Ending the War:
Considering War Termination in a Conflict with Russia

A Monograph

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The return to great power conflict has led to a recent shift in focus for the joint force back to large-scale combat operations. While strategists are concerned with developing a flexible deterrent for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the joint force focuses on winning the "next first battle." However, there is worryingly little discussion of how we might terminate a conflict with Russia once one is started. This monograph argues that international relations theory provides a framework to consider war termination. Specifically, the bargaining model of war provides the variables of credible commitment, information gaps, and vital interests of identity as reasons why countries escalate disputes to military conflict as a form of bargaining over political goods. This monograph argues if these variables form a cause for war, so too will the easing of these variables lead to its termination. Additionally, this monograph blends broad international relations theory with Russia's unique strategic culture, finding that Russia's identity formation interacts with the bargaining model's variables. This blended model is evaluated through two case studies, the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05 and the Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969. The resulting discussion provides a pathway to address current gaps in joint doctrine's operational design elements of termination and military end states.

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Abstract

Ending the War: Considering War Termination in a Conflict with Russia, by MAJ Charles A. Evans, 49 pages.

The return to great power conflict has led to a recent shift in focus for the joint force back to large-scale combat operations. As such, professional military education and joint exercises have focused on overcoming the immense challenges of deploying a force to Europe to counter Russian aggression since their seizure of Crimea in 2014. While strategists concern themselves with developing a flexible deterrent for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the joint force focuses on winning the "next first battle." However, there is worryingly little discussion of how we might terminate a conflict with Russia once one is started. Imagining war termination is a difficult topic as it inevitably involves hypothetical scenarios. However, this monograph argues that international relations theory provides a framework to consider war termination. Specifically, the bargaining model of war provides the variables of credible commitment, information gaps, and vital interests of identity as reasons why countries escalate disputes to military conflict as a form of bargaining over political goods. This monograph argues if these variables form a cause for war, so too will the easing of these variables lead to its termination. Additionally, this monograph blends broad international relations theory with Russia's unique strategic culture, finding that Russia's identity formation interacts with the bargaining model's variables. This blended model is evaluated through two case studies, the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05 and the Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969. The resulting discussion provides a pathway to address current gaps in joint doctrine's operational design elements of termination and military end states.

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Illustrations

Introduction

Tell me how this ends.

—General David H. Petraeus, quoted in
In the Company of Soldiers: A Chronicle of Combat

The year is 2025, and the Russian-speaking population in eastern Latvia temporarily seizes local government facilities and declares autonomy from the capital, Riga. The Russian government hopes to destabilize a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally and develop an excuse for Russian military intervention. Russia presents NATO a dilemma: either enter military confrontation with Russia and risk nuclear escalation or accept that NATO's Article V mutual defense clause is violable. Against expectations, the North Atlantic Council decides to invoke Article V and initiates hostilities with Russian forces and their proxies in the Baltics. If this situation sounds familiar, it is because it is common for think tanks, military exercises, and Congressional hearings to explore this nightmare scenario with the possibility of a thermonuclear exchange.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and the return to great power competition, academics and military professionals alike have spilled much ink on how the United States and NATO will overcome the problems of mobilization, deployment, and tactical employment of NATO formations in Eastern Europe. Major exercises, such as the Defender series in Europe, focus on overcoming this immense logistical feat. The US Army's professional military education circles fixate on what great power land combat might look like to avoid losing the next first battle. The common emphasis is the onset of conflict. Rarely will exercises or academic literature contemplate terminating the war.

War termination is a difficult topic for planners to grasp. It inevitably requires hypothetical scenarios and includes assumptions of initial operational outcomes. Therefore, countries routinely enter wars without considering war termination. In a conflict between nuclear-armed great powers, war termination becomes gravely prescient. The United States' intense focus

on the "next first battle" risks exposing operational artists and strategists to committing this common historical mistake. Planning for war termination is inherent in any campaign plan or operation. US joint doctrine includes the operational design principle of "military end state."[1] But where does an operational planner begin to conceptualize how they may compel Russia to end a conflict short of nuclear escalation given the "fog and friction"[2] inherent in war?

To answer this question, combine bargaining theory in international relations with Russian strategic culture. Bargaining theory provides a framework to evaluate conditions that lead to both the cause and termination of conflict. However, bargaining theorists often neglect a specific country's history, culture, and identity when considering its power and interests relative to its adversary. Therefore, a review of Russian strategic culture will assist in understanding how Russia interacts with the bargaining model. This monograph contributes to academic literature by combining the universalist bargaining theory with country-specific strategic culture, providing necessary context for planners focused on a Russia-centric Operational Plan. Given the changes and continuities in Russian strategic culture, one concludes that Russia will seek to terminate a conflict with NATO when they believe that they, (1) no longer possess an opportunity to achieve their objectives short of nuclear exchange, (2) are reasonably assured that an empowered NATO will not threaten Russian survival in the future, and (3) that Russian vital cultural interests are protected.

To evaluate this thesis, two case studies will be observed involving Russian war termination, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 and the Sino-Soviet Border Conflict in 1969. The Russo-Japanese War is the first great power conflict of the 20th century. It is a useful case study as both great powers understood the war in limited terms. Japan would not advance to

[1] US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2020), IV-21.

[2] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 101.

Moscow, and Russia did not have designs on Tokyo. The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict widens the scope of Russian strategic trends by including the Soviet era. Importantly, the clashes mark the first time two nuclear powers engaged in a militarized dispute without escalating to nuclear exchange.

This paper also assumes a limited conflict with Russia. A NATO drive to Moscow will not be considered. Likewise, Russia's interests will be limited to her historic "Near Abroad," which is essential for war termination. Even if faced with military setbacks, Russia will still maintain bargaining leverage to disable NATO from fully dictating peace terms. Additionally, this monograph assumes the conflict initiated beneath the nuclear threshold, but escalation remains possible, and nuclear escalation remains a risk to be mitigated. Specifically, it concludes that a ground incursion on Russian soil (such as Kaliningrad or St. Petersburg) presents planners with an unacceptable risk of nuclear escalation. To account for nuclear weapons, the case study of the Sino-Soviet Border Clash will look at the role nuclear weapons played in the termination of the conflict.

To understand how bargaining theory can explain conflict termination, one must understand its theoretical background and historical development.

War Termination and Bargaining Theory

> Everyone may begin a war at his pleasure, but cannot so finish it.
>
> —Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*

To analyze how Russia may terminate a military conflict with the United States and NATO, one must analyze the two separate concepts embedded in this research question: war termination and Russian strategy. Bargaining theory proposes armed conflict is a negotiation by force between two or more states (or coalitions/alliances) over political goods or objectives. Bargaining theory evolved in three stages. First, theories of war termination are rooted in classic works of strategy. Thucydides and Carl von Clausewitz provide the theoretical foundation for

understanding the nature of war and how conflicts are ended. The end of World War II triggered an additional review of the theory on war termination. Post-war theorists grappled with the rise of nuclear weapons and their effect on political ends in warfare. Cold War-era scholarship emphasized rationality of actors, signaling of intentions, and importance of accurate military estimates. Since the end of the Cold War, a third generation of scholars have codified war termination theory into formal bargaining models. Through this latest evolution, scholars identified three critical variables which contribute to conflict and its termination: the ability to "credibly commit" to a post-conflict settlement, "information" on relative power and resolve, and "(in)divisibility of interests."[3]

To study war termination, one must first understand the phenomenon and causes of war. Later bargaining theorists will note that the act of fighting settles the initial causes of the conflict, thus leading to termination of the conflict. The Greek historian, Thucydides, provides an authoritative look at the causes and conclusions of the Peloponnesian War. While Thucydides identifies the proximate cause of the epic war between Athens and Sparta as a dispute over the colony of Megara, it is Thucydides' treatment of the underlying causes of the war that make his work timeless. Thucydides famously stated, "The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta, made war inevitable."[4] Thus, Thucydides provides an ancient foundation for the modern power transition theory, where the rise of one state threatens the continued hegemony of the extant power. In other words, Thucydides says Sparta chose war, because it feared a future peace with a more powerful Athens more. As Athens becomes more powerful, she will be less likely to commit to diplomatic agreements favorable to Sparta.

[3] James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 381-382.

[4] Robert B. Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 16.

Therefore, the Spartans opted to defeat the Athenians before they could leverage their economic power into greater military might, increasing their bargaining power.

Thucydides is also famous for constructing the "Melian Dialogue," where the Athenians demanded full Melian capitulation. While Athens was far more powerful than Melos, the Athenians feared that if Melos were not made an Athenian colony, Athenian reputation would suffer, leading Melos and other Aegean islands to form a future alliance with Sparta. The Athenians famously stated, "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must"[5] and slaughtered the defiant Melians, who refused to submit to Athenian terms. The distrust of one belligerent towards the other's ability to credibly commit to a peace treaty caused conflict, which is a common trend in both the underlying cause of the war and the plight of the unfortunate Melians. This issue of *credible commitment* is the first variable in modern bargaining theory.

The Prussian war theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, provided the most critical foundation of the theory of war and its termination. Most importantly, Clausewitz subordinated military action to political objectives. By stating, "war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means,"[6] Clausewitz emphasized the interaction between military action and political negotiation. Because the political object controls war, "the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in magnitude and also in duration. Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace will follow."[7] Clausewitz stated in his "paradoxical trinity" that the rationality of policymakers, the passion of the people, and the chance and probabilities of combat interact to keep war from progressing to its theoretical absolute state.[8] Therefore, it is possible to have limited war, a condition that has prevailed since

[5] Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 352.

