CHAPTER II
ALLIANCES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

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

Michael Don Ward (1982: 26) describes the understanding of alliances in these words, “Little work has probed the black boxes of decision making within either nations or alliances... Nor has there been very much work which has sought to examine, understand or predict which alliance groupings were likely to form”. This chapter will begin by focusing on the balance of power theory of alliances which is the main tool used in the discipline of international relations to explain the formation and duration of alliances between states. Contrasted with ‘balance of power’ (BoP) theory is ‘balance of threat’ (BoT) theory, which suggests that states will react to increases in other state’s capabilities. Stephen Walt (1987: 263) maintains that balance of threat “should be viewed as a refinement of traditional balance of power theory”. His theory will be applied to two cases: alignment between Pakistan and China in one case and North Korea and China in the other. The same set of questions will be examined in each case to identify commonalities and discrepancies. Since the present work is the study of alliances, state actions and assessments are important in determining the genesis of the alliance. States tend to contain and counter perceived external threats through military defence and security cooperation with other states. Alliances are a means of security against
adversaries. These are regarded as a response to an external threat. Whether it is domestic politics or international politics, the logic and the reason of alliances and counter-alliances is quite an accepted phenomenon. Therefore they cannot be studied apart from other security policies, enmities and rivalries to which they are designed to respond.

Two different theories of alliance formation have been compared in this chapter, namely BoP theory and BoT theory. Section one deals with different concepts related to the mentioned theories. Part two examines different theories of alliances with special reference to BoP theory. The purpose of this section is not to review the entire alliance literature but to draw some of the themes that have played an important role in advancing the present understanding of alliances. The contribution of Stephen Walt in international relations is discussed in the next section. It focuses exclusively on his BoT theory. Part four deals with different views, arguments and counter arguments regarding responses of different scholars to Walt’s theory. In the fifth section, BoT theory is applied in the context of two case studies – Sino-Pak alliance and DPRK-China to be examined in the next two chapters in order to assess the validity of the propositions raised in this chapter. The concluding section offers a summary of the chapter.

I

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

Threat

Threat is not an objective phenomenon. It is a perceptual concept. It is a function of perception that takes into account a given state’s assessment of the probability, not simply the possibility, of the power capabilities of another state or a group of states, being employed in actual aggression (Kang 1997: 310). In accordance with Boulding’s (1968: 105) view “threat systems are the basis of politics”. Siverson and Tennefoss (1984: 1059) defined threat as one level of conflict, the other two being – unreciprocated military action and reciprocated military action. In their words, “Threat is an explicit
verbal statement threatening overt military action, directed at a target nation or nations”. Capabilities and intentions of a state play an important role in determining threat. Capabilities concern military expenditures, technological prowess, industrial capacity, population, size of the military, proximity i.e. closeness of the two countries etc. If there is growth in any one area, it is characterized as an increase in threat.

Security

According to realists, concept of security is a vicious cycle. In its most fundamental understanding, to be secure is to be free from threats and dangers. States are not perfectly secure or completely insecure but rather experience either condition in degrees. One state’s security can be another state’s insecurity. The concern that states have for their security stems from the nature of the international political environment. At the minimum, the ability to enjoy a reasonable degree of security requires that a state be certain either that it can dissuade other states from attacking it or that it can successfully defend itself if attacked. A concern for security immediately gives rise to a focus on military power and arms escalation follows. States historically have never restricted their security purview simply to their armies. In the name of security, great empires have been formed and relentlessly expanded, hegemonic wars have been waged, economic self-sufficiency has been sought after, crushing arms races have been entered into, innumerable interventions into the affairs of other states have been undertaken, alliances have been formed and broken and great religious and ideological crusades have been launched. In the contemporary world, conventional security structure does not have a direct causal relationship with hostilities. None the less the over concerns about security interest and overrated threat perception provides all fertile grounds for dispute between countries.

Herz has dealt with the security dilemma as the primary concern of territorial units in an unorganized international environment. According to him, even in the pre-nuclear age, security could be hoped for only through attainment of superiority in power, hence unending power competition, armament races, and wars. But a moderate degree of security could be gained through military arrangements, through alliances or diplomacy of neutrality. In a nuclear age, nuclear powers expect security from a system of mutual
deterrence with second strike capability, but every sense of relative security thus obtained is, forever, clouded by fears of possible inferiority (Herz 1981: 188). Non-nuclear nations are dependent on nuclear umbrellas i.e. on the respective superpowers determination to protect them. This way everybody’s security is constantly insecure.

The term security in international relation is based on two major assumptions: that threat to a state’s security principally arises from outside its borders and these threats are primarily military in nature (Ayoob 2000: 251). With its focus on power politics, threats, conflict, realism is conceived with the link between alliances and security. Given the role of alliances in the security policies of states, their origins, structures, process, and consequences have been a major topic of inquiry in the security literature (Ward 1981).

Alliance

Different scholars have defined the term ‘alliance’ differently. It is impossible to speak of international relations without referring to alliances (Liska 1962: 3). Alliance is described as a process or a technique of statecraft or a type of international organization (Fedder 1968: 68). Arnold Wolfer (1968: 268) defines an alliance as ‘a promise of mutual military assistance between two or more sovereign states’. An alliance is a ‘promise’, which sets it apart from intentions or expectations. An alliance involves ‘military collaboration’ as distinct from all non-military associations. Alliances are only the formal subset of a broader and more basic phenomenon, than that of ‘alignment’ (Snyder 1990: 105). An alliance may be an arrangement between states with very different regimes and political values. Kegley and Raymon (1990: 52) defined alliances as “formal agreements between sovereign states for the putative purpose of coordinating their behaviour in the event of specified contingencies of a military nature”.

