From Arming to Fighting?
The Steps to War, Mutual Military Buildups and Dispute Onset in the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey Rivalries

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Abstract

Recent developments in the operationalization of mutual military buildups raise some questions about the findings of the quantitative literature on the association of mutual military buildups (MMB) and militarized dispute (MID) onset in the Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey dyads. We use the novel data to evaluate that relationship, working within the Steps to War explanatory framework. The Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey cases are puzzles for the framework, since on the one they have had a frequent presence of the Steps to War but have far fewer wars than we would expect. Our analysis indicates that despite that puzzling incongruity the Greece - Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey cases are good fits for the Steps to War, except when it comes to the role of mutual military buildups. We find indicators that while the other factors of Steps to War have a positive combined association with MID onset, the inclusion of mutual military buildups renders such an association statistically insignificant. On the other hand, we do find indicators that mutual military buildups may contribute to the transition from Lesser to Severe Rivalry, as per the Steps to Rivalry. Finally, the dyads reach infection periods that make war more likely as per the Steps to War. But many expected wars do not take place. We posit two possible explanations for future research: deterrence, or major power managerial coordination.

Keywords: Rivalry, Mutual Military Buildups, MID Onset, Greece-Turkey, Greek-Turkish Rivalry

Introduction

In this paper we seek to evaluate the relationship between mutual military buildups (MMB) and militarized dispute onset (MID) in the Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey interstate rivalries. To do this we use a novel operationalization for mutual military buildups proposed by Nioutsikos, Travlos, and Daskalopoulou (2023, we will henceforth refer to the operationalization as the ARCADE operationalization).[1] Using the data produced by this operationalization we seek to use the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey rivalries to evaluate the fit of the case studies within the Steps to War explanatory framework of international conflict (Senese and Vasquez 2008).

We choose the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey dyad because they make an interesting case for the Steps to War framework. First, the case is one of the longer duration interstate rivalries of the modern interstate system. Second, the Greece-Ottoman rivalry and the Greece-Turkey rivalry are both afflicted with multiple repeated MIDs, and yet only the Greece-Ottoman rivalry saw four war onsets (1897, 1912,1917,1919), while the Greece-Turkey one did not see any. More importantly, despite the presence of at least one qualitative arms race in the Greece-Ottoman dyad, existing quantitative studies of mutual military buildups do not locate periods of mutual military buildups despite the frequent war incidence (Fotakis 2005; Aksakal 2008; Nioutsikos et al. 2023). Instead, both the quantitative mutual military buildups literature and the econometric arms race literature locate the incidence of mutual military buildups or arms races in the post-1954 rivalry period, which was bereft of war onsets.

These puzzling findings that indicate a more complicated interplay of the Steps to War framework with the case studies than commonly thought, as well as the active character of the Greece-Turkey rivalry justify a second look at the cases within the Steps to War framework. Furthermore, the ARCADE (Nioutsikos et al. 2023) operationalization of mutual military buildups unearthed indicators of mutual military buildups that were missing in previous scholarship, while at the same time confirming the general tenor of the findings of the existing literature. This progressive shift justifies a new look at the relationship between mutual military buildups and dispute onset in this case study. Our hope is that our application will incentivize extensions of the ARCADE operationalization to other dyads of states.

Our findings largely confirm the expectations that emanate from the Steps to War framework but with a crucial difference. Only the combination of rivalry, territorial claims, and alliance dynamics has a positive association with MID onset. Mutual military buildups whether in combination with the other Steps to War factors, or independently, have no statistically significant association with MID Onset. Consequently, in the Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey cases, mutual military buildups do not seem to be direct conflict fostering factors. More importantly we unearth two findings of importance for future research.

First, we find an indicator that the escalation of the Greece-Ottoman Empire lesser rivalry to the severe rivalry status follows Valeriano's Steps to Rivalry framework, with a

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1   The data used in this article is available at the Harvard Dataverse at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZAKTAU.

mutual military buildup taking place right before the transition (Valeriano 2003; Goertz et al. 2016). Second, we show that mutual military buildups do have a temporal association with peak periods of tension during the dyad history, when the accumulation of past MIDs in a dyad year reaches their highest number. One such peak is associated with three of four Greece-Ottoman Empire wars. But all other peaks are not associated with war onset. This is puzzling, as it shows that periods when war should have the highest likelihood of onset as per Steps to War did not see such occurrence. This raises the question about what dampened the war fostering dynamics of the Steps to War, which in turn may provide insights in how to avoid any future war onsets.

We begin our paper by discussing our explanatory framework. We then discuss the existing fit of the Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey cases in the Steps to War framework. The following section focuses on our research design, presents and discusses the findings. In the conclusion, we discuss avenues for future research and policy implications considering the increased Greek and Turkish military expenditures of the last five years.

Explanatory Framework

We base our analysis on the Steps to War explanatory framework for the onset of interstate militarized conflict. In the Steps to War framework, mutual military buildups and arms races are simply one of the many steps that lead states to the escalation of MID's to war (Senese and Vasquez 2008). Other key steps are a history of frequent repeated crises or MIDs, encapsulated usually in the concept of rivalry, the engagement in territorial claims, and the seeking and creation of either balancing alliances against the rival, compellent alliances against the rival, or grouping alliances with the rival. The Steps to War ascribe such behavior of states to the domination of a realpolitik culture among decision makers that champions deterrence and compellence strategies as the way to dominate the rivalry and keep the peace (Vasquez 1998[1983]; Senese and Vasquez 2008). Scholars working in the Steps to War framework suggest that this is not the case. Such realist strategies instead of averting war, foster repeated MIDs where one of them sooner or later escalates to war. The mechanism that feeds this dynamic is the increasing dominance of hardliners in the decision-making circles of the two states. In simple terms, war happens because states are dominated by decision makers who make choices, consciously or unconsciously, which make war more likely.

