

## CHAPTER 4

# The Rivalry Approach to War and Peace

Rivalries are not merely a new topic of research—an extension of the logic behind studying “dangerous dyads” (Bremer 1992)—nor are they simply a useful research tool and case selection device. Part of what has hindered a clear understanding of the wide-ranging ramifications of the rivalry concept comes from an exclusive focus on enduring rivalries. This entire book, and this chapter in particular, argues that one must move beyond enduring rivalries as acute conflict phenomena and start thinking about war and peace in terms of rivalry.

The concept of a militarized relationship that begins with peace, ends with peace, and that exists over time has wide-ranging ramifications for the study of international conflict. This chapter examines some of the general theoretical and conceptual implications of the rivalry approach. We discuss why it constitutes a general framework for examining many issues and hypotheses in the international conflict literature. It is not just another hypothesis to be added to an already long list, but rather is more like Most and Starr’s (1989) “opportunity and willingness” framework for the study of international conflict. We are able to demonstrate that the rivalry approach raises new questions, including new twists on old hypotheses, particularly about the relationship of war to peace. The rivalry approach also suggests some alterations in the typical methodologies used to test hypotheses about international conflict. The next chapter continues this theoretical discussion with an analysis of the implications of the rivalry approach for testing. We then apply the framework outlined here and the testing guidelines to the question of the democratic peace in chapter 6 as an illustration of our framework.

## The “Causes of War” Approach

In proposing a rivalry approach to war and peace, we are explicitly presenting an alternative to standard practice in the study of international conflict. For comparison purposes, we have grouped standard quantitative and comparative

case study research in this field under the label, “causes-of-war approach.” Let us briefly introduce here what we mean by this phrase. The contrast between this approach to the study of war and the rivalry approach will be a consistent theme in the chapters to follow (as it already implicitly has been in preceding chapters).

In some sense, there is no one approach to the study of international conflict that all scholars adopt, and indeed most scholars do not explicitly accept or reject, much less discuss, many assumptions and procedures that they adopt in their analyses. Yet one can identify a core of purposes, assumptions, and ideas that a large portion of international conflict scholarship shares. Because they have been embedded so deeply in many research programs, they are accepted without reflection or adequate consideration for their implications. Every causes-of-war study does not exhibit the characteristics noted below (and even those that do may not manifest them fully), and therefore they are not all equally subject to the same criticisms. What we describe below are better understood as central tendencies, more applicable to the international conflict field as a whole than to its individual components. The literature surveys of Midlarsky (1989) and Geller and Singer (1998) illustrate the causes-of-war approach, at least with respect to behavioral studies. We propose that the characteristics of the approach we identify below are core ones and that they commonly fit the scholarship represented in these two works.

The first central feature of the causes-of-war approach is, as the name implies, its focus on the phenomenon to be explained: war. That is, standard approaches seek to understand why states go to war with one another. One can generally distinguish three “situations” within which a dyad or pair of states can find itself: (1) nonmilitarized conflict or nonconflict, (2) a militarized dispute or crisis, and (3) war. The situation of war or dispute usually forms the phenomenon to be explained, while the other level or levels below it become the control group. When focusing on war, many of these studies, especially studies from the Correlates of War Project in the last two decades, take militarized conflict as a given, and the focus is whether such conflict escalates to war or ends short of it. Thus, typically the object of study for these studies is a militarized dispute (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996) or an international crisis (Brecher 1993). Significant is what these studies are not interested in as a result of this focus. Most standard approaches are not particularly concerned with the origins of conflict—the conditions that gave rise to a dispute in the first place.

The second core characteristic of the causes-of-war approach is that all cases (control or not) are treated in a cross-sectional fashion. There is little concern for the potential interdependence of conflicts involving a given dyad (or across dyads). Concern for interdependence can take two general forms: (1) theoretical preoccupations that lead to the inclusion of explanatory variables in the model that reflect conflict interrelationships and (2) worries about statistical assumptions, for example, error term correlation. We address methodological

issues in chapter 5, but we note here that virtually no study takes into account the possible, and probable, violation of statistical assumptions for disputes occurring within a given rivalry.

More important for our purposes in the chapter, as well as in general, are the theoretical concerns. At the heart of our project and the rivalry approach lies the claim that one cannot understand disputes, crises, and war without considering the rivalry context. The causes-of-war approach consistently looks at factors occurring at time  $t - 1$  for disputes and wars occurring at time  $t$ : to predict the onset of war, these studies look at contemporaneous conditions (those at the time of the crisis or dispute, or immediately before those events). Quantitative studies have often been accused of being ahistorical. It is not exactly clear what that means (see Goertz 1994 for an extensive discussion), but it is certainly rare to find studies that include variables representing the history of the dyad (a notable exception is Huth's 1988 work on deterrence). There is no concern for path dependency or the process of international conflict. Previous disputes or interactions between the same states are not generally considered relevant to the behavior of states in the current crisis or dispute. The cross-sectional design also generally indicates that what occurs after the war (or the absence of escalation) is not of concern. All elements of "no war" are treated synonymously, and scholars generally do not investigate which mechanisms or conditions were responsible for successful conflict management, for example, versus continued high levels of hostility (albeit short of war). Furthermore, there is little concern with the relationship between the crisis or dispute participants after the war until the next crisis or dispute occurs.