Fedder (1968: 71) differentiated the concept of alliance as defined by Potter (1948) and Morgenthau (1960). According to Potter, alliance is the “simplest form of international union approaching the forms of international government”. Morgenthau’s proposition is that alliance is a process for manipulating equilibrium. To Potter, alliance may be the desired end of policy while Morgenthau conceives of it always as a means to the end of maintaining equilibrium. Potter stipulates that the distinctive feature of alliance is the formal provision for common executive action while Morgenthau only requires the
ambiguous guarantee that A and B will come to each other’s assistance in the event of an attack upon either or both of a common enemy.

Alliances differ in the functions that they perform. Threats and counters-threats need not be explicit, but merely understood in the minds of decision makers and need not be explicitly embodied in formally signed agreements. They expect their partners to assist them in times of conflict. Alliances are also formal associations of states for the use or non-use of military force, intended for either the security or the aggrandizement of their members, against specific other states, whether or not these others are explicitly identified (Snyder 1990: 104). The primary purpose of most alliances is to combine the member’s capabilities in a way that furthers their respective interests. The form of collaboration and the nature of commitment vary. Most alliance treaties include statements about the mutual interest of the partners i.e., in the preservation of the security. In this context, Singer and Small (1970: 30) have defined three types of pacts. (a) In ‘Defense Pact’, members will intervene on behalf of each other. (b) ‘Neutrality Pact’ or non-aggression pact, commits signatories to refrain from taking military action against any other signatories (in war). (c) In the case of ‘Entente’, members can call upon each other to assist and advise on policy matters.

According to Edwin H. Fedder (1968: 67), traditionally alliances were instituted to perform one or more of the following functions:

1. Augmentive- A allies with B in order to add B’s power to its own in relation to a given outside enemy. A+B>c.
2. Preemptive- A allies with B in order to prevent B’s power from being added to that of A’s enemy. A>C-B.
3. Strategic- A enters into an alliance with B ‘simply’ for the purpose of obtaining the use of B’s territory for A’s strategic purposes (military bases, refueling depots etc.).

Fedder cited an example of the formation of NATO as the result of perception of a Soviet threat to Western Europe. The Soviet threat was inferred because of Soviet capability and estimates of Soviet intentions. To quote him, “Perceptions of threat based upon inferred intent are more fragile than those based upon deeds, which are fragile enough” (Fedder and Robinson 1967: 8). The alliances may not be universal. Alliances
are restrictive to specific goals relative to a specifiable external enemy. They tend to be short lived. In his words, an alliance is “a limited set of states acting in concert at x time regarding the mutual enhancement of the military security of the members” (Fedder 1968: 68).

**Kinds of alliance**

An alliance can take different forms by which states enhance their power:

a. **Formal or informal:** An alliance is a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states. According to Walt (1997: 157), in case of a formal alliance, commitment is enshrined in a written treaty whereas an informal alliance is based on understanding. Singer and Small (1969: 521) write, “The written alliance has usually been treated as a meaningful commitment, rarely entered into lightly”, whereas informal agreements are easier to violate. To them, formal alliance agreements signal a commitment while informal relationships permit states greater flexibility i.e., greater policy latitude.

b. **Offensive or defensive:** The purpose of alliances is to combine the member’s capabilities to further their interests. Offensive alliance refers to influence capability, the ability to affect the environment i.e., through this alliance the states seek to maximize security by maximizing their relative power. Whereas defensive alliance is the ability to avoid being influenced by other states. Through defensive alliance, states could acquire the means to defend themselves without threatening others. Osgood (1968: 18) clarified this distinction. According to him, an offensive alliance aims at forcibly changing the international status quo, territorially or otherwise, to increase the assets of its members. On the other hand, a defensive alliance presupposes only a common interest in opposing threats from specific states or groups. He also classified defensive alliance into local or regional collective security agreements. The Organization of American States (OAS) is an example of both (Osgood 1968: 18). Walt also attempted to differentiate between these two categories of alliances: offensive and defensive. According to him, offensive alliances are formed in order to attack a specific target that are intended to provide the means for an attack on some third party
whereas defensive alliance is the ability to avoid being influenced by other states (Walt 1997: 159). In defensive alliance, states merely sought to survive and great powers could guarantee their security by forming balancing alliances (Walt 1998: 31). These are intended as a mutual guarantee in the event that another state attacks one of the alliance members.

c. Ad hoc or permanent: Ad hoc alliances are formed for the purpose of meeting a specific problem. An alliance may collapse because it is no longer in the interests of the members, for instance, the Axis alliance of 1939-45. It may collapse because of domestic politics or misperception. Permanent alliance may survive even after it has become a liability, because of domestic politics or misperception.

