Chapter 1
Rivalry Types and Dynamics

Abstract This chapter introduces a 14 chapter book on interstate rivalry typologies and selected rivalry dynamics. Emphasis is placed on positional and spatial rivalry types (as opposed to ideological and interventionary rivalries) but some attention is also given to principal rivalries. Following a relatively quick review of the evolution of explicit rivalry analysis in international politics, the contents of 13 following chapters are outlined. Five pertain to updating the strategic rivalry dataset to 2020 and a consideration of some of the issues revolving around spatial and positional rivalries. Another seven chapters focus on selected rivalry dynamics, ranging from geohistorical contexts to rivalry termination. The last chapter sums up the findings. Throughout the emphasis is placed on not treating all rivalries as if they are alike. They may share similarities but it is worthwhile to distinguish among the various types.

The analysis of interstate rivalries is still a relatively new approach to studying conflict in world politics. The basic idea is that a disproportionate amount of interstate conflict is traceable to a very small number of state pairs that engage in recidivistic hostilities. Why should we waste time looking at pairs of states that never come into conflict?[1] Why not focus more on the recidivists? Yet we will argue later that all recidivists are not the same. So, even that starting point can be treacherous. But before we get to some of the complications, it would be best to provide an overview to the rivalry landscape. Seven analytical categories are reviewed. It is argued that we have good foundations in terms of rivalry origins, maintenance/escalation and termination/de-escalation. We can certainly improve on the foundations be we also need to expand our understanding of rivalry types, "complexities," rivalry effects, and domestic rivalries.

[1]The social science answer, of course, is that we need variance to make any explanatory headway. We are not challenging this basic truth. What we are challenging is the idea that we should begin our analyses with the assumption that all dyads are equally conflict-prone.

Parts of this chapter are a modified version of William R. Thompson's earlier chapter, "Trends in the Analysis of Interstate Rivalries," originally published in Robert Scott and Stephen Kosslyn (Eds.) Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences (Wiley, Hoboken, 2015).

W. R. Thompson et al., *Analyzing Strategic Rivalries in World Politics*,
Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies 4,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-6671-1_1

Studying interstate rivalries developed in part as a way to reduce some of the noise in world politics. If one wants to analyze patterns of conflict between states systematically and there are approximately 200 states in the world, that means that there are as many as 19,900 possible pairs of conflicting states to examine each year. However, we know that this an unreal situation. Most states are either too far away or too remote to have disputes. Is there some way to eliminate the less interesting cases so that we can better focus on the more interesting ones?

One way is to focus solely on adjacent pairs. If two states are not contiguous, it less likely that they will or could clash. Not sharing common borders usually suggests less to fight about. Most states have only rudimentary military capacity. Moving troops to a border is one thing. Moving them farther requires even more capacity. Still, there are important exceptions. Iran and Israel, for instance, need not be contiguous to regard one another as enemies. But then they work hard to find ways to do damage to each other. A somewhat broader net could be cast by looking at regional neighborhoods. Widespread interregional conflict is less likely but the problem here is that some states belong to multiple regions (however defined) and it is not implausible that states located on the fringe of one region could have problems with states on the margins of the next region over. Examples include Nicaragua and Colombia, Spain and Morocco, or China and Vietnam.

Looking explicitly at rivalries represents a third approach.[2] Rivalries may be defined as competitive, threatening enemies. To qualify, two states need to regard each other as competitive or operating more or less in the same league. A strong state beating up on a weak state may constitute rivalry behavior but often as not, it does not. Many weak states may regard powerful threatening states as enemies, whether adjacent or afar, but there is often little that can be done about it. The weaker state lacks competitive resources to be able to resist the stronger state. Most of the time, the Finns of the world need to find ways to accommodate the Russians. Identifying another state as an enemy requires some repeated experience.[3] In other words, the first time two states collide over some mutual interest, it is simply a conflict. Allow the conflict to go unresolved or to fester over time and decision-makers will begin categorizing their adversary as a persistent problem. Add some sense of potential military clash over the persistent problem and you have a rivalry.

There are two or three bonuses associated with rivalry analysis. The first bonus is that there are not that many of them. Fewer than a couple hundred have existed over the past 200 years. The second bonus is that although a couple of hundred dyads represent less than 1% of the universe in any given year, it turns out that they have been linked to a vastly disproportionate three-fourths of all interstate violence. The third bonus is that not only are rivals the conflict recidivists of the international system, serial clashes between opponents increase the likelihood of conflict escalation to

[2] Looking at rivalries within regional neighborhoods and asking questions about why regional neighborhood and their rivalry patterns differ is an approach that deserves much more attention.

[3] By using the example of Finland and Russia, the need to establish caveats about what small states can sometimes accomplish in dealing with large states should be evident. Moreover, small states can genuinely be competitive with large states—or can be perceived as such given the right circumstances. Power asymmetries do not exclude rivalry. They simply make it less likely.

more serious levels of hostility. Rivals are thus the states most likely to clash, to clash repeatedly, and to go to war. They are not only the actors who become involved in conflict but also the most likely culprits. Focusing on them explicitly, accordingly, affords one useful way to reduce the noise in world politics, without sacrificing too much.