In summary, the causes-of-war approach is typified by its focus on war or dispute as the phenomenon to be explained and by its cross-sectional methodological and ahistorical theoretical claims. Several theoretical and methodological consequences flow from these two core characteristics, many of which we explore in the chapters to come (most notably in this chapter and its successor). The rivalry approach takes a different route with regard to these two defining features of much of the conflict literature.

There are three general ways in which the rivalry approach focuses attention on issues normally beyond the horizon of the traditional international conflict literature, or what we have labeled the causes-of-war approach. The first of these is perhaps the most fundamental because it removes war from center stage. In virtually all analyses of conflict, war or dispute/crisis is the basic focus of the analysis. In the rivalry approach, the rivalry relationship takes over as the fundamental object of study. A rivalry relationship is a militarized competition between the same pair of states over a given period of time. With the rivalry approach, instead of trying to explain the causes of war, one tries to explain the causes of rivalry. Because the rivalry process does not end in war—although it may contain war—but finally ends in peace, the rivalry approach forces the researcher to consider issues of peace and conflict resolution as well. This shift

in the basic phenomenon under analysis presents a whole new range of propositions and some variations on old ones, a few of which we present as illustrations in the next section.

The second important way that the rivalry approach shifts the focus of international conflict research is in its emphasis on the longitudinal and dynamic aspects of the rivalry relationship. The literature on international conflict is primarily static and cross-sectional, as exemplified by the work of the Correlates of War Project (two exceptions are Leng 1983 and Goldstein and Freeman 1991). Such work analyzes conflicts as if they were independent of one another, and generally without regard to the history or future prospects of the rivalry. Even dynamic, process-oriented hypotheses, such as those concerning power transitions and arms races, are empirically studied in a cross-sectional manner. Implicit in the longitudinal study of the United States and the USSR during the Cold War, for example, is a long-term conflictual relationship. The rivalry approach extends this understanding generally and considers all conflict as a part of some short- or long-term relationship. Instead of studying only long-term conflict relationships, such as enduring rivalries, the rivalry approach asks why some relationships become long term (or not) and why some include war (or not). With a longitudinal approach to conflict, for example, we can ask how changes in regime type influence the course of a rivalry. Does democratization of one or both rivals lead to the termination of the rivalry? (see chapter 6).

The third way that the rivalry approach reorients hypotheses about war is by altering the traditional approach of assuming rivalries as prerequisites in some hypotheses about war. Many models of international conflict, such as the power transition model or those related to deterrence, assume a context of hostility between two or more states. That assumption is traditionally translated into case selection rules. For example, one does not look at deterrence between all possible, or even all contiguous, dyads, but only those involved in conflictual relationships (and often just enduring rivalries; see the discussion in chapter 5). The rivalry approach suggests that characteristics of the conflictual relationship—the background context—should be directly incorporated into the theory. The rivalry approach moves rivalries out of the research design background and places them in the theoretical explanation.

In the next sections, we explore these three aspects of the rivalry approach, illustrating our points primarily by reference to the scholarly work on deterrence. We choose deterrence as our illustrative case not only because it has occupied center stage in international relations research over the past five decades, but also because some recent studies (e.g., Huth and Russett 1993; Lieberman 1995) have adopted enduring rivalries as a case selection device. Yet, they have not benefited from insights gained through the rivalry approach. Beyond considering deterrence studies, however, we use other examples drawn from neorealism, expected utility, liberalism, arms races, power transitions, diffusion, and

long-cycles research in order to illustrate the broad applicability of the framework.

## Changing the Object of Study: From War to Rivalry

As we noted above, perhaps the most fundamental shift that the rivalry approach imposes is the move from war to rivalry as the phenomenon under analysis. The resulting focus on rivalries has important consequences for what we study in international conflict.

Research using the traditional causes-of-war framework tries to explain war as the result of certain hypothesized causes such as military expenditure patterns or political regime types. Scholars in this tradition search for the presence of the hypothesized causes shortly before or coterminous with the outbreak of war in a set of war cases as well as in control groups in which no war occurs. Transferring these sorts of explanatory models into the rivalry framework leads us to look for the presence or occurrence of hypothesized events or conditions before the rivalry starts and just before it ends. The former could be called the “causes of rivalry” hypotheses and the latter could be called the “causes of peace” hypotheses. Although the causes-of-war literature provides many useful ideas for understanding the causes of rivalry, the causes of peace prove more problematic. The problem with peace is that it has been conceptualized as “not war” (this also led to Galtung’s 1969 critique of standard approaches): how does one explain a nonevent? With rivalry as the unit of analysis, we have a potential event to analyze: the death of the rivalry. Although determining the termination date of a rivalry is not a trivial problem (see chapter 2), it is certainly not insoluble (see also Bennett 1993, 1996, 1997b, who codes end dates for enduring rivalries). Because of the temporal duration of a rivalry, we have two equally important questions: why rivalry starts and why it ends.