[6] Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

[7] Ibid., 92.

[8] Ibid., 89.

the advent of nuclear weapons. This trinity also provides policymakers a systematic perspective of evaluating their own and their adversary's estimates of relative power. As Clausewitz noted, proper evaluation of these estimates requires critical analysis and genius, as commanders will often over-estimate enemy forces, leading to decision paralysis.[9]

Clausewitz stated, "no one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it."[10] Understanding the nature of the war means a leader must identify how they envision its end. Clausewitz advised planners to seek the center of gravity—the "hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."[11] Destruction of this center of gravity breaks the enemy's system and coerces them to negotiate termination to the conflict. As an army attempts to accomplish this, it runs into the fog and friction inherent in warfare.[12] Battlefield setbacks, unforeseen events, and logistical problems all contribute to a "culminating point of the attack" where the attacker will lose his momentum and the advantage will pass to the defender.[13] As the war settles into a stalemate, leaders must decide whether to continue the struggle, or to terminate the conflict on terms short of their original objectives.

Clausewitz was perhaps the first to mention conflict in terms of bargaining.

> If such incentives were of equal strength on both sides, the two would resolve their disputes by meeting halfway. If the incentive grows on one side, it should diminish on the other. Peace will result so long as their sum total is sufficient – though the side that feels the lesser urge for peace will naturally get the better bargain.[14]

Additionally, Clausewitz warned, "even the ultimate outcome of a war is not to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a

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[9] Clausewitz, *On War*, 101, 586.

[10] Ibid., 579.

[11] Ibid., 595-596.

[12] Ibid., 119.

[13] Ibid., 528.

[14] Ibid., 92.

remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date."[15] The enemy may not commit to the final peace agreement that military force thrusts upon it.

Clausewitz's theory became increasingly pertinent with the advent of nuclear weapons after World War II. If belligerents fight wars for political objectives, what political objectives would be worth fighting for if war meant nuclear annihilation? Nuclear annihilation meant absolute war and Cold War theorists scrambled to understand how to deter conflict or keep it beneath the nuclear threshold. One of these Cold War theorists is Thomas C. Schelling. Schelling, an economist, took a rationalist approach to deterrence. He concluded two states could provide tacit signals to each other through actions. Proper understanding of these signals enabled one state to have "information" over the other's military power and the importance of the interest over which they are competing.[16] This contribution is essential because it emphasized the role of information in warfare, a critical bargaining theory variable. Schelling primarily discussed deterrence, but the concept of war termination is relevant here. If countries deter others by signaling their capability and willingness to fight over political goods, then the conduct of a military action is also a form of signaling. Schelling called this "coercive diplomacy," where a country will use force as a bargaining tool to signal its capability and resolve to impose costs on an adversary to achieve a political objective.[17] Like Clausewitz, Schelling believed warfare is simply a continuation of political negotiations, where the language is military force.

While Schelling took a rational approach to warfare, Fred Charles Iklé highlighted the irrational factors that make war termination difficult. Iklé pointed out the tendency that policymakers often enter a war without analyzing its termination.[18] Influenced by the Vietnam

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[15] Clausewitz, *On War*, 80.

[16] Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 74-77.

[17] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 31-34.

[18] Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 6.

War, Iklé lamented wars are tougher to stop once started. He highlighted hawks often over-estimate their own capabilities, while doves will over-estimate the adversary's, leading to conflict.[19] Actors fall victim to the sunk-cost fallacy by prolonging the war in the false hope of winning, believing victory is more important than making peace on less favorable terms.[20] His argument is Clausewitzian because it leveraged the need for genius, the passions of the people, and the fog and friction in war. Iklé's focus on the irrationality of actors made it difficult for theorists to use his ideas to develop a formal theory. However, Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey identified a way to systematically study how irrational factors affect war termination.

Blainey argues that causes of war are also causes of peace. He analyzed a wide range of historical conflicts and concluded states war over disagreements in their respective writs of power. Through the act of fighting and observation of the outcomes of battles and campaigns, this information gap decreases. 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.[21] Blainey extended Iklé's argument by claiming that before great conflicts, war weariness is often at its lowest. Excitement for conflict often leads to irrational and optimistic military estimates. This hubris creates a disagreement in relative power with an adversary (who, likewise, creates estimates which are too confident) leading to conflict.[22] As Schelling and Clausewitz argued, through the course of the conflict, a country's resolve and military capability is vetted through the conflict. When both countries agree on the new levels of power, they terminate the conflict, and a renewed war weariness sets in from the fighting, initiating a new

[19] Iklé, *Every War Must End*, 84.

[20] Ibid., 16.

[21] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 122-123.

[22] Ibid., 55.

cycle of peace and war.[23] Thus, *information* on the relative power and resolve of the adversary forms the second bargaining theory variable.

These Cold War theorists set the stage for the third and final evolution of bargaining theory. The 1990s saw a transition out of the era of intense bipolar competition between nuclear powers and, with it, an opportunity to reflect on the Cold War theories and develop a formal doctrine. James Fearon synthesized the previous theorists and concluded warfare is inherently costly for both actors. Since it would be more efficient for actors to arrive at their post-war settlement without resorting to costly combat, there must be reasons why this pre-war settlement does not occur. He explained that warfare is more likely when countries compete over an "indivisible good" (such as a religious city, sacred ground, or something that existentially important), when there are "information gaps," and when there is a question of a country's "credible commitment" to a peace treaty.[24] Since countries have incentives to conceal their power and inflate their true level of resolve to increase their bargaining range, other countries may miscalculate their chances of succeeding through military force.[25] Therefore, to avoid conflict, countries must signal their true levels of capability and resolve to prevent this miscalculation (as Schelling argued). As Thucydides emphasized, this level of power is dynamic and not static. Countries are likely to go to war if they fear the future with a rising adversary. A rising power may not commit to current treaties as signed as their strength accumulates. The concern over "credible commitment" in the other side causes states to risk warfare instead of agreeing to a peaceful pre-war settlement.[26] Finally, adapting Fearon's "indivisible interest" variable to *vital*

[23] Ibid., 118-119.

[24] James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 381-382.

[25] Ibid., 391.

[26] Ibid., 401.

interests of identity highlights that a country's strategic culture creates interests of heightened importance, increasing their willingness to use force.

Dan Reiter took Fearon's argument and applied it to war termination. States will terminate the war, as Blainey argued, as the information gap declines through the act of fighting. However, if a state believes the other will not commit to peace, it will continue fighting, pushing towards Clausewitz's absolute war, resulting in a Melian-style annihilation, annexation of the adversary, or regime change.[27] Reiter argues that despite negative feedback loops on the battlefield, a country will attempt to prolong the conflict if it believes the opposing state cannot credibly commit to the post-war peace. Only a clear sign that a belligerent's hope for victory is vanished (through a decisive defeat or emergence of an enemy alliance), or the expectation of dramatically escalating cost, will the belligerent decrease its war aims to make peace.[28] Clausewitz echoed this by claiming the "inability to carry on the struggle can, in practice, be replaced by two other grounds for making peace: the first is the improbability of victory; the second is its unacceptable cost."[29] A belligerent may be excelling on the battlefield but is skeptical of turning war aims towards regime change because he fears a third party intervention, or he may cross his culminating point of victory. The expectation of increasing costs may leave the belligerent the choice of securing a political good or strategic terrain that would raise the costs on the opponent to violate the post-conflict treaty.[30] For instance, Israel's ongoing occupation of the Golan Heights provides them insurance against the fear of a Syrian commitment problem, by raising the costs of a future Syrian offensive into northern Israel.

Reiter's analysis is critical because it ties together several themes in bargaining theory literature. First, he asserted the information problem remains central to war termination, as

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[27] Dan Reiter, *How Wars End* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 25-29.

[28] Ibid., 38-41.

[29] Clausewitz, *On War*, 91.

[30] Reiter, *How Wars End*, 45.

disagreement on relative power and resolve causes states to miscalculate when deciding to militarize a dispute. Second, he contended the seizure of strategic terrain and political goods in warfare can overcome the credible commitment problem. The idea that states fight conflicts to better their posture in the post-war environment supports theorists of strategy, who argue war is simply a means to improve the strategic position of the state in the international system.[31]

Therefore, this monograph uses the bargaining variables of credible commitment, information gaps, and vital interests of identity to inform the understanding of how a conflict with Russia could terminate. But this analysis is incomplete without understanding how Russia's strategic culture and identity will influence these three variables. Next, the broad political science theory with Russia's historical memory, socialization, and culture is combined.

Russian Strategic Culture

> The political personality of Soviet power as we know it today is a product of ideology and circumstance.
>
> —George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct"

A country's strategic culture informs how they evaluate information on relative power, what they interpret as a commitment issue, and what interests have indivisible importance. While Russia experienced significant changes from the Romanov era, Soviet era, and post-Cold War era, there are clear continuities in Russian foreign policy.[32] International relations theories are a useful tool to evaluate strategic culture because they act as lenses to evaluate international, domestic, and cultural mechanisms that shape a country's strategic outlook. They then fuse Russia's strategic culture with the bargaining variables described above: commitment of the

[31] Everett C. Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

[32] Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 4-5.

adversary to a post-war settlement, availability of information into true power distribution, and the divisibility of cultural goods to develop a mental model of Russian war termination.

Realist interpretations of Russian foreign policy highlight continental geography and Russia's desire for status as a great power.[33] A typical perspective is the oft-cited notion that Russia desires control over Eastern Europe to act as a "buffer state" against continental rivals.[34] As Catherine the Great quipped in the 18th century, "I have no way to defend my borders but to extend them."[35] Tsarina Catherine would be vindicated by history as Russia faced invasions from Napoleonic France and Germany. This history provides current Russian leaders with a plausible excuse for adventurism in Europe in the name of self-defense.

