

---

---

# West Bohemian Historical Review

## XV | 2025 | 1

---

---

### Editors-in-Chief

**Lukáš Novotný** (Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic)

**Monica Rüthers** (Faculty of Humanities, University Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany)

### Co-editor

**Roman Kodet** (Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen)

### Editorial Board

**Stanislav Balík** (Faculty of Law, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic)

**Gabriele Clemens** (Faculty of Humanities, University Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany)

**Radek Fukala** (Faculty of Philosophy, J. E. Purkyně University, Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic)

**Michael Gehler** (Faculty of Educational and Social Sciences, University of Hildesheim, Hildesheim, Germany)

**Frank Golczewski** (Faculty of Humanities, University Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany)

**László Gulyás** (Institute of Economy and Rural Development, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary)

**Arno Herzig** (Faculty of Humanities, University Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany)

**Hermann Joseph Hiery** (Faculty of Cultural Studies, University of Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany)

**Václav Horčíčka** (Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)

**Ivan Jakubec** (Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)

**Drahomír Jančík** (Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)

**Zdeněk Jirásek** (Faculty of Philosophy and Sciences, Silesian University, Opava, Czech Republic)

**Hans-Christof Kraus** (Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Passau, Passau, Germany)

**Richard Lein** (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria)

**Hermann Mückler** (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria)

**Martin Nejedlý** (Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)

**Aneta Pawłowska** (Faculty of Philosophy and History, University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland)

**Irén Simándi** (Institutional Departments of International Relations and History, Kodolányi János University, Székesfehérvár, Hungary)

**Aleš Skřivan, Jr.** (Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen / Faculty of Economics, University of Economics, Prague, Czech Republic)

**Aleš Skřivan, Sr.** (Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic)

**Arnold Suppan** (former Vicepresident of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria)

**Andrej Tóth** (Faculty of Economics, University of Economics, Prague / Faculty of Philosophy, University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, Czech Republic)

**Jaroslav Valkoun** (Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen / Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)

**Pavel Vařeka** (Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic)

**László T. Vizi** (Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences, Székesfehérvár, Hungary)

**Marija Wakounig** (Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria)

**Jan Županič** (Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)

---

---

## Contents

---

---

### Studies

<i>Oto Mestek, Reges Gotorum defecerunt: The Visigoths in the Asturian Chronicles</i> .....	1
<i>Ayowole S. Elugbaju, Cultural Heritage and Change in Yorubaland, Southwestern Nigeria</i> .....	25
<i>Armend Mehmeti, The Adriatic Question: Case Albania</i> .....	47
<i>Olasupo Thompson, A Town once blessed with Two ‘Witches’: A Study of Lady Jane McCotter and Gertrud Biersack in the Health Services if Abeokuta, 1928–2014</i> .....	73

### Discussion

<i>Miguel Leite Ferrari, The Divorce of Two Islands, the End of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the Interpretation of Post-WWI International Policy</i> .....	95
<i>Csilla Dömök, Der Erste Weltkrieg und das 20. Jahrhundert</i> .....	123
<i>Gergely Fejérdy, Passport Affaire of the Crown Prince of Habsburg during World War II</i> .....	143
<i>Kateřina Komorousová, Deaths of Border Guard Members on the Czech-Bavarian Border</i> .....	163
<i>Barnabás Vajda, From the post-Cold War toward a Renewed Cold War? The Multifacetedness of the Cold War Concept</i> .....	189

### Review

Jonathan CURRY-MACHADO – Jean STUBBS – William Gervase CLARENCE-SMITH – Jelmer VOS (eds.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Commodity History</i> ( <i>Michal Wanner</i> ).....	201
--	-----