### Explaining Rivalry

Many of the hypotheses about the causes of war are relevant to explaining the occurrence and severity of rivalries. For example, there has been a somewhat sterile debate in the literature over the past several decades about the relative war-proneness of bipolar and multipolar systems (beginning with Waltz 1964; and Deutsch and Singer 1964), which has produced few new insights about international conflict. By turning our attention away from war to rivalries, fresh questions can be addressed and some old controversies potentially settled. Do certain system structures produce more rivalries that are of greater severity (even short of war) and of longer duration? Multipolar systems and their alleged greater fluidity should produce shorter and more numerous rivalries, whereas bipolar systems should produce fewer and more enduring rivalries, according to the prevailing logics of each argument. If major-power war is generally avoided in a given system, does this beneficial effect also extend to

conflict resolution between the major actors? How does system change affect the conduct of ongoing rivalries? Each of these questions has the potential to provide new insights into old debates as well as to offer some new bases for understanding the impact of system structure on state behavior. The research question shifts from using system structure to account for the “long peace” as a “no-war” situation to accounting for the number, duration, and severity of rivalries in different systems. War plays an important role in defining the severity of a rivalry and may well play a role in explaining its duration. Yet we have much more nuanced hypotheses as a result of using rivalry as the framework of analysis.

In the study of deterrence, the standard focus is on explaining its success or failure (i.e., was there war or not) in a single instance. More creatively, we can look at the impact that deterrence has on the conduct of rivalries, including the propensity for deterrence failure over time. By focusing on rivalries, we might also consider the relative mix of compellence and deterrence in rivalries. Deterrence analysts generally ignore compellence attempts, and it may be the case that such compellence actions may influence deterrence success and the dynamics of rivalry behavior. Another concern is how deterrence influences the development of rivalries. Does successful (or failed) deterrence keep a nascent rivalry from becoming enduring? Do certain patterns of deterrence promote the development of enduring competitions (as opposed to shorter and less severe rivalries, what we have termed isolated and proto-rivalries). These questions are strongly suggested by the rivalry framework and cannot be examined in the standard deterrence analysis that uses enduring rivalries only as a case selection device.

Some of the classic hypotheses about war also seem to be good candidates for the job of explaining rivalry. For example, the long-cycle and power transition theories suggest places to look for rivalries to arise. The long-cycle approach (Modelski 1987; Thompson 1988) suggests that conflict is virtually inevitable between nations at the top of the international hierarchy during periods of hegemonic decline and/or rise of challengers. The power transition hypothesis as originally proposed by Organski and Kugler (Organski 1958; Kugler and Organski 1989) required preexisting conflict (i.e., a rivalry) in order to predict a war outcome. The rivalry approach may help to sort out which power transitions will lead to war (e.g., France–Germany prior to 1870) and which will be completed peacefully (e.g., United States–Britain in the early twentieth century), by reference to certain processes or characteristics of those rivalries. As discussed below, this makes the theoretical components of the background rivalry condition an explicit part of the explanation. Also, we shall suggest below that many hypotheses fit better into the dynamics of an already existing rivalry. The power transition hypothesis of Organski and Kugler illustrates this with its requirement of preexisting conflict. With the rivalry approach, however, we can reformulate the question as one explicitly involving rivalries and in particular

differentiate power transitions that take place within a rivalry from those that do not.

### Explaining Peace

Changing the object of analysis expands the horizon of international conflict scholars. They become concerned with the outbreak of peace as well as war, with peace defined as the end of the rivalry relationship rather than simply the end or absence of war. Thus, those who adopt the rivalry approach are able to explore conflict management and resolution, and they do not lump all aspects of the absence of a shooting war together. International conflict scholars have long been criticized for their exclusive focus on war, with the accompanying ignorance of cooperative and lower-level conflictual relationships. The rivalry approach addresses this critique, in part, by putting conflict resolution (not just war termination) on the research agenda and by providing some concern for the stability of peace achievements (as the rivalry approach is also concerned with how rivalries begin). The traditional causes-of-war approach has difficulty dealing with the relationships of states between wars. The rivalry approach is better able to chart the ebbs and flows of the conflictual and cooperative relationships between states over time, rather than simply pinpointing occurrence of an extreme, but comparatively rare, event—war.

By considering peace as part of the research agenda, deterrence scholars can understand the role of deterrence in promoting conflict resolution instead of seeing only how war is avoided. Looking at rivalries as the objects of analysis allows scholars to consider the possibility that successful deterrence may actually prolong rivalries (George and Smoke 1989) and thereby inhibit conflict resolution. Understanding rivalry necessarily means understanding the origins and termination of those competitions, something deterrence studies ignore, as they take militarized conflict as a given in the study of two states. Yet one might think that if general deterrence is successful, then a given rivalry may never begin, or suddenly the need for immediate deterrence is past and the most dangerous part of a rivalry is effectively over. Looking only at militarized disputes in one kind of rivalry (enduring) leads scholars to ignore considerations such as these, which have important implications for understanding rivalries and deterrence alike.

