



An Analysis of Turkish–Russian Relations within the Framework of the Enduring Rivalries Approach

Süregelen Rekabetler Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Türk–Rus İlişkilerinin Analizi

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Abstract

This review article seeks to analyze the theoretical foundations and conceptual evolution of the Enduring Rivalries Approach (ERA) while evaluating the long-term dynamics of Ottoman–Russian rivalry during the 1676–1921 period. ERA literature posits that the majority of wars and armed interstate disputes are concentrated among particular pairs of states, exhibiting consistency in terms of time, actors, and issues. The article systematically examines the fundamental conceptual elements of ERA, encompassing rivalry typologies, temporal and structural variables, causal factors like political shocks, territorial disputes, and economic competition, along with principal evolutionary models (increasing, decreasing, convex, concave, oscillatory, and flat patterns). This analysis reveals that Ottoman–Russian interactions represent a deeply rooted, enduring competition marked by persistent conflict catalysts and structural consistency. The paper asserts that the Ottoman–Russian competition closely corresponds with ERA’s fundamental principles and provides theoretical insights into the historical underpinnings of modern Turkish–Russian conflict–cooperation dynamics.

Keywords: Enduring Rivalries, Political Shocks, Territorial Disputes, Turkish–Russian Relations, Rivalry Model.

Öz

Bu inceleme makalesi Süregelen Rekabetler Yaklaşımı’nın (Enduring Rivalries Approach – ERA) teorik gelişimini ve temel kavramlarını sistematik biçimde ele alırken, 1676–1921 dönemi boyunca süregelen Osmanlı–Rus rekabetinin uzun dönemli dinamiklerini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. ERA literatürü, savaşların ve militarize uyuşmazlıkların büyük bölümünün belirli devlet çiftleri arasında yoğunlaştığını ve bu rekabetlerin zaman, aktör ve konu tutarlılığı içerdiğini savunur. Çalışma, ERA’nın kavramsal temellerini, rekabet türleri ve tipolojilerini, rekabetin nedenlerini (politik şoklar, topraksal anlaşmazlıklar, ekonomik rekabet) ve modellerini (artan, azalan, dış bükey, iç bükey, dalgalı, düz çizgi) ayrıntılı biçimde incelemektedir. Bu çerçevede, Osmanlı–Rus ilişkilerinin yaklaşık beş yüzyıllık dönem boyunca süreklilik gösteren, yapısal olarak gömülü bir rekabet modeli oluşturduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Makale, Türk–Rus rekabetinin ERA’nın öngördüğü değişkenlerle yüksek ölçüde örtüştüğünü ve modern dönemdeki rekabet–işbirliği dengesinin tarihsel temellerini anlamaya katkı sunduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Süregelen Rekabetler Yaklaşımı, Politik Şoklar, Topraksal Anlaşmazlık Türk–Rus İlişkileri, Rekabet Model.

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Introduction

Turkish–Russian relations represent one of the most striking and persistent examples of long-term rivalry in the international relations literature. Although the first diplomatic contacts date back to the late fifteenth century (1492-1493), when the Muscovite principality sent an envoy to Istanbul, the geopolitical foundations of the rivalry began to take shape in the mid-sixteenth century with Russia's annexation of the Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556) Khanates. This period constitutes the early historical background of a rivalry that would remain largely conflictual and competitive for nearly five centuries. (Brisku, 2019) The analytical focus of this study, however, is the 1676–1921 period, during which the Ottoman–Russian rivalry acquired a systematic, continuous, and recurrent character. This time frame was selected not only because eight major wars and numerous crises marked bilateral relations, but also because it corresponds to the methodological criteria of the Enduring Rivalries Approach (ERA), particularly the concepts of rivalry onset and rivalry termination. Accordingly, the 1676–1921 period provides a natural beginning and endpoint for examining the rivalry in terms of both historical continuity and ERA's analytical requirements.

The ERA literature analyses the long-term character of interstate rivalries through variables such as continuity, frequency, issue stability, actor consistency, and the impact of political shocks, offering a comprehensive explanation of why and how conflicts repeat over time. Developed by Gochman and Maoz, Wayman, Diehl and Goertz, the approach demonstrates in particular that territorial disputes and power transitions play a decisive role in rivalry behavior (Goertz & Diehl, 1993, pp. 147–159). In this respect, Ottoman–Russian rivalry often appears in the literature as a historical laboratory, as it aligns closely with most of the conceptual criteria defined by the ERA. However, two main gaps remain in the existing scholarship. First, although ERA provides a well-developed conceptual and methodological framework, long historical rivalries have rarely been examined through this approach in a holistic manner. Second, while historical studies on Ottoman–Russian rivalry offer valuable insights, most do not apply ERA's analytical tools in a systematic way. As a result, a comprehensive study that integrates the Turkish–Russian rivalry into the ERA perspective has yet to be produced.

Meanwhile, the contemporary literature on

Turkish–Russian relations largely focuses on themes such as the “competition–cooperation axis” (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016), increasingly complex dynamics of conflictual cooperation (Isachenko, 2021), conceptual and strategic transformation in the relationship (Ayar, 2024), new orientations emerging in the post-Western era (Golmohammadi, 2021), and the capacity of the two states to generate cooperation despite belonging to opposing military blocs (Cheterian, 2023). Within this context, conceptualizations such as “asymmetric interdependence” (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016) and “assertive bandwagoning” (Đidić & Kösebalaban, 2021) underline Turkey's attempt to maintain a degree of autonomy while pursuing a pragmatic cooperation strategy with Russia. While this literature contributes significantly to understanding modern Turkish–Russian relations, it tends to leave the long-term rivalry dimension in the background; here, the ERA framework makes it possible to draw a clearer conceptual link between historical continuity and contemporary interactions.

The aim of this study is to develop a conceptual perspective that sheds light on the multi-layered nature of rivalry and complements explanations based on periodic crises, leadership dynamics, or foreign policy orientations with historically continuous rivalry patterns. The analytical tools provided by ERA enable an assessment of Turkish–Russian relations not only through geopolitical or pragmatic variables, but also through recurring conflict issues, threat perceptions, and behavioral patterns. In doing so, the study argues that the Ottoman–Russian rivalry model offers a meaningful framework for understanding contemporary Turkish–Russian relations. Rather than a chronological narrative, this study adopts a thematic approach shaped by the conceptual variables of the ERA. The first part examines the theoretical foundations of the approach along two axes: first, the definitions and variables highlighted in the development of ERA, and second, the factors that contribute to the enduring character of rivalries. The second part applies the ERA perspective to Turkish–Russian relations, following the same two-part structure: (i) Turkish–Russian Relations in Light of Conceptual Definitions and Variables, and (ii) Main Causes of Rivalry within the Theoretical Framework.

I. Conceptual Analysis of the Enduring Rivalries Theory

In the discipline of International Relations, defining rivalry as a concept has become possible

mainly over the past two decades. In early studies, the term rivalry was used to describe hostile sentiments between two states and was largely built upon the notion of an “international enemy” (Goertz & Diehl, 2000, pp. 19–20; see also Finlay, Holsti, 1967; Azar et al., 1978). In this context, rivalry – understood as a situation in which two actors use military instruments as a bargaining tool in foreign policy – was developed along two main lines in the first works where the concept appeared (Wayman, 1982; Diehl, 1983; Gochman & Maoz, 1984): studies that placed rivalry at the center of conflict, and analyses that treated it as a periodic or episodic phenomenon.

