

WAR TERMINATION IN A GREAT POWER VS. REGIONAL POWER LIMITED WAR – A CASE STUDY OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR (1904-1905) WITH REFERENCE TO THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

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ABSTRACT

War Termination (WT) can occur through negotiations while the war is still ongoing. The situation of WT in a conflict between a great power and a regional power in a limited war is especially interesting. In such cases, WT through negotiations cannot easily end with a win-lose scenario, even if the regional power holds an advantage on the battlefield. To support this thesis, the authors investigated WT in the Russo-Japanese War and sought to answer whether Japan, as a regional power, could have obtained a more advantageous peace from the conflict against the great power Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, following its successes on the battlefield. Finally, the authors draw conclusions regarding the possible WT of the Russo-Ukrainian War in Europe.

Keywords: War termination, Russo-Japanese war, Ukraine, Russia, peace treaty

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INTRODUCTION

War Termination (WT) is one of the most neglected subjects in war studies. It usually occurs when one side in a conflict wins, while the other loses the war or unilaterally ends hostilities and asks for an armistice. However, WT can also occur through mediation and negotiations, without either party initially securing a clear victory. In such cases, examples of WT while the war is still in full swing are particularly interesting. Therefore, apart from victory by one of the participants, WT can also be achieved through negotiations. However, in these cases, it is exceedingly difficult to reach a balance between the expectations of each party. Specifically, if a smaller power is not faring well on the battlefield, a major power will certainly not enter into negotiations. Conversely, if a major power is losing the war, it can usually (if the internal political situation allows it) mobilize new forces and escalate the war, which the minor power must be able to follow. It is often the case that other great powers supporting a smaller power waging a war against a great power exert pressure on the smaller power to come to the negotiating table if the political and military goals of the great powers have already been met. In addition to each side entering the conflict with its political and military goals, other parties not directly involved in the conflict also have their own goals, which they prioritize. However, an often-insurmountable problem is leaving space for the great power, and the importance of not losing the war is significant because it signifies a loss of pride, and in totalitarian regimes and dictatorships, losing a war also means losing power.

SCOPE OF THE WORK AND METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to examine WT in a limited war between a major and a minor power that is logistically supported by other major powers. The situation of WT in a conflict between a great power and a regional power in a limited war, while the war is still in full swing, is especially interesting. In such a scenario, WT through negotiations cannot easily end with a win-lose situation, even if the regional power holds a better position on the battlefield.

To support this thesis, the authors investigated WT in the Russo-Japanese War, seeking to answer the research question of whether Japan as a regional power could have negotiated a more advantageous peace with the great power Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, considering its successes on the battlefield. The authors chose the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 because it provides the most similar case relevant to the research question. Although this war is not ideally representative, the authors aim to answer the research question and support the thesis through the perspective of WT in the Russo-Japanese War. Therefore, the paper is entirely focused on the WT of the Russo-Japanese War, and the authors do not expose the causes and the course of the war itself unless it is crucial for understanding WT.

To answer the proposed question, the authors used the scientific method of case study, which provides genuine insight into complex sociological phenomena such

as war. Although the case study remains one of the most controversial scientific methods for proving a thesis (with case study theoreticians still discussing its clear definition), it still offers valuable insights into the intricate and multifaceted context of social processes (Flyvbjerg, 2011). This complexity particularly refers to the even more complicated social process of war, which possesses its inherent logic and requires careful analysis to draw meaningful conclusions. Thus, one of the most suitable methods for exploring context-dependent knowledge in social science and researching war-related phenomena, in this case, WT in specific conditions, is the case study approach. For the proposed case study research, all available literature from both the Japanese and Russian perspectives was used, as well as professional literature dealing with the Russo-Japanese War.

Finally, while the wars are not identical, they share many researched conditions; the authors designed and presented plausible scenarios regarding the WT of the Russo-Ukrainian War in Europe. The authors do not assess the various outcomes of the Russo-Ukrainian War but instead explore WT through negotiations as one of the possible and less-studied outcomes. However, due to insufficient and inconsistent information regarding the ongoing war, which limits possible comparative analysis, the research aims to provide the allied Ukrainian side with insights into potential hindrances and constraints in achieving possible WT through negotiations, based on the case study research.

The current war in Europe between Russia and Ukraine is slowly entering its prolonged phase of attrition. This means that neither side can easily achieve a quick victory, which opens the possibility for a negotiated WT. Russia, as a great power, is pitted against Ukraine, a smaller power supported by other major powers. Thus, whether and when WT will occur depends on many factors, primarily the willingness of each side involved in the conflict, including supporting powers, to bear the costs of war for their political and military goals.