d. Alliances in bipolar or multipolar system: Alliance formation in a bipolar system is based on a set of states dominated by two powerful states whereas in a multipolar system, it is based on three or more major states having approximately equal military power. In a multipolar system each state perceives that it might be attacked by the others. Each feels some motivation to come to the defense of the state that is attacked (Snyder 1990: 107). Liska (1962: 28) states that in multipolar systems alliances will be formed when interests converge, but that there are no intrinsically convergent interests. In the words of Snyder and Diesing (1977: 422), “Each major actor perceives all others to be equally eligible as potential allies or potential opponents”. Thus, a multipolar system with relatively equal distribution of power brings about flexibility in alliance partner choice. Osgood (1968: 80) put SEATO and NATO in the category of multilateral regional alliance. Snyder (1990: 117) states that alliance formation in a bipolar system is a much simpler process than in a multipolar system because who allies with whom is much less a matter of choice as the structure of the system provides little opportunity.

e. Symmetrical or asymmetrical: Alliances may be either symmetrical or asymmetrical depending on whether the members possess roughly equal capabilities. In case of symmetric alliances each party gains the same type of benefit. Two major powers’ interests may be sufficiently close for them to form an alliance where they both gain security or autonomy, provided that the cost for the other is not too high (Morrow 1991: 915). Opportunities to form symmetric
alliances will be rare because they require a great harmony of interests. In case of deals between major powers and minor powers, the minor power will make autonomy concessions to the major power in return for security the major power can provide (Morrow 1991: 914). This pattern of alliance will be called asymmetric because the party receives different benefits from the alliance. Asymmetries in capabilities are found in asymmetric alliances.

The fear or threat of external aggression lead states to join forces or enter into alliances. If states join to combat external threat and if the threat is removed, the alliance may cease to exist. Alliances are only one kind of commitment by which states enhance their power. One cannot properly assess the prospects of alliances without distinguishing between various other forms of security policies. Although these security strategies are different in many ways from alliances, these are similar in the context of alliances and hence are analytically useful to understand.

**Coalitions**

Coalitions differ in principle from alliance. Snyder differentiated between alliances and coalitions. According to him, alliances are formed in peacetime and coalitions are often found during war (Snyder 1990: 106). Coalitions lack many of the political functions, such as deterrence of attack, preclusion and restraint of the ally. Osgood (1968: 50) has cited NATO as unprecedented among peacetime alliances. Fedder (1968: 80) argues that alliances are coalitions. According to him, alliances are located within a typology of coalitions. He defined coalition as “a set of members acting in concert at x time regarding one to n issues” (Fedder 1968: 80).

**Alignment**

Alignment is among the most central phenomenons in international politics. It amounts to a set of mutual expectations between two or more states that they will have each other’s support in disputes or wars with particular states (Snyder 1990: 105). Such expectations arise from perceived common interests that may be strong or weak, depending on the parties’ relative degree of conflict with a common adversary. Formal alliances strengthen existing alignments, or create new ones. Alignments may be strengthened through

Snyder (1990: 105) described an alliance as ‘a subset of the broader phenomenon alignment’. “Alignment refers to a set of mutual expectations between two or more states that they will have each other’s support in disputes or wars with particular other states”. According to him, expectations of support or opposition stem from a variety of sources, mainly grouped into three categories: strength inequalities, conflicts and common interests among states, past interaction including the negotiation of formal alliances’ (Snyder 1991: 123).

Alignment occurs when a states brings its policies into close cooperation with another state in order to achieve mutual security goals. The key concern of states is to align in such a way as to prevent any other state or group of states from achieving preponderance (David 1991: 234).

**Entente**

The concept of entente¹ is a relatively modern one. Kann compares alliances and ententes. In case of ententes, no firm commitments exist between partners. There should be simple recognition of the fact that agreements between them will make sense only if they serve common interests. The partners of an entente will be interested in strengthening their ties. According to him, the inherent trend of an entente is in the opposite direction from that of an alliance (Kann 1976: 612). He states that the text of most alliance treaties includes statements about the mutual interest of the partners, in the preservation of internal and external security and in the restraint of aggression (Kann 1976: 613). Secrecy, ideological issues etc. are well delineated in alliance treaties but not in ententes (Kann 1976: 615). The major function of an alliance is its deterrent effect, which is lacking in ententes (Kann 1976: 616). Entente is more flexible associations between states (Kann 1976: 611). It entails no definite commitments. It is vague, rests on

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¹ The concept of entente, taken from the Franco-British Entente Cordiale of 1904 and made more specific in 1912, is usually referred to as the classical case of a flexible agreement of cooperation between two sovereign powers. By intent far more loosely defined than alliance, ‘entente’ is a more meaningful term than ‘consultation’ or ‘non-aggression pact’. Robert A. Kann (1976), “Alliances versus Ententes”, *World Politics*, 28(4): 611.
point of honour, to be construed by accidents and convenience. Ententes are agreements that settle conflicts between states to such a degree that from then on they expect each other’s diplomatic or military support or by unilateral declarations and actions of various kinds (Snyder 1990: 105). On the other hand, an alliance has definite covenants. It could force the allies into actions. A major function of an alliance is its deterrent effect that is weaker in entente.

Alliances and ententes often end when the allies no longer perceive the third country as a common security threat. Building alliances is not the only tactic states have; there are other strategies also. Balancing and bandwagoning can lead to formation of alliances. When confronted by an external threat, states may either balance or bandwagon.

