism departs from the same outlook on international politics as its classical precursor. It diverges however, on the question of *why* states want power. With regard to that question, structural realism can be summed up as follows (Mearsheimer, 2013): 1) Great powers are the central actors operating in an anarchic international environment. 2) All states have, at least to some degree, offensive military capabilities that can be used to harm other states. 3) States can never be sure about other states' true intentions (whether states are status quo or revisionist states). 4) The supreme goal of any states is to survive. 5)

States are rational actors; they are able to make a hierarchy of goals and come up with strategies in terms maximizing the chances of reaching those goals.

Taken together, the assumptions above illustrate a radically different type of thesis for why states seek power. Whereas Morgenthau argued that the grim and imperfect nature of all politics essentially reflected characteristics inherently engrained in human nature, Waltz argued that it was the result of characteristics related to the constellation of the state collective as a whole - the structure of the international system. States seek power then, not as a result of some innate propensity, but because they are constituents of a system that forces them to, given certain assumptions about their nature. It is this element, the analytical primacy assigned to effects that result from the way states are positioned *vis-à-vis* one another, that differentiates structural realism from its classical predecessor.

The structure. The structure, Waltz argued, has three defining elements. Dissecting these elements allows us to gain some more insight into how exactly the system influences states and how this relates to the assumptions set out before. First off, the *ordering principle* of the international system (the international environment) is anarchic; there is no higher power above states, as opposed to domestic systems which are hierarchical. Second is the *functional differentiation*. Because states can only rely on themselves, they need to be able to fulfill the full range of necessary functions as opposed to domestic societies in which the rational, efficient way would be to divide production processes among different units. This is what causes states to act as like-units. The third element is the *polarity* or relative distribution of power. History has seen constant changes in the amount of great powers. 19th century Europe was a good example of a multi-power system with several great powers constantly switching alliances. After WWII the world became bipolar with Europe becoming the central stage for the power play between the US and the SU and after the fall of the SU, some argued we entered an era of US unipolarity.¹¹

It is this structure of the international system, combined with realist assumptions about the nature of states and international politics that forms the core of the structural realist explanatory framework. Absent world government and a monopoly on violence, rational states (i.e. states that seek to survive) need to rely on themselves and thus become like-units that fulfill every necessary function. Because in an anarchical environment survival is always potentially threatened by other states, they need power over other states in order to protect themselves as this is the means to that end. This means that what matters most is relative power and relative gains. Having 'a lot' of power is meaningless in terms of survival if someone else has 'a lot more.'

¹¹ Some (e.g. Buzan, 2011) extrapolate this trend and argue we will soon enter an era without any true superpowers (i.e. states that can globally project their power). Instead, because the advantages of the industrial revolution have spread globally, power dynamics will increasingly play out, and should be analyzed, on a regional level.

Three images. The international system is what Waltz called the 'third image'. He introduced the concept of the three images, meant to discern three levels of analysis at which explanations can (and should) be sought (Waltz, 1959). Waltz rejects what he called *reductionist* theories, which base explanations about the whole solely on the behavior of individual parts or in this case the first two images, the sub-national and national levels, for example leader traits and form of government, because "if changes in international outcomes are linked directly to changes in actors, how can one account for similarities of outcome that persist or recur even as actors vary?" (Waltz, 1979, p. 65). The answer to this question, according to Waltz, is that the international structure as set out before, steers them in certain directions, that level out differences in outcomes, despite variation at the unit level. What structural realists seek to explain then is not specific instances of foreign policy, but rather why certain patterns tend to reoccur; how the constellation of the system increases or decreases the likely set of policy options that states consider and employ.

'Change' and balancing. So how then does change occur? Change in the system is the result of change in its structure. Absent a plausible outlook on world government, system change will be the result of change in the relative distribution of power, i.e. polarity. According to Waltz (1979) the fact that the international system is a self-help system consisting of states that seek to survive, means that a *balance of power* will always arise. When one state becomes too powerful, the system induces balancing behavior¹². Elman, attempting to construct a working definition, defined balancing as "a countervailing policy designed to improve abilities to prosecute military missions in order to deter and/or defeat another state" (2003, p. 8). Generally, it can be said that *internal balancing* refers to strengthening oneself in military terms. *External balancing* refers to forming military alliances with other states in order to oppose the growing power of another state. Internal balancing will produce the most stability because one prevents becoming dependent on other states, Waltz (1979) argues. This too, he says, is why bipolar systems are the most stable ones. Interdependence leads to instability and in a bipolar system, states will be least dependent upon others.

Waltz's structure has sometimes been caricaturized, as if it is floating 'out there', deterministically steering foreign policy and leaving states without any agency in the process. As we have seen, this is not the case. The structure, Waltz argues, should be viewed as "a set of constraining conditions" (1979, p. 73); it has no agency and cannot be seen. Many critics have unjustifiably denounced structural realism for its lack of explaining precisely those important geopolitical events that seemed to contradict structural incentives. However, the structure does not determine, as Waltz is happy to content, it merely constraints and steers. In the end, states still devise their policies for

¹² As opposed to *bandwagoning*, a strategy whereby states throw in their lot with a more powerful state in the hope of achieving some success themselves. This strategy is rejected by most structural realists because it contradicts the assumption that states seek to increase their relative power compared to other states.

themselves and if we wish to explain those, we need different theories; theories of foreign policy. The structure is best suited to explain the continuity we see, not the change. Furthermore, the structure is not ontologically discernable from its constituent units. The units and their composition determine the structure and the structure, in turn, influences them; it is a reciprocal process. Change in the structure then is both the result of, and leads to, change at the unit level.

Structure: the mechanisms. The structure influences states indirectly through rewards and punishments in terms of survival. There are three important mechanisms that play out here. First off is a process of *socialization*. This phenomenon often takes place in closely interacting groups. Units alter their behavior because it is expected from them, should they seek (continued) acceptance to a group. In the case of states, one might expect states to adhere to certain international norms. Russia, for example, tried to legitimize its behavior in terms of human rights, both during the Crimean takeover in 2014 and the South Ossetian crisis in 2008. A second mechanism is *competition*. In order to survive, units tend to adapt themselves to their most successful peers. This for example explains why nation states became the prevalent form of political organization. Both these mechanisms lead to reduced sets of outcomes. A last form, *specialization*, means positioning oneself in a niche for maximum gains in a specific field. Such a strategy is especially dangerous, considering the degree of dependence that arises. This strategy is almost exclusively employed by small states however and as such not relevant in the current analysis.

Structural realism: defensive vs. offensive. One important distinction within structural realism is important to note which is that between the defensive and offensive realists. Though both concur on the assumptions related to why states want power, they disagree on important issues, for example the question of how much power is enough. Defensive realists, such as Waltz, argue that the system does not incite a struggle for hegemony because this elicits balancing and instability. Also, conquering is generally more expensive than defensive strategies because conquering eventually exhausts states and leaves them weak defensively. Lastly, offensive strategies often come with high costs in terms of keeping control over the territory, for example due to nationalism which might spur popular resistance. Maximizing one's security thus puts restraints on the pursuit of power; the system punishes states that seek too much power. Offensive realists, most notably John Mearsheimer (2001), argue that, though none of the assumptions by themselves guarantee war or threats, taken together, states have no choice but to vie for hegemony because it is the only way to assure absolute security. They predict that great powers will do everything to gain more power and to subvert the power of their rivals. Global hegemony, though impossible to achieve because of the stopping power of water, is the most attractive position because it eliminates all fears of attack. Thus, offensive realists argue, the structure forces states to be revisionists. They reject the offensive-defensive balance posed by defensive realists and argue that, most of the time, it pays to be on the offensive. Arguing that the

systems punishes states that seek to much power is simply not true. This is why offensive realists reject the idea of a 'balance of power' theory; balances do not naturally occur like Waltz argues; their occurrence is merely an empirical contingency and will be followed up by yet another state trying to increase its relative power. Balancing is considered ineffective all together due to the risk of getting passed the buck and alliance-forming will occur only when buck-passing is no longer an effective strategy because the dangers of the growing state become too big. This adjusted view, Mearsheimer (2013) argues, allows structural realists to bridge the gap between structure and foreign policy because it enables us to account precisely for those instances in which states acted without regard for the balance of power. They fill in a caveat left by defensive realists: the intentions of states.

The distinction between offensive and defensive structural realism is important to note for theoretical reasons but will not be further explored in this thesis because, for the type of question at hand, it is not (yet) relevant. Indeed, both theories might use the same empirical grounds to justify two competing stories. Continued attempts to increase power, both in the 20th and 21st century could be simply be deemed balancing by defensive realists whilst also being the continuous search for power offensive realists describe. Also, alliance-forming, archetypal for defensive realists, might appear early on in Russian foreign policy and still be considered the necessary evil offensive realist think it is. Because Kenneth Waltz's defensive realism is considered the most elaborate form and because most articulations tend to accept (albeit through different conceptualizations) the idea of a balance of power, it is his form of structural realism that will be tested.

Examples of research. Structural realism has been broadly applied over the past decennia with many scholars taking its propositions in order to analyze specific chapters in foreign policy or seeking to further articulate or amend the theory. Vasquez (1997) has attempted to aggregate some of these endeavors and provides the following overview.

Rosecrance and Stein (1993) use several case studies to illustrate that balancing, contrary to structural realist predictions, does not actually manifest itself in the grand strategies of great powers. Rather, domestic factors prove more relevant as enabling and restraining force. At the core of this lies a rejection of the assumption of rationality. Because states are in fact not rational, unitary actors, they do not balance in the ways expected. To a large extent, the same observations, the caveats between policies and structural incentives, have inspired neoclassical realists to come up with a way of synthesizing the two. This current will be addressed in the next section. Paul Schroeder (1994a; b) empirically rejects some of the realist assumptions based on an analysis of some of the great conflicts between 1648 and 1945. He argues that the assumption that anarchy leads to balancing based on power considerations violates reality as states actually use a wide array of threat-counteracting measures such as bandwagoning (also Schweller, 1994) and hiding. Stephen Walt (1987) confirms the propensity of states to balance but refines the theory by saying states balance not against power but rather

against threats. Christensen and Snyder (1990) have used structural realism to illustrate the propensity of states to opt for chain-ganging or buck-passing as opposed to balancing. These can be considered examples of the type of specialization that Waltz describes.

Structural realist predictions. So what answer can we deduce from structural realism regarding the theoretical question at hand? Under which conditions will great powers engage, or refrain from, balancing behavior, according to structural realism?

As we have seen structural realism states that explanations for foreign policies should be sought in the structure of the international system. If imbalances occur, states will engage in balancing behavior, both internal and external, in order to restore the balance. This leads to the following structural realist hypothesis:

If an objective change in the balance of power in the international system occurs, great powers will engage in balancing behavior in order to restore the status quo ante.

2.2.2. Neoclassical realism

Neoclassical realism is the latest IR theory spawning from the realist paradigm. Neoclassical realists seek not to account for the reoccurring patterns in international politics but rather the foreign policies or, more precise, *grand strategies* of states, that seem explicable neither based on a solely structural, or *Innenpolitik* view of events (Taliaferro et al., 2009). As such, by positioning themselves in between, they try to avoid the problems related to structural theory; states in similar structural circumstances not acting alike, and of innenpolitik theories; similar domestic structures leading to different policies. Neoclassical realists draw on insight from both structural realist thought, by acknowledging and taking as independent variable the enabling and restraining influence of the international system which sets the parameters for state behavior, and classical realists, by incorporating a wide range of unit-level, intervening variables through which such influences translate into policy (the dependent variable) (Rose, 1998). Though they argue that, in the long term, policies do tend to be a reflection of relative power distribution, short and middle term predictions require a more sophisticated approach focusing on the classical topics of the state and its relation to domestic society. In doing so, they take up such issues as how institutions and leaders assess threats and opportunities, who decides on the scope of policy options, what is the influence of domestic actors on foreign policy and under which conditions domestic factors will interfere with predictions made by structural realist theories (Taliaferro et al., 2009).

Anarchy and state behavior. Neoclassicals posit that, rather than seeking safety, states react to the precariousness of anarchy by aiming to control and mold (i.e. increase their influence over) their

exterior surroundings (Rose, 1998). Anarchy is considered not necessarily Hobbesian but rather murky; states have a hard time judging their security and do so based on rules of thumb. The essential empirical prognosis posed by neoclassicals is that a state's position in the international system (its relative amount of power), outlines the size and aspirations of its foreign policy; the more powerful they are, the more ambitious they become and vice versa.

Intervening variables. On the short term, neoclassicals acknowledge that a direct translation of a state's power position into foreign policy practice is overly simplified. Rather, they pose two intervening variables that influence this process. Neoclassical realism's first intervening variable is the perception of state leaders (Rose, 1998). Holding rationality constant allows structural realists to ascribe disparity in foreign policies to the structure of the international system. Neoclassicals argue that the rationality assumption, that systemic influences transition seamlessly into foreign policy, is empirically incorrect. If one seeks to account for foreign policies, one needs to recognize that people make decisions and that translations are influenced by how specific leaders understand their situation. Neoclassical realists do stress the difficulties related to tracing links between policy and power as substantial policy change can also be the consequence of perceptual power shifts unrelated to the classical indicators (Rose, 1998).

Nicholas Kitchen (2010) has elaborated further on grand strategies and the conditions under which specific ideas tend to play a larger role in their formation. Kitchen designates the grand strategies of states as the level where systemic and domestic variables converge. Grand strategies encompass the broad spectrum of means and ends related to the aspects of power at a state's disposal, mostly of military, economic and ideological nature. Subject to continuous consideration, grand strategies are supposed to guide policy in a way that serves state interest in the long run, both in times of peace and war. They represent, as Posen (in Kitchen, 2010, p. 121) argues: "a political-military means-ends chain, a state's theory about how it can best "cause" security for itself." More concrete, grand strategies are the set of policy options of states, both in times of peace and war, that set out both a state's ends in international politics and define how the scope of national capabilities should be employed in order to achieve those ends (Kitchen, 2010). Because grand strategies are comprised of attitudes states have pertaining their best options for securing long-term interests; the best way they can employ specific parts of their power in achieving their ends, it necessarily involves the study of how states come to have which attitudes (ideas) towards the international environment. Kitchen (2010, p. 141) concludes his article by posing three hypothetical situations in which ideas have a greater influence on grand strategy formation. The third situation specifically addresses individuals and the concentrations of power. According to Kitchen, in countries where power is highly concentrated, "the rationality of numbers does not have a chance to operate" which creates far greater potential for specific ideas to play an important role in state policies. This, he argues, is testified

to by the erratic behavior sometimes exhibited by dictatorial regimes. Thus, we may conclude that in states with higher degrees of power concentration, we can expect a larger potential for the reflection of specific ideas in those policies.

The second intervening variable stressed by the neoclassicals relates to domestic power constellations: the state apparatus capacity and its links to society (Rose, 1998). Neoclassicals argue that an approach based on relative power distribution overlooks the fact that political setups can hinder or enable the extent to which national power resources can be exerted and translated into policy. Indeed, though it may be true that capacities shape intentions, foreign policy may lag behind due to an inhibiting state structure. On the opposite, national capacity might translate into foreign policy more directly if leaders face little hindrance.

Mutual exclusiveness. These two intervening variables are thought to be the cause of the diverging policies that many have witnessed. As has become clear, both are in some sense mutually exclusive. Should the foreign policy executive (FPE) be relatively restricted in devising policies, we expect the translation of systemic influences to be muddled. This, in turn, might lead to cases of over- or underbalancing; overly inimical or impaired responses to policies of other states because of such processes being delayed, because policies might become a compromise, or because they are in some other sense the suboptimal result of a lengthy policy chain. Also, as a logical consequence, heavily curtailed FPE's automatically leave little space for the influence of personal perceptions on foreign policy. When the policy chain is long and policies are influenced by many different actors, leader perceptions will logically play a smaller role. Conversely, when the FPE is relatively autonomous, we expect a higher potential for the role of leader perceptions in foreign policy. Deviating policies in this case are the result of interpretations of systemic influences by the policy elites, which might not be entirely accurate. Of course, an autonomous FPE with a 'realist' mindset might lead us to expect balancing behavior corresponding precisely with what one would expect based on systemic incentives.

Which applies to Russia? Based on the former, one of the two filters can, *a priori*, justifiably be omitted from our analysis. About one and a half years into his presidency, Boris Yeltsin pushed through a new constitution that turned Russia into what some referred to as a 'superpresidential' system that gave the Russian president an extraordinary amount of power (Tsygankov, 2013).¹³ Few checks and balances were left; the judiciary and the legislature were subjugated to the executive branch and if the president feels like the State Duma is too strict in exercising its controlling function, he may simply dissolve it. Furthermore, it granted the Russian president absolute power of the country's foreign policy. This is important then, because it gives us ample reason to assume that the

¹³ For a complete overview of the Russian president's constitutional competences, see chapter 4 of the Russian Constitution: <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/ch4.html>

Russian president's perceptions are of great importance in devising the country's foreign policy. For this reason, this filter will be the center of focus; the second filter will not be addressed further.

Examples of research. Neoclassicals followed up on a wave of research first exposing the correlation between relative power and the expansion of foreign policy (Rose, 1998). They sought to aggregate and extrapolate these arguments, employing them on a wide variety of cases in different contexts. Examples include Fareed Zakaria's analysis of US foreign policy, showing that US economic growth led to larger investments in the military sector and increasingly assertive foreign policies. Others have used similar lines of argument applied to the SU's foreign policy, China-US relations and the Axis forces during WWII.

Criticisms. Several criticisms have been formulated in response to the neoclassical approach in IR. Some have pointed to the fact that by incorporating a wide range unit-level variables based on case specific narratives, the strand does little more than provide ad hoc explanations that are of scant help in explaining or predicting given different contexts. However, as long as neoclassicals remain absolutely clear about the scope of their theories and the conditions under which certain propositions are valid, such criticism seems premature. Whether neoclassical generalizations hold empirically still remains to be seen but as long as their theories meet the right standards, empirics will speak for itself. Furthermore, as Taliaferro *et al.* (2009) note, neoclassical realism seeks to strike a balance between parsimony and explanatory power. Though the generalizability of different neoclassical realist theories might suffer, its proponents argue they tend to be more useful in their specific niche than grand theories such as structural realism. Layering systemic- and unit-level variables in order to increase explanatory and predictive power might seem undesirable to some but in the end, as aptly put by Schweller (in Ripsman *et al.*, 2009, p. 299): "the political process is messy, but it is the subject matter we have chosen to study and theorize about." I agree with Schweller. To be sure, there are no *a priori* reasons stemming from the paradigm itself to reject neoclassical realism as a valid IR theory. It is clear on what it seeks to explain and, just as importantly, what it cannot explain. My view is that neoclassical realism might just be the answer to critiques aimed at structural realism which is being faulted for the theory's lack of predictive power. If it succeeds, neorealism will no longer only be able to explain continuity, but also link certain structures to specific types of counterintuitive policies on the short term.