The significance of the Enduring Rivalries Approach within rivalry studies stems from its focus on long-lasting conflicts between state pairs, especially those with a high risk of escalation. Although the term enduring rivalry refers to a narrower phenomenon compared to the broader idea of rivalry, it has become one of the most frequently cited concepts in the literature. One reason for this prominence is that the concept was developed largely in relation to dyadic territorial disputes, which tend to have high escalation potential (Hensel, 1996, p. 65; Goertz & Diehl, 1992, p. 155; Goertz & Diehl, 1993, p. 159). Considering that more than half of the wars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries emerged from such territorial rivalries – and given their high recurrence and escalation potential – the importance of the approach in war studies and empirical model analysis becomes even clearer.

In the first academic uses of the term enduring rivalry (Wayman, 1982; Diehl, 1983; Gochman & Maoz, 1984), the concept was not discussed explicitly; instead, it was used to classify empirical cases in which the same states engaged in repeated military confrontations over a given period (Goertz & Diehl, 1993, p. 147). Goertz and Diehl describe the late emergence of conceptual discussions as “putting the cart before the horse.” Only after a sufficient accumulation of empirical studies did more comprehensive and critical debates begin, and in this early stage, the meaning of the rivalry concept itself was not adequately questioned (Goertz & Diehl, 2000, p. 19). The conceptualization of the Enduring Rivalries Approach followed a similar trajectory: it was developed later, shaped by criticisms and the need arising from accumulated empirical evidence (Goertz & Diehl, 1993, p. 153). In its first years, the concept was not treated as an independent analytical model but was instead used within broader hypotheses such as arms

race and power transition theories. During this period, the works of Paul Diehl, Gary Goertz, and Robert Wayman were particularly influential (Goertz & Diehl, 1993, p. 154). Efforts to define the concept also facilitated the creation of rivalry datasets, which in turn accelerated theoretical discussion.

Grounded in the idea of territorial proximity, the Enduring Rivalries Approach seeks to analyze, through quantitative and statistical evidence, how conflict-prone dyads face each other militarily at recurring intervals over long historical periods (Goertz & Diehl, 1993, p. 150; Hensel, 1996, p. 43). The authors identify three basic conceptual pillars of the approach: temporal consistency, actor consistency, and issue consistency (Goertz & Diehl, 1993, pp. 150–151). These elements demonstrate that rivalries are not random incidents but systematic patterns of repeated behavior. Influenced by the behavioral tradition, the Enduring Rivalries literature shows that a large portion of violence in the international system is concentrated within specific rivalry relationships. Goertz and Diehl (1993, p. 149) find that, when the historical and geographical distribution of wars is examined, dyadic rivalries display a strong tendency to produce conflict and war – an observation that supports the behavioral school’s emphasis on empirical verification and suggests that systemic conflict patterns can be explained through stable pairs of actors.

A. Identifying Core Variables through Operational Definitions

When the operational definitions of the concept are examined, it becomes clear that these definitions do not differ substantially from one another. This is mainly because most of them were developed within the framework of the Correlates of War (COW) project (Goertz & Diehl, 2000, p. 22). In general, these definitions are grouped under two main categories: first-generation and second-generation approaches. While first-generation definitions emerged within an empirical framework designed largely to test the hypotheses of other theories, second-generation definitions focused more directly on rivalry issues and the substantive nature of the conflict (Hensel, 1999, p. 1).

Efforts to define the concept played an important role in the formation of rivalry datasets and in ensuring the consistent coding of these datasets throughout the development of the approach. Since the approach was developed empirically, it was redefined multiple times through different model analyses, and several variables came to

the foreground during this process. Empirical studies that sought to identify types and forms of rivalry tended to treat rivalry at the interstate level and to focus on the material components of power. Although Hensel reminds us that rivalry may also emerge through non-military and non-material dimensions, the typologies used in this study are based on measurable indicators and follow the methodological stance of the behavioral tradition. Three main variables stand out in the development of these typologies: the duration and continuity of rivalry, the nature of rivalry and the capacities of the actors involved, and the scope and scale of rivalry.

From a temporal perspective, Hensel and Goertz and Diehl classify rivalry types into three categories according to their duration: Isolated Rivalries, Enduring Rivalries, and Proto-rivalries (Diehl & Goertz, 1998, p. 131). Isolated rivalries refer to cases in which the conflict and the pattern of interaction remain short-lived; no matter how intense the clashes may be, they do not directly shape subsequent disagreements. Enduring rivalries, by contrast, display an opposite pattern: the conflict and its underlying issues shape later disputes, influence bilateral relations for a long period, and have a relatively identifiable starting point. Proto-rivalries share certain features with both isolated and enduring rivalries, but represent relationships that may evolve into enduring rivalry over time in terms of both duration and content (Diehl & Goertz, 1998, pp. 131-133).

The term enduring rivalry describes a narrower and more selective category compared to broader definitions of rivalry, since it requires repeated and militarized disputes between two states over time (Stinnett et al., 2001, pp. 719-721). Distinctions made in the literature between isolated, proto, and the relatively rare enduring rivalries show that the enduring category constitutes only a small portion of rivalry cases (Hensel, 1996, pp. 43-45). Because of this selectivity, a considerable portion of later empirical studies has concentrated specifically on the set of enduring rivalries (Diehl & Goertz, 2000, pp. 149-150).

In addition to the definitions provided by Goertz and Diehl (1993; 2000) and Hensel (1996), Thompson's typology also makes an important contribution to rivalry research. Thompson analyses interstate rivalries along two dimensions: the nature of rivalry and its scope. In terms of rivalry's nature, he distinguishes between spatial (regional) and positional (global) rivalries. Spatial rivalries usually involve relatively minor powers and revolve around territorial issues (Thompson,

1995, pp. 207-209). Positional rivalries, on the other hand, occur between actors situated at similar levels in the power hierarchy, where no clear power asymmetry exists, and the conflict concerns gaining position at the global or regional level (Thompson, 1995, pp. 205-209).

Thompson's second distinction concerns the scope and domain of rivalry. Here, the main determinants are the number of actors involved and the geographical area affected. Accordingly, rivalries are categorized as dyadic, regional, global, or regional-global. Dyadic rivalries typically focus on territorial competition within a limited area, while regional rivalries involve efforts to increase influence across a broader geographical setting (Thompson, 1995, p. 203). The sixteenth-century rivalry between Spain and France is an example of this type. Global rivalries correspond to the struggles for global leadership described in Modelski's "long cycle" theory—for instance, the Portuguese-Venetian rivalry in the fifteenth century or the Soviet-American rivalry in the twentieth century. Regional-global rivalries refer to situations in which regional gains shape global leadership competition, as in the rivalry between the Netherlands and France and Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Thompson, 1995, p. 208).

Taken together, these analyses suggest that enduring rivalries can generally be examined through three main variables: the continuity and recurrence of rivalry, the characteristics and power capacities of the actors, and the scope of rivalry along with its ability to influence subsequent conflicts. Rivalries that fall within the scope of the Enduring Rivalries Approach typically involve long-term confrontational relations between minor and major powers over territorial control, and depending on the broader context, may take dyadic, regional, or even global forms.

In this regard, a detailed examination of operational definitions helps clarify how the concept can be applied to different patterns of interstate relations. The following sections therefore focus on key variables such as the duration and frequency of conflict, the stability of rivalry, and the capacities of the actors involved.

1) Duration and Frequency of Rivalry: Continuity and Intensity

In applying the Enduring Rivalries Approach, the first variable required to determine whether a rivalry involves continuity is the identification of its starting and ending dates. The clarity of the

ending date refers to the ability to establish these terminal points with reasonably precise temporal markers. However, it is not always possible to determine the exact date of the first encounter for a rivalry to be analyzed within the framework of the Enduring Rivalries Approach. For example, the beginning of the American–Soviet rivalry is often placed at the end of the Second World War, whereas the onset of the German–American rivalry is generally understood to coincide with the early twentieth century. From the perspective of operational definitions and related analyses, the starting and ending dates of a rivalry are most often determined by the first and last militarized confrontations, and the definitions are shaped accordingly.