When it comes to the Steps, the empirical evidence indicates that the most war-prone factor is engagement in territorial claims (Hensel 1996; Sample 1998; Sample 2002; Senese and Vasquez 2008; Vasquez 2012; Mitchell and Vasquez 2021: 320-326). Such behavior fosters both MIDs and escalation of MIDs to war. Recurring engagement in disputes (crises or MIDs) encapsulated as rivalry also has a stable and strong association with war onset (Mitchell and Vasquez 2021: 331-333). On the other hand, alliance dynamics, as well as competitive arming dynamics have variable influence dependent on the historical context (Mitchell and Vasquez 2021: 327-331, 334-336). Specifically, if the major powers are in a multipolar, bipolar (Cold War), or quasi-unipolar configuration (post-Cold War).

If we focus on Arms Races, and the associated concept of MMB, these tend to be associated with the escalation of MIDs to war when the system is multipolar, but not when it is bipolar (Cold War). The association of MMBs with the onset of war also does not hold for dyads made up of major and minor states, though whether this condition expands to minor-minor dyads characterized by extreme asymmetry in capabilities, has not been resolved.

When it comes to MID onset, findings on the role of the Steps to War are fewer. A nuanced look at alliances shows different effects for different types of alliances on MID onset, depending on polarity conditions (Benson 2011; Kenwick et al. 2015). Rivalries exhibit more MIDs than non-rivalries throughout the existence of the modern interstate system, which does indicate that prior MIDs have a positive effect on the onset of subsequent MIDs (Diehl and Goertz 2001). Finally, there are indicators that arms races foster MID onset in the context of strategic rivalry.[2]

The above extant findings lead us to the expectation that mutual military buildups will foster MID onset in combination with other Steps to War factors, and not independently. The big question is whether the other Steps to War factors in combination, minus MMBs, have an influence that is stronger than when they are present in combination with MMBs. The findings of the previous studies do not provide clear indicators. We believe that an exploration of the relationship between MMBs and MID onset within the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey dyad may provide some insights and work as a proof-of-concept case for future case studies.

Steps to War and the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey Rivalries

The Greece-Ottoman Empire rivalry is set within the multipolar period of the modern international system (1816-1945). The fact that this rivalry experienced four wars (1897, 1912-1913, 1917-1918, 1919-1922) and was characterized by territorial changes should make it an excellent candidate for showcasing the Steps to War. Ideologically, the Greek side in the 19th-20th century was characterized by the presence of the Megali Idea (Great Idea), a general political culture (like the Manifest Destiny of the United States) that fostered an irredentist foreign policy (Skopetea 2009; Papasotiriou 1997; Maroniti 2009; Fakiolas 2012; Vergopoulos 2015; Malesis 2018; Malesis 2022). Despite the popular force of that general idea, the flexibility of Greek politicians in pursuing a prudent foreign policy was never abolished. Greek governments were careful to use war or the threat of war as a tool of foreign policy, rhetorically supporting the Megali Idea and its drive to war, but pragmatically being circumspect from lodging official territorial claims against the Ottoman Empire absent the favorable support of a group of major powers.

In the Ottoman Empire most of the period is dominated by two administrations. The defensive oriented conservative reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) and the administrations of the nationalist Committee of Union and Progress. While Abdulhamid had a more traditional statecraft view of the efficacy of war as a tool of foreign policy, the Committee

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2   Strategic Rivalry includes the concept of lesser rivalry and partly overlaps with that of severe rivalry, see Goertz, Diehl and Balas 2016.

of Union and Progress was more influenced by social Darwinist ideals that saw war as a public good in and of itself (Zürcher 2010). It was those governments that were more willing to make territorial claims against Greece (Fotakis 2005; Aksakal 2008).

However, there are some factors that make this case less of a perfect fit for the Steps to War. First, there is the lack of outside alliances for most of the rivalry period. In the century-long Greece-Ottoman Empire rivalry there were only fifteen years were there was at least one outside alliance present in the dyad (1878-1880, 1912-1918, 1921-1925) (Leeds et al. 2002). This is explained by the role of the major powers in this rivalry. Greece until 1920 was legally a protectorate of the Concert of Europe, and generally forced to stay out of alliances with individual major powers or other minor powers. This was compounded by the military weakness of Greece. Simply put Greece was not an alluring alliance prospect, a condition leaders sought to rectify partly by the Greek armament and military reform programs (Maroniti 2003; Svolopoulos 2005: 66-68). The Ottoman Empire did receive the attention of major power allies during periods of crisis (Crimean War, the Second Great Eastern Crisis of 1875-1886), but outside of those, the major powers avoided entering alliances with it, either individually or collectively. The condition of both states changed with the collapse of the Concert of Europe system in 1909-1914, where they became parts of opposing minor power and major power alliances. With the end of the rivalry in 1930, both Greece and Turkey largely reverted to avoiding alliances. Thus, we do not expect outside alliances to play a major role in explaining the Greece-Ottoman Empire Steps to War. On the other hand, qualitatively three of the four Greece-Ottoman Empire wars took place in the shadow of outside alliances (Sarkees and Wayman 2010).

Second, those very major powers also played a big role in containing Greece-Ottoman Empire crises and averting their escalation to war. Sert and Travlos (2018) have showed that the intensity of the Greece-Ottoman Empire rivalry, when calculated in terms of Basic Rivalry Level, is not determined by major power rivalries, or their association with the two states. That said, while the major power behavior does not cause the rivalry, or affect the variation in intensity within it, those major powers could and did intervene to stop escalation to war, examples of which took place in 1856, 1866, and 1877-1885 (Travlos 2019).

Finally, the work of Nioutsikos et al. (2023) has provided indicators that the Greece-Ottoman Empire rivalry was mostly free of long periods of quantitative mutual military buildups, at least as measured by variables based on the Correlates of War national military capabilities data. There is a consistent finding across different operationalizations of MMBs of one being present at the cusp of the transformation of the lesser rivalry of 1828-1865 to the severe rivalry of 1866-1925 (largely covering the later 1850s). This mutual military buildup is not followed by war within five years, instead being followed by two MIDs associated with the Cretan Revolt of 1866-1868. This finding does support Valeriano's (2003) Steps to Rivalry argument that arms races in conjunction with outside alliances might play more of a role in escalating rivalry intensity in a dyad, by feeding the onset of recurrent MIDs.