**Balancing**

Balancing describes foreign policy of a state. It is defined as allying with others against the prevailing threat. To Kenneth Waltz, “balancing is a sensible behaviour when the victory of one coalition over another leaves weaker members of the winning coalition at the mercy of the stronger one... On the weaker side, they are both more appreciated and safer, provided of course, the coalition they join achieves enough defensive or deterrent strength to dissuade adversaries from attacking” (Waltz 1979: 126-127). States can balance in a variety of ways. Waltz (1979) distinguishes between two kinds of balancing. States could attempt to balance threats with their own resources. This is called internal balancing. Alternatively, they can seek out other states that share their fear and ally with them. This is known as external balancing. According to Waltz (1979: 168), under bipolarity internal balancing is more predominant and precise than external balancing.

**Bandwagoning**

If the system fails to provide a balance against an aggressor, individual nations respond differently to threat. Bandwagoning is joining the stronger side for the sake of protection and payoffs, even if this meant insecurity vis-à-vis the protecting power and a certain sacrifice of independence (Schroeder 1994: 430). Schroeder sees bandwagoning as historically more common than balancing, particularly by smaller powers. According to
Schweller, bandwagoning refers to joining with a rising state, either from fear or from greed (Vasquez and Elman 2003: 79).

Walt defined bandwagoning\(^2\) as 'alignment with the source of danger'. He differentiated it into two kinds: offensive and defensive. Offensive bandwagoning is alignment with a dominant state in order to share in the spoils of victory. Defensive bandwagoning is a 'form of appeasement'; a state aligns with an aggressive state in order to avoid being attacked (Walt 1987: 21). Walt also distinguished between bandwagoning and détente. Bandwagoning involves unequal exchange; détente involves roughly equal concessions in which both sides benefit. Bandwagoning is an accommodation to pressure while détente implies a mutual recognition of legitimate interests (Walt 1988: 282).

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

**Hiding**

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

**Transcending**

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

\(^2\) The concept of bandwagoning was briefly discussed by Kenneth Waltz (1979: 126), Walt’s teacher, in Theory of International Politics, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley. Waltz credits Stephen Van Evera for the label of bandwagoning.
Other factors that may affect how states respond to threat are suggested by Christensen and Snyder's analysis of chain-ganging and buck-passing, where they find that technology, geography, and perception of strategic incentives influence the way in which states respond to threat.

*Chain-ganging*
A multipolar balancing dynamic that results when interlocking alliance commitments, alliance pull states into wars that they might have avoided. Christensen and Snyder (2003: 73) argue that this dynamic is most likely to occur when states perceive that offense has the advantage over defense, since states must then lend quick and decisive support to their allies. The result is that all the members of an alliance become hostage to the behaviour of the least restrained state, with hyperactive balancing producing unrestrained war.

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

Scholars and experts working on these dimensions have proposed various scenarios. Before analyzing the cases, it is important to briefly discuss theories related to the alliances in international politics. A number of scholars have attempted to develop theories of alliances. Modern alliances are distinguished from the traditional ones in terms of duration, scope etc.

II

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

Liska's work was the first in the sphere of theory of alliances. In his words: "It is impossible to speak of international relations without referring to alliances; the two often merge in all but name. For the same reason, it has always been difficult to say much that is peculiar to alliances on the plane of general analysis" (Liska 1962: 3). He further views that "Alliances are against and only derivatively for, someone or something" which implies that relations with allies and adversaries are inseparable (Liska 1962: 12). His Nations in Alliance emphasizes the relevance of traditional alliance patterns in the contemporary international system. He states that the relation of alliances to the balance of power is simple. Affirmatively, states enter into alliances with one another in order to supplement each other's capabilities. Negatively, an alliance is a means of reducing the impact of antagonistic power, perceived as pressure, which threatens one's independence. In order to act "economically", alliance builders must seek the most demanding commitments. They must consider the marginal utility and the last unit of cost in implementing commitments (Liska 1962: 26-27). He further states that "In economic terminology alliances aim at maximizing gains and sharing liabilities. The decision to align, in what form, and with whom or not to align, as part of a deliberate policy- is made with reference to national interests" (Liska 1962: 40).

Alliance as a military compact is also described by the scholars of international politics. For many regimes, maintaining an adequate military capability against external and internal enemies is a paramount objective to which many other needs must be subordinated. Wolfer (1968: 268) notes that 'an alliance is a promise of mutual military assistance between two or more sovereign states'. William Fox and Annette Baker Fox (1967: 6) reinforce the assertion of alliance as an instrument to rationalize diverse foreign military policies. Osgood (1968: 21) lists the principal functions of alliances as "accretion of external power, internal security, restraint of allies and international order".
But alliance formation or alliance duration is complex. The oldest explanations of alliances are derived from BoP theory. The most important motive is to prevent any nation or combination of countries from achieving a dominant position. Alliance partners are chosen on the basis of common needs.

**Balance of power as an analytical method:**

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

According to Morgenthau (1973), in the BoP theory, nations form alliances to offset growing powers and restore the balance. To him, an alliance is always a means to an end of maintaining equilibrium. To quote him, “In the realist view, the historically most important manifestation of the balance of power, is to be found in the relations between one nation or alliance and another alliance” (Morgenthau 1960: 169). He discusses alliance in terms of means/ends, costs/rewards calculations.

