

**Randall L. Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In.”**  
*International Security* 19:1 (Summer, 1994), pp. 72-107.

The longstanding debate over the relative importance of “balancing” (allying against a rising power, to forestall its hegemony) and “bandwagoning” (allying with a rising power, to reap some of the spoils of its anticipated victory) has long been both consequential and fervent in international relations theory. Practitioners have fretted for centuries over “domino effects” and the like, which imply bandwagoning, but the more prominent academic view is for widespread balancing. Schweller argues that this is a false dichotomy: bandwagoning is not “simply the opposite of balancing” (74). Either action can be a legitimate response to a threat, but the two policy choices advance different aims of the state. Balancing is a conservative response, seeking only self-preservation; bandwagoning, on the other hand, can have rapacious, predatory ends, and indeed does not require a threat at all.

Schweller specifically considers Walt’s balancing theory (“balance of threat”) and various criticisms thereof. Schweller is at first an enthusiastic supporter of Walt, and summarily dismisses naysayers: most fail, he claims, because they take Walt at Walt’s own terms, where one balances in response to threats. Schweller considers Walt’s case unassailable under such circumstances. But then he puts down his pompoms and reveals his fangs. Not all real-world situations are threatening, and Walt’s schema ignores these cases (i.e., there is a case-selection bias). Further, he takes issue with Walt’s nonstandard use of the term “bandwagon” – the common-parlance definition of bandwagoning hinges on the intrinsic momentum of the emergent actor’s power growth sweeping new allies onto its side. Walt, by contrast, conflates bandwagoning with capitulation, and conceives of bandwagoning as occurring when stronger actors coerce the weaker to join their side. In addition to meriting a stern slap on the semantic wrist, these issues induce a strong status-quo bias. With the restricted definition of bandwagoning and the examination only of cases where balancing is most likely, Walt – like all fomenters of realist theory – manufactures a world much more highly resistant to change than is reality, where many states are unsatisfied and would like to alter their relative position.

Schweller then turns to establishing “bandwagoning for profit,” that is, joining a conflict (on the seemingly stronger side) solely in hopes of eventually obtaining material rewards and despite the lack of a real threat. He cites examples from the Italian Wars (1494-1517), the wars of Louis XIV (1667-1679), and the Napoleonic Wars (1806-1813). He then attempts a taxonomy of such bandwagoning:

- Jackals are secondary (“lesser-aims”) revisionist states scavenging along behind the emerging lead revisionist (“lion”), both fearing the latter’s wrath and hoping to disgorge themselves on its “‘succulent’ ” and “‘satisfying’ ” table scraps.<sup>1</sup> The prime example is World War II, where the world was veritably overrun with jackals (Italy, Japan, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the USSR). Schweller avers that jackals decrease the stability of the system.
- Pilers-on, by contrast, join with a side that has already *de facto* won the war, and thereby increase system stability. Such behaviour can be observed at the close of many wars, including the War of the Spanish Succession, the Napoleonic Wars, the World Wars, and the Gulf War.
- The wave of the future – as seen in Third World states joining the Communist bloc in the Cold War, Comecon states in 1989-1990, etc. – typically involves states throwing themselves at the feet of “dynamic ideologies” and “charismatic leaders” in a “‘mass orgy feeling’ ” (96-7).

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<sup>1</sup> He really uses these words (93-4); even I of the vampyric cheerleaders (go team!) wouldn’t make up a metaphor like this one. But wait, it gets even better below.

- Domino effects involve the contagious advance of revolution, war, or (in Schweller's case of the Middle East peace process in 1993) peace as nations bandwagon onto the *Zeitgeist*.

To capture these phenomena, Schweller creates an alternate model to the balance-of-threat, namely the "balance of interests." A state's interest is calculated by subtracting its valuation of the status quo from its valuation of a revisionist world. If this value is large and negative (i.e., the state strongly opposes change), it is a Great Power – a "lion." If the value is small and negative, it is a "lamb" and potential prey for a predator. Small positive values imply the state has a weak preference for change and is thus a jackal. Finally, states with strong preferences for change are "wolves," and lead of the revisionist charges with which jackals bandwagon.<sup>2</sup> Further, the system as a whole has an "interest," roughly determined by summing the interests of all member states. When everyone is war-weary and relatively unwilling to face the costs incurred by war and change (as at the Congress of Vienna), the systemic interest is strongly status quo, and stabilizing Concerts can be established. Contrariwise when there is widespread dissatisfaction, tumult and conflict will be more quickly resorted to.

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<sup>2</sup> Note that the definition of "lion" has changed from just a few pages before; lions are now strongly conservative instead of strongly revisionist. Note also that I'm not even mentioning foxes and crocodiles, which also get invoked.