

Literature Review: Rivalry - A Major Cause of Conflict

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There is an abundance of theories that analyse a wide range of variables in order to explain the causes of War. These variables are often interlinked and struggle to explain War just by themselves. One of the most convincing theories is that of Rivalry. Rivalry is one of the only variables that plays a significant role in most conflicts. Other variables such as territory, religion and arms races feed into the theory of rivalry and can play an important role in explaining the origins, development and outcomes of certain rivalries (Valeriano & Powers, 2012: pp. 3-4).

Diehl and Goertz' concept of rivalry relies on 4 pillars. The first is its dyadic nature. Thompson agrees with Klein, Diehl and Goertz that a rivalry can only exist between two consistent sides (Thompson, 2001: pp. 557-558) (Klein, Goertz & Diehl, 2006: pp. 332-333). Valeriano and Powers argue, however, that rivalry isn't limited to only two states and that it can exist between groups of states. Valeriano and Powers speak of 'triadic complex rivalries' such as the UK and France's rivalry with Germany prior to World War II (Valeriano & Powers, 2012: pp. 1-2 & 11-12). The second pillar is duration. While Thompson focuses only on enduring rivalries, Goertz and Diehl emphasize the importance of shorter rivalries but also state that a difference has to be made between isolated conflicts and rivalries (Klein, Goertz & Diehl, 2006: pp. 333-334). The third dimension is the importance of militarized competition. For two states to be rivals, there must be military tension. Klein, Diehl and Goertz support the idea of considering various military actions, but are adamant that the military aspect of any rivalry be quantifiable. Thompson's approach differs in that he focuses more on the perceptions of leaders rather than military statistics (Thompson, 2001: pp. 558-60).

Mitchell and Thies would argue that military incidents aren't necessary for there to be a rivalry (Mitchell & Thies, 2011 p. 232). The final pillar is linked conflict. Goertz and Diehl argue that issues and grievances must be consistent and related over space and time. The actors' perception that such issues will continue in future is important in explaining the continuous nature of rivalry.

Vasquez argues that symmetry is important in the development of rivalry. Diehl, Klein and Goertz argue that a majority of rivalries are asymmetrical, but that symmetry could be a cause of enduring rivalries. They have determined that there were 915 isolated conflicts and 290 rivalries between 1816 and 2001. Of the 290 rivalries, 115 are enduring, experiencing an average of 13 conflicts and 36 years (Klein, Goertz & Diehl, 2006: pp. 340-341).

Mitchell and Thies are critical of rivalry studies' failure to determine the initial 'triggers' of rivalries (Mitchell & Thies, 2011 p. 235-6). While Diehl and Goertz argue that 'political shocks' initiate rivalries, Valeriano believes that it is certain factors that bring about a situation of rivalry (Valeriano 2013 27-28)

As mentioned above, the value of rivalry as a variable in explaining war comes from its ability to encompass other variables and link conflicts. Goertz, Klein and Diehl argue that the study of rivalry has changed conflict studies by focusing on a more horizontal explanation as to how single issues relate to one another over time and space. Rather than analyze each cause of war individually, the study of rivalry has allowed for concepts such as territory, arms races, power politics and religion to be

analyzed collectively in a way that allows one to determine how they affect one another within the larger frame of rivalry.

Valeriano argues that rivalry is central to the study of. He states that if rivalry accounts for $\frac{3}{4}$ of all wars, conflict resolution should focus on resolving the rivalries rather than single issues (Valeriano, 2012: p. 64). Rivalry has been used as a major factor in Vasquez' steps to war theory (Valeriano & Vasquez, 2011: pp. 158-160).

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