Neoclassical predictions. In terms of its predictions towards balancing behavior, neoclassical realism would start off by pointing to the filtering effect of either FPE perceptions or domestic political constellations on the influence of systemic effects. It would argue that balancing behavior should be viewed in terms of actual cases of foreign policy, devised by an FPE which is either relatively autonomous, in which case its own interpretations of systemic incentives inform it on how to act, or otherwise curtailed in which case it is mostly the result of way domestic political actors relate to each

other. As has been demonstrated, we have little reason to assume a filtering effect stemming from the influence of different domestic political actors. Rather, the FPE, in this case the Russian president, has a very high degree of autonomy in devising his foreign policy. From this, we can deduce the following neoclassical realist hypothesis:

If the FPE is relatively autonomous in devising foreign policy, then balancing behavior will be the result of the FPE's perceptions on the changes in the balance of power.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Chapter 2 set out both structural realism's and neoclassical realism's theoretical expectations pertaining balancing behavior, as witnessed in the Russian case. However, if we are to assess the value of both theories in explaining Russian foreign policy, a precise operationalization of the important theoretical concepts is needed in order to guide the empirical research. This chapter seeks to set out how both hypotheses will be assessed, operationalizes the most important concepts, addresses the case selection and the source material. In the process and where necessary, methodological choices will be justified and reflected upon in terms of their implications for the conclusions in this research.

3.1. Research design

The nature of the question at hand prescribes a qualitative case study research design. More specifically, this thesis seeks to apply two established theories on a state's foreign policy to see to what extent they are (still) relevant.

Case, case study and unit of analysis. Because the word 'case' can be quite confusing as it can relate to different phenomena at different levels, it is useful to differentiate between the concepts of *case*, *unit of analysis* and *unit of observation* before we move on. As we have seen, though both structural realism and neoclassical realism are theories within the realist paradigm starting from the same assumption, both devise different conceptual models. Despite these differences, both theories seek to explain the same phenomenon: great power foreign policy. This is the unit of analysis in this thesis: the broader phenomenon we seek to theorize about.

The unit of observation in this thesis, the unit used to assess the theoretical predictions about the unit of analysis, is Russia. However, because of the differences in how the conceptual models are constructed, both theories will be judged based on different types of empirical phenomena and case study designs.

According to John Gerring (2007, p. 19), a case "connotes a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time". Structural realism explicitly refrains from making statements about specific instances of foreign policy; rather, it tries to explain continuity despite differences in units over time. Neoclassical realism on the other hand tries to link structural assumptions to specific instances of foreign policy. Whereas structural realism looks at broad patterns of balancing based on systemic influence, neoclassical realism explains how structure translate into foreign policy through unit-level characteristics. As such, in order to test neoclassical realism and see if its purported mechanisms really are at work, we need to look at specific instances

of foreign policy and, in the case of Russia, try to ascertain whether systemic incentives were indeed translated through the perceptions of Russia's different leaders. These instances of foreign policy will be the cases on which the judgment about that theory will be based. For structural realism on the other hand, the 'case' is somewhat different. It does not seek to explain specific instances of foreign policy and as such, using such 'cases' to judge the theory would be a wrong approach. Rather, foreign policies can be part of those broader patterns, for example balancing, that structural realism does predict. Russia's 24 years of foreign policy in the broadest sense, not just specific instances of, for example, intervention, constitutes the case, which we expect to display certain peculiarities based on that theory.

Case selection. Which case then will be used in order to test neoclassical realism? This will depend on the outcome of the structural realist analysis. As has been established in chapter 1, Russia's foreign policy seems to have gone through a transformative phase, gradually growing more assertive, in nature despite *prima facie* contradictory systemic impulses. However, assessing whether structural realism actually is unable to account for this apparent change in posture requires a close and careful examination of the actual changes in power dynamics that occurred around the most important foreign policy events during Russia's two decades as an independent country. Based on the changes in the balance of power prior to those events, structural realism expects Russia to behave in specific ways. The theory's predictions towards balancing behavior allow us to assess the extent to which Russia's behavior, both during the 1990s and the 21st century, is then consistent with those predictions. Should we see specific cases of balancing, we expect these to be preceded by a decline in Russia's power, either by internal or external balancing by other great powers or alliances. The case becomes even stronger if periods of reticence are indeed preceded by periods in which no changes take place. Such an approach requires a certain amount of nuance and sophistication. Simply arguing that an act by itself is not in accordance with what has been predicted can be misleading. One might for example imagine certain balancing policies being thwarted by the West leaving Russia without means to push through or simply lacking the means to do anything at all.¹⁴ All of this requires an accurate and comprehensive operationalization of those empirical phenomena that could be regarded as balancing behavior in order to guide the analysis. The theory would ultimately be falsified should we fail to observe a pattern of balancing behavior over time concordant with Russian loss, or gain, of relative power.

As has been demonstrated, neoclassical realism posits the same long-term predictions as structural realism; a state's foreign policy is mostly determined by its place in the international system. Individual instances in which policies deviate are however explained by domestic political setups, or,

¹⁴ This might even mean re-assessing Russia's status as a great power during that specific phase.

in the case of Russia, the way systemic influences are interpreted by the country's leader. Because neoclassical realism mainly seeks to explain singular cases and because asserting the influence of specific leaders' interpretation requires us to look at specific instances more in-depth, the chosen method here will be a single-case study. As stated before, this case study will be determined by the result of the structural realist analysis. Should structural realism not be able to account for specific periods of Russian foreign policy, we will take a specific instance of an important foreign policy decision in order to see whether the purported neoclassical mechanism can form the missing link. Should structural realism be able to account for the full period of Russian foreign policy, neoclassical realism would still expect specific instances of those policies to be the result of the interpretation of structural effects by the Russian leader. The choice for a neoclassical case is postponed furthermore because case selection becomes much more interesting after we have established Russia's patterns of balancing. The case ultimately chosen then, will be one in which Russia clearly aligns with a country, either against, or in order with our expectations.

Neoclassical realism will be falsified if structural influences cannot convincingly be shown to have gone through a process of interpretation by its leader. It is important to note that a seemingly direct translation of structure does not necessarily refute neoclassical realism. The president in office could employ a realist worldview, in which case they act according to structural predictions, but even then it is still their interpretation that is decisive in how that structure translates, which is something structural realists reject. We may still reject denounce structural realism then, on the basis of parsimony. Their explanatory mechanism may prove to be valid but if we do not need them to explain foreign policy, they are of little added value.

3.2. Generalizability

Distinguishing between units of analysis, observation and different types of cases is important too because it relates to questions about generalizability: about what can we actually draw broader conclusions? As has been established, the unit of analysis in this thesis is great power foreign policy; this is the phenomena that both theories seek to explain. First and foremost, then, this thesis increases our understanding of, and allows us to generalize about great power foreign policy, or more specifically, it answers questions related to the conditions under which great powers tend to display balancing behavior given certain changes in their external environment.

For structural realism, already a theory seeking to pose general statements about great power foreign policy, Russia's foreign policy can be seen as a typical case. This relates to the theory's black box assumption: because the theory does not look into the state, at what makes them different, there is little that *can* make them different. Russia, for structural realism, is just another great power. The

thesis thus seeks to generalize about the extent to which the composition of international system is useful in explaining great power foreign policy.

A separate note should be made pertaining neoclassical realism's generalizing strength because, as opposed to structural realism, it is more of 'niche' theory. Because Russia's leader is relatively autonomous in devising foreign policy, we expect domestic political constellations not to play a role in this process.¹⁵ This means that in terms of generalizability, neoclassical realism is limited to telling us something about great powers that are like Russia in that sense. Still, because neoclassical realism is such a young theory, mostly applied narratively, and because we are more interested in whether its mechanisms work *at all* on a broader level, it still makes for an interesting case study. This is exactly why the *most-likely* case study is generally used to test theories that are relatively new (Gerring, 2007). It is not the most thorough test in terms of generalizability but rather shows us whether there is any strength to the theory at all. If we do not see its purported mechanisms at work in a case where we most expect it, we have no reason to expect it to work anywhere else. Using Russia then, regardless of the specific case used, turns the research design into a most-likely case study for neoclassical realism. Because the Russian FPE is so autonomous compared to the other great powers, we expect the theory's mechanisms to work in this case, above the foreign policy of any other great power. If it does not, we have no reason to believe it will work anywhere else in countries where the FPE is even less autonomous.

Still, this piece's greatest generalizing strength lies in the way it juxtaposes the two different mechanisms that are purported to be at work. It allows us to make generalizing statements about the extent to which systemic impulses are useful in explaining great power foreign policy as opposed to the interpretation of those effects by country leaders.

3.3. Justification and operationalization

3.3.1 Power

Any operationalization of realism starts with the approach's central analytical concept: power. If we are to determine whether Russia's behavior in response to the developments in the balance of power have been theoretically coherent, we first need to establish what power is and how we can measure developments therein. As the theoretical chapter indicated, realism's definition of power is quite unambiguous. Power is objective; its influence derives from defined (categories or sets) of sources (capabilities) and its influence is universal. Waltz refrains from directly defining the concept but does so indirectly when he sets out the capabilities based on which we can measure the number

¹⁵ Autonomy will be operationalized later on in this chapter.

of poles in the international system. According to Waltz (1979, p. 131), system polarity can be determined by ranking states on “size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence.” As system polarity refers to the amount of great powers in the system, consequently, these indicators are also the ones to look at when we measure power and changes therein. Constructing such a concrete, delimited list seems bold and greatly increases a theory’s concreteness and testability, however, it also makes for an easy target. Waltz does not differentiate between the different capabilities in terms of relative power. As such, strong military capabilities do not have a larger influence on total aggregate power than territorial size.

Realists agree on the concept’s objective nature, but hardly on how it should be defined precisely and how states react to it. The philosophical section in the last chapter showed how different approaches critique realism precisely for the approach’s broader objective ontology of which that characterization is part. Leaving these considerations aside, and acknowledging its practical applicability, Waltz’s list seems ad hoc, poorly justified and at best one of many possible approximations of an objective notion of power. Still, his definition is useful for practical reasons as it serves as a clear guide for empirical research. These critiques may qualify conclusions drawn based on such an operationalization which will be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

The problem thus lies not in defining the concept but rather in empirically aggregating the different sources of power into a coherent measurement. Waltz (1979) clearly states that power is indivisible. States receive total scores based on the prior indicators; there is no use in judging states’ power based on its separate elements. Again however, he gives little guidance as to how such scores should be determined. Even though Waltz clearly states appropriate indicators for measuring power, no datasets exist that provide a direct aggregate translation. Translating theoretical notions to empirical research is hardly ever flawless however and always involves deviating from the theory to some extent. This is not a problem as long as one is aware of, and reflects upon, these qualifications.

In order to measure the changes in the distribution of capabilities among Russia and other great powers, this thesis makes use of *Correlates of War* (CoW) project. The CoW’s National Material Capabilities (NMC) dataset gives an overview of the total population, urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military personnel, and military expenditure of all states that existed from 1812 until 2007 (Correlates of War, n.d.). Moreover, included in the dataset is the Composite Indicator of National Capabilities (CINC). This indicator sums up a country’s score on all six variables for a specific year and converts it to a share of the total international system which is subsequently averaged across those six components. It gives a clear overview of how countries are placed *vis-à-vis* one another based on their scores on these variables. The CINC-scores will be used to ascertain the developments in the balance of power.

As said before, translating theory in to empirics almost always involves having to make pragmatic choices that may not be completely theoretically justified. This piece does not aspire to create a dataset including precisely those indicators Kenneth Waltz points out, nor do scope conditions allow for it. Using CINC-scores is indeed not a direct translation of Kenneth Waltz' theoretical notion of power. Still, as concluded in chapter 2, his list lacks any form of justification and is therefore itself but one of many approaches to a notion of objective power. Therefore, using a dataset that includes some of the same, but deviates on some indicators will not pose a significant problem.

3.3.2. A 'great' power?

Another point that needs to be addressed may seem relatively straightforward but needs justification nonetheless. This pertains Russia's status as a *great* power. Indeed, realist theories are theories about great powers, not about small states, thus correctly assessing it requires us to apply its teachings to states that meet that qualification. The problems and debates relating to power have previously been discussed and explain precisely why there is no universal benchmark. Waltz himself acknowledges this and considered the question about which states are great powers "an empirical one, and common sense can answer it" (1979, p. 131). On the one hand, one may criticize Waltz for being so vague and leaving such seemingly important decisions to the whims of whoever employs his theory. It begs the question whether that leaves the concept with any analytical relevance at all. Still, however one may feel, we need to make do, and we may find solace in the fact that there is indeed broad agreement on which states have been great powers throughout time, which is precisely the reason Waltz left it at that. That being said, while arguing for some states' great power status might be more contentious, common sense justifiably suffices in Russia's case as its merits have been rather uncontroversial. The country has, more or less continuously since the Eighteenth Century, always been one operating in the center of world politics.

Of course, we can only come to relevant conclusions if Russia's behavior analyzed in the light of that of other great powers. Determining which countries those should be is important as it could greatly alter the conclusions. Historically, the five permanent members of the UN security council are seen as the most powerful states on earth. Those states are: the US, France, the UK, Russia and China. In my opinion, this lineup reflects times long gone and would as such distort our analysis. While the US, China and Russia are indeed still true great powers, France and the UK no longer befit that status. The EU would be a much more plausible contender but, as set out in chapter 2, is not assigned much agency at all in realist theory being an international organization. Instead it would be more productive to include fast-growing nations that have long surpassed those countries in terms of objective indicators, such as India and Brazil. While India, considering its massive population and nuclear

capabilities can truly be seen as a great power, Brazil is best defined as a regional power. The list of great powers that will be used in our analysis will thus include Russia, China, the US and India. Again, this list is but the result of using common sense. This does not mean common sense cannot be employed carefully and accurately however. Indeed, looking at Waltz's indicators they are simply the most plausible contenders and anyone arguing for a different list would at least have a hard time doing so.

3.3.3. Balancing

Another concept that needs operationalization is the concept surfacing in both hypotheses: balancing. The previous chapter already defined balancing as countervailing policies designed to improve abilities to prosecute military missions in order to deter and/or defeat another state. Waltz distinguished two forms of balancing: internal balancing, referring to increasing one's own military strength, and external balancing: seeking military alliances with other great powers to counter the threats by other states. To a large extent, Waltz's conceptualization is self-explanatory. Indicators for internal balancing are increased military budgets, i.e. a higher percentage of a country's gross domestic product (GDP) being spent on the military sector. In the case of external balancing however, Waltz's rigid definition may lead one to overlook other (albeit less) important developments that can arguably change the balance of power enough to make a difference. Therefore, this thesis will not limit external balancing to formal alliances based on treaties. Instead, other formal indicators of (military) cooperation will be included, such as joint military exercises. States are usually reluctant to commit to military alliances based on treaties and conducting joint military exercises is usually regarded as a milder way of deterring enemies by 'showing teeth' and demonstrating what one is capable of and that one likely will not be alone should conflicts escalate. Such exercises have proven quite controversial and have in the past nearly led to war (e.g. U.S. – South Korean joint military exercises in 2015). Another indicator is the presence at military parades. This too can be viewed as a more reserved way of external balancing, again showing other great powers that states consider themselves allied. Again related are diplomatic visits of state leaders or highly ranked officials as these to point towards possible alliances in a more indirect way. By broadening our interpretation of external balancing we take a more flexible approach that, while incorporating many important nuances, still remains faithful to the realist's formal frame and thus increases its applicability.

As has been said, in the case of structural realism it is the *pattern* of balancing behavior that matters, i.e. based on the systemic set up, we expect more or less balancing behavior over a given period of time. In the case of neoclassical realism, this thesis will take a specific act of foreign policy

and determine to what extent they were the result of a leader's perception as this is what the theory would expect in the case of Russia.

3.3.4. Balance

Balancing behavior is behavior exhibited by states in reaction to an objective change in the balance of power. However, as the word itself already implies, balancing is a way of correcting an imbalance, which necessarily means there was a situation before that did not elicit that same reaction and to which the balancing state wants to return: the *status quo ante* – the way things were before. Each act of balancing (or lack thereof) has its own status quo ante to which the balancing state wants to return and which needs to be looked at in order to determine whether that specific reaction is in line with what realism predicts.

Determining the status quo ante for each act of Russian foreign policy necessarily involves a certain level of arbitrariness. Because realism posits no predictions in terms of time involved in balancing, it is up to the researcher to determine whether an act of balancing follows either too late or too soon, or equally, whether the lack thereof is in line with theoretical expectations. In absence of such guidelines we can say but one sensible thing, which again relates to Russia's political character. Because foreign policy making in Russia is so centralized compared to other states, we have no reason to expect acts of balancing to take several years. Unlike in different states with extensive systems of checks and balances, Russia's president has the competence to decide the course of action on his own. Still, this does not provide us with a concrete and sensible cut-off point. This point will be established at two years. Should we see an act of balancing, we expect the status quo ante to be no further than two years back. Similarly, should we observe an objective change of power, we expect Russia to take no longer than two years to react.

Another issue is how we can establish whether the balance is restored. Here a significant problem arises, related to the way structural realism is devised. On the one hand, structural realism's definition of power is based on the objective indicators set out in chapter 2. On the other hand, it expects states to restore imbalances in power, partially, through means that are not part of what defines the concept, i.e. external balancing. We can thus question the extent to which attempts at external balancing are truly attempts at restoring the balance of *power* and more over, the theory provides no measure allowing us to determine whether such attempts have been successful. As such, we can posit plausible statements about *when* Russia should balance and some careful expectations about the degree of balancing *relative to the other periods*, but we cannot convincingly tell *how much* balancing is enough. This is a great lacuna in defensive structural realist theory that should be addressed in future research.

Finally, one may argue that looking at individual manifested status quo antes ignores the fact that there may be a larger context with its own meta-status quo ante that determines whether behavior can be considered theoretically coherent. This may be especially relevant in the case of Russia which for decades was on par with, or close to the US in term of objective power. Everything since the collapse of the SU then could be viewed as an attempt to restore that old balance, to return to the status quo ante of 1990. However, this would lead us to predict a constant display of Russian balancing behavior throughout the 1990s and the 21st century. As has been established in chapter 1, this has not been the case. Therefore, it makes more sense to analyze Russia's foreign policy with a more nuanced approach.

3.3.5. Autonomy

On several occasions, this text has referred to the Russian president's autonomous status, what this means for Russian foreign policy, the theoretical approach and the generalizability of the conclusions. Autonomy relates to the degree of independence policy makers have in devising policies. Saying the president is autonomous however is by itself a rather meaningless statement, unless his autonomy is compared to that of leaders of other great powers. This paragraph does not seek to posit and comprehensive comparison between the between the political competencies of great power FPE's. Rather, it serves as a concise illustration of why we are justified in calling the Russian FPE more autonomous than the others.

The US president too has considerable leeway in making decisions concerning foreign policy. However, he is kept in check by the US Congress. Congress decides whether the US goes to war, writes the military budgets, regulates commerce with other countries and needs to give its consent in the appointment of the Secretary of State who is mostly in charge of diplomacy (McCormick, 2010). As no such checks and balances exist in Russia, the US president is relatively less autonomous than the Russian president.