In this introductory chapter, we try to summarize some of the things that we think we know about rivalries, as well as some of the topics on which our understanding might be improved. We have a respectable base for appreciating rivalry origins, maintenance/escalation, and termination/de-escalation. That does not mean that the base cannot be improved upon, only that it is reasonably solid. Rivalry topics on which we need to know much more include types of rivalries, rivalry complexities, rivalry effects, and domestic dimensions of rivalries.

1.1 Origins

The study of rivalry origins has been influenced by a split among researchers on how to empirically identify rivalries. Even though the definitions of rivalry may not be all that different, the choice of how to operationalize the definitions tends to lead to rivalry inventories that are dissimilar. One camp prefers a conflict density approach and requires evidence of some minimal number of militarized interstate disputes within a specified time period to qualify a dyad as a rivalry. 2 The other camp argues (Thompson 2001) that not all rivalries engage in militarized interstate disputes, or at least to the same extent. Therefore, the identification burden should be placed on determining who decision-makers perceive to be their adversaries. The main advantage of the conflict density approach is that it does not require any analytical intervention beyond accepting the notion that rivals be equated with the most conflictual state pairs. The main disadvantage is that a rivalry definition predicated on high levels of conflict should prohibit rivalry information being used to explain conflict propensities. 3 Otherwise, one is using conflict to explain conflict, which is more than a bit circular. The perceptual approach, on the other hand, is more subjective and labor intensive but does permit the use of rivalry information to be used to explain variation in conflict.

If a rivalry only begins when it exceeds a conflict density threshold, it is quite possible that the identification assumption could bias or distort our understanding of origins. For instance, if we ask how many rivalries begin at the onset of independence, it is most unlikely that a dyad could possibly satisfy the conflict density expectations immediately. As a consequence, most rivalries would then be coded as beginning later, perhaps much later than independence. Similarly, some rivalries involve multiple issues and the different issues tend to go through different life cycles. It is conceivable than an early issue might not have been associated with sufficient physical conflict to qualify but the development of subsequent issues might be linked to militarized disputes. The question then becomes whether we should attribute the physical conflict to the subsequent issues, the maturation of time in rivalry, or perhaps

the multiple issues that have accumulated over time? It is not a matter of the conflict density approach overtly misconstruing origins questions. It is more a matter of there being some inadvertent but likely bias given the assumptions on time.

This observation applies to rivalry termination questions as well. Conflict density-based rivalries end when they no longer satisfy the criteria for qualification although in some cases the termination date is specified as a set number of years after the criteria are no longer met. This approach creates some ambiguity as to precisely when a rivalry should be viewed as having ended. As the conflict density criteria are assessed for a particularly period of times, there is also some inevitable ambiguity about the termination status of rivalries that begin toward the end of the assessment period. Have they truly ended or will they be shown to have been terminated when the assessment period is not extended? Then, there are the cases in which the violence is sporadic. Should each cluster of violence, assuming the conflict density criteria are satisfied for brief intervals of time, be viewed as a new rivalry?[4]

Colaresi et al. (2007: 78), relying on a perceptual identification of rivalries, report that most rivalries (70.5%) are spatial in nature—that is, they are contests over the exclusive control of territory. A substantial proportion of these cases encompass dyads pitting minor power against another minor power. Almost 72% of minor power rivalries are about spatial issues. However, many rivalries involve multiple issues. Slightly more than half (54%) of the rivalries examined between 1816 and 1999 were positional rivalries, or about contests over relative influence and prestige. All rivalries between major parties were at least partially positional in nature whereas only 43% of minor power rivalries contained some positional element. Almost 41% were characterized by ideological differences. Ideological differences were also more likely in major power rivalries (70%) than in minor power rivalries (40%).[5]

Many of these rivalries began fairly early. Of 128 rivalries that began after 1816, 72 (56%) began when one or more of the adversaries gained independence. Another 14% began within the first post- independence decade. Overall, 90% had begun within the first three decades after independence. This early onset should not be surprising, given the strong orientation toward spatial issues that often involve boundary questions

[4] These problems notwithstanding, Diehl et al. (2019) have suggested that the identification problem has been resolved by integrating rivalries identified with spatial density rules with rivalries identified by not applying spatial density rules (the other approach to rivalry identification). Their solution places rivalries that satisfy the spatial density criteria at the top and rivalries identified based on perceptual evidence are consigned to a lower position ("lesser rivalries") in the rivalry intensity ladder. The problem here is that there is probably only one way to integrate disparate rivalry identifications. Start with the rivalries not identified according to whether they turn to violent and differentiate them as rivalries that exhibit high levels of conflict from those that exhibit low levels of conflict. Otherwise, one mixes apples and oranges because some of the conflict density cases will not satisfy the perceptual criteria.

[5] A fourth type of rivalry, the interventionary rivalry, was proposed in the study by Thompson and Dreyer (2011: 21). These rivalries, located mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, are about adjacent states leverage on decisions in a neighbor usually focused on ethnic groups shared by the two states in conflict.

among new states.[6] Once underway, rivalries tend to persist. The average duration of rivalries over the past two centuries is about 42 years. Major power rivalries tend to last about 55 years on average while minor power rivalries average about 38 years in duration.

Yet if most rivalry issues are spatial in nature, why is that some territorial disputes lead to protracted conflict and interstate rivalry while others do not? It could be a matter of territorial dispute attributes. For instance, highly valued territory should be more prone to generating rivalries than less valued territory, other things being equal. One possible experiment would be to isolate areas initially low in perceived value and examine what happens when the territory in question abruptly comes to be seen as more desirable. Is a new rivalry likely to emerge? If a rivalry is underway, is it more likely to escalate if territorial issues become more pressing, as Rasler and Thompson (2006), among others, contend?