Another scholar, Quincy Wright (1942: 254) stated that the BoP is a system designed to maintain a continuous conviction in every state that if it attempted aggression, it would encounter an invincible combination of the others. For a BoP system to reach and maintain a position of stable equilibrium, all essential actors of the system must be satisfied with that position. Kaplan (1969: 291-303) has given six 'essential rules', which define the BoP system. They are:
a. Increase capabilities but negotiate rather than fight.
b. Fight rather than fail to increase capabilities.
c. Stop fighting rather than eliminate an essential actor.
d. Oppose any coalition or single actor, which tends to assume a position of predominance within the system.
e. Constrain actors who subscribe to supranational organizational principles.
f. Permit defeated or constrained essential national actors to re-enter the system as acceptable role partners, or act to bring some previously inessential actor within the essential actor classification.
g. Treat all essential actors as acceptable role partners.

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

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

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

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Perceptual theorists distinguish among three components of perception: values, beliefs and cognitions. A value is a preference for one state of reality over another e.g. green is prettier than blue. Values do not specify what is but rather what ought to be. Values assign a relative worth to objects and conditions. A belief is a conviction that a description of reality is true, proven or known. Often it is based on prior reception of information from the environment but it is not the same as the data themselves. It is an analytical proposition that relates individual pieces of data into a "proven" pattern e.g. democratic governments are less war like than totalitarian governments. A belief is not the same as a value. Cognition is a data or information received from the environment. Cognitions are key elements in establishing perpetual systems and in changing these systems. Jervis bridges the gap between theories of foreign policy decision making and the study of perceptions. According to him, scholars often seek to understand the goals, beliefs, and perception of decision makers that can make their policies intelligible (Jervis 1989: 186). Wohlforth's (2004) basic contention is that power affects policy through decision-maker's perceptions.

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

According to Thomas J. Christensen (1997: 81), before the two world wars, security policies were largely driven by the degree of threat perceived by political and military leaders. Before World War I (1914), when leaders felt they or their allies were relatively vulnerable to offensives, most European nations built weapons and tightened formal or informal alliances. Alternatively, before World War II (1939), when defense
was believed to have the advantage in continental warfare, tight alliances did not form. Where loose ones existed, they were quickly abandoned e.g., the case of France and the Little Entente in Eastern Europe (Christensen 1997: 81). In 1914, both beliefs about the offense-defense balance and the balance of power affected the security policies of the major powers. The widely accepted view emphasizes the importance of offensive biases in creating tight alliances and quick escalation in the early phases of the war. The author reviewed this view by focusing on how adding the variable of perceptions about the distribution of capabilities enhances the concept. To him, sensitivity to perceptions and misperceptions of basic security conditions may be especially important in analyzing the stability of a rapidly changing Cold War East Asia (Christensen 1997: 92). In the Cold War East Asia, multi-polarity is affected by various factors- the collapse of Russian influence, the rise of China, the possibility of unified Korea, the uncertainties of Japanese militarization, the level of US deployments etc. He quotes Stephen Walt’s argument that the kind of revolutionary political changes that seem possible in China and likely in Korea may lead potential adversaries to misread those nations’s overall strength in potentially destabilizing ways (Christensen 1997: 93).

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

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

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

III

*Stephen M. Walt: balance of threat*

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

According to Walt, nations do occasionally cooperate but when they do so, the cooperation is meant to face a powerful threat from one or more states. When the threat is terminated, the cooperation also comes to an end. How states will select their alliance partners can be identified on the basis of whether the states ally against or with the principal external threat. It is with this perspective that Walt analyses and explains the basic cause of threat and alliances is analyzed and explained.
Walt seeks to distinguish between the BoP theory and the BoT theory. In the BoP theory, “states will react to imbalances of power”, whereas in the BoT theory, “states react to imbalances of threat”. According to him, “when there is an imbalance of threat i.e., when one state or coalition appears especially dangerous, states will form alliances or increase their internal efforts in order to reduce their vulnerability”. Several case studies, including West Asiaern states studied by Stephen M. Walt during 1955-1979, found support for the ‘balancing’ hypothesis.

Walt defined an alliance as “a formal or informal arrangement of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states”. It includes both formal treaties and informal commitments because states may be willing to cooperate but unwilling to sign a formal treaty. The presence or absence of a formal treaty often says relatively little about the actual level of commitment between the parties (Walt 1987: 12, 13).

**Balance of threat theory**

Walt finds that it is the general tendency of states to “balance” against the most threatening state or coalition, rather than “bandwagoning” with it. Balancing is usually done in terms of power. States are said to balance against the strongest state or coalition. In fact, they balance against the state that poses the greatest threat. The level of threat a state poses to others is a function of its power, geographic proximity, offensive military capabilities and perceived aggressiveness, though the precise weight attached to each factor will vary across cases. It is important to consider all the factors that will affect the level of threat that a state may pose:

**Aggregate Power**: The total power of states is an important component of the threat that they can pose to others. The greater a state's total resource e.g., population, industrial and military capability, and technological prowess, the greater a potential threat it can pose to others. A state’s aggregate power may provide a motive for balancing or bandwagoning.

**Geographic Proximity**: The ability to project power declines with distance; states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away. States are more likely to make their alliance choices in response to nearby powers than in response to those that are distant. Walt (1987: 277) asserted the importance of geography stating that if a Soviet strategic planner could be granted one wish, it should be to move his country somewhere else.
**Offensive Power:** Offensive power is the ability to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state. States with large offensive capabilities are more likely to provoke an alliance than are those that are incapable of attacking.