China forms an interesting case. Sometimes referred to as a 'one-party dictatorship', recent years found the country's political power far more concentrated with the current 'paramount leader' Xi Jinping than before ("The power off", 2014).¹⁶ Who is truly in charge in China is much less clear than in other countries however. Still, it is generally believed that, though shrinking, most decisions are made by a select group of elite party officials, not by the paramount leader himself. It is interesting to

¹⁶ Though not an official title, it is commonly used to designate the country's most prominent political figure. Since Deng Xiaoping's death in 1992 it has referred to people serving both as General Secretary of the Communist Party of China and the country's president.

see if these developments will continue in the future. If so, a world views approach might pose interesting predictions for China's foreign policy as well.

In India, considered the largest democracy in the world, power is shared by several different actors, most famously the president and the prime minister. The president serves as the head of all three branches of the trias politica, as well as commander-in-chief of India's armed forces. The prime minister serves as chief of government, main advisor to the president, leader of the majority party in the Indian parliament and the head of the Council of Ministers (differencebetween.info, n.d.). Policies, including foreign policy, are chiefly devised however by the Indian Council of Ministers and the minister of foreign affairs. Given the shared responsibility, India thus clearly lacks the centralization characterizing the Russian system.

As shown in the theoretical chapter, the Russian president, contrary to the leaders of the other great powers, has autonomy nearly reaching dictator-like levels. Though the other countries may show considerable differences in terms of autonomy, none seem to get close to that enjoyed by Russia's leader. Hence the choice for Russia in order to test neoclassical realism's mechanism.

3.3.6. Interpretation of structural effects

In the case of neoclassical realism, what we are looking for are indicators that point towards a process of interpretation of systemic pressures by state leaders, *in casu* Boris Yeltsin or Vladimir Putin. One will immediately notice the absence of Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's president from 2008 until 2012. The reason for omitting him is that there seems to be consensus with regard to his term as president being nothing but a way for Putin to circumvent a constitutional restriction that limits the possible number of consecutive presidential terms to two (Blomfield, 2008). One of Medvedev's close trustees, Igor Yurgens, confirmed that after Medvedev came to office, Putin was indeed still pulling the strings. Medvedev's cabinet and presidential administration were filled with politicians owing their career to Putin. Considering these qualifications of his term as president, we have little reason to expect his personal worldviews to have mattered much in his foreign policies. If the theory holds at all, these should rather be considered proxies of Putin's belief system.

One of the main weaknesses of neoclassical realism is that, though it emphasizes interpretation, it hardly discusses how this process of interpretation actually works. What factors can help us understand how leaders interpret structural effects? Here we may draw upon extensive insights generated by scholars working in the field of foreign policy analysis (FPA). A distinct subset of FPA scholars focuses specifically on how worldviews of leaders influence their policymaking. Though FPA is mostly a first-image approach, we may combine this with the neoclassical argument by arguing that leaders filter structural effects through a process of interpretation, mostly determined by their

personal worldviews. These worldviews concretize the interpretation argument and give it practical usability. In order to test whether this process of interpretation of systemic incentives indeed played a role in Russia's presidents foreign policies, the following four different indicators will be used in assessing the empirical material. It must be said that they are merely a random selection from a myriad of different options. Still, they are selected to assure a comprehensive approach addressing most of the relevant aspects of worldviews.

The first indicator relates to the president's view of Russia's identity. This identity can have several components. It can relate to Russia's role in the world: what 'is' Russia and what was Russia? What should its role be in the future and (how) does that relate to its role in the past? Is Russia destined to be a great power and should its empire be restored? Or the SU? Furthermore, such an identity might have different components like ethnicity (Russia as one of the three 'Slavic sisters'; ethnically Russian?); religion (Russia as an Orthodox Christian nation); territory (what should its size be; Russia as Asian or European nation?) or even philosophical (a communitarianist focus on the communal spirit versus Western individualism stemming from the enlightenment). What matters here is that the president's view of Russia's identity might influence the way he interprets external threats and thus the way he reacts to them.

The second indicator relates to the president's general view of international politics. Is he a realist, i.e. is he inherently pessimistic and does he consider international politics to be conflictuous and a zero-sum game, or does he believe politics is a zero-plus game and is he more open to cooperation?

The third indicator (relating to the previous one) has to do with how the leader believes his goals ought to be achieved. Does he believe in the use of force or threat (military/economic) or is he inclined to the use of diplomacy?

Finally, who is the significant other or the main opponent? To who does Russia compare itself (if at all)? Who is the bellwether in terms of what it wants to achieve? Does he compare Russia to Poland, the US, or China for example?

3.4. Source material

The following chapter contains the empirical analysis that will assess the theoretical expectations of both structural and neoclassical realism. This thesis will make use of several different empirical sources of material. In order to map the developments in power, this thesis makes use of the CINCScores included in the NMC dataset of the CoW-project. However, because this project only includes the years up until 2007, the subsequent years will be interpreted based on an estimation of the available information of those same indicators. Sources for this information might include the CIA

Factbook, the World Bank, the IMF, SIPRI, et cetera. Also, information pertaining Russian balancing behavior (e.g. alliance-building) will be sought in books and newspaper articles. A significant problem that arises when trying to establish balancing behavior is that Soviet military expenditure figures have always been subject to debate. These numbers are necessary to determine whether Russia's early military spending constitutes a rise or decline compared to that of the SU. Reliable figures are scarcely available as official numbers tend to diverge highly from foreign estimates of actual spending, sometimes up to one hundred percent (Department of Defense, 1991). Thus, these need to be interpreted with caution.

In order to assess the presidents' interpretation process, it is important to stay as close to the actual source as possible. During the first years of both Yeltsin's and Putin's presidency, several documents were released that broadly set out the country's developments and aims in terms of foreign policy, national security and the military. These documents are the National Security Concept (NSC), the Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) and the Military Doctrine (De Haas, 2010). Considering the Russian president's autonomy in these matters, these documents can be considered decent proxies of his worldviews. Depending on the case chosen, the documents released either during Yeltsin or Putin's terms will be scrutinized to distill their worldviews. Furthermore, the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly will be used; a speech in which the president is constitutionally obliged to outline the guidelines for the country's foreign policy. If available, further primary sources will be used that provide relevant insight into the president's thinking.

Chapter 4 – Empirical research

The previous chapter's main focus was turning the theoretical hypotheses into meaningful and measurable statements which can now empirically be assessed. The foundation for both the structural realist and the subsequent neoclassical realist assessment lies in a precise overview of the developments in power since Russia's independence. Because Russia's earliest behavior might be seen as an attempt to restore a status quo ante existing before its independence in 1991, this analysis will include 1990 - the year preceding Russia's independence.¹⁷ Based on these developments, predictions pertaining balancing behavior can be made for specific periods in Russian history.

The 1992 – 2007 will be divided into several sub-periods. These periods will be determined based on developments in CINC-scores. For each of these periods we will then ascertain whether we expect Russia to balance or not. The developments in power also allow us to predict against who Russia will balance. Should Russia lose a lot of relative power to a specific great power, we expect most of its external balancing to somehow be directed at that actor, not the others.

As of November 2015, the NMC dataset has not yet been updated to include any years after 2007. The question thus becomes how these countries have developed on these indicators since, especially since Russia shown quite some interesting behavior after 2007. Because the CINC-scores for the subsequent period are not readily available, and it is beyond the scope of this piece to devise them manually, an alternative method will be applied. In order to approach the method used for the 1992 – 2007 period, I have collected the data available for each of the six different CINC-indicators for the 2008 - 2014 period. I will start by plotting graphs for all of the six different indicators comprising the CINC showing growth percentages for the 2008 – 2014 period. This will allow us to conclude whether developments on a certain indicator have been positive or negative in a certain year compared to each of the three other great powers. Subsequently, based on these graphs, I will make three different tables, comparing Russia's developments to each of the individual great powers. If, in a certain year, an indicator has positively developed for Russia compared to another country, this will be denoted with a '+', and, conversely, with a '-'. If there has been no development, this will be denoted with '+/-'. If, in a specific year, Russia loses power on a majority of indicators compared to a specific country, we expect Russia to display balancing behavior towards that country, and conversely, based on years in which Russia gains power we expect none. Years in which Russia's gains equal its losses are years in which we expect no balancing too as the *status quo* does not change.

¹⁷ As Russia only become independent in late December or 1991, Its behavior will be analyzed from 1992 onwards.

Ultimately, this will allow us to predict against which countries Russia will balance (or not) in each specific year for the 2008 – 2014 period in roughly the same manner as the 1992 – 2007 period. Granted, because the figures cannot be combined into a single CINC-score, some nuance is lost in the process. Years in which Russia loses a slight amount of relative power on four indicators and gains great amounts on the two others will be considered just as negative as years in which it loses a great deal on the same four indicators and gains only little on the other two. Furthermore, this approach does not provide the means to compare *how much* power Russia loses against each country. As a consequence, we cannot make predictions pertaining external balancing for this period with the same amount of accuracy as the 1992 – 2007 period. However, because the CINC-index covers the vast majority of Russia's history as an independent nation and, as will become clear, some very explicit and continuing trends are visible, we will proceed by extrapolating the numbers. To be sure, such analyses should be interpreted with great caution. Still, absent CINC-scores, this pragmatic choice should give us the closest possible approximation of the 1989 – 2007 period and thus allow us to devise the most precise and meaningful predictions.

What exactly should the selected periods look like in order to allow for clear, testable hypotheses? First, if available, these will be periods in which Russia either loses or gains power against *all* other countries. This is a methodological issue and relates mostly to internal balancing. If we want to test the viability of structural realism based on predictions about internal balancing, we want to select those periods in which we assume it is most likely to happen. If the theory cannot explain internal balancing behavior in those periods, we have no reason to expect it to be able to do so anywhere else.

Second, this means selecting periods without any 'leftover' predictions. Because of the maximum span of two years to react, we may end up with periods during which we both expect Russia to balance because of power loss during the previous (two) year(s), or retain the balance of power. Because we cannot come to meaningful conclusions based on such periods, those selected will be unambiguous in that regard.

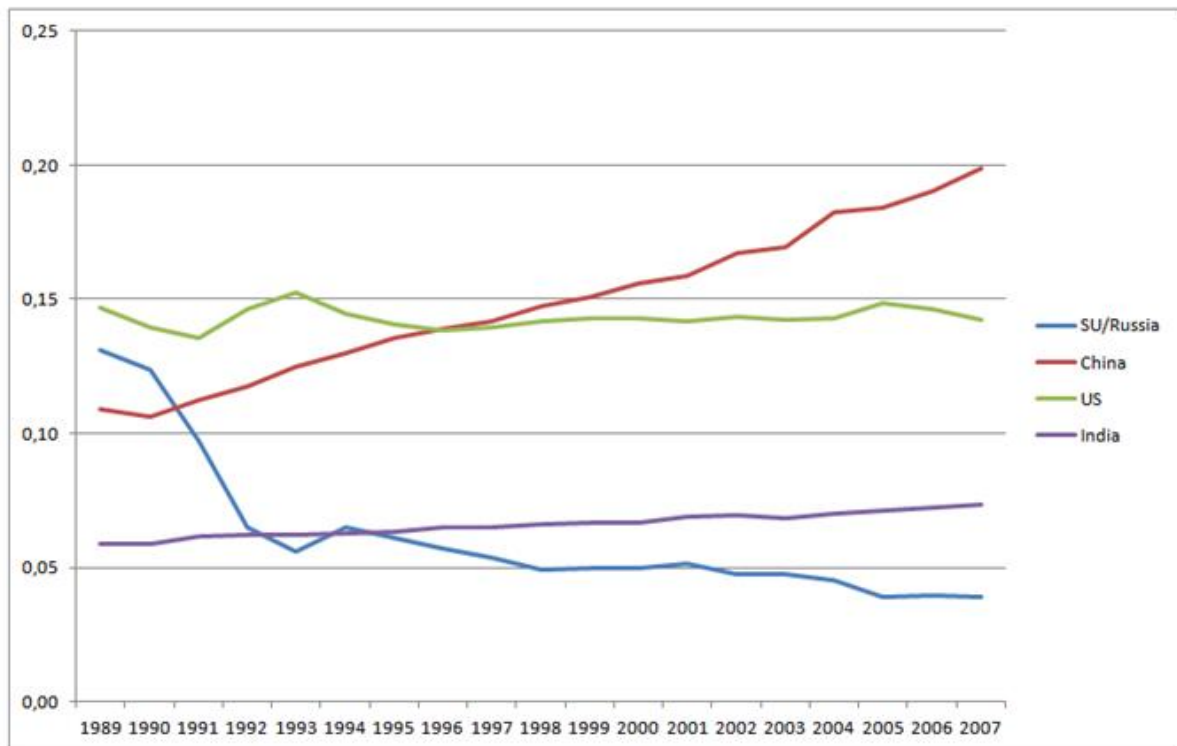
Finally, it should be noted that specific acts of balancing taking place in a specific year but continuing over one or several years will not be counted as 'new' acts of balancing during the next year. They are considered attempts to permanently restore the *status quo ante* preceding the specific imbalance against which they were first implemented.

4.1. Developments in power

4.1.1. 1989 - 2007

As has been stated in the previous chapter, the CINC-index, included in the NMC-dataset will be used to map the developments in power for the selected four great powers. Figure 1 displays the development in CINC-scores for the selected great powers from 1989 until 2007:

Figure 1 - CINC-score development for the four selected great powers over the 1989 – 2007 period.



Source: self-compiled graph based on data from the national material capabilities dataset (see Correlates of War, n.d.).

The biggest change in terms of power for Russia is visible during its transition from SU to the RF and then continuing throughout 1993. In 1989 at the end of the CW, the SU, already severely economically weakened by an endless battle with the US, still had a CINC-score of .131, relatively close to that of the US (.146) and ahead of all the other great powers. Around the same time Russia's power drops, we see an increase in America's CINC-score which stops right around 1993 when Russia's freefall ends and seems to enter a period of sudden growth. This growth quickly evens out however and from 1995 we see a somewhat steady decline up until 1999. Russia's score then remains steady until around 2004 when it again shows steady decline.

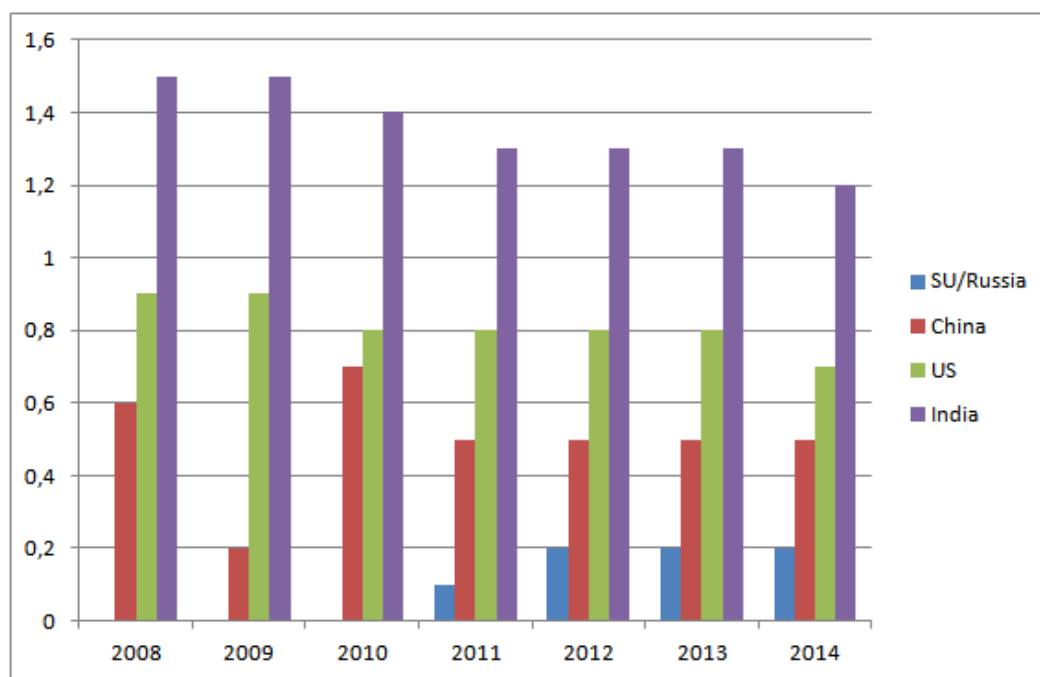
China, while initially having a lower score than both the SU and the US and showing some initial decline, has been growing remarkably fast and steady since 1991. In 2007, its CINC-score nearly

doubled compared to 1989 and was vastly larger than that of both the US and especially Russia. The fourth great power, India, displays the steadiest development in its CINC-score. Starting at .058 it grows to .073 in 2007, quite a significant growth in power. Most interestingly, India overtakes Russia in terms of power somewhere between 1992 and 1993.

4.1.2. 2008 – 2015

As stated before, CINC-scores are based on a country's score on six variables: total population, urban population, iron and steel production, primary energy consumption, military personnel, and military expenditure. What matters when looking at these indicators is not so much whether a country has 'increased' on such an indicator, but how these developments compare to the developments of the other great powers. Therefore, what we are looking for is a comparison in growth (or decline) percentages. Figure 2 plots the annual growth percentages for total population for the selected great powers from the 2008 - 2014 period:

Figure 2 - Annual growth percentages for total population of the four great powers over the 2008 – 2014 period.



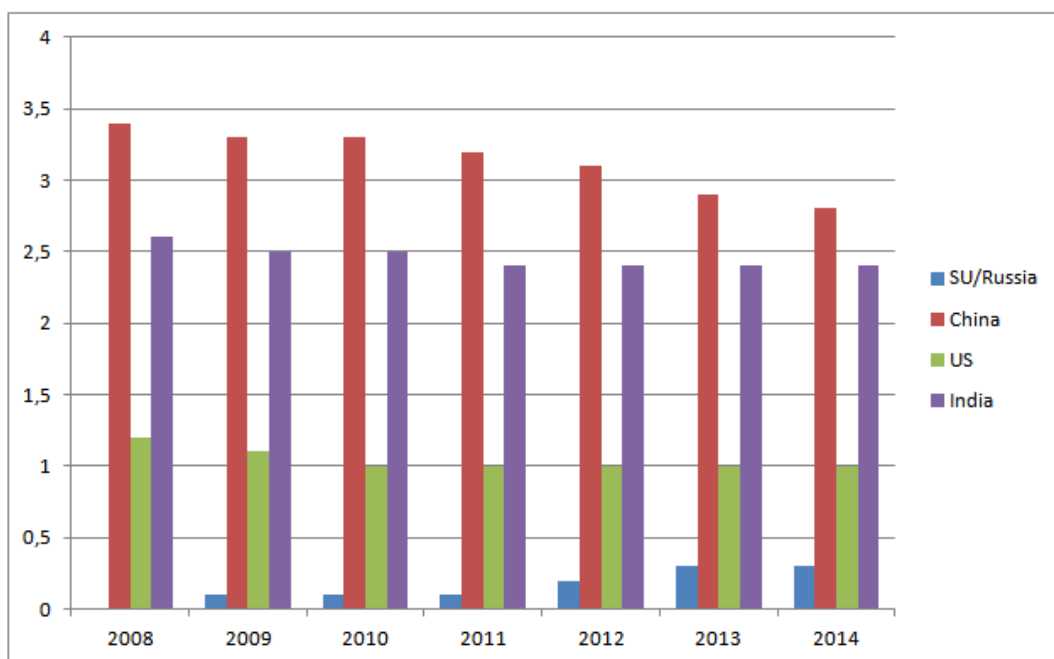
Source: self-compiled graph based on data from World Bank (see World Bank, 2015).