The international relations literature tends to proceed as if most rivalries are spatial—which they may be—but the situation is actually more complex. In other words, we tend to analyze rivalries as if they are trees. But trees come in all types and shapes. Some are very large while others remain small. Some are evergreen while others shed their leaves annually. Some have roots that grow deep into the ground while others spread out near the surface. Some bear fruit while others are better for shade. The point is that when it comes time to plant and cultivate trees, we do not treat all trees as trees. We should treat rivalries similarly to the extent that we find that different types of rivalries are predicated on different types of issues and, therefore, work differently according to type.

However, perhaps there is more at stake than just the issues. Miller (2007) argues that the missing links for territorial disputes are groups that are closely associated with the contested space. Minority groups resident on or near a state's boundaries, with co-ethnics across the border bring some agency to clashes over territory. This is all the more the case if weak states are unable to control the demands for incorporation or separatism. Are then spatial rivalries more likely to emerge in the context of heterogeneous societies and ethnic groups situated on both sides of a border? Is it heterogeneous societies that are most at risk or is it a question of political discrimination against minorities that have ethnic kin in adjacent countries (Salehyan 2009; Cederman et al. 2013)?

One of the more interesting developments in international relations theorizing is an argument called the territorial peace (Gibler 2012). It states that contested boundaries are the main sources of preparations for, and involvement in, interstate conflict. Resolve the boundary issues and a pacified external environment will emerge that places much less stress on domestic political systems to prepare for coping with external threats. Just how far the territorial peace and its implications for the internal effects of interstate conflict take remains to be seen. It Is conceivable that we will find that external rivalries encourage the rise of centralized and militarized states that become increasingly prone to civil war in which external rivals participate and

[6] See Senese and Vasquez (2008) and Vasquez (1993), among others, on the significance of territorial issues in understanding interstate conflict.

escalate to internationalized internal warfare.[7] Nonetheless, it opens up an excellent opportunity for placing rivalry within a nexus of external threat environment and internal political-economic institutions and processes. Embedding rivalry within a broader context is an attractive alternative to using a slate of stand-alone hypotheses about what stimulates the development of rivalries. It is likely that the explanatory outcome will be much more complex than a straightforward territorial dispute resolution that equals international peace equation. However, in the process of finding out how complex the equation is, we will probably learn a great deal about both rivalry origins and effects.

1.2 Maintenance/Escalation

Probably the least developed dimension of rivalry analyses is our understanding of how relations between adversaries are maintained over long periods of time. Why do they fluctuate in hostility? What brings about escalations in hostility? What constrains escalations? Of course, answering these questions is tantamount to explaining why conflicts occur—long a major and contested focus in international relations. Focusing on rivalry process cannot be expected to resolve all of the arguments we have about what drives conflict processes. It should, however, contribute to their resolution if studying rivalries is on the right track for unraveling the unknowns of hostility dynamics.

A core idea about rivalry maintenance (and perhaps escalation) is that interstate relationships are subject to short- and long-term inertia and reciprocity (Dixon 1986). Bureaucratic inertia means that state S has some likelihood of behaving toward state Y exactly as it did earlier (both recently and in general) and vice versa. Tit-for-tat dynamics imply that state X will behave toward State Y as state Y has behaved towards State X, and vice versa. Escalation occurs in this instance when state X ratchets up its response to state Y beyond whatever stimulus state Y initially sent to state X. The combination of inertia and reciprocity can be expected to account for about half the variance in dyadic relationships. Thus these core ideas are very useful even if the leave much unexplained. This same type of work suggests that these processes are relatively invulnerable to the comings and goings of personalities and administrative regimes. Inertia and reciprocity do not work identically in every regime but they rarely disappear altogether.

An alternative mode for maintenance is the basic rivalry level (BRL) argument (Goertz et al. 2005). It argues that the nature of conflict is established in cases early on in the rivalry.[8] As the issues cannot be resolved coercively, the rivalry settles

[7] This argument places external rivalries at the heart of the construction of "hard" states (Lu and Thies 2013; Gibler and Miller 2014) and then re-introduces external rivalries into civil wars underway (see, for instance, Toucan (2019) and Palik (2020). The possible integration of these arguments for Middle Eastern cases is explored in Mansour and Thompson (2021).

[8] Inertia and reciprocity are explored more in Chap. 8.

into a BRL that characterizes the antagonism thereafter. An open question is the extent to which the rivalry path dependency is linked to the emphasis on militarized dispute behavior. Would we find BRLs if we examined the month-to-month or year-to-year interaction s of rivals using events data? Nonetheless, this model hardly seems incompatible with emphases on inertia and reciprocity and might be categorized as a hyper-inertia approach.

Rivalry escalation examinations have focused primarily on crises. The basic argument is that serial crisis behavior leads to a greater tendency to escalation to higher levels of conflict (Leng 1983). Something happens in earlier crises that changes the probability of subsequent crises turning into shooting wars. In addition, the types of actors stressed in Steps to War theory (territorial disputes, alliances, arms buildups) also contribute to rivalry escalation (Colaresi et al. 2007). In sum, we seem to have a better handle on general tendencies in rivalry escalation than on rivalry maintenance—although, no doubt, there is ample room for improvement in both areas.