The case would make a good example of the dynamics of Steps to Rivalry, except for the lack of an outside alliance in this period. At least in our interstate alliance depositories. The historical reality is that there was an alliance present, but the character of alliance members

does not make this an interstate alliance. There was indeed an attempt at the formation of an anti-Ottoman Alliance in the 1860s with Greece signing a Convention with the Principality of Serbia in 1861 that sought to create an alliance between Greece, Romania, Montenegro, and Serbia. This agitation led to a major military dispute between the Ottoman Empire and Serbia, and a war between Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire. This in turn led to a Greek-Serbian military treaty in 1867 (Sotirovic 2011; Markovich 2020). The only reason this alliance is non-existent from the usual databases on interstate alliances is that Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania were still Ottoman vassals. If we accept the reality of history, then the escalation of the Greece-Ottoman Empire rivalry fits well with Valeriano's argument, with the only difference being that the mutual military buildup preceded and overlapped with the formation of outside alliances, rather than followed it.

Under one operationalization of mutual military buildups there is a mutual military buildup in the 1910-1913 period. This buildup fits the more traditional Steps to War logic, as it was combined with an outside alliance in 1912-1913 (i.e. The Balkan League), the presence of four ongoing territorial issues and was followed by the First Balkan War. The only factor missing was a previous period of recurrent MIDs, as there was only one MID in 1909 between the end of the War of 1897 and the onset of the First Balkan War (Nioutsikos et al. 2023).

When we move on to the modern post-1957 Greece-Turkey rivalry, there is some continuity and difference with the previous rivalry. First, unlike the 1828-1930 period the whole 1957 to present period is characterized by severe rivalry (Goertz et al. 2016). There was no period of lesser rivalry preceding the hardening of attitudes. Unlike the Greece-Ottoman Empire rivalry, this rivalry was characterized by long periods of presence of outside alliances. However, any potential conflict fostering effect of this was dampened by the grouping alliance between Greece and Turkey within NATO. This grouping alliance has permitted the United States (US) to act like the Concert of Europe in intervening to avert the escalation of MIDs to war. Indeed, this may be a reason why there has been no Greece-Turkey interstate war during this rivalry period, despite the presence of most other Steps to War. These include, outside alliances, claims since 1964 by Turkey concerning the ownership of islands and islets in the Eastern Aegean, repeated MIDs, and significant periods of mutual military buildups that overlap with most of the rivalry period (Palmer et al. 2015; Frederick et al. 2023). That said recent work corroborates the earlier finding of Sert and Travlos (2018), that bilateral dynamics are paramount in explaining the intensity of the rivalry (Sert and Travlos 2018; Choulis et al. 2022).

It is the commonality in the key role of a major power (or major power coalition) in managing the escalation of the Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey rivalries, and the commonality of a struggle over control of the Aegean geographic region that we argue justifies treating the two rivalries as one case for this study. Indeed, with only 27 years between the termination of the first and the initiation of the second, the two rivalries could be seen as a possible case of interrupted rivalry (Rudkevich et al. 2013).

The above conditions lead us to the following expectations. The literature and case history do not support an expectation that MMBs should have some independent association

with MID onset in the Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey rival dyads. The question of interest is if combinations of Steps to War factors excluding MMBs are more associated with MID onset, then combinations including them.[3]

Research Design

To evaluate our argument about the influence of mutual military buildups on MID onset in the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey dyad we use a dyad year design beginning from 1828 and lasting to 2016.[4] The end date is determined by data availability. There is one temporal discontinuity in the dyad years, 1942-1943 when Greece ceased to be a member of the interstate system due to Axis occupation in World War II. Thus, our *n* is 184 dyad-years. The dependent variable we use is a binary variable taking the value of 1 if a dyad year experienced at least one MID onset between dyad members, and 0 otherwise. MID onsets are located using the Correlates of War MID Dataset (v.5).

The independent variables are based on the ARCADE operationalizations of MMBs (Nioutsikos et al. 2023). They locate MMBs by comparing the rivalry period average annual rate of change in military spending or military spending per military personnel capita for each country, with the annual rate of change per dyad year. They then create four alternative operationalizations, which capture mutual military buildups based on the presence of consistent contemporaneous dyad year rates of change in military expenditures that are above the rivalry period annual average rates of change. One operationalization is based on Correlates of War military expenditures using the three-year period. For brevity we call this Type 1(I) MMBs. The next is the same using the five-year period. For brevity we call this Type 2(II) MMBS. The next one uses military expenditures per military personnel capita using the three-year period. For brevity we call this Type 3(III) MMBs. The final one is that same but using the five-year period. For brevity we call this Type 4(IV) MMBs. The four variables thus take the value of 1 if a MMB was present in the dyad year, and 0 otherwise. They are all lagged by one year.

We decided to use the ARCADE variables because we argue it is a progressive shift in methods for capturing the presence of mutual military buildups using Correlates of War data, while meeting the basic criterion of replicability. It also has advantages compared to the two main existing quantitative measurement instruments for military buildups. These are variations of Horn's 1987 measure, extended by Susan Sample (1997) or variations of the 8% increase operationalization developed by Diehl (Diehl 1983, Gibler et al. 2005; Rider et al. 2011). Compared to these two measurements instruments the ARCADE instrument incorporates rivalry intensity directly into the calculation of the subsistence level of military expenditures.

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3   We used STATA for the calculations, Statacorp, "Stata Statistical Software: Release 13", College Station, TX, StataCorp LP, 2013.

4   The data used in this article is available on the Harvard Dataverse at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZAKTAU.

Horn based measures calculate subsistence levels for the whole period of dyad or for sub-periods (Gibler et al. 2005). On the other hand, the ARCADE variables are calculated for each rivalry period in the dyad. The logic is straightforward. The basic level of hostility as captured by variation in rivalry conditions, will influence what states consider adequate subsistence spending, and in turn what is considered extraordinary spending demanding a strategic reaction. Unlike Diehl (1983) based measures, the threshold of subsistence spending is not based on the 8% threshold used by most studies using a variation of the Diehl measure (Rider et al. 2011; Gibler et al. 2005). The operationalization of the measure may make that threshold inapplicable outside the original major-power 1816-1980 domain of Diehl.[5] The ARCADE measure does not rely on a specific threshold number. The subsistence threshold is calculated for every rivalry period, and will vary from state to state, and by rivalry intensity. This creates an operationalization applicable to all possible combinations of states in the interstate system.