TERMINOLOGY

To establish clear definitions of the various terms used in this paper to avoid misunderstandings, standardized terminology will be presented. Although Carl von Clausewitz particularly refers to victory as a unilateral primal means of ending the war (Clausewitz, 1984: 579) (military end state), he also outlines additional situations for war termination: the inability to carry on the struggle, the improbability of victory, and unacceptable costs (Clausewitz, 1984: 91). Besides, Clausewitz recognizes WT as a non-ultimate outcome, which is particularly important for a final peace agreement: he argues that the outcome should be a mutual matter involving both parties, including the defeated adversary (Clausewitz, 1984: 80, 483). Furthermore, WT was significantly influenced by nuclear weapons during the Cold War era, during which theorists emphasized rational actors, information, and deterrence, establishing a bargaining theory of WT (Shelling, 1980: 74-77). On the contrary, Ikle emphasized irrationality (Hawks and Dove theory) (Ikle, 1971: 6), while Blainey tried to systemize this irrationality in WT and pointed to the information gap approach: "At the

end of a conflict, the peace treaty serves as an agreement between states on their respective levels of power they validated through the crucible of combat" (Blainey, 1973: 122-123). Post-Cold War theorists further developed bargaining models for WT, stressing rationality by considering the redundant costs of war for both sides (Fearon, 1995: 381-382). Reiter connected this theory to WT, agreeing with Blainey's notion of decreasing the information gap throughout the conflict to achieve WT. However, he also argues that if one side believes that the other will not be committed to post-war peace, the conflict will continue to a Clausewitzian absolute war, potentially leading to Melyan annihilation, annexation, or regime change (Reiter, 2009: 25-29), which brings us back to Clausewitz. In conclusion, most of these theories are merely recycled thoughts of the Prussian general. Despite the theories provided, WT remains one of the most neglected aspects of war studies.

While in theory, Clausewitz discussed absolute or total war (unlimited), in practice, he was convinced that most wars, by their ends (objectives), ways (methods), and means (resources), are limited. As the theoretician Jomini before him recognized, Corbett also accepted and developed the concept of limited war in maritime strategy (Corbett, 1911: 57-59). Limited war became standard in the era of nuclear weapons to keep conflicts below the nuclear threshold, which particularly concerns great powers.

A great power is a sovereign state with significant diplomatic, economic, and military strength to exert power in international affairs (Costa, 2022). Russia is a vast country spanning two continents, with excessive natural resources, significant demographics, and nuclear capabilities, boasting a strong army and military industry. It holds a permanent seat with veto power on the UN Security Council. Although sometimes denied the status of a great power after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its economic inefficiency, due to the aforementioned reasons, it still retains that title due to the above-mentioned reasons.

Nevertheless, International Relations (IR) scholars have not yet agreed upon a clear definition of a regional power, and various approaches have established certain attributes that a state must meet, which Ukraine does not entirely fulfill. Most of these attributes relate to a large population in the regional context, a high GDP, and a strong conventional army (Nolte, 2010: 889). Neumann defines it as a state that is geographically part of a delineated region, capable of standing up against any coalition of other states in the region, and highly influential in regional affairs (Neumann, 1992: 12).

However, Ukraine possesses some of those attributes; it has a large population and successfully stood up against a great power, and consequently, it is highly influential in regional, and even international relations. Due to the war and Western support, Ukraine possesses some additional attributes of a regional power proposed by Nolte: it influences the geopolitical delimitation and the political-ideational construction of the region, defines and articulates a common regional identity or project, provides a collective good for the region or participates significantly in the provision of such a collective good, defines the regional security agenda significantly,

its leading position in the region is recognized or at least respected by other states inside and outside of the region, it is integrated into interregional and global forums and institutions where it articulates not only its own interests but also acts, at least in a rudimentary way, as a representative of regional interests (Nolte, 1992: 893).

On the other hand, Ukraine has a poor economy and an army that, while significant in number, lacks sufficient equipment and sophisticated training. However, it is supported by the West, experienced, and highly motivated. Moreover, Ukraine had possessed nuclear weapons, which are a prerogative of a great power, but relinquished them to Russia in accordance with the Budapest Memorandum (1994), in exchange for security assurances from the great powers, proclaiming protection over Ukraine. Therefore, at this moment, Ukraine serves as a hub receiving extensive Western financial and military support because the West will not allow Ukraine to fail. Consequently, Ukraine will become the western frontier delineating free democratic Europe from the authoritarian expansionist regime. Therefore, to become a bulwark against Russian expansionism, with the support of the West, Ukraine will eventually attain even more regional power attributes. Accordingly, Nel and Stephen argue for the importance of regional aspirations over leadership achievements (Nel and Stephen 2010: 71-90).