1.3 Termination/De-escalation

We know that about half of the rivalries that have ended have done so due to coercion of some kind (Colaresi et al. 2007). If rivalries are viewed as contests, one side was either defeated in war or conceded its inferiority to the stronger adversary. The other half of the terminated pool tend to be de-escalated through negotiations. One or both sides develop incentives to engage in signaling and discussions with its adversarial counterpart. Incentives to negotiate, however, are not enough to bring about de-escalation. Precisely, what is necessary to obtain a successful outcome is a subject on which analysts disagree.

The subject of why or how rivalries de-escalate and terminate has generated a number of competing theories. For instance, Rock (1989) argues that decision-makers are more likely to see rapprochement if they are confronted with new security threats, the risk of disruption important economic connections, and the prospect of internal warfare. A catalytic defeat can serve to overcome inertia and search for alternative strategies. For Orme (2004), decision-makers will be more open to hostility de-escalation if they become pessimistic about their own chances of remaining competitive. Cox (2010) contends that what is needed is a policy failure that increased the perceived costs associated with maintaining the rivalry and/or improves the political position of decision-makers interested in or open to ending the rivalry.

On situations involving transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes, Mani (2011) expects newly democratic regimes to prefer cooperation abroad and reform/consolidation at home. High costs in the last authoritarian regime and weakened veto players facilitate a consistent and cooperative interaction with rivals that can lead to de-escalation. Rasler et al. (2013) argue that decision-makers develop strategies for coping with adversaries based on external threats, the capabilities of their enemies, and their own capabilities. Expectations about rivals become entrenched.

Shocks are needed to break through the inertia. Once new strategies are formulated and tried, reciprocity from the adversary and longer term reinforcement of the benefits linked to the new approach are essential to successful de-escalation and termination.

There are some points of overlap in these arguments. Foreign policy inertia needs to be overcome. New or alternative perspectives need to emerge and ascend in the political hierarchy. However, how these situations are arrived at is where the theories disagree most. Yet, for all the wealth of arguments about termination/de-escalation, we have little in the way of comparative tests of the competing theories.[9] If more than one theory is able to generate support for its claims, we would need to consider the possibility of more refined theories that can be applied to specific types of rivalries. So far, theories on rivalry termination/de-escalation have assumed that one theory should fit all types of rivalry. Of course, it is also conceivable that all of the theories will prove to be deficient in some respect.[10] All tests of the relevant theories on this subject, to date, have focused on a limited number of cases.[11]

1.4 Issues for Future Research

1.4.1 Rivalry Types

Collectively, the study of rivalry has proceeded as if all rivalries are exactly the same. We know they are not. Some are about prestige and influence. Others are about disputes over territory. Some involve ideological differences while many more do not. The point is that there is no more reason to assume that all rivalries are alike than there is to assume that all rivalries are distinctively different. More attention might be paid to "principal" rivalries—the ones that are most important to foreign policy makers (Thompson 1995). We analyze some of these distinctions in Chaps. 3–6 and some of the distinctions reappear in subsequent chapters.

1.4.2 Rivalry Complexities

There are several ways in which the focus on specific rivalries can be misleading. A rivalry frame emphasizes the relationship between two adversaries but that can introduce a different type of "noise' through distortion. What if the dyad is not the most appropriate structure? There are at least two ways in which alternative frames

[9] Other approaches to termination exist as well—see Armstrong (1993), Bennett (1996), Diehl and Goertz (2000), Lebow (1997), Maoz and Mor (2002), and Kupchan (2010). See as well the analyses compared in Chap. 13.

[10] A more generic theory that encompasses most of the different theoretical emphases to varying degrees is constructed in Chap. 13.

[11] Rivalry termination is the main focus of Chaps. 11, 12, and 13.

on rivalry interactions have been explored. One focuses on triads while the other looks at the dynamics of rivalry fields.

We do not have an inventory of conflict triangles but some prominent ones come readily to mind. Perhaps the most prominent one was the Cold War interactions for the Soviet Union, China, and the United States. Other examples include Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, China, and the Soviet Union or the multiple triangles in South Asia (Pakistan, China, India; Soviet Union, India, Pakistan; United States, India, Pakistan, and so on). The point here that there are plenty of rivalries in these cases but they not necessarily function along dyadic lines. In a three-rival situation, what happens if rivalry A influences rivalries B and C. If one focuses exclusively on rivalry A, potentially valuable explanatory material is lost by ignoring what is going on in rivalries B and C. Unfortunately, not a lot of triad rivalry analysis has been completed to date. It is difficult to assess how much we be missing. Obviously, more work on rivalry triangles would be very welcome.[12]

A focus on the dynamics of rivalry fields is in some ways a broader generalization for the triadic situation to more complicated structures. There are several ways in which these rivalry field dynamics might be conceptualized. An easy example is the contention that not all rivalries are equally significant in world politics. Alter one central one and there can be reverberations throughout the extended network of linked. The termination of the Soviet-US Cold War rivalry impacted conflicts throughout the world just as the end of the Sino-Soviet rivalry had implications for the maintenance of rivalries in northeast and southeast Asia. Freezing (not terminating) the Egyptian-Israeli rivalry at Camp David changed what had been possible in Middle Eastern politics for several decades. For instance, Arab–Israeli wars became extremely unlikely without Egyptian participation. Converting the Franco-Germany rivalry into the core of the European Union presumably altered the nature of European politics for generations to come.[13]