The issue of the democratic peace revolves around the ability of democratic countries to manage their conflicts with each other. The causes-of-war approach has generally been concerned only with regime type and the occurrence of war or militarized disputes at specific points in time. Yet the beginning and particularly the end of rivalries do not necessarily coincide with a dispute or a war. This, combined with the empirical fact that regime type can change during the course of a rivalry, opens up a whole series of hypotheses regarding the democratic peace that can be studied by changing the basic theoretical orientation. One possibility is that the conflict patterns in a rivalry might not be

disrupted when both rivals become democratic in the middle of the rivalry, suggesting a limitation on the democratic peace thesis. We address this possibility in our empirical analyses in chapter 6.

Although the use of rivalry as the basic conceptual framework cannot explain peace per se, it can be used to explain why peace breaks out between countries that might go to war. It can help explain an important class of situations of particular interest to peace researchers: the transition from a war-probable dyad to a war-improbable one. We find this integrative aspect of the rivalry approach attractive, in part because the literature on conflict management is diverse and lacks strong theoretical coherence. To be able to understand war and peace within one framework (if this is indeed possible) would be a major achievement.

### From War Diffusion to Linking Rivalries

Another set of consequences resulting from the new object of analysis is a better understanding of the linkage between conflicts. Diffusion research has focused on how war begets war (Siverson and Starr 1991; Most, Starr, and Siverson 1989). Within the rivalry approach, this becomes much broader—we are concerned with how rivalries influence each other. The rivalry approach incorporates not only temporal dynamics, but spatial ones as well. For example, alliances are usually thought of as linking states, but for us alliances are just one of the elements that connect dyadic rivalries. An alliance can be a cause of a new rivalry or a consequence of the tighter linking of two existing rivalries. Thus, the rivalry approach can provide a more complex and, we believe, more accurate understanding of the effect of alliances on the spread of conflict (and vice versa). Results in chapter 12 indicate that rivalry linkage is an essential element in understanding the severity of conflict between rivals.

The rivalry approach further changes the orientation of traditional diffusion studies. One consequence of replacing war with rivalry in the diffusion framework is that war can arise without a previous war occurring as the initial cause. This is possible because we assume that the rivalry continues during times without active hostilities. Thus, there may be no war at time  $t - 1$ , but there still may be conflict diffusion at time  $t$  as long as there was a rivalry at  $t - 1$ . The rivalry approach is broader in that (1) it accounts for diffusion in the absence of war, and (2) it identifies diffusion involving lower levels of conflict than full-scale war.

Another consequence of the rivalry approach is to propose an explanation for the absence of war diffusion (or so-called negative diffusion). The attention and resources that must be devoted to an ongoing rivalry relationship may reduce the ability of individual rivals to engage in conflict with other adversaries. Rivalries (particularly enduring ones) may generate conflict locally (as suggested by the diffusion literature), but at the same time other disputes involving the same protagonists become less likely. Thus, the rivalry approach



is more nuanced in that it offers an explanation for why some conflicts expand and why others are less likely to occur.

We suspect that one factor helping to create enduring rivalries is the linking together of dyadic rivalries, each reinforcing the other. One way to view the changes in alliance structure prior to World War I is as a progressive linking of rivalries into two blocks (Sabrosky 1975; Vasquez 1993). A large number of rivalries in the Cold War era appear related to each other; such patterns are evident in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

Most standard studies of deterrence focus on dyadic relationships and have little concern with how success or failure of deterrence in one context influences deterrence in other relationships. The closest such studies come is with respect to a concern with reputation (see below), but deterrence theory generally lacks a framework to understand how deterrence relationships are interconnected, and the diffusion literature is largely inapplicable here. Looking at linked rivalries provides an explicit mechanism for understanding how the relationships are related as well as for assessing how the failure of deterrence in one instance may have a short-term or immediate effect on the viability of deterrence in a related context. There has been much written about extended deterrence, and the rivalry focus provides a framework for how the conduct of the United States–USSR superpower rivalry, for example, affected deterrence and the propensity for war in Europe and other proxy conflicts.

Linkage analysis may also be important for long-cycles research (Modelski 1987; Thompson 1988). For example, how does the involvement of a major power in a spatial or global structural rivalry affect the patterns of interaction in a simultaneous regional structural rivalry (Thompson 1995)? There may also be linkages between spatial rivalries involving small states and structural rivalries between the major powers. In order to understand minor-power rivalries, it may be necessary to consider structural rivalries, in which each major power provides arms and other assistance to a patron state in the spatial rivalries (Kinsella 1994b, 1995). It may also be that involvement in these minor-power rivalries overextends the system leader's capabilities and hastens its decline (Kennedy 1987). A focus on the interaction of rivalries at various levels would not only help us understand rivalries, but could also enrich long-cycles work and help to specify the processes of conflict interaction in each of the leadership phases postulated by that model.