Offensive realists note that Russians seek hegemony as a means of returning to Russia's rightful place as a great power.[36] As a continental power, Russia fears containment as her neighbors look westward. Therefore, Russia desires all-weather naval access at Sevastopol and Mediterranean access at the Syrian port of Tartus, a motive for Russia's recent military interventions in Ukraine and Syria, respectively.[37] In aggregate, these realist explanations primarily fall under the commitment category of war termination. Russia defines her interests by the lack of trust they have in the West's commitment to respect Russia's status as a great power.

Constructivist perspectives of Russia look at the development of Russia's identity compared to their Other. For Russia, this Other is the West.[38] Initially starting as Enlightenment

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[33] Robert H. Donaldson and Vidya Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, 6th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2019), 2-3.

[34] John Berryman, "Geopolitics and Russian Foreign Policy," *International Politics* 49, no. 4 (July 2012): 532.

[35] Quoted in Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of a New Russian Imperialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 17.

[36] Donaldson and Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 397-398; Elias Gotz, "Putin, the State, and War: The Causes of Russia's Near Abroad Actions Revisited," *International Studies Review* 19, no. 1 (June 2017): 242-246.

[37] Donaldson and Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 32.

[38] Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, xxiii.

Europe, the notion of the West continues to play a key role and is currently bounded by the US-led world order.[39] Peter the Great's military modernization in the early-18th century sparked a political tradition that maintains Russia is a European power. These Westernizers believe Russia's Eurasian identity has led to destitution while the West thrived from a liberal, modern development. Therefore, Westernizers such as Tsar Alexander I, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Alexei Kozyrev (Boris Yeltsin's first Foreign Minister) tended to favor both emulation of and cooperation with the West.[40]

Opposing the Westernizers are the Eurasianists, who understand Russian identity as unique from Europeans. Instead of looking to Europe, Eurasianists see Russia's identity as a Eurasian country.[41] Eurasianists see Russia as the custodian of true Christianity—Eastern Orthodoxy, with Moscow as the "Third Rome." Russia is also the defender of the Slavic ethnicity abroad. This ethnocentric approach coincides with heightened nationalism in Russia, typified by Ivan the Terrible and Vladimir Zhirinovski.[42] However, it is also evident in the Soviet era. Vladimir Lenin (at least initially) demanded adherence to Moscow's Communist orthodoxy, which was to act as ground zero of a worldwide revolution. This reflexive desire for control eventually led to rifts within the international communist movement (Yugoslavia and China) as the Cold War developed. In response, Soviet leaders decided to take pragmatic steps to allow other communist countries to pursue "socialism in one country" and for the Soviets to develop "peaceful coexistence" with non-communist powers.[43] This pragmatism provides the final category of Russian strategic identity—the Statists.

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[39] Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 4.

[40] Ibid., 5.

[41] Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors and Sectors* (Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press, 2014), 18.

[42] Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 7-9.

[43] Margot Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 27-31, 47-48.

Statists still identify Russia as a power unique from the West but are willing to cooperate with Western countries over mutual interests. Viewing Russia as a unique power, Statists do not look to Western economic and liberal politics as a model for Russia, seeing Western calls for democratization skeptically. However, where interests overlap, Statists act pragmatically to bolster Russia's status as a great power while lowering the risks of military conflict with Western powers.[44] Josef Stalin developed relationships with Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. Nikita Khrushchev's desire for "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist West was a major break from previous Soviet orthodoxy, which promoted the inevitability of communist revolution over the entrenched bourgeoisie. After the Cold War ended, Yeltsin and Kozyrev pursued a Westernizer agenda in foreign policy. However, perceptions of Western slights in Chechnya and Bosnia, combined with fears of further NATO expansion, led to a return of traditional Russian Statism under Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov.[45] The rise of Vladimir Putin to office in 2000 set Russia on a decisively Statist path, with a focus on authoritarian stability at home combined with a pragmatic foreign policy abroad which identified the West as another power with which Russia could both antagonize and cooperate.[46]

Russian strategy must account for domestic politics as well. As Christopher Marsh and Nikolas Gvosdev write, Russia's policy is not monolithic, but made up of several "sectors" of Russian society, including military officers and oligarchs.[47] For instance, Vladimir Putin must maintain key actors' support to reflect Russia's economic and political stability. As Iklé suggests, domestic political influencers in Russia's foreign policy are important to consider as they may have interests to either terminate or escalate a conflict.[48]

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[44] Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 6-7.

[45] Ibid., 86-87.

[46] Ibid., 158.

[47] Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 8-10.

[48] Iklé, *Every War Must End*, 60-61.

In addition to maintaining a coalition of powerbrokers in Russia, Putin must also maintain domestic legitimacy. The "color revolutions" in Russia's Near Abroad are therefore problematic. These revolts threaten to spread to Russian allies in her traditional sphere of influence, such as Belarus.[49] More worryingly, ideological contagion from these demonstrations could spread to Moscow, threatening Putin's control and Russia's authoritarian arc. Therefore, it is in the regime's interest to intervene in neighboring countries to prevent consolidation of revolutions that run counter to Russia's preferred ideology. These interventions span multiple eras of Russian history, from Tsar Nicholas I's suppression of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution, to Khrushchev's suppression of Hungary's 1956 version of revolution, to the recent conflict in Ukraine after the 2014 Maidan Revolution. The 1905 Revolution during the Russo-Japanese War provides insight into the relationship between internal unrest and conflict termination.

Fear of revolutions abroad has featured so prominently in Russia's strategic culture that it has become a central tenet of Chief of the General Staff Valeri Gerasimov's military strategy. Gerasimov views color revolutions in Russia's periphery as Western-inspired political warfare designed to reduce Russia's influence and stature as a great power. As the West is adopting methods that fall beneath the threshold of warfare, Russia must be prepared to operate in unconventional methods as well.[50]

Merging Bargaining Theory with Russian Strategic Culture

> One can regard strategic culture as being in good measure socially constructed by both people and institutions, which proceed to behave in some degree culturally.
>
> —Colin S. Gray,
> "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back"

[49] Roy Allison, Margot Light, and Stephen White, *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe* (London: Chatham House Papers, 2006), 161-162.

[50] Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (January-February 2016): 33-37.

Russia's strategic culture informs its view of the three variables to war termination. Russia's continental outlook, combined with political culture (Westernizer, Eurasianist, or Statist), influences their credible commitment to peace. The Kremlin will also terminate conflict upon revealing greater information on assessments of relative power (and its dynamic trend). While part of this process is counting ships and tanks, Russia's strategic culture distorts how Russia understands the West's power and intentions. Russia's regime type and identity formation produces vital cultural/historical interests. These include cities or regions which are of religious or cultural significance. Finally, Russia's authoritarian regimes will view the regime's survival as a non-negotiable interest, influencing possible conflict termination.

Strategic Culture and Commitment

The first variable is credible commitment to a future peace. Three sub-components to the commitment variable are strategic terrain, prospects for future success, and regime identity. Using the bargaining model of war, commitment issues should arise when rising continental powers (especially in Europe) create fear in Russia, leading Russia to aggressively pursue or protect a sphere of influence on her periphery. Recalling Reiter's argument, Russia would be concerned about ceding strategic terrain as it would fear future use by a rival to limit Russia's great power status. Access to naval ports in Syria, Sevastopol, Kaliningrad, and Vladivostok provides Russia with an increased bargaining range in future conflicts. Additionally, Russia maintains influence in neighboring states by freezing conflicts in breakaway territories such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. NATO's seizure of terrain inside Russian territory such as Kaliningrad, St. Petersburg, or even Crimea might invite a nuclear response. However, NATO operations targeting Russia's periphery may provide a bargaining chip, bringing the commitment variable into focus. Seizing strategic terrain from Russian control or influence also provides NATO with security against future Russian revanchism.

Seizure of strategic terrain reinforces the second commitment sub-variable: trends of power in the conflict. As NATO secures critical nodes, the alliance increases its future combat power while degrading Russia's ability to continue resistance. NATO's escalating dominance increases the likelihood Russia will negotiate to protect her interests before its position deteriorates further. For NATO, this means securing objectives tied to expanding combat power while simultaneously reducing Russia's operational reach by neutralizing key assets or protecting vulnerable populations in NATO states. However, trends of power will not always be viewed in rational terms. As Daniel Kahneman suggested, leaders often view defeat in terms of "loss aversion" and will increase risks to avoid an increasingly likely defeat.[51] Therefore, planners must be cognizant of Russia's identity and historical sensibilities–discussed below.

The challenge for planners is to balance NATO's fears of Russian commitment (particularly in the Baltics) with Russian concerns of NATO threating its future great power status. Eurasianists, Westernizers, and Statists all view Russia as a rightful great power and a military defeat to NATO is unlikely to shift this deeply rooted belief.[52] Therefore, NATO should be wary of imposing an unbearable peace on Russia which would be viewed as a "temporary evil," as Germany did after the Versailles Treaty. While it is critical for the US and NATO to protect alliance members against Russian revisionism, planners must therefore organize objectives with an understanding of Russian domestic impacts.

The domestic regime in Russia affects Russia's view of a future commitment problem. Westernizers view Russia's identity as one capable of coexisting within a rules-based international order. If a conflict ends with Westernizers in power, perhaps the commitment issue becomes less salient as opportunities for cooperation with the West outweigh threats of costly

[51] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011), 317-319.