Of course, ARCADE is not the first measure to directly seek to integrate the concept of rivalry with the measurement of military buildups. Gibler, Rider and Hutchison used the Diehl measure but restricted its application to dyads that were in strategic rivalry, arguing that mutual military buildups only make sense under conditions of motivation, expressed by strategic rivalry (Gibler et al. 2005: 134-135). While the authors of ARCADE agree with this approach, what they disagree with is the limitation of the sample to periods of strategic rivalry (Nioutsikos et al. 2023: 5-8). They argue that i) in many cases strategic rivalries are of such a long duration that it is hard to justify an expectation that the concepts encapsulated in the term can account for a variable like mutual military buildup onset, ii) advances in the study of rivalry have indicated that strategic rivalries are less intense than other periods of interstate contention, mainly Severe Rivalries (Goertz et al. 2016). The variation of rivalry intensity between Lesser Rivalries, mainly identified with strategic rivalries, and Severe Rivalries may have important impacts on the onset of mutual military buildups. Furthermore, iii) mutual military buildups may play a role in the escalation of dyadic relationships from no rivalry to lesser rivalry, and from lesser to severe rivalry.

We can summarize the main advantages of the ARCADE operationalization as applicability to all dyads of states, integrating the full influence of the intensity of dyadic interstate relations, running the gamut from positive peace to severe rivalry, and using that variation of intensity to calculate variable substitute spending thresholds that are sensitive to different conceptions of enmity between states. This final point is based on the punctuated equilibrium of rivalry intensity (Diehl and Goertz 2001). Rivalries shock dyads to increased levels of conflict, but then that intensity locks in and remains stable until a new shock. The ARCADE assumption relies on extending this punctuated equilibrium dynamic to the levels of military expenditures. Thus, thresholds are dependent on rivalry periods, which capture variations in dyadic conflict intensity that are tied to different conceptions of what is adequate subsistence spending.

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5   Contact with Paul F. Diehl by email on 5:54 AM Pacific Time, 11/27/2023, the Diehl dissertation, which included the original operationalization of the 8% threshold is not available anymore to the public, the relevant pages in the dissertation are 69 to 82.

The measure thus permits an integration of the insights of the conflict process treatment of mutual military buildups, with key insights of the econometric literature on the study of arms races (Brauer 2002). This effort to integrate the two literatures also extends to operationalizing military expenditure changes both in terms of absolute values, but also in terms of military expenditure per military personnel capita. The second operationalization is used in the econometric literature to capture increased investment on things like training, professionalization etc., factors that are important in the ability of the military forces of a state to wage war (Brauer 2002). This is an important factor that rarely gets treatment in the existing literature. This integrative effort of two different but conceptually connected literatures in the Nioutsikos et al. (2023) measure is a major progressive shift in the study of mutual military buildups.

The only criticism we have for the measure is the arbitrary decision to use three and five-year periods for locating periods of mutual military buildups. The three-year period is used in many of the studies based on the Diehl operationalization, and neither do these offer some theoretical justification for that choice. That said the offer of two different periods provides options for researchers that could control for any biases created by the arbitrary period durations.

When it comes to control variables, we follow both the general stipulation of including only variables that can explain variation in both the dependent and independent variables, but also fit in the Steps to War framework (Kadera and Mitchell 2005). We locate territorial claims in the Greece-Ottoman Empire and the Greece-Turkey based on the Issue Correlate of War Territorial Claims dataset (Frederick et al. 2017). The dataset contains ten territorial claims initiated by Greece against Turkey, and five territorial claims initiated by Turkey against Greece in the 1816-2001 period. We consider that dispute number 364, initiated by Turkey against Greece over sovereign rights and the ownership of various islands and islets in the Aegean to still be active. We use this data to produce two variables, one count variable that captures the number of active territorial claims per dyad year, and one binary variable that captures whether at least one territorial claim was present, noted as 1, or not, noted as zero.

To control for the irenic influence of asymmetrical capability distributions or the war fostering ones of parity and near-parity as noted by Vasquez (2009), we create a continuous variable that is a ratio of the Greek composite index of national capabilities (CINC) score over the Ottoman Empire/Turkish CINC score. We extract our data from the National Military Capabilities Dataset of The Correlates of War Project (v.6) (Signer et al. 1972; Singer 1988). This number varies from 0 to 1, with scores closer to 1 indicating parity.

We control for the number of MIDs that took place between the members of the dyad in the previous decade for each dyad year. This partly captures the weight of recent militarized interactions on current decision-making and partly rivalry intensity. This is a count variable taking the value of 0 if there were no MIDs starting or ongoing in the previous decade of that dyad year, and the numerical value equal to that number if there were. MID information is based on the Correlates of War MID Dataset (v.5) (Palmer et al. 2020). We also create a binary variable that captures whether at least one MID was presented in the previous decade for each dyad year, which takes the value of 1 if this was the case, and zero if it was not.

We also control for the role of alliances in dyad history. We use one variable to code whether a dyad-year was characterized by at least one outside alliance involving a dyad member. We use another to code whether a dyad-year was characterized by at least one alliance which both dyad members were jointly part of. In both cases the variable is binary, taking the value of 1 if the condition is present and 0 if it is not. We extract alliance information from the Alliance Treaty Provisions and Obligations Project (ATOP 5.1) (Leeds et al. 2002).

Finally, we also code two alternative independent variables to better gauge the effect of mutual military buildups within the framework of Steps to War. One variable denotes those dyad years where all other Steps to War factors were present in the dyad year except for MMBs. This means the presence of alliance dynamics (outside alliances or joint alliances), of at least one MID that took place in the previous decade of the dyad year of observation, and the presence of an active territorial claim in the dyad year. The other variables denote whether MMBs were also present in conjunction with the aforementioned factors. There are four versions of that variable, each for one of the four alternative operationalizations of the MMBs variable. They are binary variables, taking the value of 1 if the condition is present, or 0 if it is absent in a dyad year. By comparing the influence of these two variables on MID onset, we can get a grasp of the relative weight of mutual military buildups in the Steps to War process that feeds MID onset. All independent and control variables are lagged by a year. During the lag, the year 1944 and 1945 are dropped due to the lack of Greek statehood for 1942,1943, and 1944.