If rivalries can be linked, they can also be “delinked.” Delinkage is the process by which these rivalries become detached from each other. One way to view the history of Arab-Israeli relations is as an evolution of rivalries that progressively link or delink, and to varying degrees. Jordan was probably the first Arab country to delink (although not fully) after the 1967 war; Egypt delinked in 1979; and the Palestinians started the process in 1993, although events at the time of this writing suggest the process is far from complete and may be even stagnated. The United States–USSR rivalry starts to decline in severity in

the mid-1960s, leading to detente in the 1970s (and this is consistent with most common perceptions). A common explanation gives pride of place to the conflict management lessons of the Cuban missile crisis, but we also note that at the same time the linkage between the United States–China and United States–USSR rivalries was dramatically loosening. As with all questions of rivalry and conflict management, these particular implications of the rivalry approach remain the least explored.

The dangerous dyad perspective on enduring rivalry privileges the temporal aspect of conflict relationships. While rivalry connects conflict over time, linkage connects rivalries over space. Just as rivalries ebb and flow as well as begin and end, so too can the degree of linkage vary from completely linked to completely unlinked. With the concept of rivalry linkage, the rivalry approach brings the spatial dimension of conflict into a unified framework of analysis.

### Longitudinal and Dynamic Implications of the Rivalry Approach

Treating rivalry as the unit of analysis generates many new hypotheses and is particularly appropriate when trying to understand the initiation and termination of rivalries. Yet, the core of the rivalry approach also stresses the longitudinal and dynamic character of the rivalry relationship; it is an interaction that exists over time. Another whole series of questions thus arises about the dynamics of rivalries.

In many ways, developments in game theory over the last 10 to 15 years have pointed in the same direction. Much of the new research has involved repeated game play. Repeated or iterated games, sequential games, and the theory of moves (Brams 1993) all reflect that most interactions are not one-shot affairs. For example, when Powell (1989) examines the temporal sequence of equilibria in nuclear deterrence strategy, he is assuming some rivalry-like setting. How these new game theoretic techniques can inform the study of rivalry remains an open question. Maoz and Mor (1998) have used Brams's (1993) theory of moves to model the evolution of the Israel–Egypt and other rivalries.

#### Rivalry as the Expectation of Future Conflict

Many rational choice models focus on the impact of expectations about the future on choice. The relative importance of the shadow of the future is a key parameter in Axelrod's (1984) Prisoners' Dilemma analysis. We see certain kinds of expectations as central to understanding rivalries. An enduring rivalry is a hostile and competitive relationship in which each side views the other as posing a significant threat to its own interests. In such a relationship, rivals expect that disputes, crises, and even war will continue into the future. These expectations condition current foreign policy choices, which may then feed back to help cause future war (the positive feedback of an arms race model), or prevent it (the negative feedback of deterrence models). Static models based on

national attributes or current conditions will not capture this long-range outlook. We argue later in the book that enduring rivalries have a peculiar stability, which is reinforced by the expectation of future conflict.

The study of immediate deterrence is inherently concerned with the present, but a concern with general deterrence implicitly indicates that future conflict is expected. The acquisition of alliances or enhancement of weapons capacity is generally done in order to meet future challenges, as such actions are generally not possible in the midst of a crisis, when immediate deterrence is the goal. By focusing on the expectation of future conflict in the rivalry approach, deterrence analysts could ascertain how that expectation conditions behavior as states seek both to prepare for future challenges and to establish or reinforce "reputation." Without consideration of the future, a state may appear to overreact to a contemporary crisis, unless one considers that the state is attempting to deter and gain an advantage in the long run. Short-term analyses of deterrence will misinterpret such actions.

A longitudinal analysis of power transitions might lead to the discovery of "preventive wars" (Levy 1987) launched by the status quo state in anticipation of the future loss of power. Thus, the rivalry approach has the potential to integrate both power transitions and preventive wars in the same process. Furthermore, the concern with the future may lead the status quo state to pursue a range of different options (beyond preventive war) to stave off the challenger (alliances, military buildup, arms control agreement) and preserve its advantage. If effective, these may be important reasons why no power transition occurs or why it occurs peacefully. In each case, such actions can be understood only by consideration of the future expectations of the parties.

### The Push of the Past on Rivalries

If future expectations are significant in rivalries, one might ask where they come from. One obvious response is past interactions. Rivalries have a joint history in addition to a joint future. Rivalries can be both pulled by future expectations and pushed by the not-so-dead hand of the past. The United States has often referred to its "commitments" as a justification for its behavior. An alliance treaty is one type of commitment that may "constrain" states. Tit-for-tat and arms race models provide two examples in which current behavior is a function of past acts. Leng (1983) found a tendency toward escalatory tactics from one crisis to the next, but scholars have yet to explore whether the reverse de-escalatory process helps explain the end of rivalries.