Within the first generation of definition attempts, Wayman argues that, for a rivalry to be classified as an enduring rivalry, the parties must encounter one another militarily at least twice within a ten-year period. He also emphasizes that the issue at stake in these disputes must generate new disagreements within this decade and that the rivalry should possess a character extending beyond this timeframe (cited in Goertz & Diehl, 1993, p. 159). Diehl broadly accepts Wayman's definition but adjusts the duration criterion to fifteen years instead of ten, and sets the frequency threshold at a minimum of three militarized disputes within this period (Diehl & Goertz, 1995, p. 33). Diehl further suggests that, for a rivalry to be considered terminated, there must be at least a ten-year interval between two militarized conflicts (Goertz & Diehl, 1995, p. 44; Goertz & Diehl, 2000, p.33). For this reason, Diehl's definition is regarded as more specific than Wayman's, particularly in terms of the temporal and frequency criteria used to determine the conclusion of a rivalry.

When the second-generation COW project studies are examined, it becomes evident that they follow a broadly similar methodological approach to the first generation, albeit with additional criteria and modified time–frequency thresholds. For example, some studies identify the frequency of confrontations between rivals as five to seven disputes over a period of twenty to twenty-five years; they also emphasize that, for these disputes to be counted as part of the same rivalry, the interval between two conflicts should not exceed ten to fifteen years, and that one dispute should, in a sense, give rise to the next. Beyond the core variables of continuity and frequency, auxiliary variables have also been introduced (Goertz & Diehl, 2000, p. 22). In some definitions,

for instance, a militarized dispute must last at least thirty days to be counted; similarly, for a rivalry to be considered terminated, reference is made to time gaps ranging from ten to twenty-five years (Goertz & Diehl, 2000, p. 33). Several studies also argue that, for a rivalry to acquire an enduring character, there may be periods in which the parties refrain from open conflict—due to systemic pressures or domestic political constraints—yet the rivalry relationship itself does not entirely disappear.

When first- and second-generation definitions are evaluated together, it becomes clear that the criteria for frequency, intensity, and duration used to classify a rivalry as enduring have evolved over time. In first-generation work, the frequency threshold was generally defined as two to three militarized disputes within ten to fifteen years, whereas in second-generation definitions this number could rise to five or six disputes over a twenty to twenty-five-year period. Goertz and Diehl argue that, within the scope of these projects, such differences may be standardized by adopting a criterion of six disputes across a twenty-year period (Goertz & Diehl, 1995, p. 33).

2) Stability of Rivalry and Actor Capacities

In analyses of enduring rivalries, besides definitions based on the duration and frequency of militarized encounters, models that focus on the stable continuation of rivalry are also important (Goertz & Diehl, 2000, pp.168–169). The basic reason is that such models make it possible to incorporate actor capacities and patterns of interaction into the analysis by identifying different types of enduring rivalries. Empirical models assess the power of rival actors in the system on the basis of their foreign policy behavior, military capabilities and strategies.

Within this framework, the enduring character of rivalry is often associated not with competition between two equal actors, but with rivalry between a major and a minor power. The approach discusses the stability of enduring rivalries through two main models: the Basic Rivalry Level Model (Punctuated Equilibrium) and the Evolutionary Level Model (Hensel & Diehl, 1999). The Punctuated Equilibrium Model is based on the concept of a “basic rivalry level,” or BRL (Goertz & Diehl, 1998; Hensel & Diehl, 1999). It assumes that rivalry fluctuates around a certain basic level over time; severe crises may cause sudden deviations from this level, but in the long run the rivalry tends to return to it (Hensel & Diehl, 1999, p.6). By contrast, the Evolutionary

Level Model views rivalry as an evolutionary process shaped by small, incremental changes. In Hensel's model of rivalry evolution, the process is examined in three stages: early (initial) phase, intermediate phase, and advanced (mature) phase (Hensel & Diehl, 1999, p.7). He bases this distinction on the length of the conflict history and the actors' expectations regarding future interaction. In the early phase, the absence of a long, entrenched history of hostility between the parties means that conflict tends to be conducted with less coercive instruments. In asymmetric relationships, this is consistent with the finding that the weaker actor, particularly in the initial stage, seeks institutional or political contact with the dominant actor rather than deepening the rivalry. As Vasquez (1996, p.537) emphasizes, the dynamics of war between equal powers differ from those of small state-great power relations; smaller states may sometimes behave more cautiously and sometimes more aggressively.

The findings of Klein, Goertz and Diehl (2006) also support this evolutionary perspective. In the early phases of rivalry, around 70 per cent of disputes occur between asymmetric rivals; even when the number of disputes reaches thirteen or more, asymmetric disputes still account for 42 per cent of the total. In later stages, however, the share of symmetric rivalries increases, reaching about 60 per cent of all rivalries (Klein, Goertz & Diehl, 2006, p.342). The dataset compiled by Diehl and Goertz for the 1816-1992 period shows that rivalries cannot simply be classified as either existing or not existing; instead, they tend to evolve through stages that can be described as isolated, proto, and enduring rivalries. This finding is consistent with Hensel's evolutionary rivalry model and shows that rivalry is not an "event," but a process shaped within a broader historical continuity (Diehl & Hensel, 1998, p.19).

One of the most important examples developed within the Evolutionary Level Model, which argues that the risk of conflict between parties may gradually escalate and culminate in war, is the Volcano Model. The model takes its name from the analogy of a volcano building up pressure until it erupts: in a similar way, rivalry intensifies over time and may transform into severe conflict once a critical threshold is reached. In this framework, it is assumed that a state with strong threat perceptions will pursue an increasingly intense armament strategy, which in turn will negatively affect the other state's sense of security and deepen the security dilemma (Mor, 2003, p.40). The fact that the Volcano Model is often

used together with the Power Transition model (Levy & Ali, 1998; Wayman, 1982; Geller, 1993) makes it necessary, in the analysis of enduring rivalries, to examine not only the challenging and defending actors but also their relative power capacities.

The main point to highlight here is that, even when conflicts that occur at two different points in time revolve around the same rivalry issue, it is difficult to classify them simply as a decreasing, increasing, or steadily escalating relationship. At this stage, the fact that, in addition to the Volcano Model, other models such as the Convex, Concave, Increasing, Decreasing, and Oscillating Models have been proposed to analyze rivalry stability—and that each of these models shares certain features with the others—supports the conclusion of the Basic Rivalry Level Model regarding the difficulty of modelling rivalry dynamics. When examined historically, it is also observed that, among dyadic rivalries studied within the framework of the Enduring Rivalries Approach, the Basic Rivalry Level or "flat" model has generally been used more frequently than the others (Goertz & Diehl, 1998, p.106).

The models classified by Goertz and Diehl attempt to capture the evolution of rivalry levels over time through different curve shapes. Each of the basic curve types used in the Enduring Rivalries Approach reflects a distinct way in which rivalry may change over time. The increasing model assumes that conflict intensity follows a steadily rising trajectory throughout the rivalry and that rivalry itself produces a dynamic of continuous escalation; this tendency is particularly consistent with the "gradual pressure build-up" represented by the Volcano Model (Goertz & Diehl, 1998, pp.102-103, 105). Its opposite, the decreasing model, describes a pattern in which conflict intensity gradually declines over time and rivalry slowly fades; in the literature, this is often defined as the inability of rivalry to sustain its initial level of intensity in the long run (Goertz & Diehl, 1998 p.102).