## From the post-Cold War toward a Renewed Cold War? The Multifacetedness of the Cold War Concept

*Barnabás Vajda*<sup>1</sup>

---

---

Currently we are witnessing new situations in international relations. The international political climate has cooled down once again, and a “New Cold War” is often mentioned nowadays. Despite our rich and multi-layered knowledge of the Cold War, there are firm signs that our thinking about its conceptual nature has been influenced retrospectively by the most recent international affairs in general and by the Russo-Ukrainian war in particular. The author of this study argues that it is worth considering a possibility of a “new” or “re-started” or “renewed” or “re-launched” Cold War. In the author’s understanding, since 1991 the meaning of the term Cold War has expanded. On the one hand, Cold War is far more than a historical era; on the other hand, the public opinion considers it, in its renewed form, a phenomenon that means and refers to any kind of disorderly and destabilized international relations. Consequently, a new periodization for the most recent history can be proposed such as the old Cold War; the post-Bipolar era; and the renewed Cold War (from 2007/2014/2022 onward). The author’s main argument says that the scale of the renewed Cold War is smaller than the scope and the scale that the old Cold War used to have, nevertheless, its significance regarding the world order is not smaller: Is it a start of a new world order based exclusively or dominantly on sheer force?

---

---

### The Cold War is over...

The overwhelming majority of Cold War historians are of the opinion that the Cold War as a historical era ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the years 1989–1991.<sup>2</sup> A good number of primary sources of

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Selye University, Faculty of Education, Department of History, Bratislavská cesta 3322, SK-94501, Komárno, Slovakia; email: vajdab@ujss.sk.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Cs. BÉKÉS, *Hungary’s Cold War. International Relations from the End of World War II to the Fall of the Soviet Union*, Chapel Hill 2022; Z. BRZEZINSKI, The consequences of the end of the cold war for international security, in: *The Adelphi Papers*, 32 (1991); Ch. HARTMAN–P. VILLANOVA (eds.), *Paradigm lost. The Post Cold War Era*, London & Concord, Massachusetts 1992.



historical importance can be cited as arguments for the end of this era. Just to name a few, the fifteen-page political statement titled the Charter of Paris for a New Europe issued at the European Security and Cooperation Conference that ended on November 21, 1990, literally began with the statement: “*The age of division and tension in Europe is over. [...] Europe has freed itself from the legacy of the past.*” We can also mention the joint statement by Boris Yeltsin and G. H. W. Bush at Camp David in which the second point of the document stated that the two superpowers “*will seek to remove all vestiges of Cold War hostility*” and that “*the United States and Russia are now ushering in a New Era regarding their relationship*” (February 1, 1992).

There are clearly strong arguments against a continuing Cold War. In historical hindsight it is very important that the contemporary protagonists regarded the Cold War as being over already in the times when it was only halfway through. For example, diplomatic insiders of the 1960s and 1970s, such as USA Ambassador to Moscow Charles E. Bohlen or Soviet Ambassador to Washington, D. C. Anatoly Dobrynin, at numerous points during their remarkably rich diplomatic careers considered “the Cold War over” or sometimes they felt that “it had returned”.<sup>3</sup> Historian John Lukacs wrote a monograph on “a” history of the Cold War already in 1962.<sup>4</sup> We can also cite from the American and European press from the 1980s which frequently referred to Ronald Reagan’s “new Cold War” and so forth.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that there was once the old Cold War which began in 1945 (the earliest) or in 1947 (more likely), and ended sometimes between 1988 and 1991, depending on what event or process one considers to be the most relevant factor of this historical turn. Nevertheless, it is not easy to answer the basic question that what were the characteristic

<sup>3</sup> Ch. E. BOHLEN, *Witness to History 1929–1969*, New York 1973, pp. 286, 287, 493; A. DOBRYNIN, *In confidence*, New York 1995, pp. 411, 444, 478.

<sup>4</sup> J. LUKACS, *A history of the Cold War*, New York 1962.