Thompson (2003), Rasler and Thompson (2014a) explores a different interpretation of rivalry field dynamics. In developing a model of the outbreak of World War I, rivalry is highlighted in several ways.[14] Part of the argument is that in complex rivalry fields, nonlinear interactions between and among rivalries can occur that are not unlike the complexities of freeway accidents involving multiple collisions. In the run up to 1914, four chains of rivalries are delineated. One begins with the Russian defeat by Japan and the subsequent refocusing of Russian foreign policy in the Balkans that is linked to six other rivalries. A second stream of rivalries starts with Franco-Italian maneuvering in North Africa and leads to a number of other

[12] See, for instance, Dittmer (1981), Thompson (2003, 2014a), Goldstein and Freeman (1990), Maoz et al. (2007), Thompson and Dreyer (2011), Kisangani and Pickering (2014), Rasler and Thompson (2014a), Valeriano and Powers (2016). Chapter 8 examines some of these issues.

[13] In Chap. 12, we compare the consequences of the de-escalation of three regionally central rivalries; Egypt-Israel, Argentina-Brazil, and France-Germany and argue that promise of economic integration appears to be critical in advancing regional pacification in these cases.

[14] Vasquez et al. (2011) also make use of the increasing number of rivalries in their modeling of World War I's outset.

rivalries operating in the Mediterranean and Balkans. A third cluster of eight European major power rivalries focuses on the bipolarization of the stronger states in the region. The fourth cluster is focused on global and regional leadership rivalries. Metaphorically, the interaction of these clusters of rivalries (within and between the clusters) is likened to the confluence of four streams into a turbulent whirlpool. The sheer complexity of the interactions can be analyzed in retrospect. Whether any one at the time could have been expected to follow the entire ensemble as it evolved seems most unlikely. In this sense, the old habit of blaming one state for primary responsibility in bringing about the war makes little sense. The nonlinear pinball dynamics that emerged in the decade before the outbreak of World War I were not controlled or controllable by any single state.

1.4.3 Rivalry Effects

Most of the work on rivalries looks at them as the primary focus (for instance, how are rivalry relationships different from nonrivalry relationships) or uses them as a control for intensive conflict. However, rivalries are beginning to appear in theories as variables in more complex arguments. Colaresi (2004) looks at the effect of rivalries on decision-makers who attempt more dovish approaches to foreign policies. Thies (2004), for another example, regards rivalries as a substitute for wars in the third world. In more developed states, wars ratchet upward the demands on state organizations and thereby served as principal agents of state making. Wars in less-developed contexts do not appear to have the same effect. Thies argues, however, that engaging in rivalries has improved state extraction capabilities—thereby serving as a substitute for war making in its contribution to state-making.[15]

Another example is provided by Rasler and Thompson's (2011) work on regional pacification. Why have some regions become relatively peaceful while others remain intensely conflictual? Part of the answer seems to be the relationship been disputed boundaries and rivalries. As boundaries become accepted or less contested, spatial rivalries lose their raison d'etre. Yet, this relationship is unlikely to stand in isolation from their domestic and international processes. The question is whether we can unpack how conflict is embedded in the context of domestic institutions and other characteristics such as inequality and democratization. In other words, it seems likely that external threats have had formative impacts on domestic structures and processes (and perhaps vice versa). While it is not the only way to analyze pacification, regions as the unit of analysis are promising and definitely deserve more attention.[16]

[15] However, see Kisangani and Pickering (2014) for an alternative interpretation.

[16] See, in particular, the work led by Thomas Volgy (Cline et al. 2011; Volgy et al. 2017; Rhamey and Volgy 2018; Volgy et al. 2020). One should also single out the non-regional work being done by Goertz et al. (2016), Diehl et al. (2019) that applies rivalry data to the question of peace in general, as opposed to regional pacification.

1.4.4 Domestic Rivalries

One of the interesting extensions of the rivalry idea is to view domestic insurgencies as cases of rivalry. Certainly, rivals and rivalries exist at all levels. However, the application of rivalry arguments to domestic insurgencies, so far, has been limited to the conflict density approach. "Enduring internal rivalries (EIRs); are defined as conflicts between governments and insurgent groups that persist through at least 10 years of armed conflict and 25 deaths (DeRouen and Bercovitch 2008). If the identity of the insurgent groups changes during this time, it does not matter as long as the fighting can be linked to the initial onset of civil war. Research in this vein then proceeds to explore the extent to which these protracted insurgencies last longer, recur more often, and kill more people than non-EIRs.

This approach seems problematic from a rivalry perspective. By designating the conflict as the unit of analysis, government-insurgency group relationships are obscured. Presumably, a rivalry perspective would seek to draw attention to the nature of specific internal dyads. Duration and recurrence might easily be traced to a long-running feuds between specific groups and their governments. In some cases, DeRouen and Bercovitch's EIRs are identical to what is being proposed. The Peruvian case is the government-Sendero Luminosa dyad. In Spain, it's the government versus ETA or in Mozambique, it was the government versus Renamo. Yet, once insurgencies with multiple groups are mixed with cases featuring a single group, control over who is a rival with whom is lost. For instance, civil war recurrence could be linked to attributes of a specific government-insurgent group relationships. Why is that the Taliban, the IRA, or the LTTE are/were so hard to defeat? In contrast, insurgencies with multiple groups work much differently, one would think than civil wars with one prominent rebel organization. Combat between insurgents, divide-and-conquer strategies, and alliances between governments and insurgents, or beleaguered governments fighting small-scale rebellions on multiple fronts might be expected in such cases.