The convex model depicts a curve in which rivalry intensity increases and reaches a peak in the middle phase before declining again, thus combining both escalation and de-escalation dynamics and overlapping with the rise-and-fall logic embodied in the Volcano Model (Goertz & Diehl, 1998, pp.105-106). By contrast, the concave model is characterized by a rivalry that begins at a low level, hardens significantly during the middle period, and then declines

again in the final stage; because conflict intensity rises relatively late rather than at the outset, this structure differs notably from the classic volcanic accumulation pattern (Goertz & Diehl, 1998, p.105). In addition, the oscillating model refers to situations in which rivalry intensity follows a zigzag or cyclical pattern, with successive periods of increase and decrease rather than a clear trend; Goertz and Diehl describe this pattern as a “gray zone pattern,” emphasizing that rivalry does not move consistently in either an increasing or decreasing direction, but includes multiple cycles of escalation and relaxation (Goertz & Diehl, 1998, pp.105–107).

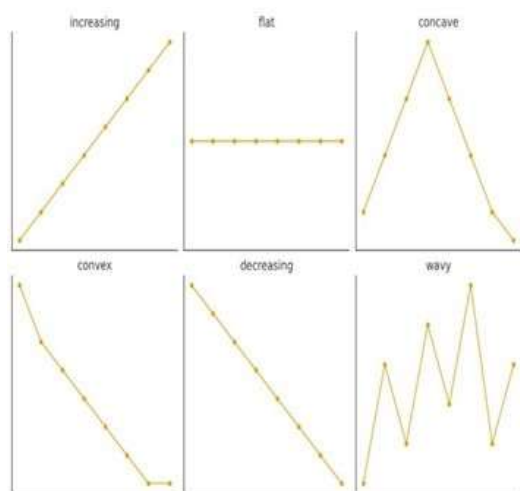


Figure 1.1

As summarized in Figure 1.1, all these models show that rivalries display too much variation to be reduced to a single line of development. They also illustrate that the flat structure envisaged by the Basic Rivalry Model is, in practice, often intertwined with complex, multidimensional and changing processes over time (Goertz & Diehl, 1998 p.106).

B. Fundamental Causes of Enduring Rivalries within the Theoretical Framework

The Enduring Rivalries Approach (ERA) needs both time-based identification of first and last conflicts and historical explanations for why rivalries develop under particular circumstances. The approach requires more than conflict recurrence because the involved issues need to create ongoing disputes which lead from one conflict to the next. As will be seen in the Ottoman–Russian case, such political shocks and issue-specific disputes—especially those related to territorial control and regional status—played a central role in transforming repeated confrontations into a long-term enduring rivalry.

The Enduring Rivalries approach differs from other rivalry studies because it requires specific issues that create ongoing conflicts between states. The fundamental elements which lead to enduring rivalries exist between two main categories such as political system transformations and state-level disruptions and the core matters which states use to fight against each other.

1) The Impact of Political Change in the System and States

Research on interstate rivalry origins demonstrates that most enduring rivalries develop after major international system changes and major political breakdowns within rival nations. The research by Goertz and Diehl demonstrates that political shocks in the international system and within rival states create enduring rivalry dyads in 87% of cases (Goertz & Diehl, 1995, p. 32). The international system experiences major power distribution changes through global wars and new great power emergence and empire collapses and state unifications and regime changes which establish new relations between potential rivals. The political shocks function as entry points which allow rivalry to develop. The research by Goertz and Diehl (1995) demonstrates that political shocks function as essential factors which initiate and conclude rivalries. According to Mor (2003, p. 40) enduring rivalries start with immediate disruptions which lead to relationship patterns that can end quickly because of major system changes. The Enduring Rivalries Approach requires researchers to study both historical conflicts between states and the complete system environment where these conflicts occur. The bilateral relationship between states in an enduring rivalry creates a multiplier effect which modifies regional and global order structures while influencing other rivalries.

2) Bilateral Rivalry Issues: Economic Interests, Territory and Sovereignty

The explanation of enduring rivalries depends on two fundamental elements which focus on the core aspects of rivalry. The research focuses on three main categories which include economic conflicts of interest and territorial and sovereignty disputes and domestic political pressures from identity-based claims. The Enduring Rivalries literature emphasizes that conflicts over territory and sovereignty create more potential for escalation and repeated conflicts than other types of disputes. The research by Hensel and Sowers (1998) demonstrates that wars between the same parties frequently start from territorial

disputes which also increase the chances of future conflicts (Hensel & Sowers, 1998, p. 19). Vasquez demonstrates that most historical wars stem from specific territorial and border and sovereignty disputes instead of abstract power struggles or hegemonic battles. The dangerous nature of territorial rivalry exists because two essential factors make it challenging to find solutions: States cannot negotiate effectively about territorial matters because these disputes directly affect their national security and identity and survival. The resolution of such disputes does not guarantee permanent peace because historical memories and identity-based politics can lead to their re-emergence. The explanation of enduring rivalries receives additional support from sovereignty and identity factors and domestic political pressures. The combination of ethnic and linguistic ties and diasporas and influential domestic groups create strong irredentist claims which strengthen border region rivalries. The combination of regime type and ideological differences and domestic political mobilization processes create rivalry patterns which exceed basic power maximization theories. The Anglo-Dutch rivalry study by Levy and Ali examines how economic interests affect rivalry dynamics. The peaceful relations between England and the Netherlands during most of the seventeenth century turned into three major wars because England followed mercantilist policies while the Netherlands adopted more liberal economic approaches (Levy & Ali, 1998, p. 57).

The definitions of concepts and operational definitions and typological categories and causal relationships in this section demonstrate both the research value and the boundaries of the Enduring Rivalries Approach. The framework shows that rivalries exist as continuous patterns between actors who maintain their identity while dealing with consistent issues through different evolutionary processes (increasing, decreasing, convex, concave, oscillating, etc.). The theoretical analysis demonstrates that enduring rivalries emerge from political disruptions which affect both system structures and individual states. The fundamental elements of enduring rivalries emerge from hard issues which include territorial disputes and sovereignty conflicts and economic competition. The ERA framework enables researchers to study territory-based and asymmetric rivalries through systematic analysis of their development from start to finish.

The following section will use the developed conceptual framework to analyze the Ottoman-Russian rivalry through an Enduring Rivalries Approach assessment of Turkish-Russian

historical relations. In this context, the Ottoman-Russian rivalry represents a particularly suitable empirical laboratory, as it exhibits clear temporal continuity, actor consistency, asymmetric power dynamics, and enduring territorial issues—the core variables highlighted throughout this conceptual section.

II. ANALYSING TURKISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ENDURING RIVALRIES APPROACH

Relations between the Russian principalities of the period and the Ottoman Empire, which began in the mid-sixteenth century over the khanates in the Crimean region, display, when the period up to the present is examined, a relationship pattern in which periods of peace and cooperation remain exceptional over five centuries (Hale, 2023, pp. 43-44). The fact that from the early seventeenth century, when conflictual relations became pronounced, up to the First World War a series of major wars and treaties took place, makes Turkish-Russian relations one of the key empirical examples for conceptualizing interstate rivalries.