Looking at the graph, we see a trend of declining growth percentages. Nearly all countries, despite different starting points, show the same amount of relative decline in percentages. The only exception in this regard is Russia, which shows an upward trend. It is important to recall however that Russia is the only country starting from a situation of decline. Where the growth numbers for all the other countries are declining, Russia's positive line merely points to a decrease in decline. As becomes

clear from the graph, at no point in time, does Russia show higher growth rates than any other great power, in fact, despite a reversing trend, as of 2014, the populations of the other great powers are still growing at a higher rate than that of Russia. We can thus conclude that, in terms of population, Russia has become increasingly less powerful compared to the other great powers over the full 2008 - 2014 period.

The second indicator is urban population. Figure 3 plots the development in percentages of populations living in urban areas for all of the selected four great powers:

Figure 3 - Annual growth percentages for the urban population of the four great powers over the 2008 - 2014 period.



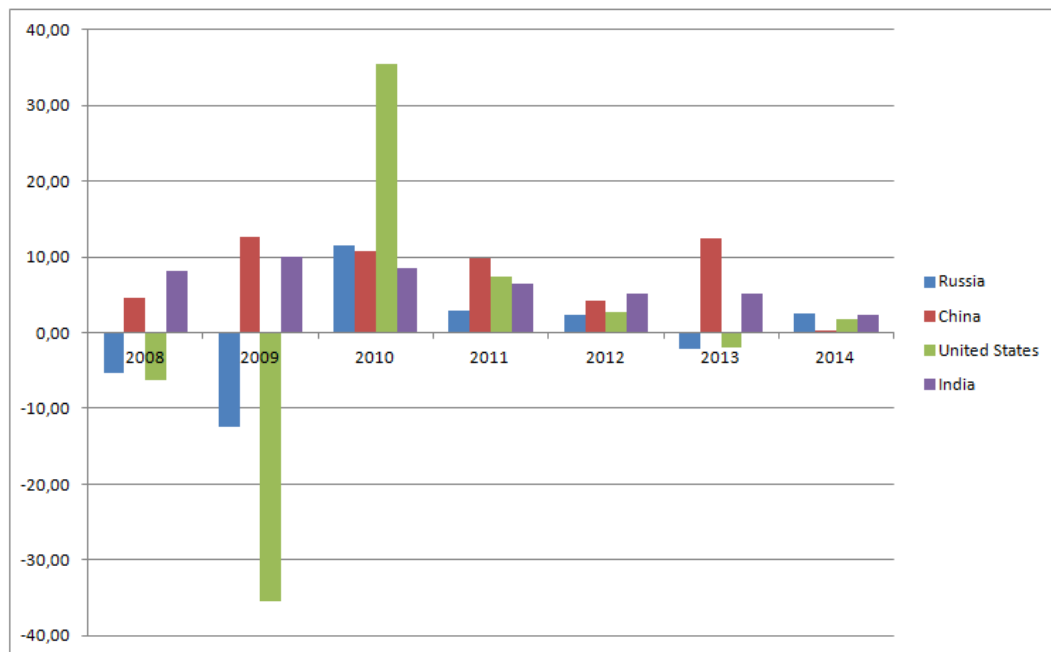
Source: self-compiled graph based on World Bank data (see World Bank, 2015).

As the previous graph shows, Russia's urban population has remained rather steady. Over the entire 2008 – 2014 period, Russia's urban population never grows by more than 0.3 percent. The only two countries that can be said to show significant growth in its urban population are India and China, respectively seeing around 2.5 and 3.5 percent growth over the entire period. Again, even though Russia is the only country showing a positive trend in growth percentages, what is important is that it is starting from a position of zero growth and is still showing the lowest growth numbers. In terms of urban population then, Russia loses ground to all the other great powers over the entire period.

The third indicator in the list is the production of iron and steel. Iron has been included in the NMC-dataset because it was the main indicator of industrial activity prior to 1900. After 1900, steel production caught up with iron and replaced it as a more reliable indicator of industrial economic

activity. For this reason, only the statistics for steel production will be included here. Figure 4 shows the annual percentage changes in total steel production for each of the selected four great powers:

Figure 4 - Annual growth percentages for total steel production of the four great powers over the 2008 – 2014 period



Source: self-compiled graph based on data from the World Steel Association (see World Steel Association, n.d.).

The chart plotting steel production shows some interesting developments. In 2008, Russia lost ground to China and India, and won little over the US. In 2009 the results of the financial crisis first started to reflect in crude steel production. Russia and the US saw a drastic decline in steel output, with the US leading the freefall with a 35,4 percent drop. Again, the two exceptions are China and India, growing 12,5 and 10 percent. Overall in 2009, the developments where similar for Russia. In terms of steel production, it gained a lot of relative power over the US but lost just as much or more to India and China.

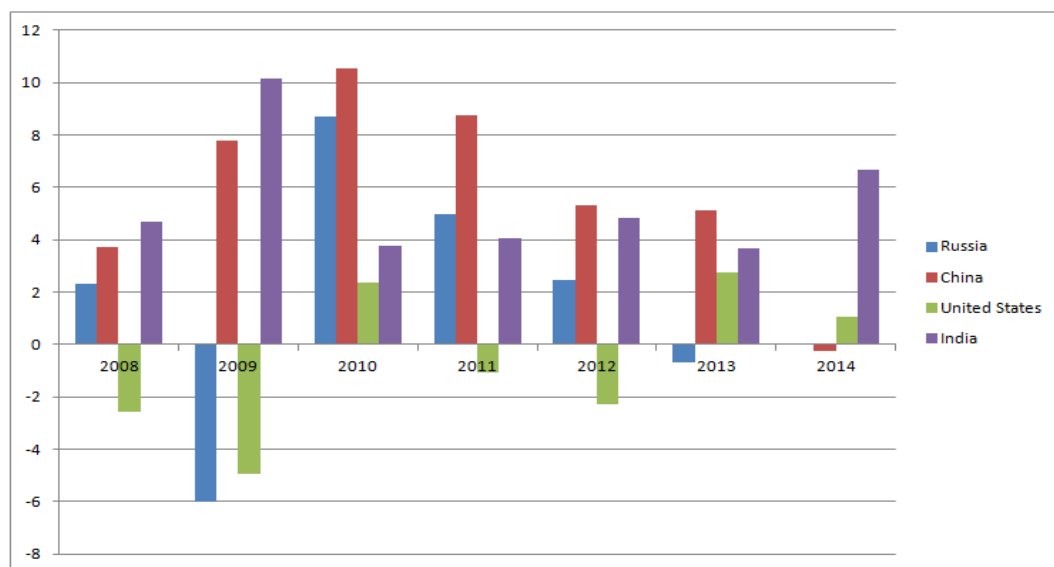
In 2010 the previously losing countries saw a remarkable recovery. The US compensated completely for its historic loss by increasing its crude steel production by 35 percent. For the first time, China and India were not the fastest growers, coming in second and fourth. Russia saw its output increase by about 11.5 percent. Overall, the results in 2010 are positive for Russia. Though it lost substantial ground to the US in terms of steel production, it now gained terrain to China and India to which it previously lost.

The numbers for 2011 and 2012 are somewhat similar and show an increasing decline in overall growth. In both years, Russia loses compared to all the other great powers. In 2013, Russia's situation

further deteriorates as its output now decreases, while China and India continue to grow. Again, Russia loses compared to the other great powers but this time, more so than the two previous years. During the final year, 2014, growth numbers seem to even out, all staying within a close range. Overall, Russia produces slightly more than the other great powers, reversing the previous trend, though the numbers are so close, they are hardly significant.

Primary energy consumption is another proxy of economic activity which is considered important in terms of power. According to the NMC codebook, CoW has combined the consumption of quantities of different sources of energy into equivalents, the thousands of metric coal-ton equivalents, in order to adequately standardize energy consumption as a whole (Correlates of War, n.d.). A more standard way of comparing energy consumption is using the one million tons of oil equivalent. Because both measures are employed to compare energy usage, to show how total energy consumption has changed over time, there is no harm in using the one million tons oil equivalent for the 2008 – 2014 period, because it too was devised for means of comparing total energy consumption. Figure 5 shows the annual percentage change in energy consumption in one million tons of oil equivalents for the four great powers for the 2008 – 2014 period:

Figure 5 - Annual growth percentages for the total primary energy consumption of the four great powers over the 2008 – 2014 period.



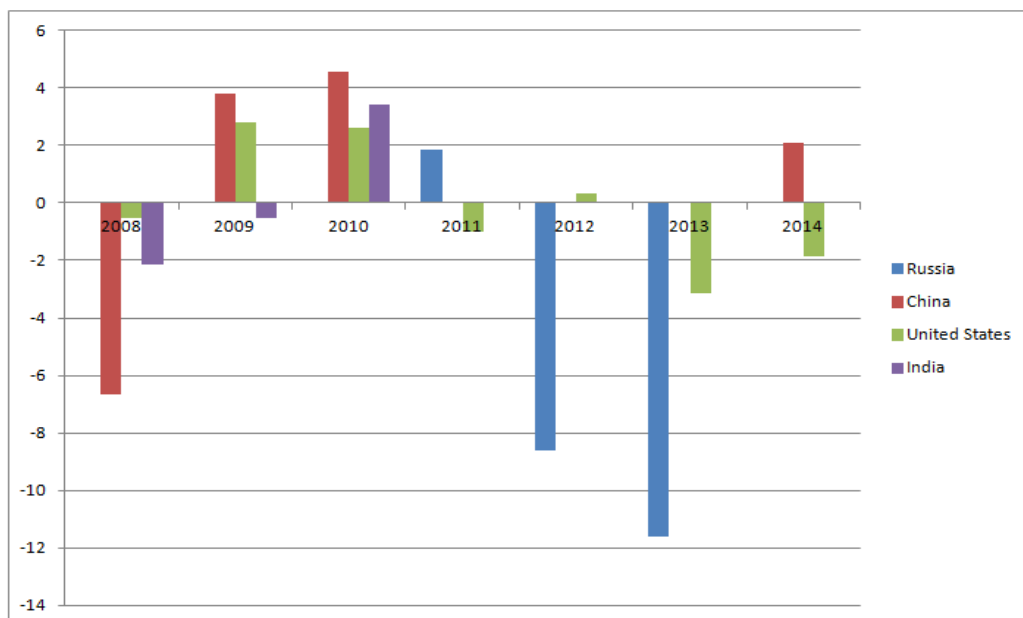
Source: self-compiled graph based on data from enerdata.net (see enerdata.net, n.d.).

Energy consumption statistics show a very erratic development. In 2008, Russia's energy consumption grew little over two percent, only trailing China and India. In 2010, its energy consumption declined nearly six percent, the biggest drop of all great powers. In 2010 and 2011 Russia rebounds by sporting the single biggest growth number, only trailing China. Its growth eventually evens

out however. While still growing little over two percent in 2012, leaving them third, in 2013, Russia's energy consumption actually declines for the first time in the 2008 – 2014 period while the others still consume more compared to the previous year. In 2014, Russia sees no change in energy consumption while India and China respectively see minor and significant growth and the US declines, leaving Russia third out of four.

The fifth indicator is military personnel. The annual journal *The Military Balance* keeps track of a wide range of indicators relating to the military, including total military personnel. Figure 6 plots the annual percentage change in total military personnel for each of the four great powers for the 2008 to 2014 period:

Figure 6 - Annual growth percentages for military personnel for the four great powers over the 2008 – 2014 period.



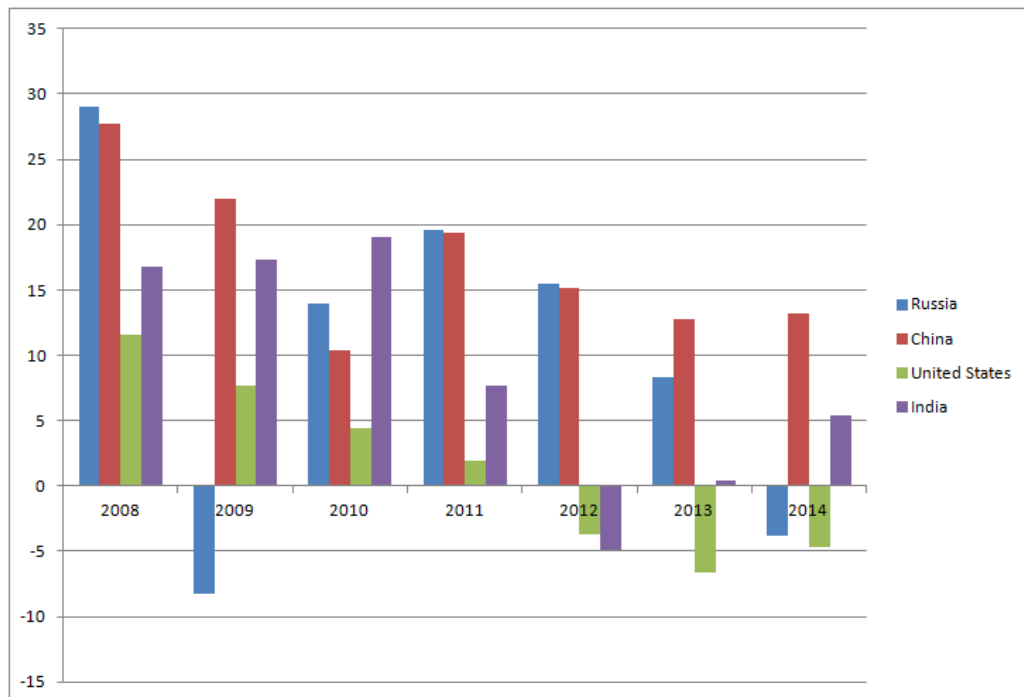
Source: self-compiled graph based on the 2008 - 2014 editions of *The Military Balance* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014)

From 2008 until 2010, the size of Russia's military personnel does not change at all. In 2008, this gives them quite an advantage as the sizes of the other countries' armed forces decreases. In 2009, this advantage remains only compared India, whilst Russia loses significant ground to China and the US. In 2010, all other countries grow, to the disadvantage of Russia. In 2011 we first see a change in the amount of military personnel in Russia. With a slight growth of 1.6 percent, Russia gains terrain over all three great powers. This is not the start of an upward trend however as Russia's military apparatus decreases with a significant 8.6 percent the next year, while the others either stay stable or experience slight decrease. In 2013 Russia again loses vast terrain to all other great powers which

either grow slightly (the US), or stay at the same level. In the final year, 2014, Russia's military size stays the same while one grows and one shrinks, thus leaving its relative position unchanged.

The final indicator related to national material capabilities is a country's military expenditure. The following figure shows the annual percentage change in military expenditure for the selected four great powers from 2008 to 2014:

Figure 7 - Annual growth percentages for military expenditure for the four great powers over the 2008 – 2014 period.



Source: self-compiled graph based on the military expenditure dataset by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (SIPRI, 2015)

The figures for military expenditure paint quite a different picture for Russia compared to the size of its military forces. In 2008, Russia increased its total spending on the military by nearly 30 percent, leading all other major powers. In 2009, Russia decreased its military spending by eight percent, now losing ground to all other countries. The year 2010 again sees Russia increasing its spending, only trailing India. During 2011 and 2012, Russia retook its position as great power investing the most money in its military forces, albeit only marginally leading China. Russia comes in second in 2013, with China leading, and in 2014, comes in second to last, with only the US behind it.

The previous exposition has given us a good estimation of how Russia's power has developed over the 2008 – 2014 period compared to the other three great powers, based on the same indicators used in for the CINC-scores. The following tables will dissect these result and plot Russia's development compared to each individual country. This will allow us to state specific predictions about balancing

tailored to the individual great powers. Table 1 compares Russia's development on the CINC-indicators compared to China. As a reminder: '+' denotes a positive development, '-' denotes a negative development and '+/-' denotes no change.

Table 1 - Russian CINC-indicator development compared to China.

	Total population	Urban population	Production of steel	Primary energy consumption	Military personnel	Military expenditure	Total
2008	-	-	-	-	+	+	-
2009	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2010	-	-	+	-	-	+	-
2011	-	-	-	-	+	+	-
2012	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
2013	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2014	-	-	+	+	-	-	-

Starting in 2008, we see Russia losing on all but the military related indicators. One year later, China overtakes Russia based on that ground too. The following year sees Russia regaining terrain on the production of steel and military expenditure while still losing on the other indicators. In 2011, China again trumps Russia on all but the military indicators. In 2012, only military expenditure remains positive for Russia, while again losing on all terrains in 2013. Russia ends 2014 with a positive development in production of steel and primary energy consumption but losing on the rest.

The following table plots Russia's development relative to the US:

Table 2 - Russian CINC-indicator development compared to the US

	Total population	Urban population	Production of steel	Primary energy consumption	Military personnel	Military expenditure	Total
2008	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
2009	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
2010	-	-	-	+	-	+	-
2011	-	-	-	+	+	+	+/ -
2012	-	-	-	+	-	+	-
2013	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
2014	-	-	+	-	+	+	+/ -

As we can see, Russia's development compared to the US has been a bit less negative. During 2008 Russia actually won relative power over the US. This was quickly followed by one of its two most negative years, 2009, in which the US won on all terrains except the production of steel. The next year saw the balance tipping only just in favor of the US with four to two, a balance that was restored the next year when both countries outscored each other on three indicators. In 2012, the US again gained slight terrain on Russia, winning on four indicators. The final year saw the US winning on all indicators again excluding military expenditure.

The following table plots Russia's development relative to that of India:

Table 3 - Russian CINC-indicator development compared to India.

	Total population	Urban population	Production of steel	Primary energy consumption	Military personnel	Military expenditure	Total
2008	-	-	-	-	+	+	-
2009	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
2010	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
2011	-	-	-	+	+	+	+/-
2012	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
2013	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
2014	-	-	+	-	+/-	-	-

Russia's development towards India starts off with India slightly gaining the upper hand in 2008, followed by a more pronounced advantage in 2009, where Russia only grew in terms of military personnel. In 2010, Russia won terrain on two indicators, while losing on four, followed by 2011, a year in which Russia and India remained on equal footing. This was followed by two out of three years in which Russia lost most of its relative power to India. Russia ends up by losing on all but two indicators.

4.2. Structural realist predictions

Based on the previous exposition, we can now come to concrete predictions about Russia's foreign policy behavior over the full 1992 – 2014 period. These in turn will allow us to test the structural realist propositions. If Russia loses relative power compared to a specific great power, we expect it to initiate balancing behavior to return to the *status quo ante*, no later than two years after that specific imbalance. To be sure, we will first devise balancing predictions based on Russia's developments

related to each individual country. Would Russia balance that country, not considering the other great powers? However, because predictions pertaining external balancing cannot be separated from developments in the system as a whole, we will then end up by selecting those periods for which we can make specific predictions.

4.2.1. 1992 - 2007

From 1989 to 1993, we see a steep drop in Russia's CINC-scores; this is a period that should clearly be followed by balancing behavior, not least due to the fact that the other great powers, most notably China and the US, show a steep rise during the same period. Also worth noting is that, in 1993, India definitively takes over Russia's place as the world third great power in terms of the capabilities included in the NMC-index. Considering the maximum reaction span of two years, the first structural realist hypothesis is that we would expect the first acts of balancing to occur between 1992 and 1996.