Whatever might be said for the conflict density approach, its application to domestic insurgency seems to sacrifice most of what might be gained by the application of a rivalry perspective. Instead, we are told, somewhat circularly, that longer insurgency cases last longer and tend to recur. The idea of applying a rivalry perspective to domestic conflict is attractive but it has yet to be implemented successfully in our opinion. However, this deficit appears to be disappearing. We have already mentioned the work of Lu and Thies (2013) and Gibler and Miller (2014) that integrate external rivalry conceptualization in the context of domestic conflict. Other approaches to examining the conflicts among states and their domestic rivals is suggested in Powell and Florea (2021) which focuses on the interactions between states and their "non-state actor" internal rivals and Conrad et al. (2021) which targets intergroup rivalries.

1.5 Interim Conclusion

A number of topical areas of rivalry analysis have been delineated. In terms of origins, we seem to have a pretty good ideas of they come from even if we disagree about how to identify them and treat them as constituting different species of rivalry. For maintenance and escalation we appear to have a solid core set of ideas about them that has received successful treatment in very limited analyses. On termination/de-escalation, we are blessed with a large number of rivalry theories that have yet to be sorted out for their efficiency and explanatory power. Complexities to dyadic forms of rivalry analysis have been introduced but they have yet to receive sufficient attention. The rivalry idea is beginning to diffuse and perhaps is even being mainstreamed into more comprehensive arguments about political development and the interactions of domestic and external processes. Finally, the rivalry perspective has been applied to internal warfare with some success but would probably fare better if distinctions were made between situations encompassing single and multiple rebel groups.

None of these areas, of course, are in such great shape that they could not profit from more attention. The argument here is only that some of these topics are in better shape than some of the others. Rivalry analysis is a healthy and ongoing enterprise even if it is still in its infancy. The topical areas selected here for attention, not withstanding, however, the real hallmark of success will be when analysts outside of international politics begin applying attention to treating interstate rivalries more explicitly and systematically. In this respect, we still have some way to go.[17]

Obviously, all of the problems mentioned so far are unlikely to be resolved in one book. Authors have to delimit what problems they choose to take on in any given examination lest nothing be accomplished. In this book, we focus on four problems. The first one has not been previously identified in this chapter. Rivalry analysis must stay current which means that our rivalry inventories need to be renewed periodically. Data on strategic rivalries were initially made available through 2000 in Thompson (2001a), updated to 2010 in Thompson and Dreyer (2011) and is now updated through 2020 in Chap. 2. The nature of rivalry identification is such that each update requires more than merely adding on more recent cases that qualify. Information on rivalry behavior emerges unevenly and often in lagged circumstances. Thus updates imply opportunities for refining older information as well as extending the chronology into the present as much as possible.

Chapter 2 identifies the instances of strategic rivalry for major powers going back to 1494 and for other states from 1816 to 2020. Two hundred and sixty-six rivalries are listed, along with their type: positional, spatial, ideological, and interventionary. Positional rivalries are focused on disputes about hierarchy and relative influence, usually centered on a regional or global scale. Spatial rivalries encompass disputes over the control of territory. Ideological rivalries involve adversaries motivated by different belief systems about how best to organize political-economic affairs. Interventionary rivalries represent attempts by one state to interfere in and

[17] Earlier attempts to encourage this type of interaction are found in Thompson (1999a), Paul (2005), Ganguly and Thompson (2011b), and Mansour and Thompson (2020).

control to whatever extent politics in a neighboring or nearby state. These types of conflict issues are not exclusionary. Any single rivalry can involve several types of grievances simultaneously or over time. In addition, principal rivalries are identified. Principal rivalries represent situations in which two states have only one rivalry (and therefore no competing adversarial contests) or in which states privilege one rivalry among several as possessing primary importance.

Why do states become involved in conflict with one another? Why do these conflicts persist? Why do they sometimes end? Rivalry analysis assumes that most conflict is restricted to a relatively small group of states that has singled each other out as threatening adversaries in competitions for space and position. Therefore, it is the dynamics of rivalries that we need to understand. Yet there is also a strong strain of emphasis on territorial issues within the study of rivalry dynamics and for good reason. Territorial issues have been found repeatedly to be critical to understanding interstate conflict. But if we pair rivalry origins and termination with only one type of issue, we run the risk of slighting unnecessarily other types of issues. Fortunately, it can be argued that most rivalry dynamics are about spatial and positional questions. What is needed, then, is an argument that encompasses two basic types of issue as opposed to only one. Toward this end an existing theory of conflict escalation is elaborated and extended in Chap. 3 to encompass new dimensions of conflict behavior. The emphasis is placed in particular on the initiation, maintenance, conflict potential and termination of spatial and positional rivalries as two main types of conflicts. Three new hypotheses, joining 6 earlier ones, are derived, operationalized, and tested successfully. In this fashion, we hope to contribute to a cumulative understanding of rivalry dynamics on which future extensions can be constructed.