**Aggressive Intentions:** States that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them. Perceptions of intent play a crucial role in alliance choices. Intention, not power is crucial.

To summarize, other things being equal, states that are nearby are more dangerous than those that are far away, states that possess offensive military forces pose a greater threat than those with purely defensive capabilities and states with aggressive intentions will be viewed as more worrisome than states that seek only to preserve the status quo.

**Other Causes of Alignment**

Walt also discussed other factors that may encourage alignment, particularly when it is not obvious which state or states pose the greatest threat.

**Ideological solidarity:** Ideology is one factor among many that may encourage alignment. Other things being equal, states will prefer to ally with governments whose political outlook is similar to their own (Walt 1997: 168). Ideology is a weaker cause of alliance formation. Ideological factors are more important in bipolarity especially when deep ideological differences divide the two strongest states, because third parties can choose the superpower with whom they are ideologically more compatible. In a multipolar world, ideology will be less important than the balance of threats. In such circumstances, states take whatever allies they can get.

**Economic aid:** Offering or accepting aid is one way that states with different capabilities can respond to a common threat. To Walt (1985: 28), a large aid relationship is more often the result of alignment than a cause of it. Economic ties can create or reinforce strong alliance relations, particularly when one partner is heavily dependent on the other. Although very weak and dependent states may cooperate on security affairs in order to gain economic benefits, the evidence for this general proposition is mixed. States are more likely to forge strong economic links when there are also powerful political incentives for alignment.
Thus, Walt advanced five hypotheses:

1. States ally against states that threaten them i.e., they balance.
2. States ally with states that threaten them i.e., they bandwagon.
3. States choose allies of similar ideology.
4. Foreign aid attracts allies.
5. Political penetration facilitates alliance.

To test these hypotheses, Walt used the following determinants: In deciding whether or not to balance, states look at aggregate power (more is more threatening), geographical proximity (closer is more threatening), offensive capabilities (more is more threatening), and offensive intentions (states that have them are more threatening).

Balancing versus bandwagoning

Walt draws a contrast between balancing (allying against a threat) and bandwagoning (allying with the threat). He contends that balancing should be more common than bandwagoning and supports his contention with a survey of alliances in the West Asia from 1955 to 1979. States seek to counter threats by adding the power of other states to their own. Although states choose allies to balance against threats, such behaviour is not universal. He argues that, in general, states should not be expected to bandwagon except under certain identifiable conditions (Walt 1987: 28). He argues that potential bandwagoners are aware that increasing the capabilities of a threatening state carries great risks, and will opt to balance against them (1987: 29).

According to Walt, balancing is more common than bandwagoning because an alignment that preserves most of a state’s freedom of action is preferable to accepting subordination under a potential hegemon. Intentions can change and perceptions are unreliable, it is safer to balance against potential threats than to hope that strong states will remain benevolent (Walt 1985: 15). He also extended his analysis to East-West relations.

The tendency for states to balance against threats helps to explain why the United States was able to lead a coalition whose combined capabilities were far greater than the Soviet alliance network, contrary to the predictions of simple BoP theory. He shows that
if states were really concerned with power, then they would not have allied so extensively with the US. Such a coalition was a result not of the power of the USSR but of its perceived threat (Walt 1987: 273-281). Thus, where the United States and Soviet Union sought allies to balance each other, their clients welcomed their support in order to deal with specific regional threats. Thus, BoT theory also explains why states in the developing world usually seek allies against local dangers, and not in response to shifts in the global balance of power. Walt's study suggests that as a superpower, the US was interested in global balance of power, but it had to react to the regional threats posed by the adversaries like China. US would attain global and regional balance by responding to the situation from countries that provided a threat. He also observes that “every modern attempt to achieve hegemony in Europe has been thwarted by a powerful balancing coalition” (Walt 2000: 203). But every state in modern Europe that attempted hegemony was near to states it threatened, possessed offensive capabilities, and had malign intentions. BoT theory also explains why states in the developing world usually seek allies against local dangers, and not in response to shifts in the global balance of power.

**Impact of multipolarity**

Walt also talked about the impact of multipolarity on alliances. The gradual emergence of a multi-polar system implies a diffusion of power. It will be difficult to determine which states pose the greatest threats, and international alignments will be more flexible and less durable than they were during the Cold War (Walt 1993: 245). Because states balance against threats and not just against power, how they evaluate each other’s intentions will become more important as power becomes more evenly distributed (Walt 1993: 245). Dealing with the efficiency of balancing behaviour in a multipolar world, he wrote that although states usually balance against threatening powers, the speed and effectiveness of the balancing process can vary considerably. Weak states are more likely to “bandwagon” because their efforts to balance would not effect the outcome very much. The end of the Cold War also means the end of superpower competition in the developing world and hence new alliance options were created for great and small powers alike.
Thus, the BoT theory more accurately describes the primary dynamics of alliance formation. For Walt, alliances are defensive and are driven by fear. With the changing global scenario both politically as well as economically, Walt's theory finds a strong recommendation. Although the tendency for states to balance against threats has been widely recognized by scholars, some suggest limits on the relevance of Stephen Walt's work.