In conclusion, Nolte emphasizes that the classification of a country as a regional power depends on the topic analyzed, and that the same country could be labeled differently, as a great power, middle power, or regional power. These concepts are not mutually exclusive; they can be complementary in certain respects. Therefore, different regional powers will comply differently with these criteria, and there may be fragmented or multifaceted regional leadership (Nolte, 1992: 893). Based on this, the authors argue that a country successful in the war against a much stronger country, supported by its region and beyond, can possess extensive attributes and fulfill the role of a regional power. Moreover, a country can be successful in a war with a great power if it receives significant support from other great powers, possesses attributes of, and fulfills the role of a regional power. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, Ukraine will be observed as a regional power.

CASE STUDY – WAR TERMINATION IN THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Despite Japan's military success over the great power Russia in the battlefields of Southeast Asia at the beginning of the 20th century and its internal "overheating", the adversaries signed the Portsmouth Peace Treaty, which satisfied Russia more than Japan. Japan could not have secured a more advantageous settlement with Russia. This thesis is based on the following arguments: firstly, Japan conducted optimal coordination between diplomatic and military efforts toward WT. Secondly, a limited war between a regional power and a great power requires a win-win solution. Finally, Japan reached the culminating point of victory and rationalized the situation to seek peace.

JAPAN'S SYNCHRONIZATION OF ALL NATIONAL POWER INSTRUMENTS

Just as in war preparation, Japan achieved optimal coordination between economic, intelligence, diplomatic, and military efforts toward WT. Thus, Japan had conducted various actions that helped reach its main objectives prior to WT. During war preparation, Japan signed an agreement with the UK, according to which the UK would help Japan if a second power intervened against it, which, in turn, prompted France to support Russia. Moreover, the UK had never been directly involved in the war but covertly provided Japan with diplomatic, economic, and intelligence support. For instance, by denying access to the Suez Channel and through the Dogger Bank incident, the UK thwarted the progress of the Russian Baltic fleet, which was on a flamboyant seven-month voyage around the world, causing it to arrive late in the Far East, at the Tsushima Strait, where the Japanese navy won a decisive victory (Towle, 1980: 44-54).

Furthermore, Japanese baron Akashi Motojiro, a military attaché in Saint Petersburg and a member of the Japanese Secret Intelligence Services, organized an espionage network to gather information on Russian troop movements and supported Russian extremists attempting to overthrow the Romanov dynasty (Lenin, Litvinov, Vorovsky). Baron Akashi was involved in and supported many uprisings, riots, strikes, and turmoil of that time. For instance, he was involved in the Potemkin mutiny and the Grafton affair, supported Orthodox priest Georgy Gapon, who had organized the Bloody Sunday Uprising, recruited the famous spy Sidney Reilly, and was involved in the assassination of Russian Interior Minister Vyacheslav von Plehve (Falt and Kujala, 1988). Keeping in mind that Russia was in a pre-revolutionary phase (in 1905 the unsuccessful First Russian Revolution took place), it was essential to undermine Russian morale and will to fight in the Far East. Eventually, the revolution was one of the reasons for the Russians to exit the war. Even field marshal Yamagata Aritomo said that baron Akashi was worth "more than ten divisions of troops in Manchuria."

However, the most crucial coordination was between military and diplomatic efforts. With military objectives exceeding political ones, Japan reached a stage before the WT that allowed it to have "enough to negotiate," as theorist Sir Julian

Corbett explained (Corbett, 1994). This referred mainly to the island of Sakhalin, as conquering Sakhalin sent a final message to the Russians: we can reach even Russian soil, and we will do it; it is time for peace. Thus, the Japanese used the island of Sakhalin as Carl von Clausewitz's *bargaining chip* for negotiations (Clausewitz, 1984: 69).

Furthermore, Japanese diplomacy had made an excellent move by choosing the United States of America, with its rising power, as a neutral mediator in peace negotiations. Instead, they could have chosen another great power with excellent relations with Russia (for example, Russia's ally France already had a prepared peace agreement, which would have likely favored Russia more) (Fuller, 1992: 375). On the contrary, the USA, as a mediator, wanted to remain as neutral as possible because it sought to counterbalance Russia in the Far East and suppress Japan's aspirations for future hegemony and becoming a world power (Nish, 1985: 10). The US president Theodore Roosevelt "... would like to see the war ending with Russia and Japan locked in a clinch, counterweighing each other, and both kept weak by the effort." (Morris, 2002: 356). Therefore, Roosevelt opposed any pressures coming from great powers to be in favor of Russia. "Witte, and above all the czar, must understand definitely that this war is a failure, and that peace must be made with the Japanese as victors. They cannot prevent peace coming to terms which will show that the Russians have suffered a severe defeat." (Beale, 1956: 291).