How and why are regions different in terms of interstate conflict? Based on a series of empirical analysis pertaining to the distribution of rivalries over territorial issues and factors associated with conflict propensities and state-level consequences of rivalries, we argue in Chap. 4 that the characteristics of spatial rivalries vary from region to region. The analyses reveal that spatial rivalries are conflict-prone to varying degrees depending on the duration and capability of states and also that involvement in a spatial rivalry makes a state more likely to militarize and less likely to be democratic. Such empirical results imply that regions may be differently conflict-prone at least partly due to factors influencing the presence and behaviors of spatial rivalries. Thus, this chapter offers a rivalry-based perspective on regional variation in interstate conflict and peace.

One of the disagreements in the rivalry literature pertains to spatial rivalries. Are they more or less likely to escalate or terminate? Arguments can be advanced for either one of these two characteristics. But one thing that is missing in the argument is the fact that spatial rivalries do not operate in a vacuum. Spatial rivals are sometimes engaged in other rivalries that lead to pressures to terminate some rivalries to better deal with other antagonisms. In addition, spatial grievances are sometimes accompanied by other conflict issues such as positional aspirations. In such cases, which set of conflict issues is likely to prevail in terms of predicting escalation and termination probabilities?

Principal rivalries are antagonistic relationships in which one or both sides regard their adversary as the primary focus of attention, regardless of how many other rivalries the rivals are involved in. The principal adjective is designated symmetrical if both sides view their opponent as their primary rival. If only one side views the other opponent that way, the principal status of the relationship is termed asymmetrical. The main rationale for distinguishing principal from non-principal rivalries is one might expect principal rivalries to be more intense than non-principal rivalries. States that have multiple rivalries operating simultaneously should have to be alert to the perceived machinations of several enemies and would have to distribute their attention and hostility in several directions simultaneously. But, in actuality, it is not uncommon for states participating in multiple rivalries to rank order them in terms of significance. Often, they view one of their several rivals as the most serious source of threat and treat it accordingly. In any event, the historical record of the last 500 years shows that great powers are particularly likely to designate a specific state as their principal rival. Wars between principal rivals at the great power level have been fairly common. That is less the case for non-great powers that, presumably, are more constrained by weaker capability foundations than are great powers. Still, it remains unclear whether, or to what extent, the principal designation is analytically useful once we focus on non-great power rivalries. Much of how this question is answered lies in the future.[18] In Chap. 6 we devote much of our attention to principal rivalry to the historical context of great power rivalry in which the salience of principal rivalries seem to have been relatively critical.

In Chap. 7, we shift gears away from typological questions to focus on rivalry dynamics. In Chap. 7 we choose to start with geohistorical structures—perhaps one of the more hard-to-pin-down sources of influence on rivalry behavior. In discussions of long-term patterns of conflict and stability in the Asian region, efforts to predict how regions and their rivalry patterns will change in the near and longer future can benefit from comparative regional analysis. But one has to be careful in doing so to avoid overlooking important regional differences such as vastly different geohistorical patterns. Projecting a European past onto an Asian future seems to do just that. But one has to also be careful about projecting selective interpretations of a region's own geohistorical past into the future. Moreover, the utility of historical patterns of any kind needs to be filtered for significant changes that may mitigate the persistence of geohistorical influences. After reviewing critically some efforts to interpret East Asian international relations in terms of developments in other regions and phases of East Asian regional history, a linkage to past European international relations is made via the "Western" question. Who would dominate in Western Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire? The corresponding "Eastern" question has been who will dominate East Asia after the disintegration of the Han Empire? While the questions of regional dominance are similar, the way in which the questions have played out in the two regions has been quite dissimilar. Moreover, questions of regional dominance in the twenty-first century are likely to play out much differently than

[18] However, see Chaps. 6 and 11 for explorations of the application of principal rivalry conceptualization to the empirical study of rival dyads in general.

they have in the past thanks to such factors as the increase in weapons lethality and the fusion of regional and global political hierarchy.

In Chap. 8 we switch the emphasis on the Asian region to great power (China, the Soviet Union/Russia, and the United States) triangular interactions. The China, Soviet Union, and U.S. Cold War triangle was found to exhibit inertia, reciprocity, and triangularity just as the triad was shutting down with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decision to adopt a low profile in China while developing its economy. This early analysis also preceded the new focus on rivalry behavior. Since the triangle appears to have re-emerged with the passage of time and more variation now exists in the three states' rivalry behavior with each other, we ask what effects rivalry and capability improvement have on triangular behavior. With some changes in the relative ranks of the players, the Cold War triangle came back after a brief hiatus. As expected, we found that rivalry generally reinforced tendencies toward inertia, reciprocity, and triangularity—although not without some dyadic exceptions. Something similar describes our finding on the capability improvement-conflict relationship. Some evidence towards conflict increasing as rivals narrowed their capability gaps was also forthcoming, albeit again not for all dyads in the triangle. While only great power behavior was examined, there does not appear to be any reason to expect these findings should not also be expected for non-great power triangles. The information on inertia and reciprocity should also inform dyadic analyses as well.