IV

Alternative theories

According to Randall Schweller, Walt does not offer a theory of alliances so much as a theory of how states respond to external threats. Both his theory and his balancing proposition apply only to threatened states. Schweller looked at how unthreatened states respond to opportunities in their environment and found that bandwagoning is a common form of behaviour, especially among dissatisfied states.

Schweller agreed with Walt's conclusion that states typically respond to threats by balancing against, not aligning with, the source of danger. Because states align for reasons other than security, he disagreed with Walt's claim that states usually balance and rarely bandwagon. He pointed out the problem with Walt's definition of bandwagoning as 'alignment' with the source of danger on three grounds (Schweller 1997: 928). First, it confuses bandwagoning with strategic surrender. Second, it defies conventional usage and the common meaning of the term. Third, by viewing bandwagoning solely as a response to threat, it ignores the primary motivation for bandwagoning, namely, the expectation of profit and easy gains. To Schweller, alliances are responses not only to threats but also to opportunities. He views alliances as tools to make gains, as well as to avoid losses. He suggests that Walt is correct that fearful states will usually balance but he underplays greed as a motive. Schweller's "balance of interests" theory suggests different account of state's motives, fear and greed. His argument is that unthreatened revisionist states, overlooked by Walt, often bandwagon with the stronger revisionist state or coalition for opportunistic reasons. He wrote that 'balancing is an extremely costly activity but bandwagoning rarely involves costs'. This is why bandwagoning is more common (Schweller 1994: 93).
In his analysis of Walt's theory, Schroeder finds difficulty with the definition of the terms, balance and threat. He argues that by focusing on perceptions of threat, Walt's balance of threat theory makes it virtually impossible to distinguish between balancing and bandwagoning or to determine the real motives of actors, since any bandwagoning state is likely to claim that it is actually balancing against a threatening enemy. He emphasizes the difficulties involved in using perceptions and motivation to explain state actions, because policy makers often have an incentive to lie (Schroeder 1994: 119). He argues that balancing was never the preferred strategy of small states or the continental great powers (Schroeder 2003: 126). Instead states followed a number of strategies, including trying to share in the profits, working out some accommodation or grouping. For him there is no pattern of states regularly balancing against power and hegemonic bids.

According to Sorokin (1994: 422), theories of alliances which support the argument that states use alliances to increase their security by balancing against threats are incomplete. He demonstrated that a mix of arms and alliance is a better characterization of state's security policies. States often pursue security independently. They rely on their own military capabilities and acquire additional arms if necessary (Sorokin 1994: 422). All the states have some military capabilities. He cited Most and Siverson (1987) who argued that arms and alliances are substitutes for one another. Either of them may be adopted to achieve security. On this issue James Morrow (1993: 208) says that nations pursue the means they believe presents the most effective path to security. They balance the political benefits of additional capabilities against the political costs of acquiring them when choosing between arms and allies. Sorokin (1994: 423) defined alliances as "formal agreements between sovereign states for the putative purpose of coordinating their behaviour in the event of specified contingencies of a military nature." To him, his definition of alliance is more accurate and useful than Walt's definition. He developed a theoretical model to test the states that need additional security. They need support in the form of arms or alliances to help them maintain the status quo. These are often small states, relying on larger allies for support. Sorokin showed that states often balance against threats without alliances (Sorokin 1994: 424). He argues that contrary to Walt's argument, Israel's desire to maintain political flexibility access to inexpensive arms have
kept it from forming an alliance. He finds that Walt's failure to distinguish between alliances and informal relationships leads him to make misleading generalizations. While critically appraising Walt he states that Walt overlooks or understates the potential costs of relying on allies promises of military support. He is of the view that, by mislabeling the Israel-US relationship an alliance. Walt draws unsupported conclusions.

To Snyder, Walt's *The Origins of Alliances* does not fill the alliance theory void but it makes an impressive start. He says that the study of Walt is mainly about alliance formation rather than the politics of alliances after they are formed. Snyder dealt with Walt's 'balance of threat'. He pondered over the new formulation by Walt that the level of threat is a function not only of distribution of power but also of geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and the perceived intentions of others. To him, all the three factors appeared to be components of 'power' or 'capability' (Snyder 1991: 126). He finds Walt's concept of disaggregating these variables and then reintegrating in the concept of threat, a useful theoretical clarification.

However, Snyder is puzzled over the point that if 'threat' is balanced rather than 'power', what does the balancing consist of? According to Snyder (1991: 126), Walt's theory ignored the intention factor on the defensive side. He does not find anything new with Walt's conclusion that states balance more than they bandwagon. According to him, the balancing-bandwagoning dichotomy is not an appropriate theory for the analysis of alliance formation (Snyder 1991: 128). This does not tell much about how states choose their allies and shape their alliances when their motive is strictly balancing. He also finds problem with Walt's balancing-bandwagoning dualism to two other forms of dualism-offensive vs. defensive alliances and resistance to versus accommodation of an opponent (Snyder 1991: 129). Walt's theory does not explain the basis to choose an ally in a multipolar system, with several partners. It fails to specify the determinants of the kind of alliance i.e., bilateral vs. multilateral, alliance vs. entente, unilateral guarantee vs., reciprocal pledge (Snyder 1991: 129). From his theory it cannot be deduced, how partners divide up the alliance's benefits and what contributes to 'bargaining power' (Snyder 1991: 128, 129). Walt's analysis leaves the misleading impression that the balance of power theory is entirely about alliance making. States may balance by means other than alliance, by armament or military action. A theory of alliance should deal with
choices between alliances and other means of security. States do have alignment options other than allying with or against a threatening power- for instance, neutrality (formal or informal), to improve relations with the third party (short of alliance), or compromise with the threatening state (Snyder 1991: 128). Snyder appreciated Walt’s concept of bandwagoning as the most original and the most elusive part of his theory. He finds him deserving credit for having initiated theorizing about an ignored phenomenon. Yet to him, Walt’s book does not claim to be a general theory of alliances.