A. Turkish-Russian Relations in Light of Conceptual Definitions and Variables

1) Duration and Frequency of Rivalry: Continuity, Intensity and Severity

The period analyzed in this study is the one between 1676 and 1921, during which 11 wars were fought and 8 major treaties were signed. However, there is no full consensus in the historiography regarding the total number of wars. Virginia Aksan (2011), for instance, takes the post-1700 period as her basis and defines the Russo-Ottoman rivalry through seven major wars; other strands of the literature, which adopt different chronological scopes, speak of a longer war cycle that includes the first conflicts of the late seventeenth century and the wars of the early twentieth century. Taking this diversity into account, the present study adopts as its analytical framework the 1676-1921 period, which meets ERA's criteria of temporal continuity and repeated conflict.

When the continuity of rivalry, the frequency of its recurrence and the degree to which issues of conflict influence one another are taken into consideration, the Ottoman-Russian case displays a dense rivalry structure in which wars

and treaties operate less as isolated events than as sequential moments within a single rivalry cycle. As summarized in Table X, on average a major war and settlement occurred roughly every 30 years, indicating a high level of temporal clustering consistent with ERA's criteria for enduring rivalries.

- 1676–1681 Ottoman–Russian War (Treaty of Bakhchisaray) – 5 years
- 1686–1700 Ottoman–Russian War (Treaties of Karlowitz and Istanbul) – 10 years
- 1710–1711 Ottoman–Russian War (Pruth War) – 25 years
- 1735–1739 Ottoman–Russian–Austrian War (Treaty of Belgrade) – 29 years
- 1768–1774 Ottoman–Russian War (Küçük Kaynarca) – 14 years
- 1787–1792 Ottoman–Russian War (Treaty of Jassy) – 14 years
- 1806–1812 Ottoman–Russian War (Treaty of Bucharest) – 16 years
- 1828–1829 Ottoman–Russian War (Treaty of Edirne); 1833 Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi; 1841 London Straits Convention – 24 years
- 1853–1856 Ottoman–Russian War (Crimean War) – 19 years
- 1877–1878 Ottoman–Russian War (Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78) – 36 years
- 1914–1917 Ottoman–Russian War (Caucasus Front)

In terms of war frequency, the Turkish–Russian pattern appears to be closer to the criteria used in second-generation projects – namely, 5–7 conflicts in a 20–25 year period – than to the first-generation Correlates of War criteria of 2–3 conflicts in a 10–15 year span. This pattern is in line with empirical findings indicating that where the rivalry history is dense, the likelihood of rivalry re-emerging increases (Rudkevich et al., 2013). When the causes of the wars and the outcomes of the treaties are analyzed, it becomes clear that a cause–effect relationship is largely present and that issues of conflict display continuity.

In applying the approach to Turkish–Russian relations, the fact that, due to data limitations, only major wars are considered makes it difficult to directly test such criteria as “conflicts lasting

at least 30 days,” which are mentioned in some studies. However, given that the wars under consideration lasted between 1 and 5 years, it may be said that the duration criterion is also met to a certain extent.

The war-free periods of up to 25 years that the approach envisages between the parties are evaluated as periods in which the actors redefine themselves and the system, and gather strength for a new war. That such war-free intervals signify an interruption rather than an end of rivalry has been systematically demonstrated by Rudkevich and co-authors through the concept of “interrupted rivalries” (Rudkevich et al., 2013). In this respect, the approximately 54 years without war within the 74-year period between the Pruth and Küçük Kaynarca treaties constitute a telling example.

This period also overlaps with Russia's reconstruction process (Topsakal, 2021, pp. 3–4). The defeat at Pruth and the subsequent Treaty of Belgrade made military and economic reorganisation imperative for Russia as the challenger; conversely, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca emerged as a threshold at which this reconstruction succeeded and the challenger–defender positions of the states were redrawn (Hale, 2023, pp. 27–33; Yakushev, M. M. 2018 p.152; Inalcık, 2017, p. 135). The fact that the Crimean War (1853–1856) represented not only a foreign-policy failure for Russia but also a turning point that made the empire's military and administrative backwardness visible is crucial for understanding the long-term dynamics of the war–reform–rivalry triangle (Hosking, 2001, p.287; İşçi, 2016, pp. 458–462).

When Goertz and Diehl's tables on the rivalry dataset are examined (Goertz & Diehl, 1998, pp. 121–122), it is seen that, beyond the quantitative classification of the modern phase of the Ottoman–Russian rivalry, the structural features of the historical pattern are also confirmed in a striking way. The period between 1876 and 1921, which contains a total of 12 militarized disputes, is coded as an “enduring rivalry”, reflecting the rivalry's nature as continuous despite interruptions.

The fact that the mean duration of disputes is as high as 10.38 years, accompanied by high variance, shows that Ottoman–Russian interaction displayed a complex severity profile characterized by episodic jumps rather than regular increases or decreases. The recording of the same number of negative residuals in the first three and last three events indicates that no

trend of directional change exists between the beginning and end phases of the rivalry; in other words, the relationship follows neither a steadily escalating nor a steadily de-escalating linear course.

The low R^2 value (0.34) points to the absence of a clear trend explaining the severity of conflict over time, while the high Durbin-Watson statistic (3.00) suggests that fluctuations in severity do not produce a positive cumulative tendency but are instead dominated by movements in opposite directions between successive periods. Taken together, these indicators lead to the placement of the rivalry in the “flat pattern” category, confirming that the long-term structure of Ottoman-Russian relations is one that is reproduced within a stable band of severity rather than in an upward or downward trajectory. This quantitative classification confirms the existence of a structurally embedded and directionless rivalry pattern centered upon the unchanging zones of contention around the Black Sea basin, the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Straits (Goertz & Diehl, 1998, pp. 121-122).

In Table 9.3 on the Russia-Ottoman Empire rivalry in Goertz and Diehl’s *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (2000), the same rivalry is once again placed in the “flat pattern” category on the basis of a different dataset (Diehl & Goertz, 2000, p. 182). The indicators provided there for the Russia-Ottoman Empire row shed further light on the quantitative character of the rivalry within the modern system.

The symmetry of the residual values for the beginning and the end of the rivalry (Beg. = 1; End. = 1) shows that the rivalry does not produce major deviations from the model either at its inception or at its conclusion, and thus that there is no directional trend of escalation or resolution. The fact that the coefficient of determination is as low as $R^2 = .19$ indicates that only about one-fifth of the variation in the severity of militarized crises can be explained by a linear trend.

Another indicator that confirms the “non-trend-producing” nature of the rivalry is the high value of the Durbin-Watson statistic (DW = 3.18); this implies negative autocorrelation in the time series, meaning that periods of high severity are often followed by periods of lower severity, but that these ups and downs do not yield a regular periodicity.

The high mean level of severity (Mean = 65) and the large standard deviation (SD = 41) reveal that intense wars and low-intensity phases are

interwoven, yet these fluctuations do not evolve into a clear direction. Taken together, these indicators suggest that the Russia-Ottoman Empire rivalry unfolded within a band of intense but directionless hostility and that basic issues of contention such as the Straits, the Caucasus, Balkan border arrangements and the protection of Orthodox subjects persisted over centuries. Thus, in line with the expectations of ERA, the rivalry fully displays the characteristics of an “enduring rivalry” with its continuity, issue stability and intermittently renewed escalation.

2) Stability of Rivalry and Actor Capacities

When Turkish-Russian relations are analyzed within the framework of the Basic Rivalry Level (BRL) Model and the Evolutionary Level Model, which assess the stability of enduring rivalries, the key question becomes how the capacities of the actors have been shaped over time and whether they have changed. As the approach suggests, rivalry patterns generally develop within a relationship between major and minor actors.

Examined from this perspective, Russia is defined as a minor actor until the mid-eighteenth century and occupies the position of a challenger state. The Treaties of Pruth and Belgrade represent the last period in which the Ottoman Empire could effectively employ its status as the major actor and dominant power in the relationship.