From 1993 to 1994 we see a short increase in Russia's CINC-score. The only power declining over that same period is the US; China and India continue to grow at the same rate, albeit a little slower than Russia. Based on that one-year period, we thus expect no balancing. Still, as we have seen, balancing during this period may still be the result of power loss prior to 1993 and this may still be very articulate.

This period of mild recovery is then followed by another period of prolonged decline from 1994 until 1998, albeit much less harsh than the 1989 – 1993 period. China and India continue to grow at the same rate. During this period, the US shows some initial decline similar to Russia, which evens out in 1996. During this period, we thus expect Russia to display balancing behavior in relation to China and India. From 1996, Russia starts to lose against the US as well.

From 1998 until 2001, Russia's CINC-score evens out and shows some minor growth. The US, as well as India, grow during the same period, but the slopes are nearly identical so we expect no balancing behavior towards these countries. We do, again, expect balancing behavior displayed against China, which, due to its massive growth, still gains a lot of relative power over Russia.

From 2001 until 2005, Russia again faces a period of decline, while the other powers still grow. We thus expect balancing against the other great powers during this period, possibly continuing until 2007. From 2005 until 2007, Russia's score again evens out. During this period, the US loses power, while India and China still gain. Based on this period, we would thus expect balancing to occur against China and India. The US actually loses power compared to Russia but balancing could still occur as a reaction to power loss during the 2001 – 2005 period. Predictions pertaining balancing against the US in this period are thus not very useful.

The following table attempts to give a clear overview of the expectations for the 1992 – 2007 period:

Table 4 - Overview of Russian balancing expectations for the 1991 – 2007 period.

	No balancing	Balancing
Period 1 (1992 – 1993)		China; US; India
Period 2 (1993 – 1994)	China; US; India	China; US; India ¹⁸
Period 3 (1994 – 1998)		US ¹⁹ ; China; India
Period 4 (1998 – 2001)	US; India	US ²⁰ ; India ²¹ ; China
Period 5 (2001 – 2005)		US; India; China
Period 6 (2005 – 2007)	US	India; US ²² ; China

Based on the previous table, we can conclude that there are three periods based on which we can formulate unambiguous predictions. These periods are ‘uncontaminated’ by leftover predictions from previous years and are furthermore periods during which Russia loses power against all other countries. These are the 1992 – 1993 period, the 1996 – 1998 period and the 2001 – 2005 period. During the 1992-1993 period, external balancing should be aimed mostly at China and the US. We would thus at least expect cooperation with India. During the 1996-1998 and 2001-2005 period, external balancing attempts should clearly be aimed at China, cooperation either with the US or/and India. Should we witness absence of balancing against these countries or any balancing at all, these hypotheses are rejected. The empirical hypotheses summed up:

1. Internal balancing takes place throughout the entire 1992 – 1993; 1996 – 1998 and 2001 – 2005 periods.
2. During the 1992 – 1993 period, external balancing should be aimed at China or the US (cooperation with India).
3. During the 1996 – 1998 and 2001 – 2005 periods, external balancing should be aimed at China.

¹⁸ Possible delayed reaction based on period 1.

¹⁹ From 1996 onwards.

²⁰ Possible delayed reaction until 2000 based on period 3.

²¹ Possible delayed reaction until 2000 based on period 3.

²² Possible delayed reaction until 2007 based on period 5

4.2.2. 2008 - 2014

Russia's developments relative to China show a persistent negative trend throughout the entire 2008 – 2014 period. During this six-year span, Russia consistently loses power, albeit to lesser and greater extent.

Looking at the table comparing Russia to the US, we see Russia starting off with its best year in 2008. Because Russia ended the 1992 – 2007 period by winning power over the US, we expect no balancing in relation to the US to take place in 2008. Furthermore, no balancing is expected based on 2011 and 2014. However, because both these years are preceded by years in which we do expect balancing, no sensible predictions can be made. Based on the remaining years, 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2013, we do expect Russian balancing behavior shown in relation to the US.

India ended the 1992 – 2007 period by gaining power over Russia, albeit not very much. Because in 2008 India continued to gain the upper hand, we would expect Russia to balance in relation to India. Russia then continues to lose power throughout 2010. In 2011, Russia and India are on par in terms of developments on the CINC-indicators. However, because 2011 is preceded by years in which we expect balancing, again no sensible conclusions can be drawn. From 2010 onwards, the tides turn again and Russia starts to lose.

The following two table aggregates all expectations for the 2008 – 2014 period in order to get a clear overview for the entire 1992 – 2014 period:

Table 5 - Overview of Russian balancing expectations for the 2008 - 2014 period.

	No balancing	Balancing
2008	US	China; India
2009		China; US; India
2010		China; US; India
2011	US; India	China; US ²³ ; India ²⁴
2012		China; US; India
2013		China; US; India
2014	US	China; US ²⁵ ; India

²³ Possible delayed reaction based on 2009 or 2010

²⁴ Possible delayed reaction based on 2009 or 2010

²⁵ Possible delayed reaction based on 2012 or 2014

Looking at the previous table, two periods surface during which we Russia loses power relative to all other three great powers and are not distorted by 'leftover' expectations. These are the 2009 – 2010 and the 2012 – 2013 periods. The predictions pertaining internal balancing are clear: we expect it to take place during both periods. As stated before, predictions relating to external balancing are based upon extrapolation of the CINC-graph trend. Luckily, the period not covered by the CINC-index is relatively small and the trend quite pronounced. Based on the prior developments, we expect external balancing during the 2009 – 2010 and 2012 – 2013 periods to be aimed at China. The empirical hypotheses summed up:

1. Internal balancing takes place throughout both the 2009 – 2010 and 2012 – 2013 periods.
2. External balancing during both periods is aimed at China.

4.3. Did Russia balance?

The first part of the empirical section gave a comprehensive overview of the changes in the balance of power since Russia first became the sovereign nation that it is today. Based on those developments, we have been able to devise several expectations. As became clear, we cannot devise meaningful predictions for all periods; during some we may expect multiple forms of behavior. For others however, we have been able to deduce clear and testable predictions that allow us to assess the accuracy of the structural realist theory. Each of these different periods will now be assessed separately to see if Russia indeed displayed the expected balancing behavior. As a reminder, balancing behavior may consist of internal balancing, defined as increased spending on the military, or external balancing, of which the strongest form is formal military alliance building but which may also consist of joint military exercises, presence at military parades and diplomatic visits of state leaders or highly ranked officials.

4.3.1. 1992 – 1993

The first period under scrutiny is the 1992 – 1993 period, the first three years of Russia's independence. During this period, we see an extremely heavy drop in Russia's power. Because it loses most of its power relative to China and the US, we expect it do display external balancing behavior against these countries, most likely in cooperation with India. As a proxy hypothesis, we may expect Russia to display its most articulate balancing behavior during this period because its drop is so pronounced. If anywhere, we expect Russia to invest most of its money in the military and form alliances during this period as objective threats are most prominently present.

Military spending. The first task is to see if Russia indeed increased its military spending during the 1992 – 1993 period. In order to establish whether this has been the case, we will not look change in absolute numbers, as was the case with military expenditure as part of the CINC-score, but rather whether military expenditure has increased as a percentage of GDP; adjusting for growing and shrinking national budgets.

The first figures available in SIPRI's military expenditure database are those of 1992, a year in which Russia reportedly spend 4.9 percent of its GDP on the military. Though our period starts at 1992, we want to compare these figures with those of the previous year to see whether military spending has increased, but these numbers are not available. However, despite the absence of clear figures it is generally agreed upon by military experts and intelligence agencies that during the final years of the SU's existence, military budgets still amounted to some 12 to 20 percent GDP ("Soviet Military Budget:", 1989). Given these numbers, given the fact that the SU decreased its military spending while losing terrain to the other great powers and given the low amount of spending in 1992, it is safe to say that the year 1991 is most likely part of a trend of decreasing military budgets.

One would expect Russia (and the SU) to counter the severe drop in power starting in 1989 by increasing its military spending as percentage GDP, however, even in 1993 when Russia's position further deteriorated, the country continued to decrease its military spending to 4.6 percent GDP. In terms of internal balancing, increasing military spending, we can thus conclude that Russia has not acted the way we would theoretically expect it to.

Military alliances. Internal balancing is but one part of the equation however as Russia may still display significant external balancing to counter its power loss. The first and most obvious indicator of external balancing is formal military alliances. An important development here is the founding of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in December of 1991. The CIS, a regional cooperative organization comprising a wide range of topics started to develop a common defense component, which further institutionalized over the years (Belosludtsev, 2006). Though this is a clear attempt by Russia to advance its security interests in the region, it must be noted that it did not involve any other great power. Here we see another weakness of realist theory as it is not interested in alliance forming so long as it does not include great powers, which means important developments like the founding of the CIS are largely ignored. Still, judging by the most important indicator of external balancing, we cannot convincingly say Russia has behaved coherently. Even though it has clearly sought to militarily lock in its formerly Soviet sphere of influence, this is nowhere the extent we would expect from a country should it truly seek to counter a (potential) new hegemon.

Joint military exercises. Maybe Russia did not become part of formal alliances but did try to improve ties and military cooperation by engaging in joint military exercises with other great powers. Such exercises are a less institutionalized way of 'scaring' states by displaying possible intend to

cooperate in case of military escalations. However, no such joint exercises took place between 1992 and 1993, again contrary to what was expected.

Presence at military parades & visits. The final two indicators are presence at military parades and friendly diplomatic visits, by state leaders or highly ranked officials. Such visits can also be viewed as an attempt to increase ties and give off signals to other great powers. During the 1992 – 1993 period, Boris Yeltsin made several trips to foreign countries aiming to improve the diplomatic ties of the newly formed Russian state. One of those trips included a visit to China in 1992 and a visit to India in 1993. Part of Yeltsin's trip to China was the signing of a joint statement which declared that both countries regarded each other as friendly states and that they would stop targeting nuclear weapons at each other ("Backgrounder: Basic facts," 2013). During this period, two more diplomatic exchanges took place, of which at least one involved exchange of military technology.

Yeltsin's also visited India. During the trip, he declared that Russia was moving away from its pro-Western emphasis and signed a series of agreements regulating military and economic cooperation between the two countries (Hazarika, 1993). At first glance, one might be inclined to conclude that this is indeed a sign of Russia trying to balance the US, in this case by joining forces (at least to a limited extent) with another great power. However, during the same period, Yeltsin also paid a historical visit to the US, being the first Russian leader ever to address the American Congress in an ornate speech, lauding the US and assuring that the faded CW dyad would never return (Speeches-USA, n.d.). Furthermore, over the course of the 1992 – 1993 period, Secretaries of State James Baker and Warren Christopher made several trips to Moscow discussing matters of military nature, and in 1993, President Bush visited Moscow to sign the START-treaty, committing both countries to far-reaching elimination of strategic arms (Office of the Historian, n.d.^b). Also in 1993, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin paid private visits to President George Bush (Office of the Historian, n.d.^c). Based on Russian official diplomatic visits to different states, we can thus not conclude that there were certain proclivities that might point towards balancing behavior aimed at any one state.

Conclusion. Concluding, we can say the following: considering Russia's massive drop in relative power, we would have expected it to counter these developments with increased military spending and active external balancing aimed mostly at the China and the US or at least in cooperation with India. While there were some signs of alignment with India, this could hardly be called substantial. Considering it more or less equally partnered with the US and Russia, and in fact decreased its military spending, the expectations were clearly not met.

4.3.2. 1996 – 1998

The second period under scrutiny is the 1996 – 1998 period. At this point in time, China took over the US's status as the most powerful country on earth. It saw pronounced growth, relative to all other great powers. We thus expect external balancing to be aimed at China.

Military spending. How then did Russia behave during these two years? Again, we first look at internal balancing – did Russia increase its military spending during this period? Upon looking at the figures, we see that in 1996, Russia spend 4.1 percent of its GDP on the military, exactly the same percentage as the year before (SIPRI, 2015). In 1997, Russia slightly increased its military spending to 4.3 percent GDP, arguably in accord with structural realist theory. Finally however, in 1998, Russia decreased its military budget to 3 percent GDP, the lowest figure ever since its independence, annulling any claims of the theory's expectations applying in this case. Indeed, Russia again lowered its military spending during a time when we expected the opposite.

Military alliances. So how about hard external balancing? Did Russia engage in any new alliance formation during this period? The answer is: hardly so. During this period Russia again showed no intent to counter its power loss in any meaningful way. Despite its growing loss of both absolute and relative power, no new alliances were formed, nor were existing ones further substantiated.

Joint military exercises. None were documented during this period.

Presence at military parades & visits. If we look at the more intricate indicators, a different picture arises. Though Russia did not engage in bilateral military exercises with other great powers, they did sign a new declaration upgrading the Sino-Russian relationship to a 'strategic partnership' aimed preparing both nations for the 21st century, again including military matters ("Putin's Visit to", n.d.). Over the entire 1996 – 1998 period, a total of eleven diplomatic exchanges took place, reaching up to the highest (presidential) level, all aimed at further intensifying Sino-Russian cooperation ("Putin's Visit to", n.d.). In 1997, Russia and China signed a joint declaration stating the explicit aim of accomplishing a new multipolar world order (Tsygankov, 2013).

Primakov, Russia's then minister of foreign affairs, was the first Russian minister to pay a diplomatic visit to India in 1996 ("Other Asian States", n.d.). In 1997, Indian Prime Minister Deve Gowda paid a visit to Moscow (Embassy of India, n.d.). Though Indo-Russian relations started off with a lot of mutual uncertainty, Russia sought to attain a closer relationship with New Delhi and involve India in a trilateral axis to counter US hegemony (Das Kundu, 2004). Russia however did not go as far as holding joint military exercises with India, nor did state officials of either country visit military parades. However, declaration and intentions are great but useless unless they are followed up by actual balancing behavior. While trying to forge a counterbalancing alliance, Russia never turned its back on the US. Over the 1996 – 1998 period, Russian officials, including President Yeltsin, paid four visits to

the US, and in 1996 Russia even engaged in a joint military exercise with the US called “Exercise Cooperation From The Sea 96”. The US naval forces involved even attended the Russian Navy’s 300th anniversary festivities in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad (“Posture Statement”, n.d.).

Conclusion. In conclusion, we can say that the expectations were not met. Though there were some visible and increased attempts at of Russian engagement towards China and India, these were simply too unsubstantial to be called serious attempts at balancing, even in its more refined operationalization. Furthermore, Russia did not unequivocally target these attempts at any one state, while we expected them to be aimed at China. Lastly, it did not increase its military spending while we expected it to.

4.3.3. 2001 – 2005

The advent of the twenty-first century marked a change in Russian leadership when Vladimir Putin took over the presidency from Boris Yeltsin. During Putin’s first years, Russia again lost power relative to all three other great powers, leading us to expect internal balancing. Considering it lost the vast amount of its relative power to China, we expect it to show external balancing behavior towards China, either with the US and/or India.

Military spending. Based on Russia’s loss of power we would again expect it to increase its military spending in order to counter this development. In 2001, Russia spent 3.8 percent GDP on the military, compared to 3.6 percent during the previous year, a small increase (SIPRI, 2015). In 2002, Russia further increased its military spending to 4.1 percent GDP. However, over the next two years, Russia proceeded to lower its budget to 3.9 percent GDP in 2003 and 3.5 percent GDP in 2004. In the final year, 2005, Russia spent 3.6 percent GDP on it defense. While there was some initial growth, Russia again lowered its military spending during a time when we did not expect it to. In terms of internal balancing, Russia did not behave according to the theory.

Military alliances. The start of the 21st century also did not see Russia signing any new military alliance treaties. It did however sign the *Treaty on Good Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China* in 2001. Tsyganov (in Shoumikhin, 2004, p. 8) notes that this treaty was not so much meant to have any military or political substance but rather as a way to give both China and Russia more leverage contra the US, “enabling the two countries to act in parallel rather than as allies.” Russia and India signed the Delhi Declaration in 2002, similarly meant to promulgate their convergence on a wide range of important issues, including multi-polarity in international politics (Das Kundu, 2004).

Joint military exercises. The most notable change at the start of the new century was probably the upsurge of *joint military exercises* held by the Russian army. These should be seen in conjunction

with the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as an increasingly important tool of Russian security policies and regional power projection (De Haas, 2005). The first of these held with China took place in 2005 and was called 'Peace Mission 2005'. This large-scale exercise – including ten thousand troops in total – was mainly targeted at the United States and meant to increase both China's and Russia's bargaining position (Beck, 2005). Peace Mission 2005 was significant because it was the largest joint exercise ever held by Russia and China, larger than the ones held during the 1950s when the SU and China were bound by a mutual defense treaty. These Peace Missions went on to be repeated almost annually, including troops from several different SCO member states.

Large-scale military exercises were held with the Indian army as well. In 2003, Russia and India engaged in naval exercises, the first held in ten years (De Haas, 2010). Subsequently, in 2005, Russia and India again joined forces for 'IndRo-2005', officially dubbed 'anti-terrorist', which included forces from all three of the military branches, including Russian strategic bombers. No joint military exercises with the US were documented, indicating balancing behavior towards the latter.

Presence at military parades & visits. Though no presence of Russian officials at Indian or Chinese military parades (or vice versa) was documented during this period, it did see a stark increase in diplomatic visits. As relations between China and India further solidified and institutionalized, dozens of diplomatic visits started taking place reaching up to the highest political level. Russian president Putin and his Chinese counterparts consulted each other regularly and met in person on numerous occasions, exemplifying their strategic convergence ("China and Russia", n.d.).

Similarly, Russia intensified its diplomatic interactions with India. Putin visited India in 2002 and his Indian counterpart returned the favor twice in 2003 ("India-Russia Relations", n.d.). In 2004, after the new Indian government was installed, Putin again visited India for the fifth Indo-Russian summit since 2000. Russian and Indian ministers of external affairs also met on several occasions.

Still, the increased interactions with China and India did not mean an equally drastic decrease in engagement with the US. Over the 2001 – 2005 period, the Russian president and the Prime Minister made five visits to the US (Office of the Historian, n.d.⁸). American president George W. Bush visited Russia four times during the same period and met Putin on three other occasions (Office of the Historian, n.d.⁹). Also, US Secretary of State Colin Powell had some fifteen encounters with his Russian counterparts both in and outside of Russia, indicating commitment to keep an open dialogue on important geopolitical matters by both sides (Office of the Historian, n.d.¹⁰).

Conclusion. So what can we conclude based on the figures for the 2001-2005, in terms of external balancing? Most importantly, Russia seems to take a clear turn eastwards. Contacts with China have greatly increased and improved, largely within the framework of the increasingly institutionalized SCO. Russia made good on its intentions to extend Russo-Chinese cooperation to the military field as well, witnessed by the large-scale military exercise between the two countries.

Russia's approach towards India has been largely the same. Though not an official member of the SCO, Russia actively engaged India, shown by the increased top-level contacts. Furthermore, Russia and India held several bilateral military exercises indicating cooperation on that field as well.