[52] Lukas Milevski, "Prospective Strategy for Baltic Defense: The Russian Public and War Termination in the Baltic States," *Military Review* 98, no. 1 (January-February 2018): 67.

conflict. A Westernizer government that sees Russia as a part of Europe would be more amenable to Western institutions such as NATO, especially if the alternative is spiraling conflict. Likewise, Westernizers provide reassurances to skeptical European governments in Poland and the Baltics, easing NATO's fear of Russian commitment. It is possible that battlefield setbacks would lead to the rise of a Westernizer government as public opposition to the war mounts.[53] However, it is also possible NATO's over-reach could harden support for Russia's Statists and Eurasianists. Adherents of these Russian traditions would make conflict termination more difficult as they would be willing to risk more to protect Russia's future identity against the West. As Iklé predicted, Westernizers would be decried as dovish traitors as hardline leaders look for ways to gamble to resurrect Russia's military reverses.[54]

Strategic Culture and Information

The second variable is the information problem—or uncertainty regarding the true balance of power. Clausewitz states, "War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty."[55] Countries suffer from information uncertainty for three reasons. First, each country conceals its military power from others, creating *private information* unknown to the adversary.[56] Secondly, the balance of power adjusts from the evolving character of warfare and shifting distributions of international power, which combatants often misjudge.[57] Finally, a country's specific strategic culture creates misperception due to cultural and organizational biases.[58]

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[53] Milevski, "Prospective Strategy for Baltic Defense," 59-69.

[54] Iklé, *Every War Must End*, 60-61.

[55] Clausewitz, *On War*, 101.

[56] Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," 395-401.

[57] Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 182-193.

[58] Robert Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception," *World Politics* 20, no. 3 (April 1968): 467-472; Zvi Lanir, *Fundamental Surprises* (Ramat Aviv: Center for Strategic Studies University of Tel Aviv, 1983), 26-38; Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 54.

Deterrence theory assumes revealing information to an adversary on one's own intentions and capabilities makes clear to an opponent that offensive action will be costly. As Stephen Cimbala noted, Russian and Soviet theories on war termination sought to avoid major engagements with the United States and NATO that may spiral towards nuclear confrontation.[59] Therefore, NATO is a powerful tool for the West in preventing Russian expansionism. However, states often conceal information for the purposes of deception.[60] By creating "private information," one increases the risk the other will over-estimate the true balance of power. If Russians do not see credible force to validate NATO's deterrent, they may become convinced of greater military success. Secondly, after a long period of peace, natural shifts in technological development and re-armament create similar opportunities to misjudge the balance of power.

While both private information and dynamic power shifts explain causes of war, the closing of this information gap creates causes for peace. After conflict initiates, private information is revealed through combat and termination results as combatants grasp the true balance of power.[61]

Much of the bargaining framework focuses on the relationship between rationality and uncertainty. As previously mentioned, states have rational reasons to conceal private information from other states, such as military strength and readiness. However, as Blainey and Iklé pointed out, states create their own uncertainty from irrational analysis.[62] Uncertainty is a key bridge between game theory models and psychological and organization theory explanations for why states over (or under) estimate their opponents. Misperception is common in international relations, and it does not simply arise from an adversary's success at deception. Cultural biases

[59] Stephen J. Cimbala and Keith A. Dunn, *Conflict Termination and Military Strategy: Coercion, Persuasion, and War* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1987), 36.

[60] Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," 399.

[61] Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 122.

[62] Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 53-56; Iklé, *Every War Must End*, 19-20.

and heuristics contribute to the formation of misperception.[63] The influence of Westernizers, Eurasianists, and Statists distorts the way Russian decision-makers perceive information. Russia's history with other continental powers biases how they view other's intentions. Additionally, its identity as a great power often creates a false sense of qualitative military superiority over adversaries such as Japan. Therefore, Russia's strategic culture creates its own uncertainty through misperceptions resulting from cultural and organizational biases.

Strategic Culture and Vital Identity Interests

Finally, Russia's vital interests of identity merges ideology and identity construction with bargaining theory.[64] Given Russia's Statist and Eurasianist identity trends, regime survival could form a vital interest. Russian autocrats fear liberal uprisings will oust them from power. As modern Russian military doctrine suggests, color revolutions on Russia's periphery create an existential threat for the regime. Military defeat causes domestic unrest in Russia, as the case study on the Russo-Japanese War will explore.

Cultural factors also create heightened interests. Eurasianists are afraid of increased Western influence—creating a series of bargaining goods that exceed their usual value. Issues that Eurasianists view as central to Russia's unique identity will include areas with Russian speakers, fellow Slavs, or Orthodox Christians and historical locations important to Russia's social consciousness. The clearest example of the latter is the historic center of the Kievan Rus, the Ukrainian capital of Kiev.[65] Therefore, regime type as well as regional and historical factors inform what Russia will be willing to contest despite a clear information picture of military inferiority.

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[63] Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception," 477-479; Lanir, *Fundamental Surprises*, 36-38.

[64] Dan Reiter, "Exploring the Bargaining Model of War," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 1 (March 2003): 36.

[65] Donaldson and Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 21.

The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905

> Had it not been for Nicholas II's belief that the Japanese are an unpleasant, contemptible, and powerless people who could be destroyed at one blow…we would never have become involved in this war.
>
> —Sergei Witte, Russian Minister of Finance, *Memoirs*

The Russo-Japanese War was the 20th century's first great power conflict, introducing history's bloodiest century. Commentary on the causes of the war falls into one of two categories. The first highlights the role of great power competition and the scramble for colonies and resources. This view follows the security dilemma model of military buildups between great powers leading to conflict.[66] The second view emphasizes Russian over-optimism.[67] Russia was the first European country to lose to an Asian power. Yet before the war, Russians displayed a sense of qualitative military superiority over Japanese competitors (as the above quote by Witte indicates). The expectations of victory influenced Russia's assessment of information towards Japan in the pre-war negotiations, leading to conflict.[68] Phillip Streich and Jack Levy contended bargaining theory bridges the two schools of thought and elucidated why pre-war bargaining failed.[69]

The Russo-Japanese War resulted from triangular great power competition between Japan, China, and Russia. During the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95, a modernized Japan crushed

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[66] Roy Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear: A Military History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 6; David Goldfrank, "Crimea Redux? On the Origins of the War," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Lieden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 87-89; S. C. M. Paine, *The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 50-54; Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 211-214.

[67] David Walder, *The Short Victorious War: The Russo-Japanese Conflict, 1904-5* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 40; Igor V. Lukoianov, "The Bezobrazovtsky," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Lieden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 86.

[68] Ibid., 42.

[69] Phillip Streich and Jack Levy, "Information, Commitment, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 4 (October 2016): 489-511.

the ailing Qing Dynasty, seizing vital strategic terrain such as the naval base at Port Arthur and Manchuria's Liaodong Peninsula (later returned to China). Additionally, the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki granted Japan control of Taiwan and a sphere of influence in Korea. The treaty set Japan on a course for great power status in the Pacific.[70]

Meanwhile, Russia was completing the Trans-Siberian Railway, linking Russia's core regions west of the Ural Mountains to the port of Vladivostok. However, Vladivostok remained frozen for four months of the year, limiting its utility as a base for Russia's navy. Russia's search for a warm water port led it to Korea and Port Arthur. Russia seized Port Arthur in 1897 and promptly began construction on a tributary of the Trans-Siberian Railway from Mukden to Port Arthur.[71] In 1900, the Boxer Rebellion provided Russia a pretext to expand its military position in Manchuria enabling them to extend the railway closer to China—and Korea.[72]

Korea served as the key catalyst for war. Japanese Foreign Minister Komura Jutaro claimed, "Korea was like a dagger pointing at Japan's heart and she could never endure its possession by a foreign power."[73] Korea cemented Japan's great power status and served as strategic terrain. If Russia controlled Korea, she would be able to augment her naval power by using Korea's ports, threatening Japan's future command of the seas. This represents a typical commitment problem, as future Russian control of Korea would be more problematic for Japan than the cost of military conflict. Japan had a "narrow window of opportunity" from which it could strike before Russian power became dominant.[74] With time on Russia's side, Japan acted

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[70] Paine, *The Japanese Empire,* 43-46.

[71] David Schimmelpenninck Van Der Oye, "The Immediate Origins of the War," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Lieden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 27-33.

[72] Ibid., 33-39.

[73] Quoted in Streich and Levy, "Information, Commitment, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905," 497.

[74] Paine, *The Japanese Empire,* 52.

on February 8, 1904, launching a surprise naval strike against the Russian First Pacific Squadron at Port Arthur.

Russian over-optimism created an information problem causing the war. An information gap opened because the Russians over-estimated their relative power to the Japanese. Similarly, Japan obscured private information from the Russians, using deception to hide its true intentions and power. A combination of Russian over-optimism and Japanese deception caused Russian intelligence estimates to suggest Japan could only field 130,000 to 160,000 troops. In actuality, the Japanese deployed nearly 500,000 troops to Manchuria by August 1905.[75]

Russia's sense of cultural superiority over Japan influenced how Russia received information, leading to over-optimism and a reckless march to war. Foreign Minister Mikhail Muraviev underlined Russia's overconfidence in Manchuria, "one flag, one sentry, and the prestige of Russia will do the rest."[76] Russian media reinforced this false superiority, dehumanizing the Japanese using racist tropes such as "macaques."[77] Russia anticipated an easy victory against Japan and intended to divert attention from internal unrest. Perhaps the most defining quote displaying Russian over-optimism comes from the Tsar's Minister of Interior Viacheslav von Plehve, "what this country needs is a short, victorious war to stem the tide of revolution."[78]

The rising influence of Eurasianists in Russian court, opposed to Westernizers like Witte, altered how Tsar Nicholas II viewed information. While Witte advocated for commercial expansion eastward, he remained cognizant of provoking the Japanese in Korea. Eurasianists known as the Bezobrazovtsky (after founder, Alexander Bezobrazov), steadily decreased Witte's

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[75] Evgenii Y. Sergeev, "Russian Military Intelligence," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Lieden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 287-28.