Finally, one of the critical facts Japanese diplomacy had to take into consideration while negotiating peace was Japan's exhaustion of manpower and finances to continue the war. Japan had paid an extremely high price for its successes on the battlefields, while Russia could still continue the fight with considerable effort.

THE CHALLENGE OF WAGING A WAR WITH A GREAT POWER

Despite all the optimal coordination of military and diplomacy efforts before WT, Japan still could not achieve a win-lose peace agreement with Russia. This fact stems from the argument that in a limited war between a regional power and a great power, even if the regional power emerges victorious, negotiations often result in a win-win peace rather than a win-lose outcome. Consequently, Japan was forced to acknowledge that to achieve victory over Russia, it would need to advance into Saint Petersburg and Moscow, leaving no manpower available for Harbin, which could have been the next battleground. The Japanese leaders were aware of this fact. After the strategic military reassessment at the Mukden Battle, field marshal Yamagata concluded, "The enemy will never request peace unless we have invaded Moscow and St. Petersburg." (Paine, 2017: 70).

Keeping in mind all of that, a great power that has lost a war may prolong negotiations as long as necessary to save its reputation or honor. In this case, Russian negotiator Sergei Witte even accused the Japanese side of procrastination and threatened an exhausted Japan that the war would continue. "Japan evidently is willing to prolong the shedding of blood to secure at any price a considerable sum

of money" (Beale, 1956: 299-300). Russia was eager to avoid any war indemnity towards Japan, considering it an act of defeat that would tarnish its honor, despite it being high on Japan's priority list of demands (Okamoto, 1970: 125). "These proposals essentially disguise a form of payment to Japan. Russia will not agree to this, as it cannot allow itself to be vanquished" (Beale, 1956: 299). (Russian negotiator Sergei Witte to T. Roosevelt).

Finally, when dealing with great powers, the most important concern is that existing great powers would protect the great ally power from humiliation. Japan was very aware of this; moreover, Japan had learned a lesson from the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 and the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 (Connaughton, 2003). Soon after the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which was favorable to Japan (a win-lose scenario), and despite Japan's victory in the war, the great European powers – Russia, France, and Germany – called for a revision of some of the Treaty's outcomes, a move known as the Triple Intervention. Moreover, the reshaped outcomes concerned the Liaotung peninsula, which Japan had to relinquish. This intervention by the great powers was very frustrating for Japan and served as the main catalyst for Japan's grievance and vengeance against Russia and other European powers. Consequently, this was also a reason for Japan to seek mediation from outside the European sphere, turning to the new rising power – the USA (since the United Kingdom had signed an agreement with Japan, it would not have been acceptable to Russia).

JAPANESE STRATEGIC REASSESSMENT AND PREPARATION FOR PEACE

While the previous argument – the limited war between a regional power and a great power – lay beyond Japanese control, the final argument was firmly linked to Japanese actions in this war and was the strongest rationale for Japan to strive for peace, even without war indemnity. Japan had reached the culminating point of victory and rationalized the situation to seek peace. Carl von Clausewitz explained that the culminating point of attack and victory should be recognized as the turning point from attack to defense. Beyond that point, the attacker's superiority is exhausted. However, he also emphasized that the culminating point of victory is "often entirely a matter of the imagination" (Clausewitz, 1984: 566). Although Clausewitz prefers audacious, risk-taking commanders when discussing the culminating point of victory, he argues that those valiant commanders with "high courage and an enterprising spirit will continue the action and cross the threshold of equilibrium, the line of culmination, without knowing it" (Clausewitz, 1984: 567).

Furthermore, applying the aforementioned Clausewitz's postulates in this case, we could argue that this Japanese strategic recognition was based on the genius of field marshal Yamagata. He recognized the culminating point of victory on a strategic level, considering the question "and then what" and realized that these military aims extended beyond Japanese political objectives. Field marshal Yamagata's consideration of "and then what" moved from Harbin to Saint Petersburg. "First, while the enemy still has powerful forces in its home country, we had already exhausted ours. Japan's military had reached its culminating point of victory" (Paine, 2017: 70).

The second Clausewitzian problem that field marshal Yamagata recognized was the equation of Japanese reduced military strength. While the psychological force (will) was high, the other part of the equation, physical strength, had significantly decreased, resulting in an overall low military strength. Therefore, Japan could not continue the war despite the high military morale. So, Field Marshall Yamagata anticipated that the next battle would be a turning point. In addition, to support the decision to withdraw from the war, Japanese leaders were also aware that it was not just a matter of critical analysis of the Japanese army. They also correctly anticipated that Russia could reinforce the battlefield with new soldiers (Masayuki, 2007: 297). Therefore, according to Clausewitz's theory, he advocated for WT at the right time and recommended that Japan seek peace.