From the viewpoint of the Evolutionary Level Model, during the early phase (mid-sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries), which constitutes the first stage of the rivalry, the strategy of Russia as the minor actor consisted more in establishing relations with the major actor than in deepening the rivalry. While direct relations with the Ottoman Empire were significant, Russia’s efforts to gain Ottoman support in its competition with the regional khanates came to the fore (İnalçık, 1948, p. 353).

The second stage envisaged by the model, the intermediate phase, is defined as the period in which the minor actor forces the major actor to change its strategies and policies in line with its own priorities and in which the first signs of rivalry become visible. In this respect, the period beginning with the Treaty of Bakhchisaray and extending to Küçük Kaynarca represents the historical phase in which rivalry became institutionalized: despite Russia’s failure to achieve full success in the wars, the alliances it formed with Poland, Wallachia and Moldavia and the demands it began to articulate over Ottoman

territories testify to this institutionalization.

The third stage, the advanced phase, refers to the period in which the perception of threat and rivalry deepens mutually and conflict reaches its most intense level. The period from the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 to the present reflects the characteristic features of this advanced phase.

The short war-free period that followed is in line with Goertz and Diehl's (1995) finding that there is a 95% probability that a rivalry will start or restart within ten years following a major political shock. The systemic rupture caused by the failed Siege of Vienna in 1683 triggered the 1686–1700 war, while the Treaties of Karlowitz and Istanbul marked a major shift in the European balance of power, weakening the Ottoman position and enabling Russia—alongside the Habsburg Monarchy—to assume a more prominent role in South-Eastern European affairs and to consolidate its long-term strategic orientation toward the Black Sea. (Petrović & Mijatović, 2023, pp.45-48; Uzunçarşılı, 1995, pp.176-179; İnalçık, 2017, p.20) The 1710–1711 Pruth War, although ostensibly related to the issue of the asylum of Charles XII, was in fact about redefining the balance of power in the Azov–Black Sea corridor. Even though the Treaty of Pruth might appear at first sight as a diplomatic victory for the Ottomans, it is clear that the structural balance of power that emerged after Karlowitz had shifted in favor of Russia (Jorga, 2007, pp. 250–251; İnalçık, 2017, pp.170-171). From an ERA standpoint, Pruth represents a period of rebalancing rather than an end to the rivalry.

The 1736–1739 War that ended with the Treaty of Belgrade can be explained by Russia's increasing pressure in the Caucasus–Azov axis and by multipolar balance-of-power dynamics (Kurtaran, 2012, p. 232). The subsequent long war-free period (29–33 years) corresponds to the “reconstruction” phase described by Goertz and Diehl (Ortaylı, 2004, p.112; Kurtaran, 2015, pp. 599–603). The 1768–1774 War and the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca constitute a structural turning point in the rivalry. Russia's access to the Black Sea, the de facto detachment of Crimea from the Ottoman Empire and its claim to protect the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan (Leanca, 2020, pp. 119–121) symbolize the transition to the second stage of the rivalry from an ERA perspective; Russia now emerges as an overt challenger. The shift in the balance of power after Küçük Kaynarca deepened with the 1787–1792 War of Jassy, and the Treaty of Jassy confirmed the annexation of Crimea to Russia. This outcome directly confirms

ERA's finding that territorial disputes are the most powerful determinants of war onset.

The 1806–1812 War of Bucharest represents the continuation of the territorial/border rivalry under the impact of Napoleon and over the status of Wallachia and Moldavia. With the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, the transfer of Bessarabia to Russia accelerated the expansion of rivalry into the Balkans. The 1828–1829 War of Edirne illustrates how domestic political shocks (the Serbian revolt, the Greek independence struggle and the weakening of central authority in the Ottoman Empire) helped trigger the rivalry. (Mantran, 1995, pp.113-118) The subsequent Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833) and the London Straits Convention (1841) created a war-free but high-tension “phase of diplomatic rivalry” (Hale, 2023, p. 44).

The Crimean War (1853–1856) acted as a major political shock in a multilateral system; while the Treaty of Paris constrained Russia, it did not end the rivalry (Leanca, 2020, pp. 128–129; Hale, 2023, p. 48). This period conforms to ERA's finding of war-free yet highly rivalrous “interrupted rivalries.” Even though the reforms that followed (the abolition of serfdom in Russia, the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts in the Ottoman Empire) defined the war-free period, rivalry issues did not disappear (Yakushev, 2018, p.153; İnalçık, 2017, p.49); therefore, a new shock reactivated the rivalry: the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 (93 Harbi). This war, combining ethno-religious ties, territorial partition and great-power competition, represents a typical ERA mixture of territorial and ideological rivalry (Hale, 2023, pp. 48–49).

Finally, the First World War opened a new phase of ideological and regional bloc formation, with the rivalry continuing over competing claims to sovereignty in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus. The end of the rivalry, however, is explained not by the outcome of the war but by the systemic shock produced by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and the collapse of the empires. This fully conforms to Goertz and Diehl's conclusion that major political shocks are crucial – though not sufficient alone – for rivalry termination.

War	Core Issue (ERA)	Actor Configuration	Power Balance	ERA Pattern
1676-1681	Territorial (Ukraine-Dnieper)	Same dyad (Ottoman-Russia) /	Ottoman dominant / Russia challenger	Issue consistency
1686-1700	Black Sea access	Same dyad	Shifting balance	begins Institutionalized rivalry
1710-1711	Azov-Black Sea corridor	Same dyad	Temporary Ottoman recovery	Interrupted rivalry
1735-1739	Crimea-Caucasus	Same dyad + Austria	Multipolar constraint	Reconstruction phase
1768-1774	Black Sea + Orthodox protection	Same dyad	Power transition	Structural turning point
1787-1792	Crimea consolidation	Same dyad	Russian superiority	Escalation reset
1806-1812	Wallachia-Moldavia	Same dyad	Russian expansion	Issue expansion
1828-1829	Straits + Balkan order	Same dyad	Russian leverage	New rivalry arena
1853-1856	Straits + ideology	Multilateral (UK-France)	Russia constrained	Interrupted rivalry
1877-1878	Balkan nationalism	Same dyad	Russian dominance	Rivalry relocation
1914-1917	Caucasus sovereignty	Same dyad	System collapse	Rivalry terminated by shock

Table 1: Ottoman-Russian Rivalry Cycle (1676-1921) in ERA Variables

When Goertz and Diehl's approach is applied to the pre-1876 Ottoman-Russian rivalry, it becomes apparent that the majority of wars follow a cyclical pattern triggered by territorial claims, changes in the balance of power and systemic shocks. The 1676-1681 War of Bakhchisaray, rooted in the struggle for control over the Crimea-Podolia axis, produced a "frozen conflict" settlement that laid the groundwork for subsequent confrontations. (Jorga, 2007, p. 162). The systemic rupture caused by the failed Siege of Vienna in 1683 and the realignment of great powers precipitated the 1686-1700 war and the Treaties of Karlowitz and

Istanbul, which institutionalized Russia's turn towards the Black Sea.

As summarized in Table 1, the rivalry displays strong issue consistency around territorial sovereignty and access/control corridors (Crimea-Azov-Black Sea, the Straits, the Balkans, and the Caucasus). Rather than resolving these issues, successive settlements repeatedly 'froze' them, generating the cause-effect chain expected by ERA: clauses and territorial adjustments in one treaty became triggering conditions for subsequent disputes.