[76] Quoted in Walder, *Short Victorious War*, 53.

[77] Sergeev, "Russian Military Intelligence," 288.

[78] Quoted in Walder, *Short Victorious War*, 56.

influence in the court by advocating for greater Russian influence in Korea. Tsar Nicholas II eventually sided with the *Bezobrazovtsky*, leading to the ouster of Witte in 1903.[79] Furthermore, Russian military attaches padded intelligence estimates with cultural arguments, diminishing the Japanese threat.[80] The resulting information gap laid the groundwork for conflict because Russia pushed for political goods without the corresponding bargaining power. Japan had more bargaining power than Russia believed, leading to Russia's fundamental surprise during the war.[81]

Russia performed disastrously, failing to win a single major battle on land or sea. From the initial attack at Port Arthur, Japan landed its 1st Army in Korea and successfully crossed the Yalu River into Manchuria. Meanwhile, the Japanese Navy maintained command of the sea, with the Russian squadrons bottled up at Port Arthur and Vladivostok.[82] The Japanese methodically moved through Manchuria and towards the Liaodong Peninsula, threatening two vital centers of Russian power. The first was the rail hub at Mukden, where Russia's vast manpower could mass after disembarking the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Here, both sides sought a decisive engagement, following the Prussian General Helmuth von Moltke's example against the French at Sedan during the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War. The second was Port Arthur, which housed Russia's Pacific naval power.[83]

Japan pressured Port Arthur from the sea to prevent the Russian Navy from joining the rest of the Pacific Squadron in Vladivostok. But it was by land where the Japanese sought to strike Russian naval might.[84] The Japanese Army entered the Liaodong Peninsula from the north,

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[79] Lukoianov, "The Bezobrazovtsky," 80-81.

[80] Streich and Levy, "Information, Commitment, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905," 503-504.

[81] Ibid., 502.

[82] John W. Steinberg, "The Operational Overview," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Lieden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 109-111.

[83] Ibid., 115-116.

[84] Walder, *Short Victorious War*, 268.

capturing the port of Dalian before besieging Port Arthur. In a preview of World War I, Japan seized vital heights overlooking the port, enabling artillery observers to engage and sink the remaining Russian vessels in port.[85] See Figure 1 for significant Japanese land operations in Korea.

[85] Denis Warner and Peggy Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise: A History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 435-436.

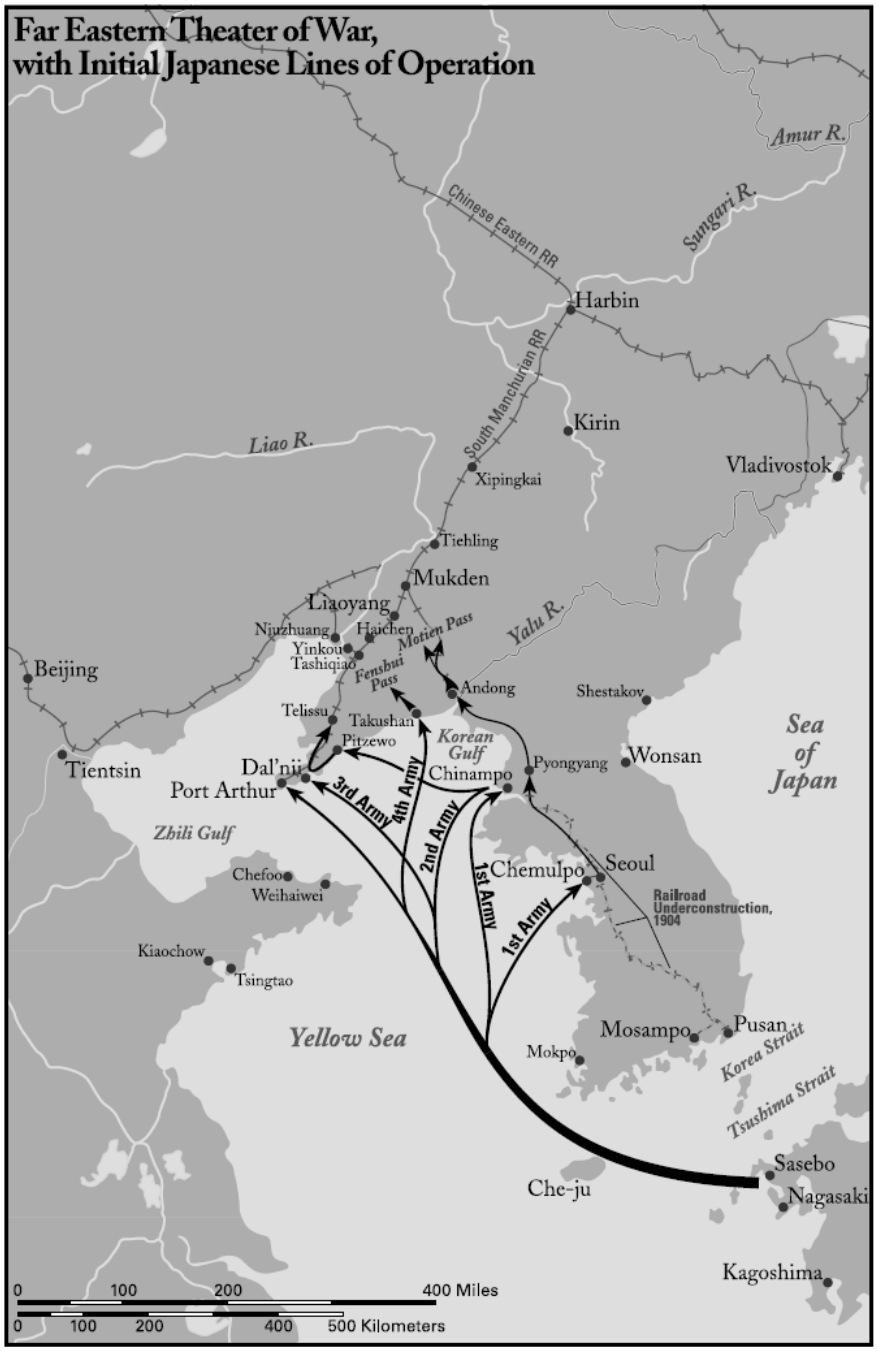

Figure 1. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpennick van der Oye, David Wolff, and Shinji Yokote, eds., *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero* (Lieden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005).

While the siege on the Liaodong Peninsula raged, the Japanese closed in on the rail network at Mukden. The subsequent Battle of Mukden, the largest in history at that point, resulted

in a close victory for Japan and ended hopes of either side executing a Moltke-esque decisive land victory.[86] However, Russia's defeat made clear her miscalculation of Japan's military power.

Meanwhile, Tsar Nicholas II activated the Second Pacific Squadron from the Baltic Sea, which made a torturous voyage around the world. By the time the fleet arrived, Port Arthur had already surrendered, making Vladivostok the only remaining destination. The Japanese Navy under Admiral Togo Heihachiro intercepted the Russian fleet in the Tsushima Straits, winning one of the most lopsided naval victories in history. Russia was losing the war, a fact becoming apparent on the Russian homefront.[87]

News of Port Arthur's fall ignited domestic unrest in December 1904, revealing the Romanov Dynasty's increasing fragility. Intelligentsia of Westernizer tradition gathered in St. Petersburg, demanding a series of liberal reforms. Most importantly, liberals demanded a legislature share power with the Tsar. In addition to Westernizers, populist movements (following the Eurasianist tradition) organized to demand land reform and various workers' rights. Masses in St. Petersburg marched on the Winter Palace to seek an audience with the Tsar. Their demands included immediate termination of the war with Japan. Instead of receiving the Tsar, the petitioners were confronted by Russian troops and police, resulting in nearly 100 dead and over 300 wounded civilians. The events of "Bloody Sunday" (January 22, 1905) sparked the 1905 Revolution.[88]

While the Russo-Japanese War was not the only catalyst, the 1905 Russian Revolution was inexorably tied to the war. Following the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905, a series of mutinies rocked the Russian Navy, most famously on the *Potemkin* in the Black Sea. Large numbers of reservists refused orders, resulting in the Tsar questioning the loyalty of his troops.

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[86] Walder, *Short Victorious War*, 271-272.

[87] Ibid., 278-286.

[88] Ibid., 250-253.

Faced with unrest at home and a deteriorating military situation in Manchuria, Sergei Witte returned to the Winter Palace and advised the Tsar to appease the liberal protestors by establishing the State Duma.[89] In addition to miscalculating Japan's military strength, Tsar Nicholas II over-estimated his own internal support.