Moreover, the whole of Clausewitz's trinity in Japan was in imbalance. While the people (passion) were overheated, the military had low strength because of the physical component. At the same time, the government/leaders (ratio) realized this, providing Japan with the opportunity for the right decision. Despite the heated passion, rationality prevailed, leading to the conclusion that it was not a time for taking chances; it was time for WT and peace. However, it was not easy for Japanese leaders to reach such a decision. In accordance with the imbalance in the Clausewitzian trinity, politicians and negotiators were exposed to harsh criticism from the Japanese public. Even though some might argue that Japan did not win this war because it could not set exclusive conditions for negotiations, this "bold" strategic rationalization for WT and peace constituted the greatest Japanese victory in this war.

RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC WEAKNESSES

Despite the abovementioned arguments, some might argue that the military situation on the ground and Russia's will to finish the war, given its delicate political and strategic circumstances, could have opened an alley for Japan to make higher demands. Russia was a two-continent power, stretching from the Far East to the Western front in Central Europe at the dawn of the Great War in Europe. Russian politicians, nobility, diplomats, and generals engaged in constant discussion regarding front priority. Tzar Nicholas II, supported by his cousin, German Kaiser Wilhelm II, was eager to further deploy in the east and expand Mother Russia in memory of Peter the Great. Simultaneously, many generals, including the Minister of War, Sergei Kuropatkin, were concerned about the European great powers' preparation for the Great War in Europe. The Russian Chief of Staff to the Emperor stated in March 1903: "It is essential to give priority to the main danger over others. And this menaces Russia from the powers of the Triple Alliance. They threaten Russia with the greatest loss, having the capacity to deliver a blow against the very center of our might" (Fuller, 1992: 377). Russia also considered giving a sign to the Slavs in the Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Regardless of strategic discussions regarding Russia's front priorities, the country continually expanded its territory in

the Far East through actions such as the Treaty of Aigun, the Amur Annexation, and the establishment of the port of Vladivostok (Ruler of the East).

Russia conducted Far East deployments for various reasons; while it had to compete with other European great powers to demonstrate its greatness, it also made economic calculations (Witte). Moreover, some commentators take a Thucydidean perspective, emphasizing that all of these actions arose from anxiety and fear (Fuller, 1992: 374). Consequently, Russia found itself oversized and unable to easily defend itself on two fronts separated by six thousand miles; it fell into a strategic trap: it was dangerously overextended. Russia became a heartland (Mackinder) with five fleets and no possibility to concentrate the navy force (Mahan, 1918: 103-107). Even with the latest achievements in the Far East, which should have finally provided the hot water port (Port Arthur) for the great world power, it suffered strategic deficiencies. Port Arthur and Vladivostok were far away from each other, and the sea line of communication between them passed through the Tsushima Strait (Evans and Peattie, 1997: 116-124).

The Russians tried to mitigate this strategic trap with the Trans-Siberian Railroad. However, at the same time, they neglected the railroads in the West, which became a vast deficiency prior to the Great War in Europe in terms of troop movement and logistic support. Despite these attempts, the distance from Saint Petersburg to Vladivostok was too enormous, and the demographic concentration was predominantly on the western, European side of the country. Furthermore, Russia did not experience any significant economic boost because of the Far East expansion; colonization of Manchuria was unsuccessful, and the soil was not particularly fertile. Additionally, with augmented internal social grievances, people started to lose patriotic sentiments for the Far East and were not as attached to it as they were to the common Russian soil. This is also why Japan's conquest of the Sakhalin did not provoke a patriotic reaction among Russians; it was just a faraway, frozen land with nothing on it. After all, for the Russian people, this war had almost all the elements of an expeditionary conflict.

The second, complementary problem for Russia emerging from uncontrolled expansion in the East was Russian strategic clumsiness. Despite the strategic trap that Russia was heading into, it pursued an eastern posture in an unthoughtful manner, with a tremendous *information gap*: "One flag, one sentry, and the prestige of Russia will do the rest" (Walder, 1973: 53). Furthermore, after the Shimonoseki Treaty, Russia became a part of the Triple Intervention, encroaching on Port Arthur and the Liaotung Peninsula, thereby harming Japan and China and leaving both sides unsatisfied and vengeful towards Russia. Russia disrespectfully increased the war indemnity for Japan from China, which had tremendous consequences. Even Mao Zedong expressed joy when Japan defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, stating, "At that time, I knew and felt the beauty of Japan, and felt something of her pride and might in this song of her victory over Russia" (Snow, 1994: 137). Russia conducted a similar unprepared action when it penetrated the Pamir Mountains on the Afghanistan and China border, which disturbed the British.