Russia and the US did not engage in any military alliances or exercises during this period, nor did any Russian or US (military) officials visit each other's military parades. While there were some minor indicators of military cooperation during the previous period, these seem to have completely disappeared during the first years of the Putin presidency. Top US and Russian officials did meet on numerous occasions; the only indicator pointing in a positive direction.

Ultimately, we see a clear move by Russia away from the West and towards China and India, something structural realism would not lead us to expect. In fact, if at all, we would expect Russia to balance against China, ever more increasing the power gap between the two. Adding the lack of internal balancing, we can conclude that the structural realist expectations were not met for this period.

4.3.4. 2009 - 2010

The next period under evaluation is the 2009 – 2010 period. During these two years, Russia's position on the international stage deteriorated relative towards the three other three great powers. This would again lead us to expect increased military spending to counter this development.

Military spending. In 2009 Russia actually did increase its military spending quite significantly compared to the year before (SIPRI, 2015). Whereas in 2008 it spent 3.3 percent GDP on the military, the budget was raised to 4.1 percent GDP the subsequent year. In 2010 however, Russia again lowered its military spending to 3.8 percent GDP. Once again, in terms of internal balancing, Russia's behavior seems ambiguous, partly resonating with theoretical expectations but refuting them as well.

Military alliances. Approaching the end of the first 21st century decade, no new alliances were formed, nor did any significant institutional leaps forward occurred within the SCO. Russia did however elevate its relationship with India to a "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership" in 2010, indicating "exceptional closeness of ties" (Das Kundu, 2012).

Joint military exercises. Russia again participated in large-scale military exercises with China (Weitz, 2015). Strikingly, Peace Mission 2009 resembled Peace Mission 2005 in that only Chinese and Russian forces participated, whereas Peace Mission 2007 incorporated forces from several different SCO countries. SCO involvement in the 2009 military exercises was limited to observer delegations from other member states.

Russian and Chinese naval contingents combined forces in 2009 for *Peace Blue Shield 2009* in the Gulf of Aden (Bin, 2009c). In 2010, the SCO again joined forces for *Peace Mission 2010*, the largest

to be held outside of both Russian and China (Weitz, 2015). Peace Mission 2010 was much more of a multilateral effort than Peace Mission 2005, including forces from all member states but Uzbekistan. Another SCO military drill, called *Saratov Anti-Terror 2010*, took place, including Chinese and Russian troops (Bin, 2010b). Besides the aforementioned drills, Russia did not engage in any bilateral military exercises with other great powers, signaling continued alignment with China on a military level.

Presence at military parades & visits. Chinese and Russian high-ranked officials continued to meet on a regular basis. In total, including several meetings between the Russian and Chinese presidents, some sixty high level meetings took place between Russian and Chinese officials in 2009 alone (Bin, 2009a; 2009b; 2009c; 2010a). In 2010, some fifty more visits took place, again reaching up to the highest level. These visits included the attendance of Chinese president Hu Jintao at a Russian military parade commemorating the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 (Bin, 2010b; 2010c; 2010d; 2011).

Unfortunately, similar figures for Russia and India are currently unavailable. In absence of such numbers, other indicators may prove equally useful in denoting trends in Russo-Indian relations. One of these, clearly pointing towards further military alignment between Russia and India, was a nuclear deal signed in 2009, assuring the transfer of technology and uranium supplies between the two countries. Furthermore, Russia and India signed an agreement extending their military cooperation program until 2020, assuring continued weapon sales and mutual development of military equipment including fighter jets (Das Kundu, 2009). In 2009, the Indian Prime Minister paid two visits to Russia, which, according to him were testimonies of the close relationship between the two nations. Indeed, Singh went on to say that “India’s ties with other countries will never be at the cost of time tested relationship with Russia” (Das Kundu, 2009). As such, despite lacking numbers, we may still conclude that Russia and India have continued to align themselves.

Again, Russia did not sever ties with the US, even in the wake of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. Over the 2009 - 2010 period, Medvedev paid four visits to the US, while the American president visited once, and met once more in Prague for the signing of the new START-treaty (Office of the Historian, n.d.^g; n.d.^a). Furthermore, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Russia twice during this period and had some twelve meetings with Russian officials (Office of the Historian, n.d.^e).

So what can we conclude based on the 2009-2010 period? The results are again somewhat ambiguous with Russia showing some expected behavior (raising military spending in 2009 and further alignment with India). Overall however, too much of its policies have been counterintuitive. If systemic incentives could explain Russia’s behavior, we would have expected continuing increased spending on the military throughout 2009 and 2010. Furthermore, if Russia’s balancing behavior was rational, it would have been much leaner towards China. Instead, Russia continues aligning with China and

remains vigilant towards the US, which continues to remain the least threatening of all. We can thus conclude that the structural realist expectations were not met for this period.

4.4.5. 2012 – 2013

The expectations for the 2012 – 2013 period are essentially the same as for the previous period. Because Russia continues to lose power relative to all three other powers, we expect in to show internal balancing. Also, based on the further extrapolation of the CINC-trend, we expect it to externally balance China.

Military spending. This period leads us to posit similar expectations as before: Russia should increase its military spending. In 2012 Russia increased its military expenditure from 3.7 to 4 percent GDP (SIPRI, 2015). The following year, Russia continued to increase military spending to 4.2 percent GDP. These developments are in accord with structural realist predictions. As Russia loses relative power compared to the other great powers, we expect it to increase its own strength to counter such developments; analysis shows that it has.

Military alliances. No new military alliances were formed during the 2012-2013 period.

Joint military exercises. Russia and China again engaged in large-scale military exercises during the 2012-2013 period. During *Naval Interaction 2012*, thousands of Russian and Chinese the combined fleets cooperated in the simulation of a hijacked ship in Chinese Yellow Sea, practicing combat interoperability (Weitz, 2015). Interestingly enough, this exercise was bilateral rather than part of a SCO program.

Military cooperation between the two countries also occurred during *Peace Mission 2012*, taking place in Tajikistan (Weitz, 2015). With only 700 soldiers participating from both China and Russia, this was the smallest of the *Peace Missions* on their end. Much larger was *Naval Interaction 2013*, the follow-up to the 2012 edition. During this bilateral effort, some 4000 thousand military personnel participated. Lastly, during 2013, *Peace Mission 2013* took place in Russia. Although officially an SCO event, only Russian and Chinese troops participated. Peace Mission 2013 was unique because activities were coordinated in real-time as part of a joint planning process, instead of depending on national command systems like in previous editions (Weitz, 2015).

Whereas the 2009 – 2010 period saw no military exercises between India and Russia, the 2012-2013 period reversed that trend. In 2012 and 2013, the Indra-exercises took place. Indra-2013, unlike its predecessor and like Peace Mission 2013, had both countries planning and managing the exercise together (Sanjiev, 2013). Furthermore, Russian servicemen were led by Indian commanders and vice versa.

Interestingly enough, Russia actually did engage in a bilateral military exercise with the US. In 2012, for the first time on US soil, Russian paratroopers joined with their American counterparts practice airborne tactics (Lee, 2012). The exercise was announced when the Russian and Chinese militaries were conducting their naval drills.

Presence at military parades & visits. In terms of high-level meetings, 2012-2013 showed no significant anomalies. Russian officials, including President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev, had some ninety (telephonic) encounters with their Chinese counterparts (Bin, 2012a; 2012b; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014). For India, figures are again scarce. In 2012, Putin paid his first to India visit as re-elected president, signing ten bilateral documents (Roy, 2013). In 2013, Indian Prime Minister Singh returned the favor, aiming to further improve bilateral ties (“Indian media upbeat”, 2013).

Putin, after regaining power in 2012, is yet to pay an official visit to the US. The last Russian official to do so was Medvedev in early 2012, attending the G8-Summit (Office of the Historian, n.d.^g). Obama, likewise, has not visited Russia during this period (Office of the Historian, n.d.^a). Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry met with Russian officials nine times (Office of the Historian, n.d.^e; n.d.^f).

The 2012 - 2013 period then is mostly an extension of the previously discussed period, barring one important difference. For the first time, Russia has been consistent in increasing its military spending, like structural realism would expect it to. In terms of external balancing, Russia continues its trend of aligning mostly with China and India, while cooperation with the US remains minimal. Indeed, though the military exercise held by Russia and the US was noteworthy, it alone cannot refute the visible and continuing trend of Russia’s eastward turn. Concluding, this period is ambiguous as structural realism can explain Russia’s increased military spending but has no explanation for its alignment with China.

4.5. Structural realism: a conclusion

The following table summarizes our conclusions:

Table 6 - Summary of structural realist conclusions

	Hypotheses	Outcome	Accepted/rejected
1992 - 1993	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal balancing 2. External balancing: aimed at China and/or US (cooperation with India) 3. Proxy: most pronounced balancing behavior of all periods 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No internal balancing takes place 2. Mild but ambiguous external balancing, not aimed at any single state. 3. Quite possibly the least pronounced of all periods 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rejected 2. Rejected 3. Rejected
1996 - 1998	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal balancing 2. External balancing aimed at China 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only 1 year of increased spending 2. Mild alignment with China and India (mostly rhetorical) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rejected 2. Rejected
2001 - 2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal balancing 2. External balancing aimed at China 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some increase, some decrease 2. Active alignment with India and China 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rejected 2. Rejected
2009 - 2010	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal balancing 2. External balancing aimed at China 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some increase, some decrease 2. Active alignment with China 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rejected 2. Rejected
2012 - 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal balancing 2. External balancing aimed at China 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased military spending throughout the period 2. Alignment with China and India 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accepted 2. Rejected

The previous analysis has attempted to use structure, (relative changes in) the distribution of capabilities, as the sole explaining mechanism for Russia's foreign policy over the 1992-2013 period. The strength of such an analysis lies in the fact that the often heard argument posited by structural realist, that singular instances of foreign policy can never be used to debunk the theory, succumb under such a longitudinal approach. No doubt, structure need not be able to explain most of Russia's

important foreign policy decisions but it should at least be able to explain *some*. In that regard, the history of Russia's balancing behavior has shown us some interesting things.

Firstly, because Russia consistently loses power throughout the selected periods, we consistently expect it to display internal balancing. Though Russia's has at times increased its military spending, it mostly has not. While erratic, most periods were characterized by a decline in military spending, even if the start was promising. If we compare Russia's initial spending in 1992 to the level of spending in 2013, we see .7 percent decrease, accurately summarizing the matter.

In terms of external balancing, the theory fares no less well. The more intricate operationalization of the theory has exposed clear attempts at balancing by Russia. Question marks arise however if we look at how these attempts play out; based on all periods, a distinct trend becomes visible. Whereas the 1992-1993 period showed no substantial acts of balancing, which is most odd concerning Russia's massive loss of power, from 1996 onwards, Russia cautiously aligns itself with China and India. Whereas this remains mostly rhetorical in the twentieth century, the twenty-first century sees Russia substantiating those intentions with large-scale military drills conducted with both countries, while also increasing the amount of bilateral encounters with highly placed political actors. With China, much of this develops within the framework of the SCO. With India, it remains mostly bilateral and *ad hoc* but no less significant. All the while, relations with the US seem to remain stagnant. Barring incidental military exercises and more or less continuous political meetings, no significant developments have taken place.

Such absence is rather meaningless on its own but acquires meaning if we look at the bigger picture. Russia's active engagement of China and India is a way of balancing the US without actively antagonizing it. It seems to be carefully creating a trilateral Asian Axis meant to counter the US. This axis is not based on formal alliances but remains rather loose in order to assure multipolarity. The oddness then, lies in the fact that based on the developments in power, Russia should be cooperating with the US, or at least direct most of its balancing behavior towards China and to a lesser extent India. Indeed, based on objective indicators, China, at least from 1993 onwards, posits the biggest threat. In practice, Russia does exactly the opposite which constitutes a problem for a theory that expects countries to cooperate in order to counterbalance a potential hegemon.

What we are left with then is a theory with little explaining or predictive capability. Though the analysis cannot denounce structure as an explaining element, its influence seems marginal in its structural realist conception and application. Although Russia seems to be playing geopolitics in a 'realist' way, it does so in a way that contradicts structural incentives. This is where neoclassical realism may play an important role. The Russian president's worldviews, considering his position of power, may play a mediating role in the translation of structural influences into foreign policy. The subsequent

section attempts to gauge whether neoclassical realism's expectations indeed form the missing link between structure and policy.

4.6. Neoclassical realism: the missing link?

Neoclassical realism has been presented as a concluding piece in the realist story; the element that allows realism to explain both continuity *and* change. To assess whether this is true, this thesis will now continue with a case study, applying the theory to one of those instances of Russian foreign policy that may be considered odd, based on a purely structural perspective. Before we posit concrete predictions and assess the theory, it is useful to recall neoclassical realism's theoretical mechanism.

Neoclassical realism, as applied here, posits that national foreign policies can be explained if we acknowledge that structural incentives do not unequivocally translate into unit level behavior. Instead, they are the product of a process of interpretation by the FPE, in Russia's case the president. Because the president is so autonomous in devising foreign policy, we expect his worldviews to be filtering mechanism. This worldview, if we recall, can be derived from several indicators: the president's view of Russia's identity, his view on the nature of international politics, and correspondingly: his beliefs on how goals should be pursued, and finally: who is the significant other, or the main opponent.

So what do we expect based on neoclassical realism's premises? Neoclassical realism would attribute Russia's sudden shift eastwards to a change in Russia's FPE, or more precise, a change in the FPE's worldviews. Indeed, with a change in worldview comes a change in interpretation of structural effects. In the case of Russia, we witnessed a much more overtly pro-Asian foreign policy since 2000 in terms of balancing. This should then be the result of Vladimir Putin replacing Boris Yeltsin as president but whether we can speak of causation depends entirely upon an analysis of those worldviews.

We will now proceed with a case study that assesses the world views of one of these presidents and subsequently gauges the extent to which they can explain one of those acts of foreign policy deemed typical for that time. The president chosen is Vladimir Putin and the 'act' of foreign policy is the founding of the SCO in 2001. This case lends itself particularly well as it is one of the most, if not the most pronounced moves of Russia aimed at intensifying and institutionalizing ties with China, right at a time when we least expect it to. What we expect to see then is a set of worldviews reflecting the tendency for Russia to engage with China while being more assertive towards the US, which would explain Russia's counterintuitive behavior. To what extent was Russia joining the SCO a result of Putin's diverging world views? T

The final part of this chapter will start off by attempting to create a comprehensive account of Putin's world views, based on the documents and speeches outlined in chapter 3, all released in 2000,

the same year Putin became president. Also, on December 30, 1999, Vladimir Putin published a manifesto on the Russian government's website called *Russia at the turn of the millennium* (RATTOTM) (Sakwa, 2008). In this document he elaborates on the views that would guide his presidency, which, according to Richard Sakwa (2008a, p. 52): "provides a genuine insight into his thinking." This document will also be included in the analysis.

Subsequently, the section will provide insights into the founding of the SCO. Here, the main focus will be on Russia's political considerations and, more specifically, the extent to which elements of Putin's worldviews seem to have played a role in its formation. We can then conclude to what degree the founding of the SCO can be considered a logical derivative of Putin's worldviews.

4.6.1. Vladimir Putin and his world views

This section seeks to provide a comprehensive account of Putin's world views in order to assess the degree to which the ascertained deviations from the structural incentives discovered in previous section can be attributed to the filtering effect of a relatively autonomous FPE. This section will be structured based on the neoclassical indicators set out in chapter three. Each will be addressed and elaborated on independently, on the basis of the five selected sources in order to come to conclusions. We will then end up by painting a general picture of Putin's worldviews based on those conclusions.

Russian identity. The sources used are structured around a narrative of what Russia was and how it handled things, mistakes that it made and what it has to become; what it envisions its role to be in the future given its past and given the new international political context. Based on this normative assessment of Russia's past and future, several reoccurring elements relating to its identity can be deduced.

Interestingly, looking at its past, it is clear that the SU era in general is looked upon as something negative by Putin. On several occasions throughout the different sources, he refers to the detrimental effects the SU had on different terrains, mainly economic policy, human rights and in paving the way for Russia's development as a nation. It is perhaps most clearly expressed in RATTOTM, where he says:

"Communism and the power of Soviets did not make Russia a prosperous country with a dynamically developing society and free people. Communism vividly demonstrated its inaptitude for sound self-development, dooming our country to a steady lag behind economically advanced countries. It was a road to a blind alley, which is far away from the mainstream of civilization." (Putin, 1999, p.5).

Indeed, the general tendency is one of Russia shaking of its past and integrating into the modern world system. The best way to portray Putin's view of the 'new' Russia is modern. Russia needs to modernize in every relevant aspect. It is to become a democratic, inclusive, transparent country, respecting, and contributing to, an international society firmly based multilateral mechanisms and international law. Its markets need to be freed and its economy needs to be integrated into the world economy. Still, Russia cannot copy the experiences from foreign nations, efforts need to be tailored to its idiosyncrasies. Though Putin acknowledges that Russia must become a modern state, he also points at the different historical and social context that precedes Russia's transition.

Furthermore, Russia is defined by Putin as a Eurasian country. Due to its location, it attributes great importance to partnering with Europe (note: not the EU) and Asia. Interestingly, China is explicitly mentioned as an important partner because of the concurrence between Russia and China on fundamental approaches to paramount topics in international politics (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000a).

Russia's uniqueness, for Putin, is another defining element of its identity. According to Putin, Russians are patriotic and want a strong state. He also continuously emphasizes the importance of moral, spiritual and ideological unity. Here we see a communitarian element of his world views. He even links protection of cultural heritage to the security of the country (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000b). Interestingly, this supersedes state borders. Though no irredentist claims are made, being Russian (mostly defined by speaking Russian), does endow you with certain rights. Putin directly relates discrimination of Russians abroad to security and calls it one of the main external threats. The shared cultural heritage of Russians all throughout the former SU area is one of the main reasons why further integration with the CIS should be pursued (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000a). Still, Russian identity has no ethnic component. All Russians, no matter their nationality, religion or race, need to be protected (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000b).

A final reoccurring, and one of the most important elements, is Putin's view on the country's status as a great power. For Putin this status is not up for debate, not even if Russians themselves wanted to. In RATTOTM, he says: "Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence" (Putin, 1999). Indeed, talk of Russia as a great power is rife throughout the different sources. This relates to the previous point in an important way because the documents portray Putin as a staunch advocate of a multipolar world order. He wants Russia to be, and probably more importantly: to be recognized as, one of the main pillars of a multipolar constellation. A weak Russia is not only bad for Russia itself but for the entire international community.