The course of the war alleviated the commitment and information problems, leading to the conflict's termination. Russia sought termination of the war because they feared a commitment issue resulting from the trending decline in their own power. The steady news of military defeats made it unthinkable that Russia could secure future objectives through military force. General Aleksey Kuropatkin's vision of concentrating forces along the Trans-Siberian Railway, followed by a decisive battle to destroy the Japanese Army was no longer possible. When Kuropatkin was relieved of command after the Battle of Mukden, his replacement, General Nikolai Linevich, asked his chief of staff, General Sakharov, for a review of the military situation. He concluded that further operations against Japan would prove fruitless.[90]

Following the decisive defeat at Tsushima, Russia could not regain naval superiority in the Pacific. Furthermore, the psychological impact of the defeat at Tsushima reverberated in St. Petersburg. Roy Connaughton notes, "The news of the one-sided, disastrous defeat percolated back to St. Petersburg. At first there was a stunned, numbed despondency which gave way to a gathering uproar of anger and grief. As a result, there was a surge of rebellious outbreaks throughout the land."[91] Russia's domestic and military outlook signaled future decline, so Russia accepted peace overtures from US President Theodore Roosevelt to end the conflict.

Strategic terrain was critical to the termination of the Russo-Japanese War. Japan's military accomplishments prevented future Russian influence in Korea, therefore removing the

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[89] John Bushnell, "The Specter of Mutinous Reserves: How the War Produced the October Manifesto," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Lieden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 334.

[90] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 524.

[91] Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear*, 270.

necessity for Japan to continue a costly conflict with Russia. Indeed, Witte and the Russian peace delegation decided not to contest their loss of influence over Manchuria or Korea.[92] However, Japan needed to threaten Russian strategic terrain to force Tsar Nicholas II to seek termination. Port Arthur's seizure was a major accomplishment for Japan, but they had yet to threaten territory within Russia. The only other Russian port in the Pacific was Vladivostok. Therefore, the Japanese seizure of Sakhalin Island threatened Russia's future Pacific naval power.[93] After agreeing to negotiations, the Japanese invaded Sakhalin Island in July 1905, securing it a month later. Sakhalin Island became a critical bargaining chip in the Peace Treaty of Portsmouth. Russia agreed to divide the island, with Japan holding the southern half to prevent future Russian designs on Hokkaido, and Russia holding the northern half of the island to prevent a future Japanese attack on Vladivostok.[94] Thus, both parties overcame the commitment problem, leading to termination.

The course of the war made information on relative power clear to both belligerents, leading to termination. Russia's previous optimism was replaced with the sobering reality of defeat at Port Arthur, Liaoyang, Mukden, and Tsushima. Historian Sally Paine wrote on Tsushima: "The virtually complete destruction of the Russian Navy crushed Russian morale. . . . The effect was purely psychological but politically debilitating and therefore decisive. While many battles are key . . . few are actually decisive. This was one."[95] During the fighting, Russian intelligence identified the true levels of Japanese strength. Indeed, by the end of the conflict, Russia's military intelligence apparatus improved collection networks and means to disseminate

[92] Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear*, 531-532.

[93] Ibid., 272.

[94] Norman E. Saul, "The Kittery Peace," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Lieden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 502-505.

[95] Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, 69.

intelligence to commanders.[96] Improved information on relative levels of power contributed to Russia's decision to seek peace at Portsmouth.

The conflict revealed information which turned Russia's sense of qualitative superiority on its head. Perhaps the greatest surprise revealed to the Tsar during the Russo-Japanese War was not the Russian military's inferiority but the lack of legitimacy his people saw in his rule. Since Nicholas I, the Romanov Dynasty emphasized the ideological triumvirate of "Nationality, Orthodoxy, and Autocracy."[97] Various Tsars oscillated between interpreting this ideology in a Westernizer mold (as did Alexander I) or a Eurasianist mold (Nicholas I and Alexander III). Nicholas II was solidly in the Statist realm, believing firmly in the necessity of autocratic rule in Russia. The 1905 Revolution rejected traditional Statism in Russia, as liberals and socialists sought a new relationship between governor and governed. In the wake of the widespread unrest, the Tsar (begrudgingly) re-appointed Sergei Witte to lead peace talks in Portsmouth.[98] Witte's success in garnering favorable terms from the militarily successful Japanese earned him influence in government. In October 1905, Witte persuaded the Tsar to sign the October Manifesto, which provided civil liberties and a legislature, the State Duma, for the first time in Russian history.[99] Witte's influence contributed to mitigating ethnocentric evaluations of power, narrowing Russia's information gap and leading to peace.

The act was short-lived, as Russian success in securing a loan from France provided Nicholas with further stability at home, enabling him to dissolve the Duma. He also permanently dismissed Witte from government—rejecting the Westernizer that pulled him out of the Russo-Japanese debacle, installing Statist Pyotr Stolypin in his place. As a result, Tsar Nicholas II returned to autocracy, repression, and military over-optimism before World War I. In the process,

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[96] Sergeev, "Russian Military Intelligence," 302.

[97] Donaldson and Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 23.

[98] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 528.

[99] Walder, *Short Victorious War*, 293.

he nurtured the seeds of discontent which blossomed into the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and the collapse of the Romanov Dynasty.[100]

The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict, 1969

Fight no battle you are not sure of winning.

—Mao Zedong, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks"

In the sparsely populated borderlands along the Ussuri River, two barely noticed incidents changed the course of the Cold War. On March 2 and 15, 1969, Soviet and Chinese forces clashed over Zhenbao Island (Damansky, in Russian)—a small mudflat in the middle of the river. The incidents resulted in a decades-long militarized dispute and solidified the Sino-Soviet Split. See Figure 2 for the topography of the area.

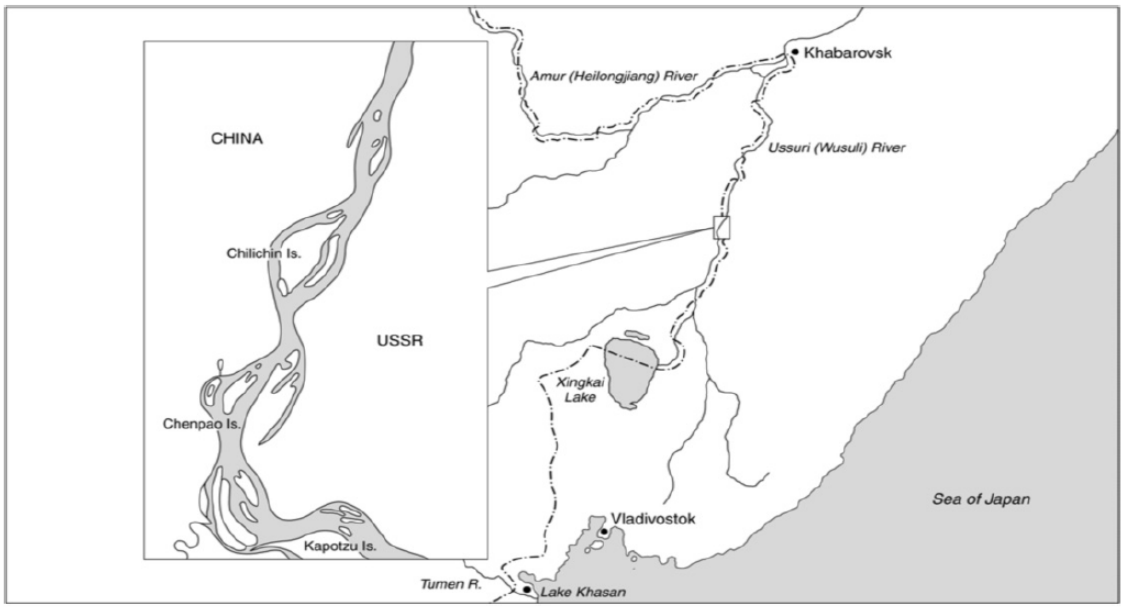

Figure 2. The Amur-Ussuri Rivers and Chenpao (Damansky) Island. Chien-Peng Chung, *Domestic Politics, International Bargaining and China's Territorial Disputes* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 63.

[100] Walder, *Short Victorious War*, 293-297.

Including this case study is a challenge. The conflict does not have a neat start or end date. Neither side issued declarations of war and there are not clear campaigns. Indeed, final agreement over the Sino-Russian border was not signed until 2008.[101] However, this conflict is important for several reasons. First, this is a militarized dispute between two nuclear powers resulting in sustained clashes along a territorial border. Second, the conflict remained beneath the threshold of war in the traditional sense. Finally, both powers in the conflict intuitively understood the conflict must remain limited and used force as a means of signaling their intentions and will to the other.

Strategic cultures heavily influenced the 1969 conflict. The clashes were the culmination of centuries of conflict between two countries that both held an identity as a great power. For China, control over the periphery coincided with the regime's domestic control. As China lost control of its peripheral areas to Japan and Russia, the Qing Dynasty faced internal unrest before falling in 1911.[102] Russia exploited the long decline of the Qings by expanding territorial claims south of the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, signing a series of treaties in the 19th century, establishing the border along the Amur and Ussuri Rivers with China's boundary demarcated along the Chinese bank of the rivers. This expansion left thousands of river islands in Russian territory. For Russia, expansion legitimized the tsars' rule as it represented Russia's identity as a great power. Sally Paine concludes, "For the Chinese, the boundary became the physical incarnation of China's failure to fend off the predations of European civilization, while for the Russians, their expanded boundary enshrined their country's great power status."[103]

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[101] Krista E. Wiegand, *Enduring Territorial Disputes: Strategies of Bargaining, Coercive Diplomacy, and Settlement* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 275.

[102] Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), 74-75.

[103] S. C. M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 13.

The Opium Wars in 1842 marked the start of the "century of humiliation" for the Chinese. The wars underscored China's inferiority compared to the modern European states and forced the Chinese to sign several "unequal treaties" with outside powers, including Russia. Internal convulsions, including the Taiping and Boxer Rebellions stressed the fragility of the Qing Dynasty. The "century" included the fall of the Qings, World War II, and the Chinese Civil War, before the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong was able to reassert domestic control.[104] This era had a lasting impact on China's strategic culture, as it viewed control over the periphery as a means of saving "face" for internal legitimacy.[105] The "century" and the relationship between the periphery and internal regime stability explains why China viewed small islands as indivisible goods worth fighting over. It also informed their view of their supposed fraternal communist allies in the Soviet Union.