From the perspective of the Basic Rivalry Level Model, the Turkish-Russian rivalry is closer to a flat/punctuated-equilibrium pattern than to a steadily escalating Volcano trajectory. This is also consistent with a limited continuity check beyond 1921: the absence of direct Turkish-Soviet war between the world wars corresponds, in ERA terms, to an ‘interrupted rivalry’ rather than termination, since core arenas of contention (the Black Sea–Straits–Caucasus axis) remained salient. The 1945–46 Strait’s crisis illustrates issue consistency (Straits/Black Sea access) under a new ideological context, while the post-Cold War period reflects a more modular rivalry-cooperation balance in which competition persists in several theatres (e.g., Black Sea security, the Caucasus, and Middle Eastern crisis management) without necessarily producing continuous militarized escalation

If Goertz and Diehl’s criteria for rivalry termination are taken into account, it becomes clear that the conditions that would require us to consider Turkish-Russian rivalry as “ended” in a technical sense are not met today. The continued perception of threat, the persistence of geopolitical arenas that generate rivalry (the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Middle East, the Karabakh corridor and so on), and the survival of issue areas with crisis potential all indicate that the structural character of the rivalry endures. From the perspective of Maoz’s definition of protracted rivalry, the intensity of the rivalry has declined over time, yet ongoing clashes of interest in arenas such as Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Black Sea show that it continues at a low-intensity level. To avoid extending the empirical scope beyond the 1676–1921 rivalry cycle, the references to the Soviet and post-Cold War periods are not treated here as additional cases for analysis, but solely as a brief ‘continuity check’ that links ERA’s core variables (issue/actor consistency and interrupted rivalry) to the present. Accordingly, the following remarks are limited to identifying whether the main arenas of contention and threat perceptions observed in 1676–1921 reappear—under transformed institutional settings—after 1921

Period	ERA continuity	Similarity to 1676–1921
1945–46 Strait’s crisis	Issue consistency (Straits/Black Sea), actor consistency (successor state), interrupted rivalry	Same arena, different institutional context
Post-2014/2022 crises (Black Sea, Caucasus, Syria)	Issue persistence + modular rivalry/cooperation	Same theatres, hybrid competition

Table 2: Post-1921 Continuity Check of Ottoman-Russian Rivalry through ERA Variables

B. Main Causes of Rivalry in the Theoretical Framework

1) The Impact of Systemic and Domestic Political Changes on Rivalry

The ERA finding that systemic shocks and changes in states’ domestic political structures are effective in the emergence of enduring rivalries in 87% of cases (Goertz & Diehl, 1995a) largely overlaps with the historical trajectory of Ottoman-Russian relations. In this respect, systemic and domestic political changes are decisive not only in the emergence of rivalry but also, and particularly, in explaining its development and evolution.

The period up to the mid-sixteenth century, during which Russia transitioned from a principality to a tsardom, corresponds to the early phase of the Evolutionary Level Model. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire rose as a strong political, economic and military actor in Anatolia and the Balkans, while during the same period Russia entered an imperialization process through regional expansion strategies following Ivan the Terrible (Topsakal, 2021, p. 1). Halil İnalçık clearly notes that in the mid-sixteenth century the territorial axis of the rivalry formed along the Crimea–Astrakhan–Kazan line and that it was in this period that the Ottoman Empire first faced the Russian threat in the north (İnalçık, 1948, pp. 353–356). This finding is compatible with ERA’s “territorial dispute–conflict correlation” assumption. Russia’s annexation of the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan and its move towards a multi-ethnic and multi-religious

imperial structure gradually turned it into a more visible challenger vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire – a pattern that corresponds to ERA’s observation that most rivalries begin after major political shocks.

In the Tsarist period, the intensification of contacts with the Ottoman Empire corresponds to the second stage of the Evolutionary Level Model, while the strengthening of the link between internal reforms and external expansion under Peter the Great (Hosking, 2001, pp.187-191) Catherine II and Alexander II. (Hosking,2011, p.266) corresponds to the third stage as İřçi (2016) emphasizes, the Great Northern War, the 1768–1774 Russo-Ottoman War and the Crimean War (1853–1856) were crucial turning points for redefining absolutist rule and increasing the military-fiscal capacity of the Russian state. These waves of war accelerated Russia’s transition from a semi-feudal structure to an early capitalist phase; the empire’s rivalry capacity was strengthened in tandem with internal reforms (İřçi, 2016, pp. 452–467).

In this context, the mid-eighteenth century, when Russia moved from the tsardom to the imperial period, is important for demonstrating the role of domestic political shocks in the development of rivalry. The fact that Ottoman-Russian confrontation occurred roughly a century after the death of Suleiman the Magnificent, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was in decline within the system, shows that Russia emerged as a rising regional power. ERA’s “power transition” logic is clearly observable: a rising actor (Russia) versus a relatively declining great power (the Ottoman Empire) inevitably deepened the rivalry.

At the systemic level, the failure of the Second Siege of Vienna in 1683 and the subsequent alignment of Russia with the Austrian-Polish alliance constitutes one of the first systemic ruptures in the early period of the Ottoman-Russian rivalry (Topsakal, 2021, pp. 2-3). After the Treaty of Sistova in 1791, the decline in the Habsburg threat and the Ottoman Empire’s coding of Russia as its primary adversary marked a phase in which the direction of the rivalry became more clearly defined (Topsakal, 2021, p. 4). The impact of the French Revolution of 1789 on empires and the support given by Russia to separatist movements in Ottoman territories added an ideological dimension to the rivalry, reinforcing its character as an “identity-driven rivalry.” since the beginning of the 18th century. (Ortaylı, 2004, p.108)

Regional chain-effects also played a crucial role in the evolution of the rivalry. Developments such as transformations in Austria, the partition of Poland and the weakening of Iran turned the Ottoman-Russian rivalry into a multi-regional geopolitical contest of containment. Yakushev, 2018, p.155) Hale (2023, pp. 45–47) defines the period 1798–1841 explicitly as the first phase (shifting alliances / multipolar system). During this period, the Caucasus, Eastern Anatolia, the Balkans and the Black Sea became multiple “zones of contention” (Topsakal, 2021, p. 1). The 1768–1774 Russo-Ottoman War and the Peace of Küçük Kaynarca intensified the need for internal reform in Russia (Hosking, 2001, p.300) and strengthened defensive reflexes in the Ottoman Empire; they thus demonstrated that wars were rupture points that triggered institutional restructuring in both empires (İřçi, 2016, pp. 454–456; Yakushev, 2018, p.153). This expanding rivalry space is in line with ERA’s findings that issues of conflict tend to expand by triggering one another (Rudkevich et al., 2013).

2) Bilateral Issues of Rivalry

From the very beginning of the Ottoman-Russian rivalry, the fundamental issue between the two states has been the struggle for control over frontier regions and spheres of influence. The main theatre of rivalry has not changed over time; it has only expanded. The initial area of rivalry was the present-day Ukrainian region – especially Crimea, Azov and the Dnieper basin – and the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were primarily fought over the control of these areas.

After consolidating its dominance over Crimea, Russia extended the same type of territorial rivalry first to the entire Black Sea coastline and, with the 1806–1812 war, to the eastern Black Sea and the regions of Wallachia and Moldavia. The expansion of this sovereignty-based rivalry to the Straits and the Balkans carried the rivalry from a strictly bilateral level to a multilateral and international plane. The internal rivalries of Europe and the balance-of-power politics aimed at containing Russia became one of the main external factors determining the course of Turkish-Russian relations. In this process, short-lived periods of cooperation between Turkey and Russia also emerged. The cooperation observed during Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt and the rebellions of Mehmed Ali Pasha reflected the complex nature of the rivalry-cooperation balance. (Inalcık, 2017, p.52) The atmosphere of insecurity in the international system and the

fact that the Ottoman Empire was supported against Russia in the 1856 Treaty of Paris carried the rivalry to a different level and concretely illustrated ERA's proposition that different dyadic rivalries can influence one another.