General view of international politics. Questions relating Putin's views on the nature of international politics have to a large extent been answered in the section above. As became clear, it is in Russia's best interest is to become a modern state, integrated in the international community with its multilateral institutions. This naturally implies a believe in a zero-plus nature of international politics. Indeed, time and time again, the documents reflect a clear believe in the necessity and mutually advantageousness of international cooperation in all relevant fields, from law enforcement to preservation of human rights, not just with adjacent countries but also with other great powers. It is perhaps most integrally summed up in the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept, which states that one of the main goals in Russian foreign policy is:

"To seek concord and coinciding interests with foreign countries and interstate associations in the process of resolving the tasks that are determined by the national priorities of Russia, and on this basis, to build a system of partnership and allied relations that improve the conditions and parameters of international cooperation." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000a)

Though the documents convey an unambiguous message as to the nature of international politics, reading between the lines does expose some relevant nuance. Several times, without calling names, criticisms are vented at the way Russia is being treated by other states, despite its goodwill. For example, the National Security Concept states that: "there is an increasing threat to national security in the information sphere. The striving of a number of countries to dominate the global information space and oust Russia from the external and internal information market poses a serious danger" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000b). In RATTOTM, Putin (1999) says that "foreign rivals have pushed Russia especially far back on the market of science-intensive civilian commodities. Other quotes reference the threat of increased buildup of military contingents close to Russian borders (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000a). Such references do portray a certain level of distrust, but even then, solutions remain confined to the framework of multilateral institutionalism aimed at mutual advantage.

How to achieve goals. In terms of how goals in international politics should be achieved, the documents are possibly most vocal and unambiguous. The sources explicitly call for a reduction of military might as a means to pursue objectives and an increase of multilateral institutionalism and international rule of law. Countries may still be powerful, but the concept gets redefined by Putin:

"In the present world the might of a country as a great power is manifested more in its ability to be the leader in creating and using advanced technologies, ensuring a high level

of people's wellbeing, reliably protecting its security and upholding its national interests in the international arena, than in its military strength." (Putin, 1999)

The documents call for enhancement of multilateral governance to cover nearly all relevant issues in international politics: "The foreign policy of the Russian Federation must be aimed at ... strengthening the key mechanisms of multilateral governance of world political and economic processes, primarily under the aegis of the UN Security Council (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000a). Such examples are ubiquitous and indicate a strong believe in Russia as gatekeeper of international rule of law.

Significant other. Countries can have both positive and negative significant others. In a positive sense, countries can identify with other countries based on similar fundamental believes approaches to topics in international politics. Also, they can be considered benchmark countries in terms of performance on many different terrains. Negative significant others are in a way the opposite. They are negative role models and generally embody believes and approaches alien to that of the host country. Ideology (for lack of a better term) and performance should be separated however. Countries might loathe each other's approach but still envy their performance in other terrains.

Often, a good first indicator when looking at significant others is looking at how regularly they are mentioned. In that regard, it is worth noting that China is mentioned only four times while the US is mentioned eight times explicitly (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000a, 2000b; Putin, 1999, 2000; Arms Control Association, 2000). This is of course rather meaningless without looking at the way they are mentioned. Both China and specifically the US are mentioned as positive benchmark country in terms of economic performance. China however, is also mentioned positively with regard to concurrence on fundamental approaches to international politics. The US is mainly referenced to in a negative way, mostly for its (perceived) disregard for multilateral solutions. The documents continuously accuse the US of trying to bypass international institutions in implementing its policies.²⁶ When addressing new dynamics in international relations, the National Security Doctrine states that:

"The second tendency manifests itself in attempts to create an international relations structure based on domination by developed Western countries in the international community, under US leadership and designed for unilateral solutions (primarily by the use of military force) to key issues

²⁶ NATO bombings of Serbian targets during the Kosovo War ended only months prior to the publication of these sources.

in world politics in circumvention of the fundamental rules of international law.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000b)

US growing power is considered a direct threat. The Foreign Policy Doctrine states: “There is a growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2000a). Furthermore, there are numerous implicit mentions of the US and NATO thwarting Russian interest, indicating a strong focus on the US as a negative significant other. In general, the documents paint a picture of the US as the opposite of Russia. Whereas Russia firmly believes in the need for a multipolar world order based on multilateralism and the rule of law, the US seeks to dominate the international economy and world politics and is striving for hegemony in general, which, according to Russia, will cause great problems. This issue relates to an element discussed in the section about Russia’s identity. By defying international law, bypassing important multilateral institutions like the UN Security Council and disregarding Russian interests in general, the US is not only manifesting antipode tendencies, but it is effectively denying Russia’s status as a great power.

4.6.1. The founding of the SCO and Russia’s considerations

The previous section has tried to create a comprehensive account of Putin’s worldviews based on several relevant indicators. The next challenge lies in determining the degree to which these world views have translated into corresponding decisions, particularly, the decision to become part of the SCO. This paragraph starts off with a very brief description of the SCO, after which the focus will switch to the Russian political considerations.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a regional intergovernmental (and to a limited extent supranational) organization found on June 15 2001, consisting of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Aris, 2011). Previously, these countries (except Uzbekistan) were known as the ‘Shanghai Five’, a mechanism created in the 1990s to expedite the settlement of border issues between China and the newly independent central Asian states, with Russia joining as an important stakeholder. Gradually, the Shanghai Five mechanism’s scope broadened and with the signing of the Founding Declaration in 2001, the organization officially institutionalized and became known as the SCO, which today is involved in economic, security and humanitarian related issues and forms an integral part of its member states’ foreign policies.

For Russia, the SCO constituted a remarkable brake with traditions as it had up until then preferred a bilateral approach and got involved in multilateralism only to the extent that it could exercise predominant influence over such efforts. In the SCO however, Russia was clearly the junior

partner (Aris, 2011). Nonetheless, the SCO was considered of vital importance to Russia's foreign policy. Once Russia realized that the CIS was failing to progress its interests as some of its members preferred cooperation with Europe, the country turned eastwards towards central Asia where many states were very much willing to cooperate. This region was considered primal due to the import of both illegal narcotics and Islamic extremism into the country. The SCO thus became the mechanism by which Russia was able to tackle these issues.

Furthermore, the SCO was of symbolic importance to Russia (Aris, 2011). Once its influence started waning in post-Soviet territory, the SCO proved a viable and effective mechanism to parry the extension of that trend to the Central Asian states and exert new and continued influence over a region it previously dominated. Underneath this lay greater issues Russia had with its treatment by the West. The West, Russia felt, adopted an increasingly confrontational stance. Russia's initiatives were continuously blocked in international organizations and, in general, the West seemed to downplay and disrespect Russia's (perceived) status as a great power (Aris, 2011). Russia thus felt forced to search for different ways to regain its former status, which it found in the SCO. The SCO provided an alternative to the Western dominated international order, based on a completely new set of normative principles on which its influence was much greater than in western institutions.

Interestingly, the SCO had more than just symbolic value. Russia genuinely considered it an important and necessary mechanism to counter US hegemony. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the SCO, "in the long term can play the role of one of the major pillars of a multipolar world pattern" (Aris, 2011, p. 61). This is noteworthy because it exposes Russian elements of Russian systemic interpretation. It is not China that is viewed as the real threat but rather the US, and the SCO allowed Russia to balance that threat.

4.6.3. Neoclassical realism: a conclusion

So, to what extent does neoclassical realism provide a plausible explanation for the founding of the SCO? To what degree are Putin's world views indeed responsible for Russia partnering with its biggest objective enemy?

Even though the structural realist analysis has shown that it was indeed China that, from the mid-nineties onwards, posed the biggest objective threat, this was not perceived as such by Putin. The documents, besides pointing at Russia's own shortcomings, clearly portray the US, and looming US hegemony, as the biggest objective threat to Russia's interests and even international peace. This could be explained by Putin's redefined concept of power. He views the US as most dangerous, not solely based on objective indicators but because it has found new – non military – ways to advance its interest.

What links US danger to Putin's worldviews however is, first, Russia's status as a great power. For Putin, Russia should be a strong pillar in a multipolar international community. It was not so much the US's objective power then, but rather its complete disregard for Russia's interests that constituted the problem. First, the US, from Putin's perspective, tended to act unilateral and on its own accord, without consideration for Russia's interest. Second, the US had created an international system of institutions based on Western norms and principles that systematically favored US interests. In doing so, the US effectively denied Russia its rightful place as a great power which interests should be taken seriously, and second, through its actions, America showed it adhered to different principles underlying international politics, contradicting Putin's multilateralism. Thus, slowly, the US started manifesting itself as Russia's antipode, it's negative significant other, mirroring everything Russia and international politics should be, according to Putin.

China on the other hand, not only refrained from frustrating Russia, it agreed on many of the foundational principles in international politics. China too, believed in diplomacy and had great problems with the moralizing and intrusive policies of the US. This turned China into the positive significant other. In Putin's world view, China, as opposed to the US, was acting much the way he thought countries should act. China did not deny Russia its rightful place as a great power, it too attributed great importance to diplomacy, and finally, China shared much of the framework of principles underlying international politics.

Based on that image, it is not hard to see why the US was considered the main threat and why partnering with China was a rational move. It allowed Russia to balance what it considered to be the biggest objective threat to its own national interests; the country that formed its mirror image. The country that denied Russia its rightful place, acted unilaterally in its own interests and kept alive a normative framework alien to that of Putin. The SCO then, formed an alternative on all those fronts. It objectively increased Russia's power *vis-à-vis* the US by regaining power over central Asia and thus contributed to Russia's great power status, and put forward an organization based on a completely different normative framework. All the while it was able to do this with a partner it identified with; that recognized Russia for what it was and shared precisely those normative principles that Putin held dear.

Concluding, we can say that, based on the Putin's world views, we can see that partnering with China in the SCO is indeed a rational move.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions

The concluding chapter of this thesis consists of two parts. First, it seeks to summarize the findings from the previous chapter and relate them to the central question stated in chapter 1. Subsequently, it will follow up with reflections, discussions and some suggestions for further research.

5.1. Findings

This thesis has attempted to gauge the cogency of modern-day realist claims regarding the nature of international politics. More specifically, it has attempted to systematically analyze the relevance of contemporary realist propositions regarding great power foreign policy behavior – does power as a central analytical concept really help us get a better grip of international politics? It has sought to do so by looking at the foreign policies of one of the world's great powers and assessing the extent to which they fit realist expectations. In the process, several things have come to light.

The purported ambiguity in Russia's foreign policy ascertained in chapter 1 proves only mildly relevant when its behavior is cast in the light of realist empirical propositions. This thesis started off by sketching the difference in foreign policy posture, despite seemingly unchanged objective interests. The analysis altered this image in two ways. First, such a superficial observation ignores the fact that not only did Russia's objective interests change, but they did so quite erratically. It has seen positive (mostly less negative) and negative periods in both the twentieth and twenty-first century. Thus, judging Russia's behavior without a meticulous analysis of subtleties in power dynamics, disqualifies any conclusions *a priori*. Second, much of this assertive behavior does not necessarily constitute the empirical scope of realist theory. Indeed, balancing behavior is considered balancing behavior precisely because it is considered meaningful with regard to the perpetual struggle for power. Merely appearing aggressive or assertive need not change power dynamics at all.²⁷ This is important then, because realists are using Russia's assertive stance to argue for the realist nature of international politics, which is essentially based on a mischaracterization of their own theories.

With regard to the structural realist analysis, the conclusions are unambiguous. Based on the developments in power, clear and testable expectations were postulated for a range of five different periods. Based on Russia's relative loss of power, structural realism would predict continuing increased investments in Russia's armed forces throughout these different periods. The analysis has shown that,

²⁷ This behavior may become rational from a neoclassical realist point of view however, which will be addressed later.

barring one period, the opposite is true. As structural realism purports to explain trends, not specific instances, this simply cannot be accounted for.

With regard to external balancing, structural realism equally falls short. The overall trend in terms of balancing, is one of Russia, from the mid-nineties onwards, increasingly aligning itself with India, and most importantly, China. From the 21st century onwards, this trend becomes more explicit and more formal, all while keeping the US at bay. This contradicts the theory then, because, with the exception of the first period, China is the country continuously gaining most relative power compared to Russia. As such, depending on the period, Russia would be expected to cooperate with the US and possibly India, to counter the objective Chinese threat. As has been shown, the opposite has been true.

One example of the most formalized examples of Russo-Chinese alignments was the founding of the SCO. While in itself not a necessarily a form of balancing, it laid out an institutional framework accommodating much of Russia's balancing behavior towards the US. It regulated military exercises, exchange of military intelligence and high level meetings between Russian and Chinese politicians. Neoclassical realism has been applied to its founding to see whether it could account for one of Russia's most important deviant policies. Neoclassical realism's prediction is that Russia's deviating behavior can be explained by the filtering effect of Russia's FPE, *in casu* Putin, on structural incentives.

An analysis of Putin's worldviews and the political considerations surrounding the founding of the SCO has found that, indeed, Putin's worldviews seem to be able account for why Russia chose to align with China instead of the US. An often reoccurring element of Russia's identity was the country's unassailable status of a great power. Russia is meant to be a great power and, as such, should be treated as an equal pole in international politics. It was not so much objective US power then, but rather its denial of Russia's great power status that frustrated Putin. This stemmed from outright disregard and bypassing of Russia's interest in important geopolitical matters but also from the fact the US created an international institutional framework systematically favoring US interests. This relates to Putin's world view in another important way as Putin's world views display a strong propensity towards multilateralism and international rule of law. By bypassing Russia, not only did the US deny Russia's status but it displayed principled inclinations (unilateralism) alien to that of Putin. For him, the US thus became Russia's negative significant other.

The SCO neatly fits the neoclassical narrative because, not only did it allow Russia to live up to its true identity but, as the analysis has shown, it was explicitly meant to form an alternative based on different normative principles. Russia's main partner, China, was explicitly mentioned by Putin as sharing the same basic outlook on geopolitics and in doing so, respecting Russia's status. China thus, became less of a threat in many different ways.

This analysis brings us back to the main question posed in chapter one: to what extent can structural realism and neoclassical realism account for Russia's foreign policy from the 1990s to the 21st Century?

Our first conclusion is that structural realism can hardly account for any Russian foreign policy. It fails to explain Russia's strategic alignment with China throughout the 20th Century, let alone its firm institutionalization starting in the 21st century.

Our second conclusion is that neoclassical realism has proven far more apt in answering this question. It has convincingly shown that in the case of a country with a relatively autonomous FPE, filtering effects such as worldviews, can alter structural incentives to the extent that they influence important decisions in foreign policy.

Should we agree with Walt when he says that *the bad old days are back*? Like so often, the answer hinges upon definitions and interpretations of the question. If these *bad days* are defined as the inevitable result of a structure bound to incite confrontational behavior, the answer is most likely no. If they are looked upon as the result of a new leader, interpreting structural incentives with his own set of world views, the answer might well be yes. In fact, referring back to Russia's increasingly confrontational foreign policies during the early twenty-first century described in the first chapter, much of this may seem more rational if it is not viewed as concrete attempts at balancing but rather as corollaries of a nation, or in the case of Russia: a leader, trying to assert itself; trying to live up to its identity as a great power.

5.2. Reflections and discussion

This thesis attempted to assess the usefulness of modern realist theories in understanding great power foreign policy. Doing research then, is all about making choices. This section reflects on some of the most important (implicit) choices made throughout the chapters, how they have influenced this research and what their implications are regarding our conclusions. Furthermore, this thesis will be embedded in the broader debate surrounding the analysis of international politics. Along the way, suggestions will be made on how future research could build upon this thesis.

Theory. The realist analysis of Russian foreign policy has shown that realism still provides some useful insight into understanding great power foreign policy. Choosing realist theory however, first means choosing but one approach from a vast array of theories, of which many start from very different ontological and epistemological premises. These cannot all be addressed here but two will be introduced shortly. Liberal and neoliberal theories emphasize the mediating role of (international) institutions. As the analysis has shown, Russia being excluded from much of the western dominated institutional framework seems to have greatly influenced its decision to align with China and may even

be a primal cause for the founding (or necessity) of the SCO. Future research may assess how Russia's exclusion from these institutions determined its decision to partner with China and work towards an alternative framework.

Social constructivism, as laid out in chapter two, focuses on the role of norms, identities and ideas. As the analysis has shown, Russia's foreign policies were influenced by Putin's view of China as the 'positive significant other'. A constructivist approach could expand on this, not so much from a leader's point of view, but broaden this idea and see to what extent these ideas resonate throughout society. A possible outcome could be that Russia's changing approach to towards the West and China was not so much the result of a change in the world views of a leader, but rather the result of a changing image of both China and the US in Russian society.

Choosing specific realist approaches also means excluding strands within realism itself. Indeed, this thesis applies the relatively strict version of Kenneth Waltz's structural realism (albeit accounting for more subtleties in balancing), but it since the conception of balance of power theories, many different versions have emerged. As the analysis has shown, Russia chose to balance the US instead of China because of reasons relating to Putin's world view. Different articulations, for example Stephen Walt's *balance of threat* theory, expect states to bandwagon with threatening parties in order to prevent potential attacks (Walt, 1987). One of the factors determining whether states will bandwagon is proximity. As such, China's proximity combined with its growing power may have lead the severely weakened Russian state to bandwagon with China instead of balancing against it.

This is but one of many different explanations from within structural realism itself, which might be applied to acquire new insights. The same, perhaps even more so, could be said for neoclassical realism. Focusing on world views means focusing on but one of many possible factors. Neoclassical realism could draw on FPA research to see whether, for example, different cognitive, psychological factors, or even illness influences the way leaders interpret structural incentives.

Methods and research. Other choices made in research relate to the way we choose to operationalize theoretical concepts and the methods we choose to approach the analysis. Again, such choices profoundly influence our conclusions.

First off, this thesis started off from Waltz's conception of power which is based on a rather strict and objective interpretation. In his book, Waltz gives little justification for why these indicators are chosen. This is important because these indicators determine the way we look at empirical material; structural realism's failure might then well be partly due to the way power is operationalized. A different conceptualization and operationalization of power could lead to a different empirical focus and possibly different outcomes which could be useful in future research. Another choice pertains the status of great power. Great powers are great because they have profound influence in international politics. What exactly this means and which countries have such power is still up for interpretation. In

this thesis I have chosen not to incorporate countries like France, the UK and Brazil, who either have nuclear weapons or could be considered soon-to-be great powers. Future research could incorporate these countries into an analysis, possibly combined with new definitions of power, which could lead to different expectations pertaining balancing behavior.

Regarding the analysis, one must be particularly cautious when interpreting external balancing conclusion for the post-CINC period. These conclusions are based on a hypothetical extrapolation of previous trends and do not account for sudden external shocks that may have altered the balance of power.²⁸ Also, as seen before, no statements were formulated pertaining the degree of balancing needed to accept or refute structural realist expectations. Given Russia's behavior, this did not constitute a problem but in the future realists should be more explicit about the relationship between power and external balancing. Further considerations relate to the setup of the neoclassical analysis. This thesis sought to explain the shift in focus by Russia through analyzing a singular event in the 21st century. Further research could expand this analysis by incorporating such an event in the 20th century. Neoclassical realism would expect Boris Yeltsin to display world views somehow more favorable towards the US. Including such a case would greatly strengthen the neoclassical argument as it would be a perfect example of a case which similar conditions for which we could thus devise very precise expectations which are generally hard to find for neoclassical realism. Future research might also apply neoclassical realism to internal balancing. As demonstrated, Putin rejects a vision of power based on military strength. This might be able to explain why he refrained from investing in the military. Until then, the conclusions related to neoclassical realism give us a hunch at most; a first indication that worldviews seem to matter.