Before moving on to the analysis we wish to explain how the research design here is a progressive shift of the research design used in Nioutsikos et al. (2023). That design was one utilizing descriptive statistics. While the descriptive statistics in the Greece-Ottoman Empire rivalry would indicate a lack for association between MMBs and MID onset, the situation in the Greece-Turkey rivalry was not as clear. Furthermore, their design did not control for other variables that can affect the MMB-MID Onset relationship. Finally, their design was not placed within an explanatory framework for the onset of military conflict, like Steps to War. It should also be noted that the use of descriptive statistics does not permit ascertaining how much of a relationship is due to the stochastic factor (random luck) or due to statistical association. The expectation in quantitative studies is that descriptive statistics will be followed by inferential statistics, which will permit to clarify the influence of other variables, and the stochastic factor. And in turn that this design will be informed by an explanatory framework. We address these in this design and thus produce a progressive shift over the Nioutsikos et al. (2023) design.

Analysis

Univariate logistic regressions, with robust clustered standard errors, indicate a statistically significant positive association between MID onset and the presence in the previous year of a mutual military buildup based on Type 1(I), Type 2(II), and Type 4(IV) MMBs.[6] Only the

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6   a=0.05. Full results for all univariate and bivariate regressions can be found in the Online Appendix which is included in the Dataverse resources for this article at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZAKTAU.

variable bases on Type 3(III) MMBs did not exhibit a statistically significant association. We will thus not pursue further analysis of this version of the independent variable. When it comes to the binary variable that captures the conjunction of Steps to War factors including mutual military buildups, the indications are similar (statistical significance for the variables based on the three- and five-year version for military expenditures, and the variables based on the five-year version for military expenditures per personnel capita).

Concerning the univariate influence of the other Steps to War variables, we found that the number of MID onsets in the previous dyad-year, the presence of at least one outside alliance in the dyad the previous dyad-year, and the presence of an alliance between the two dyad members in the previous dyad year all exhibit a statistically significant positive association with MID onset in a dyad year. The number of active territorial claims in a previous dyad year, and the value of the ratio of Greece over Ottoman Empire/Turkey military expenditures in the previous dyad year did not have a statistically significant association with MID onset in a dyad year.
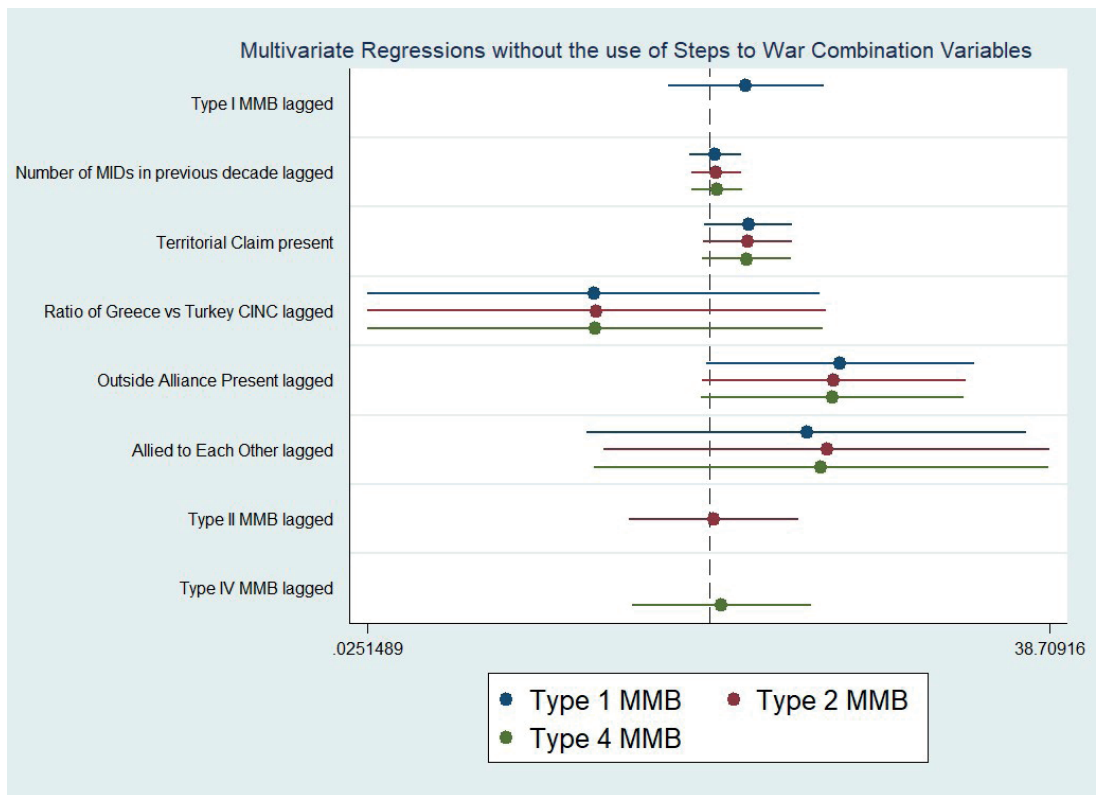
We also ran univariate regressions of the other Steps to War factors on the independent variables. In this case all the control variables exhibited a statistically significant association with the versions of the mutual military buildups variable. With the exception of the territorial claims variable, all have a positive association. Normally the fact that the territorial claims variable, and the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey asymmetry variables, only have a statistically significant association with the independent variable and not the dependent variable would be grounds to not use them in further analysis (as per the Kadera and Mitchell argument). However due to their intrinsic theoretical interest in the Steps to War framework we will consider them in the multivariate regressions.

We then conducted bivariate analyses of the influence of those independent variables that experience univariate statistical significance on MID Onset while controlling individually for the other Steps to War factors. For brevity we report the results textually. For all three operationalizations of the MMB variable the variable loses its statistically significant association with MID Onset in all pairings except for when paired with the territorial claims or asymmetry variables. The results of the univariate and bivariate analysis agree with the general tenor of findings of analyses using the Steps to War framework. While quantitative mutual military buildups have an independent influence on the onset of war, this tends to be less robust across periods or dyad types, compared to the influence of other Steps to War factors (Vasquez 2012; Mitchell and Vasquez 2021). In Figure 1 we present the results of the multivariate analysis that includes all the variables in one model (three different models per relevant operationalization of MMBs) using the coefplot Stata command (Jann 2014).[7] The results are surprising. None of the variables included in the multivariate models retained a statistically significant association with MID onset. The closest to a strong effect are the number of MIDs in the previous decade of each dyad year, and the presence of a territorial claim. The range of effects of the three

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7   Numerical Results are available in Table 1 in the Online Appendix under heading Multivariate Regression Results in Table Format.