With Mao's victory in the Chinese Civil War, there was a warming of relations between the two communist powers of the Soviet Union and China. Mao followed Josef Stalin as a guide for governing China. Like Stalin, Mao obsessed over political rivals and closet "capitalist roaders." As such, Mao tolerated little room for deviation from the Chinese Communist Party.[106] Following Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin's excesses in the famous Twentieth Party Congress "secret speech." Additionally, Khrushchev placed Soviet foreign policy firmly in the Statist camp, seeking "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist world.[107] Khrushchev's willingness to back down from the Cuban Missile Crisis reflected an abandonment of the cause of international revolution in Mao's eyes.[108] Moscow's newfound

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[104] Swaine and Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, 75-79.

[105] Ibid., 13.

[106] Andrew G. Walder, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 25-26.

[107] John L. Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 208.

[108] Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, 52-53.

pragmatism isolated Mao, precipitating the Sino-Soviet Split, which escalated into open conflict in 1969.

The Sino-Soviet Split created a commitment problem for both countries, as they raced to achieve détente with the United States. In 1964, Mao approached the Soviets, demanding they characterize the treaties signed under the tsars demarcating the border as "unequal treaties." The Soviets refused, citing a slippery slope for future Chinese claims.[109] Mao's consolidation of domestic power provided the Chinese with increased bargaining leverage that the Soviets might fear in the future, creating a commitment issue for the Soviets. Additionally, the Sino-Soviet relationship must be seen through a triangular lens—with the US as the third point. Both sides feared that the other would warm relations with the US, creating a commitment issue by shifting the trajectory of power.[110] The Chinese feared the Statism of Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev would cause an opening with the West. Nixon's recognition of China in the 1970s was thus strategically significant for China.[111] The Chinese sought to leverage the border dispute as a bargaining chip to both signal the United States, as well as achieve Chinese interests in other areas.[112]

As in the case of the Russo-Japanese War, strategic terrain formed a commitment issue with the Soviets. While river islands may seem innocuous in terms of strategy, the Bolshoi/Heixiazi Island proved vital for Khabarovsk's future security. Khabarovsk is the capital of the Soviet Khabarovsk Krai province and sits at the apex of the Ussuri and Amur Rivers. The rivers coalesce around Bolshoi/Heixiazi, creating a need for Soviet control to ensure Khabarovsk's river access. Chinese control of this island creates a commitment issue for the

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[109] Chien-peng Chung, "Domestic Politics, International Bargaining, and China's Territorial Sovereignty Disputes" (PhD Diss., University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1999), 101-102.

[110] Donaldson and Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 91-92.

[111] Yang Kuisong, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969: From Zhenbao Island to Sino-American Rapprochement," *Cold War History* 1, no. 1 (August 2000): 42-48.

[112] Wiegand, *Enduring Territorial Disputes*, 249-253.

Soviets, as the Chinese could threaten a Soviet regional capital in the future as bargaining pressure. While military confrontation did not occur on the island (both sides picked remote islands for reasons discussed below), the issue of Soviet riverine access to Khabarovsk stifled negotiations, emphasizing strategic terrain's role in conflict termination based on a commitment issue.[113] Both sides signaled their resolve over this issue by military signaling elsewhere along Sino-Soviet frontier (see map at Figure 3).

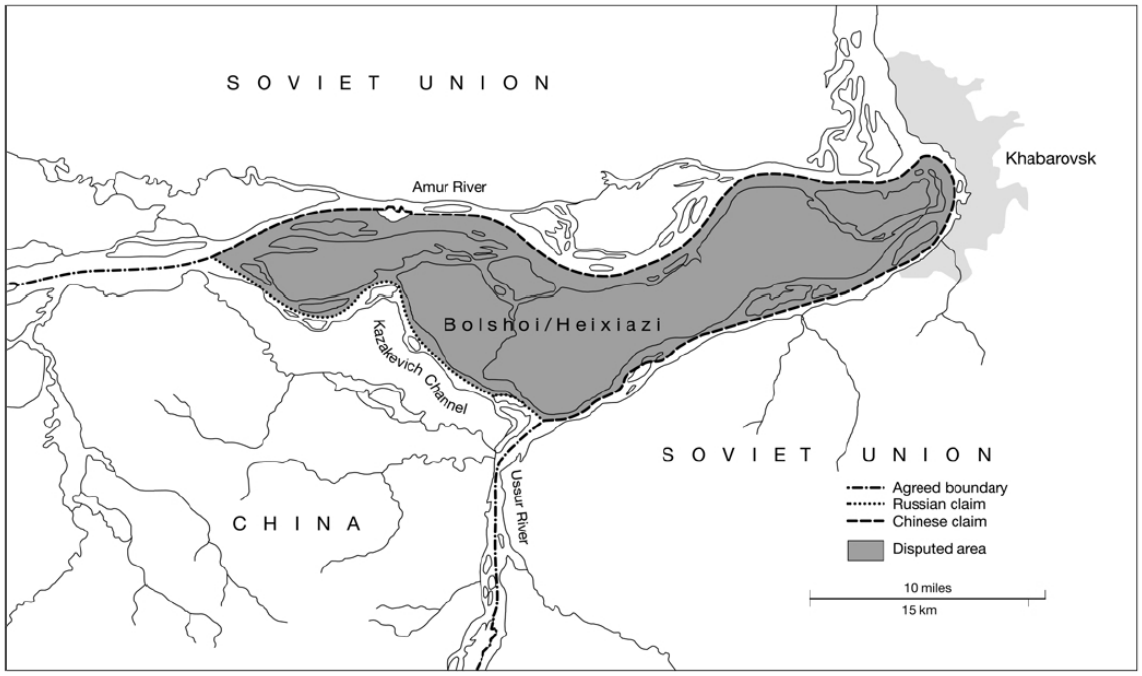

Figure 3. Bolshoi/Heixiazi Island and Khabarovsk. Chien-Peng Chung, *Domestic Politics, International Bargaining and China's Territorial Disputes* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 74.

While Chinese power increased during the 1950s, after the Civil War, domestic events threatened China's relative power compared to the Soviet Union. China was amidst the Cultural Revolution, where Mao sought to leverage student groups to suppress imagined capitalist revisionists and political rivals. The clashes devolved into utter anarchy but served Mao's interests in maintaining power.[114] Combined with the catastrophic Great Leap Forward, the

[113] Chien-Peng Chung, *Domestic Politics, International Bargaining and China's Territorial Disputes* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 73-75.

[114] Walder, *China Under Mao*, 195.

Cultural Revolution dented China's consolidation of power after the century of humiliation. The People's Liberation Army became heavily politicized at the expense of combat effectiveness.[115] One explanation is the diversionary war theory.[116] The chaos surrounding the Cultural Revolution meant Mao feared his power declining. Mao played a two-level game by simultaneously appealing to Chinese nationalists at home by attempting to reverse unfavorable 19th-century treaties while also militarily striking the Soviet Union before domestic unrest deteriorated his ability to do so.[117] Therefore, Mao feared a commitment issue as well, since the intervention was both a means to strike before the Cultural Revolution deteriorated relative Chinese power further.

National myths and domestic politics influenced information asymmetries, leading to conflict and its termination. The Brezhnev Doctrine declared other countries within the socialist movement had limits to reforms.[118] Peaceful coexistence could occur between the socialist and capitalist world, but such an arrangement was not possible between socialist powers.[119] Brezhnev thus falls between the Statist and Eurasianist views. While willing to work pragmatically with the West, he reinforced traditional Eurasianism, depicting Russia as the center of the true religion (the "Third Rome") of international socialism. Brezhnev also subscribed to the correlation of forces theory of Soviet foreign policy. This theory viewed socialism as gaining a critical advantage over capitalism as more states fell to socialist movements throughout the developing world.[120] Ironically, the Soviets feared "losing China" as much as the Americans did in the 1950s, fearing a chain reaction of nationalist movements in the Soviet bloc. The upstart Mao not

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[115] Ibid., 196-198.

[116] Lyle J. Goldstein, "Return to Zhenbao Island: Who Started Shooting and Why it Matters," *The China Quarterly*, no. 168 (December 2001): 994-997.

[117] Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427-460. Reference for further detail on domestic-international linkages.

[118] Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, 194-200.

[119] Ibid., 203-204.

[120] Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, 268-271.

only threatened the Soviet's identity as the center of worldwide revolution, but also offended the historical sensibilities of Russian leaders facing a continental power along her borders. Therefore, the Soviets viewed Chinese actions on the Ussuri River as a significant threat, something Mao did not calculate initially. This perception created an information asymmetry which could dangerously escalate if the gap were not closed through combat beneath the nuclear level.

Scholars generally fault Mao as the catalyst of the clashes on March 2, 1969. Chinese units formed into two echelons, seized the heights on the Chinese side of the river, and ambushed Soviet patrols on Zhenbao Island. Soviet reinforcements ran into China's second echelon, resulting in dozens of Soviet casualties. This was repeated on March 15th, finally catching Brezhnev's attention.[121] The Soviets mobilized thousands of troops with heavy equipment to deter future Chinese aggression. Additionally, they attacked isolated Chinese patrols, decimating them in detail.[122] By 1970, Soviet strength along the frontier increased from 15 to 35 divisions, to face the 67 lesser-equipped Chinese divisions opposing them.[123] This clear Soviet response surprised the Chinese. Zhou Enlai met with Soviet Foreign Minister Alexei Kosygin in August 1969 to discuss the border conflagration. Zhou told his counterpart, "You say we want to go to war. But now we have very many domestic problems to deal with. How can you believe that we want to go to war?"[124] The Chinese clearly under-estimated the Soviet response to the clashes. The new deployments exposed faulty Chinese estimates, causing Mao to limit hostilities fearing further escalation. The Soviet deployments thus decreased Mao's information gap, freezing the conflict.