The concept of "learning" has received a great deal of attention in recent years (see Levy 1994 for a review of this literature). Levy (1994) recommends that one examine learning in the context of one crisis. We suggest that learning models can neither be conceptualized nor studied except in a dynamic, longitudinal fashion. If a state has learned something, that learning will be evident on many future occasions. If such evidence is not forthcoming, doubt is cast

on whether any learning took place. If it is a trial-and-error or search process, then we can only see that process over multiple trials. If one examines models of learning, all involve a process that takes place over time. Bayesian updating as a model of learning makes little sense in a one-shot situation. Bayesian techniques permit updating of current information based on past experience (Wagner 1989); the past plays a role because of imperfect information. For us, learning is an intervening variable mediating the impact of the past on the present. The rivalry approach provides a framework for examining different models of state learning. Particularly in enduring rivalries, governments make immense efforts to understand their rivals and expend great effort analyzing previous crises and wars.

The push of the past in rivalries is often not adequately considered in cross-sectional studies of deterrence. The most obvious way that the historical experience of the rivals comes into deterrence models is through the concept of reputation and credibility. The credibility of current deterrence threats depends (at least in part) on past behavior in the rivalry, which appears *prima facie* to be relevant, as well as on linked rivalry behavior. Although this has been the subject of some conceptual assessment, reputation has received relatively little attention in the quantitative literature on deterrence (Levy 1988). Even studies that do explicitly consider reputation “pay far less attention to the impact of the past on the way participants define their roles, the legitimacy of their purposes, and their strategies” (Lebow and Stein 1990, 356).

Part of the reason that deterrence studies downplayed the impact of the past is that they heretofore lacked a framework for addressing such concerns. The rivalry approach provides such a framework and permits empirical analysis. For example, Lebow (1981, 5) had as one of his three main interests “the relationship between crisis and underlying patterns of conflict,” what we might term as prior interactions in the rivalry. He specifically asks, “In what ways do crises affect the long-term relations between protagonists? In what circumstances do they act to intensify or ameliorate the conflicts which they reflect?” (1981, 5). To answer such questions, one needs the longitudinal comparative case studies that are facilitated under the rivalry approach.

Preferences are part of all rational actor models. Normally, the origin of these preferences is not an issue (they are assumed to be exogenous to the model), and they are assumed to be constant. Yet one may legitimately ask why a state has the preferences it does, and one may reject the assumption that preferences are constant. Preferences are formed, in part, by the past interactions with a given state. It is likely that current preferences are partially affected by prior wars and hostile interactions (see Elster 1983 for a survey of theories of endogenous preference change). Loss of territory may create new preferences—to maintain the new status quo for the gaining side or to prompt the losing side to seek revenge. One notable outcome of World War II was to change Japan and Germany from enemies of the United States, Britain, and

France to close allies. If this is the case, it implies that preferences are not constant, as “previous experience” is constantly changing. Indeed, Maoz and Mor (1998) have found some preference change in their analysis of Middle East rivalries.

The relative weights of future expectations and past experience might vary over the course of the rivalry, although it may be hard to distinguish between the two because the strength of future expectations could depend, in large part, on the length of previous experience: the more entrenched the rivalry, the more firmly entrenched the expectations. One consequence of the rivalry approach is to inquire about the stability of preferences and the origin of expectations. We suggest that answering these questions will put international conflict in the context of a past and a future. Part of the key to understanding rivalry will be making the links between the two.

#### After War or Crisis, What?

As we have already discussed, the causes-of-war approach postulates a series of events or states of affairs occurring just before war as potential explanations of war. In the rivalry approach, war most often occurs somewhere in the middle of the rivalry. Hence, we are naturally concerned with what happened before the war in the rivalry, but just as often we are concerned with what happens after wars. In a symmetrical fashion, many of the phenomena that occur before a war can take place following it; that is, many of the causes of war can also be the effects of war. For example, does war result in a power transition? in an arms race? in a regime change?

One of key aspects of putting deterrence into the context of rivalries is that it permits us to ask what happens after deterrence. The standard approach is concerned with only the success or failure of deterrence at a given point in time. There is no real afterlife. Yet in most instances the *after* is also a *before*, thus opening up the question of how long a general deterrence strategy is successful. “The focus on immediate deterrence . . . is troublesome . . . because it can lead us to miss perhaps the most important feature of the last quarter century: the paucity of superpower crises” (Jervis 1989, 195), especially in that the Cuban missile crisis was the last such confrontation. The traditional approach stops with war and crisis, but rivalries end with peace and begin similarly, allowing the analyst to trace the end of competition and assess deterrence behavior well after the last crisis has occurred in the rivalry (which does not necessarily represent the last serious threat to peace). Huth (1988) has been criticized for exactly this point. Sagan (1991) argues that deterrence in one crisis might lead a potential aggressor never again to challenge the status quo. Quantitative analysis, he argues, therefore must look forward from the cases rather than just backward in understanding deterrence. The rivalry approach not only facilitates such an analysis, it all but demands that scholars not stop with the end of a particular discrete event of interest, be it war or crisis.