MMB variables is similar and rather large compared to those variables, though less than that for the other control variables. This indicates that any influence the variables will have will be in combinations as per Steps to War logic. The question though remains, why lose all statistical significance? Our argument is that the cause is probably the role of major power politics and its impact on the Greek-Ottoman and Greek-Turkish rivalry. While no variable directly capturing major power activity had statistical significance, key variables like outside alliances, and being allied to each other, capture some level of the influence of major power politics on the dyad, as do other variables that were not statistically significant in univariate analyses. We have here a collection of tidbits of major power influence that are in isolation statistically insignificant, but in conjunction indicate a powerful influence that cannot be easily captured by quantitative measures.

Figure 1. Regression Coefficients Plot for Multivariate Logistic Regression on MID Onset without the use of the Steps to War Combination Variables

To further explore the effects of the variables in the multivariate regression without the use of combination variables we also generated adjusted predictions. These are presented in Table 1. We can see that in comparison to their absence, and with all control variables set to mean, the presence of the MMB variables does have a marginal positive effect on the adjusted predicted probability of MID onset.

Table 1. Adjusted Predictions for MID Onset for Multivariate Models without the use of Steps to War Combination Variables

Independent Variable (all other variables set to mean)	Margin (standard Error)	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]
Type I MMB absent	0.146 (0.038)	3.80	0.000	0.071 - 0.222
Type I MMB present	0.202 (0.055)	3.62	0.000	0.092 - 0.311
Type II MMB absent	0.161 (0.037)	4.26	0.000	0.086 - 0.235
Type II MMB present	0.166 (0.060)	2.77	0.006	0.048 - 0.284
Type IV MMB absent	0.159 (0.036)	4.42	0.000	0.088 - 0.229
Type IV MMB present	0.176 (0.069)	2.55	0.011	0.041 - 0.312

In Figure 2 we present the result of the multivariate logistic analysis using the Steps to War combination variables.[8] One version of these combination variables excludes MMBs but includes the other Steps to War variables, while the other also includes MMBs. The univariate logistic regressions indicated that both combination variables exhibited a positive and statistically significant association with MID onset. The results in Figure 2 indicate that while the co-presence of all other factors in the Steps to War has a strong statistically significant positive association with MID onset, the combination with the addition of periods of mutual military buildups does not. The closest to a strong clear positive affect in the combination variables with Type 1(I) MMBs. In general, we can argue that mutual military buildups are not a crucial part of the Steps to War when it comes to MID onset in these cases. Since all wars begin as MIDs the possibility of them having an influence on war onset is also unlikely.

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8   Numerical Results for the regression are available in Table 2 in the Online Appendix under heading Multivariate Regression Results in Table Format.

Figure 2. Regression Coefficients Plot for Multivariate Logistic Regression on MID Onset with the use of the Steps to War Combination Variables
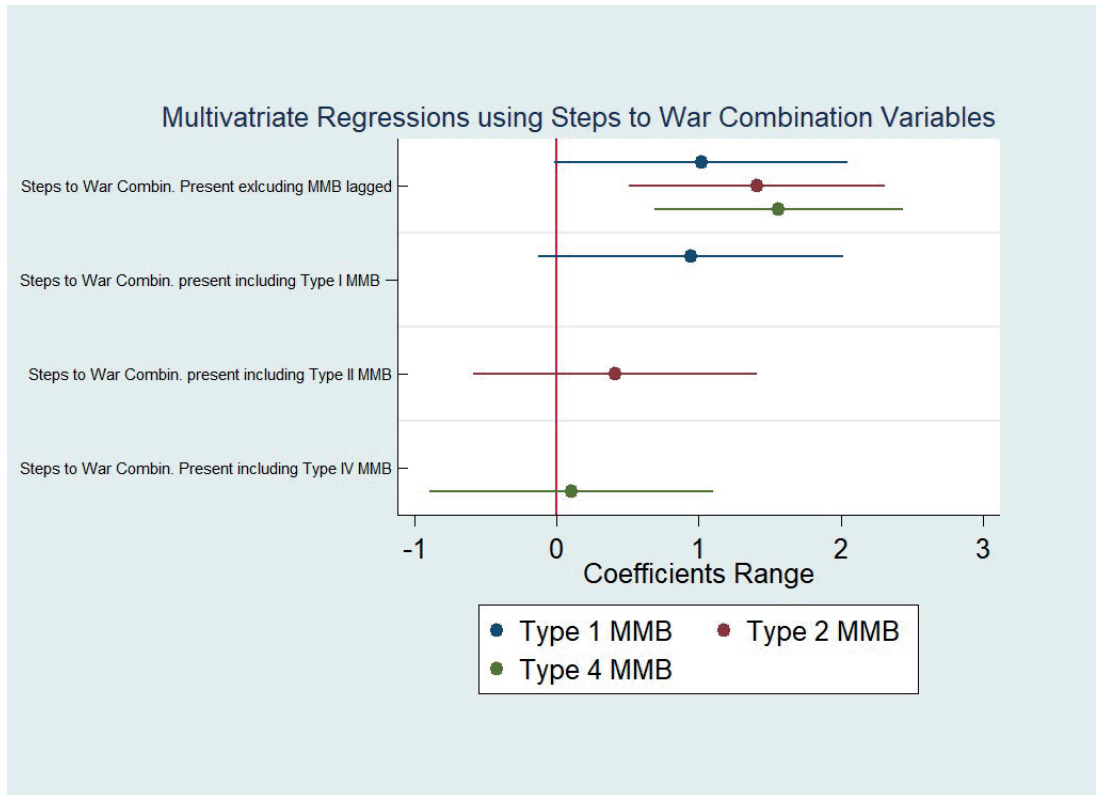
To further explore the substitutive effects generated by the multivariate logistic regression we generated adjusted predicted probabilities on MID onset. We present these in Table 2. In this case we compare the effect of the presence and absence of the combination variables with MMB with the effect of the presence of the combination variable that excludes MMB. In all cases the presence of the combination variables with MMBs results in increase of the adjusted predicted probability of MID onset. But for Type 2(II) and Type 4(IV) MMBS that increase is slight and dwarfed by the stronger effect of the combination variables excluding MMBs. Only the combination variable with Type 1(I) MMBs results in an effect comparable to that of the combination variable excluding MMBs, and the range of the effect is similar, though weaker in the minimum effect than that of the control variable.