Instead, Russia could have reached an agreement with the Japanese to establish the eastern border with China, potentially maintaining a balance between Japan and China, while securing its own border with China. Kuropatkin advocated for the reestablishment of friendly relations with Japan at a special conference in March 1903 (Fuller, 1992: 377). However, "appeasement would risk national self-abasement before the despised Orientals" (Fuller, 1992: 375). As a consequence of strategic clumsiness, Russia was forced to keep a vast number of soldiers deployed in the east. These inputs suggested that Russia could have conducted strategic rethinking and switched its efforts toward the West without incurring immense damage. Although it was part of the debate before the Russo-Japanese War, it became obvious afterward that Russian Far Eastern imperialism was crushing.

Besides, Russia was in a pre-revolutionary phase, with widespread dissatisfaction among the people compounded by their recent defeat in the war. The new sociological ideology had spread profoundly throughout the nation. Ironically, even in Kuropatkin's strategic document *Inter Alia*, written for the Tzar in 1900, traces of Marxism can be discerned (Fuller, 1992: 379). Despite the large numbers of soldiers, their morale was low, and mobilization was unsatisfactory. Compared with Japan's Clausewitzian trinity, Russian morale and passion were low, military strength was moderate, and the government was on the brink of revolution.

SAVING RUSSIAN HONOR

Despite the possibility of Russia reconsidering its strategic priorities and shifting focus towards Central Europe, abandoning the eastern front, dishonored and defeated, was not an option. Moreover, Russia had to preserve the outcomes of the eastern front to influence the western front, as these fronts operated as loosely connected vessels. Damage on the eastern front would have had a significant and potentially irreversible impact on the western front, rendering it unrepairable. To corroborate this, even Nelidov, the Russian ambassador to France, who was aware of strategic flaws in the east and wanted to cut costs, argued that Russia, in its pursuit of reputation, should continue the war to achieve a decisive victory. Tzar Nicholas II was impressed (Fuller, 1992: 406).

Regarding distance, Russia managed to overcome the transportation bottleneck, and the Trans-Siberian railroad could have transported hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Russian intelligence collected data indicating that Japan was on the verge of collapse. The continuation of the war would have suppressed the revolution. Moreover, if Russia had been forced into this war and had won it, it could have completely stopped the revolution. However, playing with Clausewitz's trinity, especially after attacking Russian soil, was precarious and could have jeopardized the chance: new demands could have led to new battles. After all, it was merely a decision made by one individual, whose reputation was at stake for being indecisive.

To conclude with Carl von Clausewitz's assessment of the war, it is evident that Russia's political objective was only to maintain its honor and avoid defeat. It was

the storm that would have influenced both Russian flanks, compelling them to fight. And, no, Japan could not have obtained war indemnity.

DISCUSSION

Whether there will be a WT while the war is still in swing between a great power and a regional power in a limited conflict depends on many factors. Firstly, it hinges on the political and military objectives of the involved forces and supporting entities, as well as the political climate and circumstances in these countries: economic situation, public opinion, elections, political upheavals, and other political, economic, social, public health, security events, natural disasters, etc. It also depends on the cost of war they are willing to bear and their capability of continuing the war. Additionally, it rests on the smaller power itself and its willingness and ability to wage the war. Finally, it certainly depends on the powers that support the regional power and on their political and military goals. If supporting major powers have already achieved their political and military goals, and the cost of war becomes too high for them, or new internal or external political developments occur that affect the war itself, the supporting powers can request an exit from the war by exerting pressure on the smaller power to approach the negotiating table.

Whether the Russo-Ukrainian War will end with negotiations, and, if so, whether the principle of leaving a major power in conflict with a smaller one to achieve a win-win situation will be confirmed, remains to be seen. Therefore, to draw some conclusions regarding possible WT, a compatible war was investigated between a great power and a regional power in the limited Russo-Japanese War. This analysis explored its conclusion and negotiations, particularly focusing on whether a smaller power that held a stronger position on the battlefield could have obtained more favorable terms from the negotiations, leading to a win-lose outcome. It should be emphasized that the situation is not identical; it pertained to imperial Russia during a pre-revolutionary time at the dawn of a new major world war in the West. Therefore, the Eastern Front in the Russo-Japanese War seemed like an expeditionary war and the people in Russia did not show the same level of interest in it as they did in Mother Russia. Today, the context is characterized by a different geostrategic framework. Specifically, Russia, as a nuclear power, challenges the unipolar world order and wants to contribute to the creation of a new, multipower one. Russia brutally attacked a sovereign country, violating the existing international law order, and committed the same strategic blunder of *information gap* as in the Russo-Japanese War, expecting that it was sufficient to merely raise a Russian flag. Conversely, Ukrainians are also highly motivated, as were the Japanese. On the other hand, Ukraine has not conducted as extensive preparations for war as Japan did, but it can compensate since all Western great powers are sympathetically and overtly supporting Ukraine, while Japan was covertly supported by just one great power. The West has been supporting Ukraine through diplomacy, military aid, intelligence, and financial assistance, accepting refugees, and imposing sanctions on Russia.