<sup>5</sup> Related to this is the fact that the concept of “the second Cold War” has already been used in the Hungarian scholarly literature. In 2000, Csaba Békés, the leading scholar of the Hungarian Cold War research introduced a novel Cold War chronology, in which the total time period between 1945 and 1991 consists of a first half of the period, “*the first Cold War, the irrational phase [...] the worst phase of it up until 1953*”, which was followed by “*a second Cold War from 1953 to 1991*”. See Cs. BÉKÉS, *Enyhülés és emancipáció. Magyarország, a szovjet blokk és a nemzetközi politika, 1944–1991*, Budapest 2019, p. 15. Yet, prof. Békés slightly changed his position on the term “second Cold War” in one of his later works, calling the period between 1979 to 1985 a “period of standby détente”. See Cs. BÉKÉS, *Hungary’s Cold War. International Relations from the End of World War II to the Fall of the Soviet Union*, Chapell Hill 2022, p. 13.

features of the Cold War which had already ended, since there is no comprehensive (concise, coherent) definition of the Cold War.

In general terms, the Cold War used to mean a bipolar world order which was dominated by the USA and the Soviet Union. It was a flow of international relations, a process that took place in an overall atmosphere of mistrust and animosity between two political and military hegemonies and their respective block members. Reviewing the extremely abundant international historiography of the Cold War, it is not easy to single out a definition as the most typical one. Being aware of the simplification, I focus here on two definitions from the scholarly literature. Firstly, Odd Arne Westad's recent definition states that "*the Cold War was born as an ideological contest in Europe and the European offshoots, Russia and the United States*".<sup>6</sup> Secondly, I draw attention to Mark Kramer's slightly earlier summary: "*Two features of the Cold War distinguish it from other periods in modern history. First, it stemmed from a fundamental clash of political ideologies (Marxism-Leninism versus liberal democracy). Second, it entailed a highly stratified global power structure [...] Both of these features were prerequisites for the Cold War.*"<sup>7</sup>

By analysing and condensing several interpretations of the Cold War into a formal definition, we can establish the following: By the Cold War we mean an international phenomenon in which there is a clear conflict of interest between two major power actors who are imbued with ideology; during this conflict the nuclear option is an important factor and their conflicts extend not only onto the direct participants but they have a global impact.<sup>8</sup>

### **If the Cold War is over, why are we talking about it?**

The confidence of the scientific discourse over the essence and the time span of the Cold War has been shaken recently. Even the most renowned

<sup>6</sup> O.A. WESTAD, *The Cold War. A world history*, London 2018, p. 261.

<sup>7</sup> M. KRAMER, Power, politics, and the long duration of the Cold War, in: S. PONS, F. ROMERO (eds.), *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War. Issues, interpretations, periodizations*, London, New York 2005, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, when applying the above definition, selection and careful weighting should be done between related phenomena. For example, during the analysis of events, truly determining (relevant) factors should be separated from less determining, or downright irrelevant, factors. Does the number of participants in the Cold War matter, i.e. should we stick to two superpower participants or perhaps a limited number of actors? If there is a conflict of interest among the Cold War participants, exactly what type of interest conflicts are we witnessing today: is it a political, military, economic, or ideological tension, or a combination of them? and so forth.

scientific authorities of the Cold War started to ask, among other questions, what came about when the Cold War was over? For example, O. A. Westad in one of his basic Cold War books (dated 2018) denies in the one hand that recent US foreign policy towards Russia or China “*would lead to a new Cold War*”;<sup>9</sup> yet, on the other hand he makes us aware that during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century “*new forms of global interaction had taken place in the world*”.<sup>10</sup>

The language of the news on recent international affairs has also contributed to the terminological uncertainty over the Cold War. For if that era is definitely over, then why do the public political discourse as well as analytical media of our time often refer to “Cold War conflicts”, “a return of a new Cold War”, “Cold War mentality”, or “continuing Cold War attitude”, or “Cold War-type international tensions of our times”, etc.?<sup>11</sup> Why is the concept of the Cold War being mentioned so regularly and in so many different aspects, and why do observers and commentators interpret it as something still ongoing and effective? Why is the “Cold War” mentioned every now, if and when the Cold War ended in 1991 and we have been living in a post-Cold War era for three decades now?<sup>12</sup> Of course, one has to acknowledge that public speakers when referring to the Cold War as an expressive *metaphor* do not necessarily consider the historical relevance of the term they use. After all, many of the phenomena

---

<sup>9</sup> WESTAD, p. 625.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 616.