Table 2. Adjusted Predictions for MID Onset for Multivariate Models using Steps to War Combination Variables

Independent Variable (all other variables set to mean)	Margin (standard Error)	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]
Model I				
Steps to War Combination Variable including Type I MMB absent	0.171 (0.036)	4.72	0.000	0.101 - 0.242
Steps to War Combination Variable including Type I MMB present	0.337 (0.093)	3.59	0.000	0.153 - 0.521
Control Variable				
Steps to War Combination Binary Variable excluding MMB present	0.315 (0.071)	4.45	0.000	0.176 - 0.454
Model II				
Steps to War Combination Variable including Type II MMB absent	0.201 (0.034)	5.77	0.000	0.132 - 0.268
Steps to War Combination Variable including Type II MMB present	0.267 (0.076)	3.50	0.000	0.117 - 0.417
Control Variable				
Steps to War Combination Binary Variable excluding MMB present	0.369 (0.069)	5.28	0.000	0.232 - 0.506
Model III				
Steps to War Combination Variable including Type IV MMB absent	0.213 (0.034)	6.17	0.000	0.145 - 0.281
Steps to War Combination Variable including Type IV MMB present	0.229 (0.068)	3.37	0.000	0.096 - 0.362
Control Variable				
Steps to War Combination Binary Variable excluding MMB present	0.392 (0.071)	5.60	0.000	0.255 - 0.531

The results of the inferential analysis are not the only discoveries we present in this paper. In Figure 3 we present four graphs that capture perhaps the most unanticipated and striking finding of our analysis. In the four graphs depicted in the figure, we associate the number of MIDs in the past decade for each dyad-year (blue line) with the presence or absence of mutual military buildups (orange lines). Each graph uses one of the four Nioutsikos et al. operationalizations for MMBs.

We locate four rough infection periods when dyad interaction in specific dyad years was under the heaviest weight of the largest number of past MIDs in the previous decades. One infection period roughly lasts from 1878 to 1893, with a peak in 1885, one roughly lasts from 1912 to 1925, with a peak in 1918, one lasts from 1970 to 1994, with a peak in 1985, and one from 1997 to 2010, with a peak in 2006. Based on what we know from research in the Steps to War framework, violence begets violence and the accumulation of multiple past MIDs make any dyad year likely to see both MID onset, and MID escalation to war. The four infection periods of conflict accumulation are the most likely periods to experience war onset.

Figure 3. Mutual Military Buildups and the weight of past MIDs 1828-2016
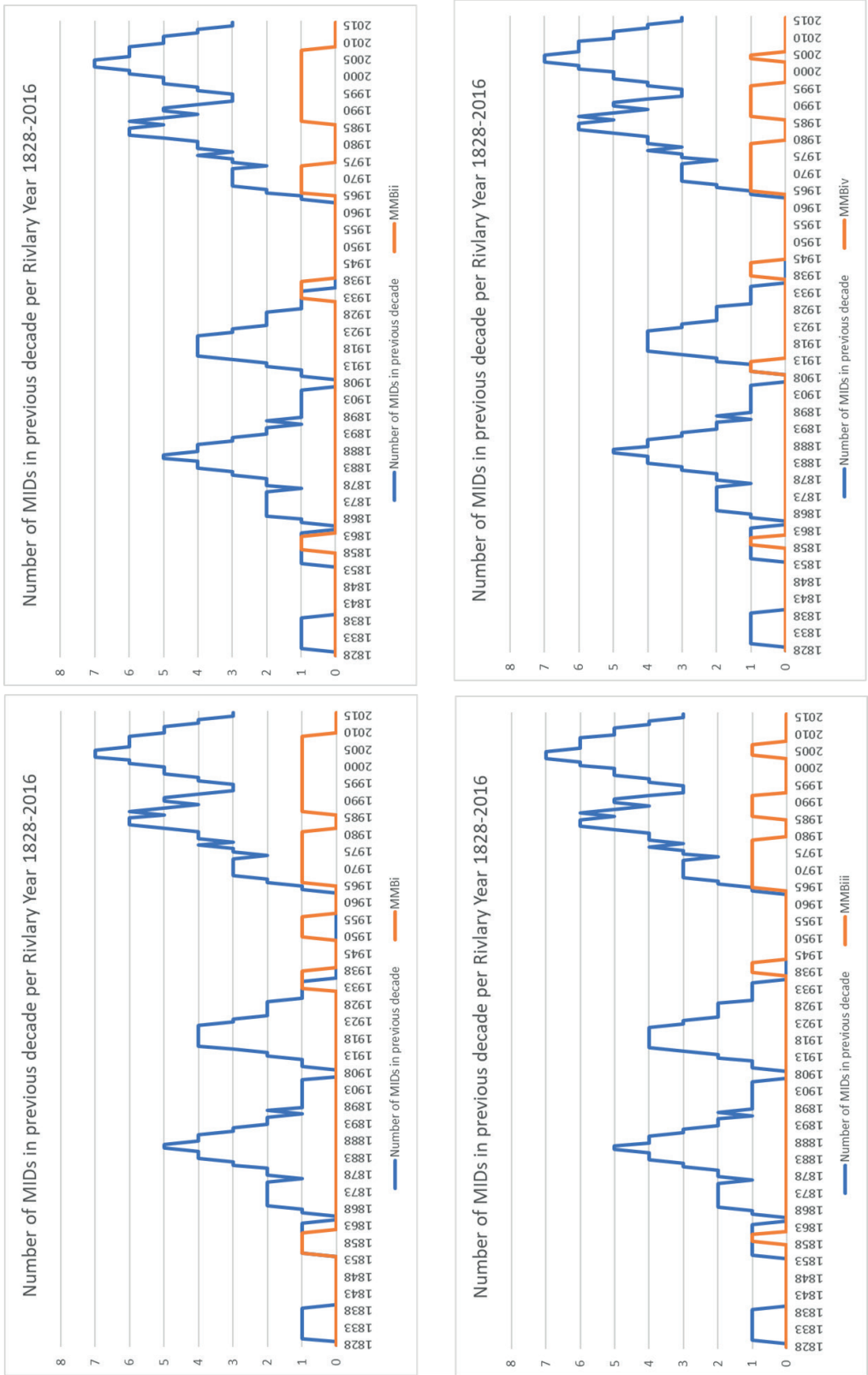
Of the four Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkish Wars noted in COW, three took place before, right on, or right after the 1918 peak. Only the 1897 war is not directly temporally associated with a peak (the 1885 peak taking place a decade before). Considering the association of peaks with war, we quickly see that the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey dyad had a high likelihood of experiencing at least three more wars (one associated with each peak) that it did not. The answer to why this did not happen can be ascribed to two different potential sources. Either successful deterrence, or major power managerial coordination, or a combination of both (Danilovich 2002; Travlos 2021; Bayer 2023).