Also, one might question the validity of the sources used to assess Putin's world views. Though the Russian president may indeed be very autonomous in devising foreign policy, official documents and speeches may still obfuscate some of his true beliefs. This issue relates to the fundamental problem that we can never look inside a person's head. Future research could use different sources however, such as people who have been close to the Putin regime and have known him personally. This may reveal different worldview, ultimately altering our expectations.

Generalizability and theoretical progression. Some qualifications, for example relating to methodology, operationalization and the setup of the case study have been addressed above. A final issue regarding generalizability, the choice of Russia, also illustrates how realism as an approach might progress in the future.

While structural realism does not distinguish between great powers based on idiosyncrasies – the theory claims to explain all great power foreign policy behavior – which makes the choice for Russia

²⁸ The financial crisis of 2008 might be a good example.

perfectly justifiable, the version of neoclassical realism applied here is essentially tailored to the Russian situation, making it a most-likely case study. If we expect there to be a great power where structural incentives are filtered through a relatively autonomous FPE then, we expect that great power to be Russia. Furthermore, if we expect there to be an FPE where world views matter due to the centrality of power, we expect that FPE to be Russia's. While the structural realist conclusions could plausibly be generalized to the other great powers, the generalizability of the neoclassical conclusions are rather limited. We are justified then, in believing that neoclassical realism can account for Yeltsin's foreign policies as well, because the conditions were essentially the same, but beyond that, these conclusions could be generalized only to great powers with similar conditions which are arguably non-existent.²⁹ The theory incorporates so many unit-level factors that it is generally limited to explaining singular instances of foreign policy. Still, we cannot deny that this analysis has provided useable insight into great power foreign policy, given certain circumstances. Its results then, may be of use policy makers who seek to devise more substantialized ways of engaging Russia in the future.

The issues mentioned in the previous paragraph raise legitimate questions pertaining the usability of such theories. Essentially, both realist theories suffer from their own shortcomings. While structural realism's strength lies in its broad generalizability, it often falls short in explaining important and defining instances of foreign policy. In fact, we have seen that an approach not incorporating unit-level variables cannot even account for prolonged periods of foreign policy. Neoclassical realism on the other hand, while able to give rich and specific accounts of singular instances of foreign policy and allowing us to theorize about these instances to some extent, leaves little room to generalize because of the extensive amount of conditions under which their expectations hold. If usefulness is defined as the extent to which theories allow us to understand international politics and foreign policy, both seem relatively useless on their own.

Perhaps the true added value of this piece then, has been that it demonstrates the need for an integral realist approach. What is the use of understanding international politics if we cannot explain foreign policy? And what is the use for understanding singular instances of foreign policies if such stories are not embedded in a broader narrative about great power dynamics that contextualizes these attempts? This then, may be the key to truly 'understanding' international politics in its broadest sense. Such an approach could help progress realist theory building, for example by revealing to us, not only which personal factors, like world views, tend to influence foreign policy, but also whether there is any correlation between structural configurations and world views; i.e. under which structural conditions are certain world views more likely (and will thus lead to certain policies) and do we witness

²⁹ For example, a neoclassical approach based on world views applied to China's foreign policy would be of little use considering its broad party bureaucracy. Likewise, such an approach would bypass the restrictions of Congress placed on the US president in terms of foreign policy.

leaders implementing different policies in times of similar objective incentives. The true goal for realism in the future then, may be working towards a truly synergized and broadly applicable realist approach.

References

Primary

Arms Control Association. (2000). *Russia's Military Doctrine*. Retrieved from https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_05/dc3ma00

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2000a). Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Retrieved from <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2000b). National Security Concept of the Russian Federation. Retrieved from <http://archive.mid.ru//bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/1e5f0de28fe77fdcc32575d900298676/36aba64ac09f737fc32575d9002bbf31!OpenDocument>

Putin, V. (1999). *Russia at the turn of the millennium*. Retrieved from <http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ilos/RUS2504/v14/russia-at-the-turn-of-the-millennium.doc>

Putin, V. (2000). *Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation*. Retrieved from http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2000/07/08/0000_type70029type82912_70658.shtml

Speeches-USA. (n.d.). *Address to U.S. Congress. Boris Yeltsin*. Retrieved from http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/047_yeltsin.html

Secondary

Aris, S. (2011). *Eurasian Regionalism. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Backgrounder: Basic facts about China-Russia relations. (2013). Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-03/22/c_132254155.htm

Beck, L. (2005). *Russia, China Begin First Joint Military Exercises*. Retrieved from: <http://www.rense.com/general67/joint2.htm>

Belosludtsev, O. (2006). Military Partnership of Russia with CIS Member-Countries, 1991–2004. In R.S. Rush & W.W. Epley (Eds.), *Multinational Operations, Alliances, and International Military Cooperation. Past and future* (pp. 181 – 186). Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History.

- Bieler, A., Morton, A. D. (2008). The Deficits of Discourse in IPE: turning base metal into gold? *International Studies Quarterly*, 52(1), 103 – 28.
- Bin, Y. (2009a). Between Crisis and Cooperation. *Comparative Connections*, 11(1), 127-136.
- Bin, Y. (2009b). Market Malaise and Mirnaya Missiya. *Comparative Connections*, 11(3), 129-134.
- Bin, Y. (2009c). Summitry: Between Symbolism and Substance. *Comparative Connections*, 11(2), 133-144.
- Bin, Y. (2010a). Mr. Putin Goes to China: Ten Years After. *Comparative Connections*, 11(4), 125-133.
- Bin, Y. (2010b). Peace Mission 2010 and Medvedev's China Visit. *Comparative Connections*, 12(3), 123-131.
- Bin, Y. (2010c). Putin Invited Xi: Overture to 2012. *Comparative Connections*, 12(1), 119-124.
- Bin, Y. (2010d). Reset under Medvedev: Zapad-Politik and Vostok 2010. *Comparative Connections*, 12(2), 135-148.
- Bin, Y. (2011). Coping with Korea. *Comparative Connections*, 12(4), 139-150.
- Bin, Y. (2012a). Succession, SCO, and Summit Politics in Beijing. *Comparative Connections*, 14(2), 131-141.
- Bin, Y. (2012b). Succession, Syria ... and the Search for Putin's Soul. *Comparative Connections*, 14(1), 139-149.
- Bin, Y. (2013a). Pivot to Eurasia and Africa: Xi's Style. *Comparative Connections*, 15(1), 137-147.
- Bin, Y. (2013b). Summer Heat and Sino-Russian Strategizing. *Comparative Connections*, 15(2), 133-144.
- Bin, Y. (2013c). Tales of Different "Pivots". *Comparative Connections*, 14(3), 137-145.
- Bin, Y. (2014). Putin's Glory and Xi's Dream. *Comparative Connections*, 15(3), 121-136.
- Blomfield, A. (2008, May 20). Vladimir Putin is 'real power' in Russia. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/1996452/Russia-Vladimir-Putin-remains-real-power-says-aide.html>
- Boghossian, P.A. (2007). *Fear of knowledge. Against Relativism and Constructivism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buzan, B. (2011). A World Order Without Superpowers: Decentred Globalism. *International Relations*, 25(1), 3 – 25.

Campbell, D. (2013). Poststructuralism. In T. Dunne, M. Kurki & S. Smith (Eds.), *International Relations Theory. Discipline and diversity* (3rd ed.) (pp. 223 – 246). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

China and Russia. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.cctv.com/lm/1039/20/1.html>

Christensen, T. J., Snyder, J. (1990). Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity. *International Organization*, 44, 137-68.

Correlates of War. (n.d.). *National Material Capabilities (v4.0)* [data file and code book]. Retrieved from <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/national-material-capabilities/national-material-capabilities-v4-0>

Cox, R. W. (1981). Social forces, states and world orders. Beyond international relations theory. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10(2), 126 - 155.

Das Kundu, N. (2004). *Russia-India-China: Prospects for Trilateral Cooperation*. Retrieved from http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/contents/ap_3-2004.pdf

Das Kundu, N. (2009). *Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Moscow Visit: Giving Fresh Impetus to India-Russia Strategic Partnership*. Retrieved from http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/IBdoc_IB-pmsingsvisit.pdf

Das Kundu, N. (2012). *View from New Delhi: Bilateral relations strengthened*. Retrieved from http://in.rbth.com/articles/2012/12/25/view_from_new_delhi_bilateral_relations_strengthened_21263

De Haas, M. (2005). *Russian-Chinese military exercises and their wider perspective: Power play in Central Asia*. Retrieved from: http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20051000_cscp_haas.pdf

De Haas, M. (2009). *NATO-Russia Relations after the Georgian Conflict*. Retrieved from http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20090000_cscp_artikel_mhaas.pdf

De Haas, M. (2010). *Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century. Putin, Medvedev and beyond*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Department of Defense. (1991). *Military Forces in Transition*. Retrieved from <http://edocs.nps.edu/2014/May/SovietMilPower1991.pdf>

Differencebetween.info. (n.d.). *Difference between President and Prime Minister of India*. Retrieved from <http://www.differencebetween.info/difference-between-president-and-prime-minister-of-india>

Duncan, B. (2006). Beware of False Prophets: Biology, Human Nature and the Future of International Relations Theory. *International Affairs*, 82(3), 493 -510.

Elman, C. (2003). Introduction. Appraising balance of power theory. In J. A. Vasquez & C. Elman (Eds.), *Realism and the Balancing of Power: A New Debate* (pp. 1 – 21). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Enerdata. (2015). *Total energy consumption*. Retrieved from <https://yearbook.enerdata.net/energy-consumption-data.html>

Fierke, K. (2013). Constructivism. In T. Dunne, M. Kurki & S. Smith (Eds.), *International Relations Theory. Discipline and diversity* (3rd ed.) (pp. 187 – 204). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Finnemore, M., Sikkink, K. (1998). International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization*, 52(4), 887 – 917.

Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York, NY: Avon Books.

Geertz, C. (1993). *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays*. London: Fontana Press.

Gerring, J. (2007). *Case Study Research. Principles and practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldgeiger, J. M., McFaul, M. (2003). *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Hazarika, S. (1993, January 30). Despite U.S., Yeltsin Backs Rocket Deal With India. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/30/world/despite-us-yeltsin-backs-rocket-deal-with-india.html>

Hille, C. M. L. (2010). *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*. Leiden: Brill.

Hille, K., Buckley, N., Waever, C., Chazan, G. (2014, March 18). Vladimir Putin signs treaty to annex Crimea. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d93e4c7c-ae6d-11e3-8e41-00144feab7de.html#axzz3SmL1GctU>

Hume, D. (1978). *A Treatise of Human Nature* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Indian media upbeat on Russia ties after Manmohan Singh's visit. (2013). *BBC*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-24619780>

Embassy of India. (n.d.). *India-Russia Relations – an Overview*. Retrieved from <http://www.indianembassy.ru/index.php/ru/jncc/iccr-scholarships/114-media/bilateral-relations-india-russia-archives/155-india-russia-relations-an-overview>

International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2008). Country comparisons - commitments, force levels and economics. *The Military Balance*, 108(1), 419 – 450.

International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2009). Country comparisons - commitments, force levels and economics. *The Military Balance*, 109(1), 425– 454.

International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2010). Country comparisons - commitments, force levels and economics. *The Military Balance*, 110(1), 441– 472.

International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2011). Country comparisons - commitments, force levels and economics. *The Military Balance*, 111(1), 451 – 482.

International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2012). Country comparisons - commitments, force levels and economics. *The Military Balance*, 112(1), 463 – 476.

International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2013). Country comparisons - commitments, force levels and economics. *The Military Balance*, 113(1), 543 – 556.

International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2014). Country comparisons - commitments, force levels and economics. *The Military Balance*, 114(1), 471 – 492.

Kitchen, N. (2010). Systemic pressures and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation. *Review of International Studies*, 36(1), 117 – 143.

Kurki, M., Wight, C. (2013). International Relations and Social Science. In T. Dunne, M. Kurki & S. Smith (Eds.), *International Relations Theory. Discipline and diversity* (3rd ed.) (pp. 14 – 35). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lakatos, I. (1978). *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes: Philosophical Papers Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lebow, R. N. (2013). Classical Realism. In T. Dunne, M. Kurki & S. Smith (Eds.), *International Relations Theory. Discipline and diversity* (3rd ed.) (pp. 59 – 76). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lee, E. (2012). *Russia Is Sending Troops To The US To Learn American Military Tactics*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/joint-us-russia-military-drills-2012-4?IR=T>

Lo, B. (2002). *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era. Reality, illusion and mythmaking*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lopez, A. M. (1999). Russia and the Democratic Peace: The Decision to Use Military Force in Ethnic Disputes. In T. Hopf (Ed.), *Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy* (pp. 171 – 210). University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Lucas, E. (2014). *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

MacFarlane, S. N. (2006). The 'R' in BRICs: is Russia an emerging power? *International Affairs*, 82(1), 41 – 57.

McCormick, J. M. (2010). *American Foreign Policy and Process* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

McTague, T., Leonard, T. (2014, 18 July). This is a wake-up call for Europe, warns Obama as U.S. President calls Malaysian plane disaster an 'outrage of unspeakable proportions'. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2697096/Putin-facing-global-isolation-West-vents-fury-downing-MH17-Russian-backed-rebel-forces-Ukraine.html>

Mearsheimer, J. J. (1990). Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War. *International Security*, 15(1), 5 – 56.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2002). Realism, the Real World, and the Academy. In M. Brecher and F.P. Harvey (Eds.), *Realism and Institutionalism in International Studies* (pp. 23 – 33). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2013). Structural Realism. In T. Dunne, M. Kurki & S. Smith (Eds.), *International Relations Theory. Discipline and diversity* (3rd ed.) (pp. 77 – 93). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The liberal delusions that provoked Putin*. Retrieved from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141769/john-j-mearsheimer/why-the-ukraine-crisis-is-the-west-s-fault>

Morgenthau, H. J. (1978). *Politics among Nations. The struggle for power and peace* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Nayak, M., Selbin, E. (2012). *Decentering International Relations*. London: Zed Books.

Nygren, B. (2008). *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia. Putin's foreign policy towards the CIS countries*. New York, NY: Routledge.

O'Clery, C. (2011). *Moscow, December 25 1991: The Last Day of the Soviet Union*. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

Oliker, O., Crane, K., Schwartz, L. H., Yusupov, C. (2009). *Russian Foreign Policy. Sources and implications*. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG768.pdf

Office of the Historian. (n.d.^a). *Travels of President Barack Obama*. Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/obama-barack>

Office of the Historian. (n.d.^b). *Travels of President George H. W. Bush*. Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/bush-george-h-w>

Office of the Historian. (n.d.^c). *Travels of President George W. Bush*. Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/bush-george-w>

Office of the Historian. (n.d.^d). *Travels of Secretary of State Colin Luther Powell*. Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/powell-colin-luther>

Office of the Historian. (n.d.^e). *Travels of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton*. Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/clinton-hillary-rodham>

Office of the Historian. (n.d.^f). *Travels of Secretary of State John Forbes Kerry*. Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/kerry-john-forbes>

Office of the Historian. (n.d.^g). *Visits by Foreign Leaders of Russia*. Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/russia>

Other Asian States. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://countrystudies.us/russia/86.htm>

Popper, K. R. (2002). *Conjectures and Refutations*. London: Routledge.

Posture Statement. (n.d.). *Department of the Navy*. Retrieved from <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/policy/fromsea/pos97/pos-pg03.html>

Putin acknowledges Russian military servicemen (sic) were in Crimea. (2014, April 17). *Russia Today*. Retrieved from <http://rt.com/news/crimea-defense-russian-soldiers-108/>

Putin's Visit to China. (n.d.). *People's Daily*. Retrieved from <http://en.people.cn/200007/18/sino-russia.html>

Ripsman, N. M., Taliaferro, J. W., Lobell, S. E. (2009). Conclusion: The state of neoclassical realism. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy* (pp. 280 – 299). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. *World Politics*, 15(1), 144 – 172.

Rosecrance, R., Stein, A. (1993). Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy. In R. Rosecrance & A. Stein (Eds.), *Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (pp. 3 – 21). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Roy, R. (2013). *Putin's India Visit: A Review*.
http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/PutinsIndiaVisit_rroy_040113

Ruggie, J. G. (1998). What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the social constructivist challenge. *International Organization*, 52(4), 855 – 885.

Sakwa, R. (2008a). *Putin. Russia's Choice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Sanjeev, A. (2013). *Indra-2013: Russian and Indian servicemen destroy a 'terrorist base'*. Retrieved from http://in.rbth.com/economics/2013/10/29/indra-2013-russian_and_indian_servicemen_destroy_a_terrorist_base_30433

Sengupta, K. (2014, 13 May). Ukraine crisis: a country is born in Donetsk but not for long. *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-crisis-a-country-is-born--after-a-vote-by-10063-per-cent-of-its-population-9359411.html>

Schroeder, P. W. (1994a). Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory. *International Security*, 19, 108-48.

Schroeder, P. W. (1994b). *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Schweller, R. L. (1994). Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In. *International Security*, 19, 72 - 107.

Shoumikhin, S. (2004). *Sino-Russian Relations*. Retrieved from <http://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/December-2004-webpage1.pdf>

SIPRI. (2015). *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*. Retrieved from: http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/research/armaments/milex/research/armaments/milex/milex_database

Smith, S. (2003). Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and 11 September. *International Studies Quarterly*, 48(3), iv + 499 – 515.

Soviet Military Budget: \$128 Billion Bombshell. (1989, 31 May). *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/05/31/world/soviet-military-budget-128-billion-bombshell.html>

Taliaferro, J. W., Lobell, S. E., Ripsman, N. M. (2009). Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy* (pp. 1 – 41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The power of Xi Jinping. (2014, September 20). *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/news/china/21618882-cult-personality-growing-around-chinas-president-what-will-he-do-his-political>

Thorun, C. (2009). *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy. The role of ideas in post-Soviet Russia's conduct towards the West*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Trust, B. (n.d.). *Should the United States Arm Ukraine?* Retrieved from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/143169/should-the-united-states-arm-ukraine>

Tsygankov, A. P. (2013). *Russia's Foreign Policy. Change and continuity in national identity* (3rd ed.). Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ukraine crisis: Russia defies fresh Western sanctions. (2014, 20 December). *BBC*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30560941>

Vasquez, J. A. (1997). The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz's Balancing Proposition. *The American Political Science Review*, 91(4), 889 – 912.

Viotti, P. R., Kauppi, M. V. (2012). *International Relations Theory* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Walt, S. M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Walt, S. M. (2014). *The Bad Old Days Are Back*. Retrieved from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/02/the-bad-old-days-are-back/>

Walt, S. M. (2015). *Why arming Kiev Is a Really, Really Bad Idea*. Retrieved from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/09/how-not-to-save-ukraine-arming-kiev-is-a-bad-idea/>

Waltz, K. N. (1959). *Man, the State, and War. A theoretical analysis*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Waltz, K. N. (2000). Structural Realism after the Cold War. *International Security*, 25(1), 5 – 41.

Weitz, R. (2015). *Parsing Chinese-Russian Military Exercises*. Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College Press.

Wendt, A. (1992). Anarchy Is What States Make of it. *International Organization*, 46(2), 391 – 425.

Wendt, A. (1999). *A Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

World Bank. (2015). *Indicators*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

World Steel Association. (n.d.). *Crude steel production*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldsteel.org/statistics/statistics-archive/steel-archive.html>