<sup>11</sup> My press examples come mostly from the Hungarian press. Term “post bipolar age” is mentioned by Viktor MARSÁI in *Válasz online*; visited [2022-07-14]. Term “a newer Cold War” appears at Péter STEPPER in *Magyar Nemzet online*; visited [2022-07-14]. Term “new cold war” was used by Viktor MARSÁI in *Válasz online*; visited [2022-09-14]. Term “modified Cold War” was used by strategic expert Réka SZEMERKÉNYI; according to her, it is justified to speak about a “new chronology of the Cold War”, see R. SZEMERKÉNYI in *Mandiner online*; visited [2022-04-11]. It has to be noted however, that many identical or very similar phrases appear in the press from the USA through European papers up to the Chinese press in English.

<sup>12</sup> Verbal references on the Cold War appearing in international political press after 2022 are so numerous that there is no need to prove their existence, here I indicate a few examples for the sake of illustration only. US President Joe Biden felt it necessary to state in Bali that “the US does not seek a New Cold War”. (US President Joe Biden on 14. November 2022 in Bali, Indonesia; cited in *China Daily*, November 18–24, 2022.) North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in October 2023, referring to his cooperation with Russia, “*urged North Korea to play a more significant role within the coalition of countries opposing the US [...] in the new Cold War*”, in *Mandiner online*; visited [2023-10-13].

that used to characterize the Cold War (an era very, very close in time for many of us) have been living with us.

The more research is being done on the Cold War, the more questions are raised about its particularities. For instance, when did the Cold War end? Honestly, picking its end is quite optional. For many, and not only for Germans, but the Cold War also started to end symbolically in November of 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down and ended by the re-unification of Germany in October 1990. From the perspective of the re-united Western and East Central Europe, the Cold War ended with the “Charter of Paris for a New Europe”, a solemn political declaration at the Paris Conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in November 1990. For those East Central European citizens who care remembering historical turning points, especially the ones that were turning points of their lifetime, the Cold War started to end now when they got sense of their re-gained national independence in the years of 1988 and 1989. The official break-up or dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 can be described not simply as a reassuring end of a historical process but rather as a big and deep sigh from the chest of millions of East Central European people: Free, at last free without Russians!

But when did the Cold War end for the countries of Asia and the Global South? Even if there is no definite answer, we know it with high probability that for most of the Globe the historical period that we call Cold War means quite a different era than for most Europeans.<sup>13</sup> And finally, when did the Cold War end for Russia? Without too much ado and detail, if one considers the presence of the Russian army in Moldova/Transnistria since 1992; or one looks at Russia’s war in Georgia/South Ossetia/Abkhazia in August 2008; or one studies Russian occupation of the Crimea in 2014;<sup>14</sup> or one looks at the all-out attack of Russia on Ukraine in February 2022 – so, judging from these events, it is rather obvious that the Cold War

<sup>13</sup> E.g. P. M. McGARR, *The Cold War in South Asia*, Cambridge 2015.

<sup>14</sup> A. CUPPULERI, Russia and Frozen Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space, in: O. RICHMOND, G. VISOKA (eds.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, London 2020, pp. 1–9; G. HALL, The Russian annexation of Crimea: regional and global ramifications, in: *European Politics and Society*, 17, 2016, pp. 490–505; T. D. GRANT, Frozen Conflicts and International Law, in: *Cornell International Law Journal*, 50, 2017, 3; J. VIDMAR, The Annexation of Crimea and the Boundaries of the Will of the People, in: *German Law Journal*, 16, 2015, 3, pp. 365–383.



never ended for Russia. Some would even add that the Cold War did not end for *imperial* Russia.<sup>15</sup>