The impact of domestic political pressures on the form of relations can also be observed in the context of Russo-Slav-Orthodox relations. Russia's assumption, with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, of the role of protector of Slavs and Orthodox Christians in Ottoman territories was not merely a foreign-policy instrument; it was also a reflection of ideological and social pressures within Russian domestic politics. Likewise, the internationalization of the rivalry and the involvement of European powers directly influenced domestic politics in the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts and the proclamation of the constitutional regimes. (Inalcık, 2017, p. 97)

Although economic interests played a certain role in relations from the early period, the axis of the Ottoman-Russian rivalry was not primarily defined by a mercantilist-liberal economic model confrontation as in the Dutch-English example. The rivalry was fundamentally about territory, security and spheres of influence; about control over transit routes, trade corridors and strategic straits. While the concentration of territorial rivalry in regions such as Ukraine, the Caucasus and the Balkans - located on transit and trade routes - shows that the economic dimension cannot be completely ignored, it is clear that the decisive variable was geopolitical and strategic.

In the post-Second World War period, a limited economic dimension emerged in Turkish-Russian relations as a reflection of the US-Soviet rivalry, yet it is difficult to speak of a period in which economic interests were the primary axis of conflict. With the rise of energy geopolitics in recent years, it can be argued that geo-economic factors have become more visible in Turkish-Russian relations. This remains, however, in line with ERA's finding that while economic rivalry is an important variable, in some dyadic rivalry's geopolitics may dominate this dimension.

Main Cause	Explanation	Continuity (from an ERA perspective)
1. Southward Russian expansion	Russia's long-term strategic drive toward the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Balkans	Most stable independent variable shaping the rivalry
2. Ottoman geopolitical vulnerability in the north	Competition over Black Sea control, the Crimean Khanate and the Straits	Conflict issues evolved, but the core geographical axis of rivalry remained constant
3. European balance-of-power dynamics	Strategic positioning of Austria, Britain and France; major power wars and balancing behavior	Wars repeatedly triggered by major political shocks in the 17th-19th centuries
4. Orthodox protection and Balkan nationalism	Russia's ideological and religious claims over Orthodox populations, combined with the rise of Balkan nationalisms, notably the Greek War of Independence (1821), the Battle of Navarino (1827), and the Treaty of Edirne (1829)	Persistent source of tension after 1774; identity- and ideology-driven dimension of rivalry became institutionalized

Table 3. Main Causes of Ottoman-Russian Rivalry and Patterns of Continuity (ERA Framework)

CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the long-term patterns of Turkish-Russian rivalry on the basis of the theoretical framework of the Enduring Rivalries Approach (ERA). The findings show that Ottoman-Russian rivalry constitutes a classic example of an "enduring rivalry" with respect to ERA's three core criteria of temporal continuity, actor consistency and issue consistency. The fact that the rivalry, despite interruptions, has not ended for roughly five centuries, has been reproduced in different historical periods, and has largely preserved its structural features provides an important reference point for understanding the historical nature of the relationship.

When the applicability of ERA to Turkish-Russian relations is evaluated, it becomes clear that the main preconditions envisaged by the concept are largely met. A rivalry that began in the sixteenth century and has continued under different political units generated eight major wars and peace treaties; the causal links between issues of conflict are strong; and the frequency and continuity of disputes are compatible with both first- and second-generation empirical models. This has led Turkish-Russian relations to be regarded as one of the most distinctive rivalry patterns in the literature. From the standpoint of models dealing with rivalry stability, Turkish-Russian relations appear to resemble less the Volcano Model and more the flat / punctuated-equilibrium pattern defined within the Basic Rivalry Level Model. This suggests that, although the nature of conflicts and the positions of actors have changed over time, the rivalry has not followed a straightforward escalatory trajectory and that each war and each period need to be analyzed in light of its own internal dynamics.

The rivalry pattern also clearly reflects a major power-minor power, or challenger-defender, relationship. While Russia was a minor actor from the sixteenth century onwards, it reversed this position from the mid-eighteenth century, especially after the Treaties of Küçük Kaynarca and Jassy; from that point on, the Ottoman Empire increasingly came to be defined as the weaker party. In terms of the fundamental causes of rivalry, the relationship has largely been driven by territorial sovereignty, struggles for regional influence and geopolitical strategies of expansion. The struggle for control that began in Crimea and extended to the Black Sea, the Balkans and the Straits is the clearest illustration of this. Domestic political transformations and systemic ruptures were the other critical variables shaping the rivalry. Systemic shocks such as the European balance of power, the French Revolution and the First World War altered the quality of the rivalry and carried bilateral relations into an international dimension. In this context, the Soviet period functions as an intermediate link showing that the rivalry did not disappear completely but rather changed form. The 1921 Treaties of Moscow and Kars made possible a tactical rapprochement and limited cooperation between the young Turkish Republic and the Soviet Union, yet they did not eliminate the geopolitical arenas of rivalry centered on the Caucasus and the Straits. The absence of direct military conflict between the two world wars corresponds, in ERA terms, to an "interrupted rivalry": a phase in which rivalry does not end but continues at low intensity and primarily through diplomatic channels.

The findings of the study suggest that, in the modern period, Turkish-Russian rivalry has moved away from a purely classical military confrontation and taken on a more complex, multi-layered and modular character. Energy dependence, cooperation in the defense industry, economic interdependence and emerging patterns of mutual dependence in regional security architecture all indicate that rivalry has evolved into a hybrid model in which competition is intertwined with cooperation. This outcome is consistent with the concepts advanced in the literature such as the rivalry-cooperation axis (Öniř & Yılmaz, 2016), conflictual cooperation (Isachenko, 2021), asymmetric interdependence and assertive bandwagoning (Đidić & Kösebalaban, 2021). Turkish-Russian relations have therefore not entirely moved out of the ERA-type rivalry pattern; rather, they have been reproduced in a transformed way, resulting in a form of rivalry that is resilient yet, to some extent, manageable.

Another important finding is that historical rivalry continues to provide a crucial background for explaining modern diplomatic processes. The pragmatic flexibility observed in contemporary Turkish-Russian relations, the mutual dependence in crisis management and the balance between rivalry and cooperation in regional issues all show that the legacy of historical rivalry has been reinterpreted and carried into present conditions. The fact that rivalry has not disappeared entirely keeps alive the possibility that each regional crisis may turn into a power struggle; at the same time, mutual dependence in energy, trade and defense acts as a stabilizing factor that prevents a complete

breakdown in relations.

At this point it should be underlined that a comprehensive analysis of contemporary Turkish-Russian relations in all their dimensions would require a much broader analytical framework and a separate in-depth study, spanning a wide spectrum from Syria to Ukraine and from Black Sea security to energy dependence and the defense sector. Nonetheless, by setting out the conceptual foundations of the historical rivalry pattern, this study provides the structural background necessary for understanding current Turkish-Russian relations and offers a theoretical lens for interpreting contemporary diplomatic and strategic interactions along the rivalry-cooperation axis.

In conclusion, Turkish-Russian relations have not fully exited the “enduring rivalry” category; rather, the rivalry has persisted, being redefined across different regimes and periods - from the Ottoman-Russian legacy through the Soviet era to the present-day relationship with the Russian Federation - and has adapted its character to

modern international conditions. This framework contributes both to the ERA literature and to the analysis of Turkish foreign relations, demonstrating that historical rivalry offers an indispensable explanatory basis for understanding the future of Turkish-Russian relations.

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