Therefore, the crucial question remains: Will it be necessary for the international community, led by the US, to reward a bully by entering final negotiations with Russia? However, regardless of the above, WT always has a positive aim because it saves lives and stops destruction. Thus, negotiations are in progress simultaneously with the war, involving numerous attempts at peace agreements. Alongside talks with Ukraine, Russia, considering itself a great power, will negotiate only with another great power, the USA, which Russia considers a rival in the realm of Great Power Competition (GPC). Russia officially refers to the West as an enemy due to internal political reasons. Apart from that, Russia denies the strategic importance of Europe not out of concern for European strategic independence, but rather to disrupt EU-US strategic synchronization. Consequently, Russia will negotiate strictly with the US, considering it the flagship country of the West, claiming that Ukrainians are not their enemies but merely a means for the West to achieve its goal. However, if the war reaches the phase of final negotiations, many elements of WT remain the same and can be analysed similarly to WT in a limited war between a great power and a regional power.

Based on previous research, a plausible scenario for WT can be predicted in the existing Russo-Ukrainian War. The conflict has entered a phase of exhaustion, and the supporting great power will struggle with critical domestic political events, such as US elections, which could change foreign policy objectives, and external political challenges, such as a new war in the Middle East, which is strategically important for the USA. Nevertheless, Ukraine is not of primary strategic importance for the US, and to translate it into *blood and treasure* war terminology: the US is willing to *pay for* the objectives of this war rather than *die for* them. Among others, these factors could lead to diminishing support for Ukraine. Keeping in mind that the US GPC focus has already shifted towards the Pacific and South China Sea to counter China (Full Spectrum Competition), and that in the Russo-Ukrainian War, their political and military objectives may already have been achieved, WT could prevail as an acceptable solution in this conflict. Russia, as a second GPC challenger of the existing world order, has been marginalized in Europe, i.e., removed from the strategic table, and with WT, the war could become a frozen conflict, predominantly concerning Europe. NATO has been augmented (by the addition of Sweden and Finland) and has significantly strengthened due to enhanced security awareness among members and an immense increase in armament procurements. The US has been confirmed as an unavoidable guarantor of European peace and security, extending the post-WWII security architecture of Europe. All European efforts to establish a self-sufficient and strategically independent defense force alliance, such as France's initiatives, seem unlikely at this moment.

Furthermore, the important role of the possible mediator will be released, and based on the previous case, the upcoming new power should be the top contender. Despite Turkey's eagerness and overt ambition as a regional power (as evidenced by the Istanbul communique), the authors still consider China, with the support of the EU, as the most plausible mediator (as outlined in the 12-point document). China is a non-interfering actor and a reliable partner for both adversaries. Politically, China

has provided assurances to both Russia as a strategic ally and to Ukraine as a party that recognizes its territorial integrity. Moreover, China wants to keep Russia as an ally and protect it from losing face, while also aiming to avoid disappointing the West, confirming itself as a reliable partner to both sides. This may seem like an acceptable precondition for a mediator. Besides the challenge that the West faces in accepting China's non-democratic governance, the most important balance for the US is whether to allow China to draw strategic benefits from this conflict as a mediator or to prolong this exhausting war and risk losing chances to engage in negotiations with Russia. Due to the abovementioned reasons, it still opens up the opportunity for other neutral countries and international organizations to act as mediators: Qatar, UAE, SA, EU, Switzerland, India, Turkey, etc. However, timing for negotiation is crucial and negotiations must be acceptable for both sides (Shelling, 1980). If the gap in negotiating time exceeds and Russia realizes that it can win this war, the negotiating demands will rise, potentially leading to a lost opportunity. On the other hand, if Ukraine is successful on the battlefield, Russian demands should significantly decrease.

The other option is to continue supporting Ukraine in its attempt to defeat Russia or overthrow the Russian political establishment. In both cases, supporting countries cannot abandon Ukraine, whether in a continuation of war or in possible negotiations, because it could lead to strategic inconsistency that could eventually boost Russia's efforts to undermine the world order. Moreover, an escalated war with a nuclear power could additionally frighten the international community, influence the global economy, and weaken international unity, especially in Europe, which could affect its capability to support Ukraine. Nuclear capability is the ultimate de-escalator, keeping the war strictly in the conventional zone. Although Russia threatens with nuclear power and intends to exploit nuclear deterrence, it is unlikely that it will play a nuclear trump card. Nevertheless, global concerns will remain. If the nuclear great power realizes that it is losing the war, with the catastrophic consequences of losing territory or statehood, it may resort to its ultimate nuclear option. So, a narrative of destroying and dismantling Russia could be detrimental. For this reason, the international community will always experience honest relief after reaching a peace treaty with a nuclear power.