### **From the post-Cold War Era toward a Renewed Cold War**

The end of the Cold War began in the late 1980s, and the period after that has been called since then either commonly as “the era after the Cold War” or more professionally as “post-Cold War era”.<sup>16</sup> In the three decades from 1991 to 2024, the majority of historians has been calling this period as the “post-Cold War”, expressing that this era ended once and for all. Since the general European public after 1991 also assumed that some new era would come (and this perception was strengthened especially as the 21<sup>st</sup> century set in), both designations (“after, post”) were very convenient to use. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was generally believed by many scholars as well as politicians that the Cold War was over. Twenty or thirty years ago there were not many scholars who thought that the post-Cold War period, a prosperous time of two generations without major wars in Europe, was supposed to be provisional or interim; and this feeling further strengthened a routinely usage of the “post-Cold War” designation in the last decades.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the question what proceeded after the Cold War, has been a subject of debate since 1991. In the last 20 to 30 years, scientific voices pointing to the continuation of the Cold War, or raising the possibility of its return, were not typical but they did exist. In fact, the scholarly literature wrote about the possibility of a “*return to the Cold War*” right after 1991,

---

<sup>15</sup> A. GRAZIOSI, The Weight of the Soviet Past in Post-1991 Russia, in: *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 23, 2021, 1, pp. 89–125; C. S. MAIER, The Cold War as an era of imperial rivalry, in: S. PONS, F. ROMERO (eds.), *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War. Issues, interpretations, periodizations*, New York 2005, pp. 13–20.

<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, some contemporary historians mark the period after 1989–1991 as an “ex-Soviet”, or “post-Soviet era”; see e.g. GRAZIOSI, pp. 89–125.

<sup>17</sup> The concept of post-Cold War era has been used in numerous scientific works, such as: F. FISCHER, *A kétpólusú világ 1945–1989*, Budapest, Pécs 2005; M. FURRER, P. GAUTSCHI (eds.), *Remembering and recounting the Cold War. Commonly Shared History?*, Schwalbach 2017; J. L. GADDIS, *Studená vojna*, Bratislava 2006; S. MICHÁLEK, M. ŠTEFANSKÝ, *Age of Fear. The Cold War and Its Influence on Czechoslovakia 1945–1968*, Stuttgart Verlag 2019; S. PONS, F. ROMERO (eds.), *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War. Issues, interpretations, periodizations*, New York 2005; S. SAVRANSKAYA, Th. BLANTON, V. ZUBOK (eds.), *Masterpieces of History. The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe 1989*, Budapest, New York 2010; W. McWILLIAMS, H. PIOTROWSKI, *The world since 1945. A history of international relations*, Boulder 2014, and by many others.

specifically in connection with Russia's humiliated international position after 1991, and especially if "*some changes in Russia turn bad*". Co-authors Hartman and Villanova asked the question as early as 1992: "*Is it realistic to think of a new 'freeze' in the USSR, and to consider the reaction of Europe and the USA?*"<sup>18</sup>

The "post-Cold War" denomination had its challengers already in the 2000s. Some experts have already been sensing some kind of back-shift in times, such as Martin McCauley whose book-title suggested almost a decade ago that year 1991 might not be necessarily the end of the Cold War.<sup>19</sup> Commencing from the early 2000s, and especially following the Russo-Ukrainian war, scientific doubts about the closure of the Cold War period have become more frequent when the political and media discourse analysing the Russo-Ukrainian war has so often referred to this war as a "Cold War conflict". At the same time, term "Cold War" became a hot word in the press once again. So much so that recent historical events suggest that we have been living in an interim age which can be described as a "renewed Cold War".

### A Renewed (Revived) Cold War

The impact of the most recent international relations has revealed the vulnerability of the term "post-Cold War". Its implicit meaning, suggesting that "we have long been over it", contradicts to our recent experiences about the turbulent world politics in general, and some "cold-warlike conflicts" in particular, where superpower conflicts are casual. As a consequence, we have been witnessing new interpretations of the Cold War concept under this influence. A circle of scientists, including John Mearshimer, Niall Ferguson,<sup>20</sup> Hal Brands, J. L. Gaddis, Simon Dalby among others, can be named nowadays who say that a "New Cold War" or "Cold War II" is already underway.<sup>21</sup> One of the conclusions that can be drawn from them is that the era what ended in 1991 was the Old Cold War; that indeed ended between 1988 and 1991 gradually. And if we live

<sup>18</sup> HARTMAN, VILLANOVA, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> See e. g. M. McCAULEY, *The Cold War 1949–2016*, London, New York 2017.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.hoover.org/research/cold-war-ii-niall-ferguson-emerging-conflict-china> [visited 2024–01–14].