Keohane finds that Walt supported Waltz’s theory, reformulated it and applied it to another domain. He appreciated Walt for testing conditional hypotheses about state behavior and not forcing all cases into his mold. He admitted that Walt relied on secondary sources, as he is not an expert on the West Asia. His ‘balance of threat’ theory has relatively little theoretical power of its own. But his theory helps to illuminate West Asia’s alliances. He admits that Walt’s theory provides a favourable test from the standpoint of the neorealist theorist (Keohane 1988: 175, 176). Keohane also tested how neorealist theory helped to illuminate Walt’s analysis. He points out that without the use of neorealist theory it is difficult to imagine that he would have formulated his propositions about balancing, bandwagoning, and role of ideology so clearly (Keohane 1988: 174). He finds some shortcomings of Walt’s work. The institutional questions are not raised in Walt’s work. To mention some, under what conditions do alignments become formalized? Does the creation of formal alliance structures make an alliance more or less durable? What is the impact of formal treaty as opposed to an informal understanding? Keohane (1988: 175) feels that these sorts of questions are not dealt with in Walt’s work because they are not raised by neorealist theory. Despite this, he thinks Walt’s confirmation lends credibility to the neorealist theory. He also labels Walt as a limitationist in foreign policy (Keohane 1988: 176).

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

Barnett argues that Walt’s ideas about BoT do not fit with the core of neorealism.
He notes that if states balance threat and not power, one has to ask where threat comes
from (Barnett 1996: 400-447). In his case study of Arab politics, he argues that conflict
and threat come from their mutual conception of identity and not power. For him, alliance
formation and perceptions of threat do not derive from material factors, but from ideas
and social constructions. States find each other threatening and form alliances against
each other not because of differences in power, but because they believe in different
things. Steven David (1990) argues that unstable third world states often form alliances to
counter imminent internal threats.

To summarize, the neorealist interpretation of alliances propounded by scholars like
Walt, Christensen, Snyder etc. has emerged as a established school of thought. Though
there are differences in the finer details of their theories on alliances, the broader
premises of their themes that alliances are distribution of power, remains same. Despite
the counterarguments put up by various writers about the relevance of Walt’s *The Origins
of Alliances*, it can be said that the book offers valuable guide to the theory and practice
of alliances. Stephen M. Walt is the first to look at alliance behaviour in the West Asia
and presented empirical evidence that states do not balance power per se, but balance
against threat. Over one-third of his book describes alignments and realignments in the
West Asia between 1955 and 1979. It has informative chapters on alliances, which has
direct theoretical question. Walt’s theory is valuable and can help its reader to reconsider
the value of theory in contemporary international relations.

The specific cases, which are to be examined, distinguish this work from other
works. The following section explains why Pakistan-China and North Korea-China be
good studies of BoT theory. It asks if Walt is correct, what should be expected in South
Asia and East Asia.

V

Case studies on alliances

The two cases that will be examined in the next two chapters in order to assess the
validity of the propositions raised in this chapter are: (a) alignment between Pakistan and
China and the informal alliance between them i.e. no written agreement and (b) North Korea and China, having formal alliance i.e. written agreement between them. Both cases may indicate the same community of interests among the parties. Criteria for case selection underlie its uniqueness. Pakistan and North Korea aligned with China despite the fact that these two countries are neighbours of China which is relatively more powerful. They should be balancing against China. Nevertheless they entered into alliance with it. These theoretical models assume a state that faces an external threat from an adversary. The cases involve enduring rivalries. Through this study, it will be possible to identify the sources of external threat the actor perceives.

In the case of Sino-Pak alliance, Pakistani threat perception came from India. Few characteristics facts that underlie this situation need to be mentioned here. Pakistan and India negotiated bilateral agreements from time to time, like the Indus Water Treaty (1960), the agreement to submit the Rann of Kutch dispute (1965) to international arbitration and the acceptance of the award of the tribunal (1968), the Simla Agreement (1972) etc. The resolution of specific disputes did not lead to peace; new disputes arose to take the place of those that were resolved (Rajagopalan 1998: 1261). The 1971 Indo-Pak war had tilted the balance of power in South Asia in favour of India. It suited neither Pakistan nor China. Pakistan felt threatened when India exploded a nuclear device on 18 May 1974. India continued to be Pakistan’s principal security concern. The natural imbalance of material power between India and Pakistan, and the resulting Pakistani insecurity became the main cause for the Indo-Pak conflict (Rajagopalan 1998: 1263). Thus, Pakistan’s search for security has one main target- augmentation of security against external threat primarily from India and counterbalancing India’s military superiority. To secure itself, it aligned with China.

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

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

VI

Summing up

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