Finally, the most demanding aspect of WT needs to be addressed: how to satisfy Russia as a great power with an honorable peace without humiliation. It is important to consider what is important for Russia's pride, what it can present as a victory to its people, and whether territorial demands, such as keeping Crimea and granting special status to the Donbas region as per the Minsk Agreement or possible referendums following the Istanbul communique, will suffice, or if the conducted bloodshed forbids such a stance. Moreover, beyond Ukrainian territory, what are the negotiating options for Russia to give the impression that they did not lose the war? In other words, what is important for Russia on a larger geopolitical scale as a GPC competitor but less crucial for Ukraine? Although territorial demands seem insurmountable for both sides (most peace treaty attempts postpone territorial issues for the future), the authors consider Russia to be keen on maintaining its

status as a great power in the GPC. It could have political, economic, and diplomatic demands that might also be offered by the international community. This is particularly true for economic agreements related to lifting sanctions and security agreements regarding the future political and security status of Ukraine, which Russian media machinery could present to the domestic public as an undoubted victory. Additionally, as every table has two sides, some bargaining chips could still be under the table. On the other hand, at the GPC level of war, if the West misses this opportunity to offer Russia at least something to pull it back into the existing world order, the West could enhance the erosion of the existing world order and the establishment of a new multipolar one, which is Russia's primary political objective.

CONCLUSION

WT through negotiations during the Russo-Japanese War answered the research question and corroborated that, despite Japan's successes on the battlefield, as a regional power it could not have negotiated a more advantageous peace in its limited conflict with the great power, Russia. Therefore, the case study of WT in the Russo-Japanese War has confirmed the thesis that WT through negotiations in a limited war between a great power and a regional power may not necessarily end with a win-lose situation, even if the regional power holds a superior position on the battlefield.

This mainly refers to the great power's ability to increase the stakes in the war and its urge to preserve honor. Moreover, other great powers may assist the great power seeking an honorable exit, driven by their higher interests. Additionally, if the war involves support for great powers, the fulfillment of their political objectives also depends on the willingness to support minor powers. Therefore, the authors emphasized the role of a mediator and Japan's excellent decision to divert from the standard European box, characterized by the interplay among great powers, burdened with multifaceted relations and interests.

Finally, although the war is not identical and there is a lack of sufficient information, the authors tried to provide insight into possible outcomes in the case of WT through negotiations in the Russo-Ukrainian War. It would be righteous if Ukraine were to liberate the country and Russia faced deserved humiliation. Yet, such a scenario might come at a significant cost in terms of human lives and destruction, potentially lasting for years. However, as the Russo-Ukrainian War has entered its attrition phase, achieving its political and military objectives through WT negotiations would require Ukraine to position itself militarily in a way that endangers vital Russian interests (similar to how Japan took Sakhalin and threatened Vladivostok after the Battle of Tsushima). Ukraine also depends on the political objectives of supporting powers, which may vary. Therefore, Ukraine must be prepared to achieve its own political and military goals, namely, saving its territory by allowing Russia to maintain its perception of great power importance.

In conclusion, history is repeating itself: after brutally attacking Ukraine, fuelled by boosted arrogance, Russia once again wants to exit a strategic blunder while saving its pride, which may be recognized only from the Russian perspective and for domestic purposes. Considering WT as one of the less researched aspects of war studies and due to new information about the Russo-Ukrainian war, the authors suggest further research in this area.

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KRAJ RATA U OGRANIČENOM RATU IZMEĐU VELIKE I REGIONALNE SILE – STUDIJA SLUČAJA RUSKO-JAPANSKOG RATA S OSVRTOM NA RUSKO-UKRAJINSKI RAT

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SAŽETAK

Kraj rata može nastupiti kroz pregovore dok je rat još uvijek u zamahu. Situacija kraja rata između velike sile i regionalne sile u ograničenom ratu je posebno zanimljiva jer u takvom slučaju kraj rata putem mirovnih pregovora ne može lako završiti sa pobjednikom i gubitnikom čak i ako regionalna sila stoji bolje na ratištu. Da bi poduprli ovu tezu, autori su istražili kraj rata u Rusko-japanskom ratu pokušavajući dati odgovor na istraživačko pitanje da li je Japan u skladu s uspjesima na bojnopolju kao regionalna sila mogao ispregovarati povoljnije uvjete mira u sukobu sa velikom silom Rusijom na početku 20. stoljeća. Zaključno, autori su izvukli zaključke u vezi s mogućim krajem Rusko-ukrajinskog rata u Europi.

Ključne reči: Kraj rata, Rusko-Japanski rat, Ukrajina, Rusija, Mirovni sporazum