<sup>21</sup> See e. g. J. J. MEARSHEIMER, *The Inevitable Rivalry. America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics*, in: *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021; S. DALBY, *Creating the Second Cold War. The Discourse of Politics*, Bloomsbury 2016; H. BRANDS, *War in Ukraine: Conflict, Strategy, and the Return of a Fractured World*, Baltimore 2024.

in a new era than retrospectively it is necessary to rephrase our knowledge on the historical period, we have been living in.

If we suppose that we are living in a renewed Cold War than in what way is it different from the earlier one? Did we return to the past, meaning that we are witnessing the same typical features of the Old Cold War perhaps in new situations? Is it the same Old Cold War times, perhaps its slightly renewed/alterd version, or do we experience something new? And if we live in a new era, in an era of a renewed or revived Cold War, when and how did it start? Currently we might not be in a position to make final judgements; nevertheless, the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia in 2014, and its full-scale military attack on Ukraine in February 2022 may be regarded as a start of a new historical era.

The notion of a new era is not new neither among Cold War historians<sup>22</sup> nor among politicians and journalists. One might ask where is the proof that there is a new era regarding international relations? Of course, a substantial amount of cautiousness is needed here. Yet, politicians of the highest rank make attempts to find answers to the most burning international questions. For instance, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz wrote about a “*new global dichotomy*” and a huge cataclysm of our times when he declared that “*the world is facing a Zeitenwende: an epochal tectonic shift*”.<sup>23</sup>

The era of the renewed Cold War is being marked with appearance of new challengers on the international horizon who have stepped up on the world stage to openly challenge the current international system and order. And it is not only the overall concept of the Cold War but the presence of its components in the public discourse that may resemble an earlier historical epoch. Some issues of the international political discourse recall affairs that were typical for earlier times. Nowadays we can read about “deterrence”, even “nuclear deterrence”, and we can read about “the [*Nato*] Alliance [*that*] must credibly deter further Russian aggression”, etc.<sup>24</sup>

Another example is the return of the “containment policy” to the European international public discourse under the influence of the

---

<sup>22</sup> See for instance a forum of experts at P. ZELIKOW – C. RICE – K. SPOHR et al., Ending the Cold War and Entering a New Era: Perspectives on To Build a Better World, in: *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 23, 4, 2021, pp. 181–210.

<sup>23</sup> O. SCHOLZ, The Global Zeitenwende. How to avoid a New Cold War in a multipolar Era, in: *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2023, [<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/germany/olaf-scholz-global-zeitenwende-how-avoid-new-cold-war>].

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Russo-Ukrainian war. It is manifested, for instance, in an article published in the *Foreign Affairs* journal, which was written by three Central and East European prime ministers at the end of April 2023. The article, written by Prime Ministers Petr Fiala (Czechia), Eduard Heger (Slovakia) and Mateusz Morawiecki (Poland) firmly stands out in favour of Ukraine and the continuation of the war. The prime ministers not only literally refer to George F. Kennan (who also published his famous strategy in the *Foreign Affairs* back in 1947 which became the principal basis for President Truman's containment) but they explicitly advocate a kind of "dual track" on the NATO's side. Quite remarkably, the prime ministers wrote about the same duality of "deterrence and dialogue", i.e. a dual strategy towards Russia, which used to be the very context of Kennan's historical article.<sup>25</sup>

### The Multifacetedness of the Cold War Concept

It is obligatory to look at the renewed Cold War that commenced recently in a new international environment (which is quite different from the times of the late 1940s, or 1970s, or 1980s) both with curiosity and a substantial amount of cautiousness. What are the characteristics of our changing times? What are the features of a re-branded Cold War which distinguishes it from the old one? What has been taken over from the old Cold War to the renewed one? Which are its historical features that had never existed before? There is a real notion that the Russo-Ukrainian war created a completely new situation not only in geopolitics but also in terms of linguistic concepts referring to our own era. Quite naturally, we incline to re-use, re-cycle the conceptual apparatus of an earlier era, at least some parts of it, for newer international situations.<sup>26</sup>