We know that territorial claims are problematic for regional stability. The boundary claims of new states often give rise to interstate rivalries fixated on where one state begins and another ends. Rising powers—states that are increasingly concentrating their share of regional power—are also thought to be destabilizers. Might there be a relationship between the two sources of trouble? Rising powers are thought to have a propensity for challenging the geopolitical status quo. It follows that the decision to pursue territorial claims are more probable as they develop the increasing capacity to back up the claim and also possess an urge to disrupt regional orders. Once they achieve their climb to the top of the power ladder, incentive to disrupt the new status quo that they have constructed should be much less. Empirical support for this proposition suggests that territorial claims are neither random nor constant. Some proportion of new claims and old claims revived reflect a changing regional power distribution. In this respect, it is not the territorial disputes that matter as much as it is its context—changes in regional power hierarchy. Chapter 9 takes on this topic.

Territorial disputes obviously constitute an important root of interstate conflict. Yet these disputes do not always lead to war or even militarized conflict. Sometimes, one side yields to the other side by withdrawing its claims. Focusing on rival dyads whose territorial claims should be more intractable than is the case in non-rival dyads, we suggest in Chap. 10 that it is challengers, as opposed to the side that already controls the disputed territory in question, that are more likely to make concessions. Moreover, it is threats external to the spatial rivalry that encourage challengers to surrender their claims so that they may deal with more pressing threats. The empirical evidence supports these contentions. Territorial dispute challengers are more likely to engage in negotiations over the disputed space if they are also participants in other rivalries

that, presumably, become associated with threats that are more worrisome than other, older spatial disagreements. One of several implications is that it is debatable whether we should assume that it is primarily boundary negotiations that end spatial disputes and therefore rivalries.[19] On the contrary, the linkages between boundaries and rivalry are apt to be more complicated. Not only are all rivalries not spatial in nature, the way they end need not be due to the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes either.

Rivalries are characterized by variable levels of hostility over time but also intermittent bouts of cooperation. Why might that be the case and can we predict which types of rivalry are likely to be more cooperative? Two types of rivalry—positional and principal—are less likely to exhibit cooperation than other types of rivalry. Positional issues are broader than spatial grievances and therefore less likely to permit cooperation. Principal rivalries tend to be more intense and focused than rivals who have to contend with multiple rivals. Principal rivalries, therefore, should also demonstrate less cooperation than non-principal rivalries. Some support for these expectations are found in an examination of UN General Assembly voting alignment patterns in Chap. 10. Voting by positional rivals is less likely to align than voting by spatial rivals (although the relationship is not statistically significant). Principal rivals are also less likely to align in their demonstration of preferences in General Assembly voting. In this respect, different types of rivalry appear to evince different types of behavior based on the kinds of rivalries in which the actors are embedded.

Zartman (2005) differentiates between forward and backward incentives for negotiation. Backward negotiation is about ending ongoing violence or righting some wrong done in the past. Forward incentives refer to achieving something new in the future such as less coercion and violence in interstate relations. It does not matter whether negotiators fully understand what they are doing as long as a) their deliberations create a mechanism that reduces future conflict and the mechanism has region-wide appeal. Chapter 12 looks at and compares the circumstances involved in de-escalating the Franco-German, Egyptian-Israeli, and Argentine-Brazilian rivalries. In two of the cases (the European and South American rivalries), de-escalation encouraged some progress in regional economic integration. In the third case (the Middle Eastern one) had region-wide implications but were limited to keeping Egypt out of Arab war coalitions. Regardless of the motivation, economic incentives, thus, can reinforce rivalry termination processes already underway. But even economic integration gains are probably not sufficient in terminating rivalry.

Unlike many topics in international relations, a large number of models characterize interstate rivalry termination processes. But many of these models tend to focus on different parts of the rivalry termination puzzle. It is possible, however, to create a general model built around a core of shocks, expectation changes, reciprocity and reinforcement. Twenty additional elements can be linked as alternative forms of catalysts/shocks and, perceptual shifts, or as facilitators of the core processes. All 24 constituent elements can be encompassed by the general model which allows for a

[19] Perhaps the strongest statement to date on this issue is found in Rider and Owsiak (2021).

fair amount of flexibility in delineating alternative pathways to rivalry de-escalation and termination at different times and in different places. The utility of the unified model is then applied in Chap. 13 to an illustrative fashion to the Anglo-American rivalry which ended early in the twentieth century.

Finally, in Chap. 14 we summarize briefly what the preceding 13 chapters have attempted to accomplish. We are under no illusions that we resolve any of the outstanding problems concerning the study of interstate rivalry. That is not the way research proceeds. We perceive problems and questions that deserve attention. We address the problems and seek to answer the questions. Readers can evaluate how successful we are but however our efforts are received, there is always considerable room for improvement and further treatment of the problems and questions we choose to take on in this book. Of course, that says nothing about the problems and questions we duck or leave for future attention.

One problem that we do not duck is the issue about whether we should treat all rivalries as more or less similar. In the next chapter, we update the strategic rivalry data base to encompass activity through 2020 and then turn to the problems related to differentiating rivalries by types. Our basic stance is that there is no reason why rivalries cannot be aggregated as sufficiently similar for some questions. For instance, is the number of active rivalries increasing or decreasing is the type of question that can be answered without first clarifying what types of rivalries one is talking about. But some questions deserve more explicit consideration of rivalries by type. If boundary disagreements disappear, should we also anticipate rivalry termination? The answer to that question depends on the nature of the rivalry.

As part of our effort to clarify what types of rivalries we are talking about, the next chapter revises and updates the strategic rivalry case inventory through 2020. In addition to reporting new cases after 2010, each rivalry is also coded for the presence of absence of positional, spatial, ideological, interventionary, and two types of principal rivalry.

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