### The Dynamics of Rivalry

A central focus of the rivalry approach is the dynamics of rivalries' evolution. Here we move away from juxtaposing the rivalry approach with important hypotheses in the war literature. Although the causes-of-war literature can provide us with many suggestive ideas, it cannot address the evolution of conflictual relationships. The dynamics of rivalry are certainly related to the dynamics of other phenomena. Most of the dynamic hypotheses in the war literature involve escalatory processes, but rivalries escalate and de-escalate; periods of calm are punctuated by the storms that occasionally shake the relationship. We need theories that relate periods of calm to periods of crisis. We need to know if and when crises, disputes, and wars affect the basic parameters of the relationship and when they do not. These questions make sense only within the rivalry approach. For example, if in rivalries we find that periods of calm are associated with democratic regimes (or democratization) and periods of greater conflict with nondemocratic regimes, then we have direct evidence for the democratic peace hypothesis.

One general way to pose the process question is to ask about patterns of rivalry development. Leng's (1993) conclusions about learning imply a certain pattern to crisis behavior over time. Does one often find that kind of escalatory pattern with enduring rivalries? Does one often find a similar de-escalatory pattern? Can one detect a secular trend in the severity of the rivalry relationship? (We address these questions in chapter 9.) Leng (1993) classified bargaining strategies into four types based on the analysis of crisis behavior. Could one do the same on the larger scale of enduring rivalries?

Most of the process theories in international relations tend to describe such processes before war, but few connect wars and disputes with each other. The rivalry approach poses a new set of problems and provides ground for new theorizing about international conflict. One test of a theoretical framework is how many answers it can provide. But another test is how many interesting new questions it raises. Above, we argued that the new question "Why rivalry?" can replace "Why war?" In this section, we face the fundamental question of explaining how crises, disputes, and wars interact in the dynamics of the rivalry relationship.

### Rivalry as a Contextual Factor

Until recently, the primary use of enduring rivalry has been as a case selection device. Most of the studies that have used enduring rivalries in such a fashion have in effect argued that a given relationship (e.g., between arms races and war—Diehl 1985a) or process (e.g., between power transition and war—Wayman 1982) occurs only when there is some preexisting conflict relationship. Huth, Bennett, and Gelpi illustrate this case selection usage: "the concept of a Great Power rivalry is critical because it identifies the population of cases

to be used for testing the model's propositions" (1992, 483). (This point is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.) We suggest that this is a crude way of linking rivalries to phenomena such as deterrence. What these authors are doing is making a theoretical claim about situations in which deterrent threats, for example, are likely to be made; the variables in their models then try to explain why such threats work or not. We suggest that these are related concerns and should be addressed together in the theory, and not relegated to simple research design questions.

As we saw above, some important hypotheses in the causes-of-war framework suggest parallel hypotheses for explaining the origins of rivalries, and in particular enduring rivalries. Neorealist structural theories and long-cycles hypotheses are prime candidates for understanding how rivalries between major powers occur and how they affect minor-power rivalries. Other hypotheses, in contrast, seem to fit better within the dynamics of an already existing rivalry. For example, the idea of an arms race presupposes some conflictual relationships, as Richardson (1960) argues. Deterrence is another example of a concept that seems to presuppose a rivalry relationship. Deterrent threats are not usually made against a generic foe, but rather against a clearly defined adversary. Some hypotheses seem to function in both roles, as explanations of rivalries but at the same time important in the internal dynamics of rivalry. The power transition model fits these criteria. One can see power transitions as giving rise to rivalries, as suggested here, or one can assume a rivalry background, as do Kugler and Organski (1989).

In the arms race literature, formal models of arms race processes assume an underlying potential conflict. The positive feedback model, whereby one side's arms expenditures influence those of the other, does not make sense outside of a context marked by basic hostility. This becomes more clear in the empirical literature on arms races. In particular, how does one decide who is racing against whom? A given country's arms acquisitions could be driven by the behavior of a large number of potential adversaries. Such issues these are often ignored or sidestepped with the assumption that arms increases are primarily directed against one opponent (with the other enemies ignored) (Smith 1980). These rather ad hoc methods can be replaced by the rivalry concept.

The logical next step is to include rivalry characteristics in the theoretical framework itself. First of all, this means abandoning the notion that there is necessarily a radical break between enduring and lower-level rivalries. It also means that the characteristics of the rivalry relationship are thought to influence the process under scrutiny, whether it be deterrence or the escalation of arms races to war. This prompts the scholar to identify those characteristics rather than to leave them broadly subsumed under the surrogate rivalry relationship variable.

Perhaps an appropriate way to theorize about how the rivalry context may affect deterrent threats is to see the effectiveness of the deterrence variables, for

example, as changing according to the underlying rivalry relationship. As we have seen, however, rivalry is really a continuous variable, and we may wish to include multiple rivalry characteristics in the model. For example, credibility may be less effective in a short-term rivalry or an early stage of an enduring rivalry, as rivals have had little opportunity to build reputation. These types of models are called “contextual” (there is a large literature on contextual models in American politics; for applications to international relations, see Goertz 1994).

A third alternative is to see the rivalry context as the cause of the phenomenon, such as an arms race. Here the arms race “intervenes” between the rivalry relationship and war (Diehl and Crescenzi 1998). In Richardson’s (1960) model, each nation’s arms expenditures are driven by two causal variables: the other side’s expenditures and the “grievance” held by each side. This grievance term influences arms expenditures, which then may cause a war. Thus, the rivalry as a background factor can enter many ways (our list is certainly not complete) into a better understanding of how certain phenomena like arms races are linked to war.