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[121] Neville Maxwell, "How the Sino-Russian Boundary Conflict Was Finally Settled: From Nerchinsk 1689 to Vladivostok 2005 via Zhenbao Island 1969," *Critical Asian Studies* 39, no. 2 (June 2007): 246-248.

[122] Kuisong, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969," 34.

[123] Chung, "Domestic Politics," 113.

[124] Jin et al., *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949-1976* quoted in Kuisong, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969," 38.

Both the Chinese and the Russians signaled each other to reduce the other's information gap to avoid a dangerous escalation. An interesting feature of the conflict was how it was fought over remote areas along the Ussuri River. The remoteness provided an opportunity for signaling resolve to the other side.[125] As Thomas Schelling anticipated, the clashes served as a form of communication. Saving face was important for Mao during the Cultural Revolution, so he needed to signal both the Soviets and his own population his will to press the conflict. Likewise, the Soviets would not retreat from a challenge to its control over international socialism. As the crisis proceeded throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Chinese used the clashes to gain leverage in other areas of bilateral interests. For instance, the Chinese and Soviets disagreed over the Soviet support to the Vietnamese during the Sino-Vietnamese Conflict in 1979. Additionally, the Chinese opposed the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan (which borders the Chinese periphery) that same year.[126]

Signaling acts as a way of reducing the information asymmetry. Each time military action signals resolve, the likelihood of war termination increases as information on bargaining power and will is revealed to the other side. During the 1980s, a breakthrough occurred when Mikhail Gorbachev agreed with Deng Xiaoping to delineate the border in accordance with the navigable channel of the river (the *thalweg* principle). This effectively handed China hundreds of disputed islands along the Ussuri and Amur Rivers, including Zhenbao Island.[127]

Chinese and Soviet strategic culture elevated the importance of seemingly worthless islands into major strategic interests (close to indivisible interests). At stake was not just remote river islands, but the prestige of the regimes. The Brezhnev Doctrine papered over the inexorable decline of the Soviet Union. Any concession to the Chinese risked further fragmentation of the

[125] Chung, "Domestic Politics," 120.

[126] Wiegand, *Enduring Territorial Disputes*, 267.

[127] Ibid., 272-273.

Soviet bloc elsewhere. For Mao, failure may empower rival factions in a combustible Chinese domestic ecosystem. Historian Tai Sung An stated, "deterioration of relations between the two powers has now reached the point where both adversaries would regard any kind of concession as a shameful defeat."[128]

Concurrently, both sides realized the existential risk to their regimes that would result from nuclear escalation. Therefore, the conflict effectively remained frozen after the 1969 clashes. While Soviet units exchanged artillery fire with the People's Liberation Army, minimal attempts were made to escalate.[129] The fear of Chinese and Soviet leaders of both losing credibility with domestic audiences and military escalation allowed the conflict to sustain itself beyond the fall of the Soviet Union. Ironically, the collapse of the Soviet Union eased the value of the islands to Russia. Despite criticism from local governors in Russia's eastern provinces, there was little political risk for Yeltsin to move the conflict towards settlement.[130] Similarly, the Chinese regime became secure following Deng's Reform Era and after the 1989 protests in Tiananmen Square were extinguished. The islands thus carried less of an iconic value to either regime, creating an opening for conflict termination.

The commitment issue in the conflict finally settled itself after the Cold War ended. The Sino-US partnership lost strategic weight after the end of the Cold War and both Russia and the Chinese started to fear future US hegemony as the major commitment problem. The decisive US victory in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm in 1991, NATO's intervention in the Balkans, and the US Navy's presence during the Taiwan Straits Crisis in 1996 made both China and Russia fear a future of US hegemony. However, with the rise of China and Russia's decline, it remains to

[128] Tai Sung An, *The Sino-Soviet Territorial Dispute.* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1973), 121.

[129] Wiegand, *Enduring Territorial Disputes*, 238-240.

[130] Chung, "Domestic Politics," 127.

be seen if Russia will fear a future Chinese superpower, or if the Chinese will renew an irredentist quest to create equality from the unequal treaties.

Recommendations and Conclusion

> They were persuaded to fight because the enemy seemed weakened by unrest at home: they were persuaded to seek peace because they themselves were now torn by unrest. They were persuaded to fight because they were prosperous and confident, and they were persuaded to seek peace because their prosperity and confidence had dwindled…They were persuaded to fight because their nationalism or ideology could not conceive of defeat and persuaded to cease fighting because their ideology could no longer mask the reality of defeat.
>
> —Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*

Recommendations

Iklé's observation that "military leaders are sometimes guilty of designing wars as if they had to build a bridge that spans only half a river" resonates today.[131] Joint doctrine removed termination as an element of operational design, instead imploring planners to seek the "military end state," which "defines achievement of all military objectives."[132] Too often, instead of a critical discussion of war termination, planners consider what a successful operational outcome may look like. The standard for success becomes the conduct of an operation, rather than its relation to furthering termination criteria. The military end state principle creates further separation of the military instrument of power from diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments, by distancing operations from political objectives. Doctrine requires a framework to assist planners in developing termination criteria.

This monograph suggests bargaining theory's three variables of credible commitment, information, and indivisible interests provides such a framework. These variables, when combined with an understanding of the adversary's strategic culture, builds a mental model for understanding how the war may end. In an era of great power competition with nuclear-armed

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[131] Iklé, *Every War Must End*, 6.

[132] US Joint Staff, JP 5-0, *Joint Planning*, IV-21.

states such as Russia, the lack of a coherent model for war termination is a doctrinal gap which requires urgent redress. The inclusion of the bargaining variables in doctrine forces planners to think beyond strictly military end states to consider how military actions may impact the domestic, cultural, and political responses of opponents. This research strongly suggests an adversary's culture impacts how they view relative power; a factor often overlooked in doctrine and operational planning. Further research should refine a framework for evaluating strategic culture beyond the existing PMESII-PT operational variable structure.[133]

Planners must realize deterrence and war termination are opposite sides of the same coin. Discussions of force posture in Europe must include an understanding of how military force enables achievement of termination criteria in the event of conflict. The ability to threaten Russia's strategic terrain, such as Kaliningrad or Sevastopol, provides an effective deterrent as Russia will be reluctant to engage in a conflict which will cost them vital nodes in their defense structure. Signaling to the Russians that military confrontation will lead to, rather than resolve, a commitment issue will keep bargaining beneath the threshold of armed conflict. Exposing this posture to the adversary during peacetime closes the adversary's information gap, making war less likely, and therefore, deterrence more effective. Finally, planners must be careful in realizing how the Kremlin will receive military signals given their Westernizer, Statist, or Eurasianist outlook. The US must defend its interests in Europe but be careful to calibrate its force posture to avoid a commitment problem with the Russians which will lead to conflict.

Conclusion

Patience and time are my warriors, my champions.

—Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*

[133] US Joint Staff, JP 5-0, *Joint Planning*, IV-7. PMESII-PT stands for Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Terrain and Time.

Despite clear changes throughout Russia's history, there is a remarkable continuity in strategic culture. This consistency demonstrates the inherent link between strategic culture and Russian identity, an identity based on Russia's relationship with its primary Other—the West. This relationship is formed by Russia's geographic position as a continental power, reflexive distrust of Western ideology, and Russia's identity as the center of a Eurasian civilization. Russia's strategic culture informs how it conducts politics, both during peace and war.

If, as Clausewitz famously suggested, war is a continuation of politics, so too is its termination. War is a violent discourse, bargaining between two or more political entities over a set of imagined political goods. The combatants will cease seeking violence in bargaining when they no longer fear the other side's increasing power, easing the credible commitment problem. This could result from the installation of a favorable regime who no longer views the other as hostile, or perhaps the seizure of strategic terrain protects critical interests from future encroachment. Perhaps the will and military mobilization of one side leads the other to conclude that future resistance is futile, leading to peace. Japan's seizure of Sakhalin Island created a commitment problem for the Russians as it threatened Vladivostok in the future. Japan's skillful use of Sakhalin as a bargaining chip in the peace talks contributed to the signing of the Portsmouth peace.

Conflict decreases the information gap and reveals the true balance of power. Pre-war hubris, often inflated by national or cultural identity, is exposed through the devastating reality of war. The revelation of true military power causes states to adjust their pre-war bargaining goals, leading to peace negotiations. Often, information on the adversary's political will is revealed through military signaling, as was the case during the Sino-Soviet border clashes.

Finally, culturally or politically indivisible goods are either destroyed during conflict, or respected by the other side, leading to space for negotiations. These goods are determined and adjusted by the identity of the regime in power. Russia defines this as the survival of the regime in the face of Western-inspired revolutions on Russia's periphery.

Political, cultural, economic, and social factors are helplessly intertwined with military operations. Planners cannot consider operations in a "politics-free zone" with a clear delineation between the end of politics and the start of war.[134] The return of great power competition means that military operations must consider political factors, with an eye towards achieving conflict termination. Failure to do so risks nuclear escalation, making political objectives irrelevant.

[134] Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 40.

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