Greece and the Ottoman Empire had a high likelihood of fighting a war between 1875-1886. There were multiple MIDs and active territorial claims. But war was averted. In this case we can be confident that the cause was major power intervention as they put pressure on Greece to back down in 1877-1878 and 1884-1886, and on the Ottoman Empire in 1881-1882. Additionally, we can argue that in many of those cases the major powers intervention provided a useful political alibi for governments that already were seeking a way to get off the Steps to War but needed to do so in way that saved them face (Christodoulidis 2004: 283-284; Kofos 2015; Svolopoulos 2017: 87, 92-96; Klapsis 2019: 166-173; Tsoucalas 2015; Louvri 2004). There was also a high likelihood of Greece-Turkey wars over Cyprus and the maritime claims in the Aegean in the 1955-present period. Despite repeated militarized disputes, there was no general Greece-Turkey war. In this case it is less clear if wars were averted due to US intervention, or successful deterrence by either dyad member. That said we do note that the lack of a statistically significant association between the ratio of Greek CINC score over the Ottoman-Turkish CINC score, and MID onset would seem to undercut a deterrence explanation in general.

The role of major power managerial activity, whether multilateral in the pre-1945 period, or US unilateral after 1945, could also explain why mutual military buildups exhibit a more muted influence on conflict onset than we would expect. Based on the graphs presented in Figures 3, we can see that there is a mutual military buildup before the 1885 peak, and a continuous presence of such buildups either predating the two post-1945 peak periods, or present during them. But all three of those peak periods are the ones where major power action could have dampened the push for war onset.

Finally, the figures also help clarify the potential role of mutual military buildups in the context of the Steps to War at least in the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey case and perhaps beyond. We can see how the 1850s mutual military buildup precedes the first infection peak, and thus is associated with the transformation of the Lesser Rivalry to a Severe Rivalry, as per Valeriano's Steps to Rivalry argument. We can also see that under the five-year period military expenditures per military personnel capita operationalization of mutual military buildups, the 1910-1913 mutual military buildup is associated with the onset of the second infection peak. In another name in both cases mutual military buildups precede the escalation of the rivalry at least as measured by the increasing accumulation of past disputes per dyad year. The post-1957 period also bears this out, with both high infection points being preceded by mutual military buildup periods, though these also overlapped with some of the infection points.

Conclusion

Our goal was to use the novel operationalization of mutual military buildups suggested by Nioutsikos et al. in order to evaluate if the association between mutual military buildups and militarized dispute onsets in the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey case fit with the expectations of the Steps to War framework. We were motivated by the fact that in many ways the Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey dyads are a puzzle for the Steps to War, at once both fitting and defying many of the expectations raised by the framework. Our findings indicate that the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey dyads behave in ways that are fully cognizant with the Steps to War framework. However, mutual military buildups do not seem to foster MID onset. Instead, their role might have to do more with the escalation of rivalry intensity.

This leads to a couple of infection periods in the Greece-Ottoman Empire and Greece-Turkey dyads, whose peaks are likely to be associated with war onset according to Steps to War. But of four major infection periods, all associated with MID onset, only one is associated with three of the four onsets of war in the Greece-Ottoman Empire dyad. The other three infection periods do not experience the onset of war despite the similarity of conditions to the one that did. This is probably the reason why in many cases the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey dyads did not fully fit the Steps to War framework. We now can say that the dyads exhibited all the conditions that lead to a rise in tensions that increased the likelihood of war onset. But something averted the explosion. This is an important question to ask if we are interested in understanding how war is avoided within the Steps to War.

We suggest that future research on this topic should focus on three different aspects. First, there is a need for qualitative research that will focus on the mutual military buildups that took place during the transition from the lesser rivalry period to the severe rivalry period in the 1850s of the Greece-Ottoman Empire dyad. The goal would be to unearth if there was a presence of arms race motivations among decision makers and to understand whether and how these motivations played a role in the escalation of the lesser rivalry to a severe rivalry.

Second, scholars using mixed method research designs should focus on explaining why the three of four infection periods of the Greece-Ottoman Empire/Turkey Rivalry did not lead to war onsets. Such a design would evaluate the relevant roles of intra-dyad deterrence and major power intervention in dampening the escalatory dynamics of infection points. Exploring these explanations has important policy implications for current and future Greece - Turkey relations, as the presence of rivalry conditions always keeps alive the specter of war.

Finally, our findings have a policy implication. In the last five years both Greece and Turkey have engaged in major military procurements. This has led many to worry about possible escalatory effects. At least one recent study does show an association between airpower levels between the two countries and the onset of aerial MIDs (Choulis et al 2022). This is especially worrisome in the context of a hardening of elite attitudes due to recent major Greece-Turkey crises (Ifantis 2018). Although armaments competition could be a worrisome element in the Greece-Turkey dyad, our findings indicate that focus should also be put on ameliorating or removing the other Steps to War factors present in the dyad. At least in this case, arming does not necessarily lead to fighting.

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