Several contextual variables might be incorporated in analyses of deterrence, arms races, and power transitions. A critical assumption of all those analyses is that the states in question view each other as the primary (in some cases the exclusive) security threat. This can be tested by incorporating the degree of concentration or interaction (*vis-à-vis* all other states) between the rivals. This, in turn, could affect the arms race levels, as Goldstein and Freeman (1991) have demonstrated in the triangular relations among the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. The salience of competing claims between the two sides may also influence the propensity for deterrent attempts to be successful or for power transitions to spawn conflict. This can be incorporated into the model explicitly rather than assuming that all cases are equally salient or picking only cases that seem to meet some unspecified threshold.

Specifically, one might want to model previous outcomes of disputes or deterrent attempts in analyses of deterrence. The availability of substitutes (e.g., alliances) for arms races might be essential in tests of that phenomenon’s relationship to war. The degree of hostility or common interests between two states has already been intimated as a key concern in determining which rivals in a power transition will go to war and which will experience a transition peacefully. Merely using enduring rivalries as a case selection method sweeps these theoretical concerns under the rug and may ignore the variations that exist even among enduring rivalries. The rivalry approach forces the scholar to deal with these concerns theoretically and subjects many of the assumptions to empirical tests.



## Conclusion

Rivalries are crucial contexts for the understanding of crisis behavior. In addition, crises and wars define a rivalry and in an important sense keep it alive. The rivalry approach suggests that understanding crisis and war requires that these events be put into some larger context. This aspect of rivalry is perhaps more fundamental than issues of power transition, arms races, and deterrence. Rivalries can exist without an arms race, or a power transition, but they cannot exist without crises or disputes. If we exclude the possibly dubious category of long-term latent conflict, our conceptualization of a rivalry centers around the occurrence of crises and disputes that involve militarized moves, and the eventual possibility of war.

Over the past decade we have seen studies of enduring rivalries and such topics as power transition, deterrence, and the democratic peace (e.g., Geller 1993; Lieberman 1995). One might suspect that enduring rivalries are a new way to prolong the life of a few old warhorse hypotheses. We have argued that far from being a new test for old hypotheses, rivalries provide new ways to think about issues of war and peace: it is because the rivalry approach is so valuable that it is natural to use it to examine deterrence, arms races, and the like.

Most of the studies that use rivalries to test a hypothesis use *enduring* rivalries. But if one examines the theory involved, for example, deterrence, nothing in the theory restricts its application to the enduring rivalries subset of all rivalries. Using that subset of rivalries is not required by the theory, but also produces unnecessary sampling bias. There are perhaps good reasons why deterrence may work differently in enduring rivalries, but of course one cannot know this without a comparison group.

We have argued that the first step in putting rivalry at the core of theoretical concerns lies in using it as the object of study. We can then ask new questions, for example, why some rivalries have more deterrence failures than others. If one takes the usual war/dispute/crisis as the object of analysis, this question never gets posed (e.g., Huth and Russett 1993). Because all rivalries eventually end, we can ask about the impact of deterrence strategies, success, and failure on the duration and termination of rivalries. Does successful deterrence prolong the rivalry relationship, as some have suggested (George and Smoke 1989)? As most research stops its analysis with crisis or war, it never poses the question about deterrence and conflict termination.

Key to the whole rivalry approach is that rivalries exist over time. The concept of a rivalry emphasizes the longitudinal aspect of conflict relations, in contrast with the cross-sectional character of most comparative case study and quantitative work. The rivalry approach provides a natural framework for investigating theories with longitudinal or dynamic components. For example, the concept of reputation plays a key role in the deterrence debate. To say that reputation matters means that behavior in the current conflict is influenced by behavior in the previous one. Lieberman (1995) argues that the actual carrying

out of deterrence threats (i.e., war) is crucial for the deterrent threat to be credible in the next round. Rivalries provide him with framework within which to examine that hypothesis.

Rivalries can also fill in key gaps in theory construction. For example, Lebow (1981, 337) begins his model of crisis behavior with a concept labeled “underlying hostility,” which has an arrow leading to crisis and eventually war. There is also a feedback arrow from crisis back to “underlying hostility.” “Underlying hostility” is, of course, a rivalry. The feedback arrow gives a model of how a rivalry is maintained. With the rivalry approach, we can complete his model by including the beginnings and endings of rivalries. Lebow suggests that crises are embedded in the context of a rivalry relationship. This is true of many phenomena that interest scholars of international conflict, such as arms races, deterrence, and regime type. We have argued that explicitly including rivalry in the model can have important theoretical payoffs.

In this chapter, we have discussed the conceptual and theoretical implications of adopting the rivalry approach to war and peace. We believe that adoption of this orientation provides new insights into the way that we think about international conflict and offers some new ways to address long-standing controversies in the field. Yet along with the theoretical alterations that accompany the rivalry approach, there are also methodological ones. In the next chapter, we look at the implications for testing hypotheses that follow from many of the theoretical concerns noted here.