As a general rule, it is worth looking at the renewed Cold War not as a period but rather as a *concept*. It seems that the meaning of the Cold War has changed, and we should pay particular attention to the assumption

<sup>25</sup> P. FIALA – E. HEGER – M. MORAWIECKI, The free world must stay the course on Ukraine. A frozen conflict or partial victory will solve nothing, in: *Foreign Affairs*, April 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/free-world-must-stay-course-ukraine>.

<sup>26</sup> Those who had lived through it and had experienced it, at minimum from political news, what old Cold War international relations were like, can agree that many familiar elements can be discovered in today's Russo-American relations, as well as in a wider spectrum of international affairs. For instance, the nuclear threat has haunted us since the early days of the Cold War; sharp opposition between the superpowers can resemble the 1960s; the usage of the "oil weapon" is well known from the 1970s, and so forth. It does not need much effort to realize that the *deja vu* is completely natural.



that the concept of the Cold War has been continuously changing ever since 1991. It is happening because the international environment and the nature of the international relations have all been changing significantly.

As a historical period, Cold War is equal to four decades of tension and confrontation. The same term in its most everyday meaning today is understood as a steadfast confrontation between major countries.<sup>27</sup> And what makes it even more complex is that, under the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war as well as several other tense international affairs, certain nuances of the Cold War as a concept became visible. We should be careful, however, because some features are identical with the old Cold War features; some only resemble former phenomena; and some might be completely new. It seems that the old Cold War had had some well known features that did not cease with the end of that era; on the contrary, they have been with us practically ever since 1945.

Considering the main directions of change in the meaning of the Cold War since 1991 (so that it is no longer just an era and not just a tense relationship between two actors), we can identify the concept of the Cold War as a world order or an overall international system as the most decisive concept that has been dominating the scholarly discourse. In this sense, *“the Cold War was an international system, in fact, the last great international system [...] and an organizing element in the world”*.<sup>28</sup>

Others may mean different concepts when referring to “Cold War”, such as: Cold War as a “global war project”; the Cold War as a “peace project”; the Cold War as “the USA’s European project”; and others. For instance, behind the Cold War as a global war project there is the idea that *“the Cold War was the global militarization of the world [...] the faith in purely military solutions”*.<sup>29</sup> It is closely related to the use of military power and brute force in international affairs which Odd Arne Westad have put succinctly as follows: *“The [CW] confrontation helped cement a world dominated by superpowers, world in which might and violence, or the threat of violence, were the yardsticks of international relations.”*<sup>30</sup> We might also mention the Cold War as an “imperialist” project from the point of view of the Global

---

<sup>27</sup> Further details on the military confrontation see at M. BÍLÝ, *Varšavská smlouva 1985–1991. Dezintegrace a rozpad*, Praha 2021; G. KECSKÉS, *A view from Brussels. Secret NATO reports about the Eastern European Transition, 1988–1991*, Budapest 2019.

<sup>28</sup> WESTAD, pp. 1–3, 170.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, 103.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

South (earlier the Third World) in relation with both superpowers. In the context of this concept, decolonized countries had to solve a double task: on the one hand, they had to overcome their own internal backwardness, on the other hand they had to face international challenges of the Cold War. Finally, a very interesting way of understanding the Cold War is the Cold War as a method, i.e. a method of managing international relations. We can recognize the idea in the NSC-68, an early American national security plan that was drawn up in 1949–1950: “[...] *the Kremlin seeks to bring the free world under its dominion by the methods of the cold war* [...].”<sup>31</sup> Here the emphasis is on the idea that the Cold War is neither an historical era nor a world system dominated by two powerful actors but it is a kind of *method of managing international relations* (peculiarly, attributed to the Russians in the source above).

### Summary

The possibility that we are living today in a renewed Cold War era does not change the fact that the old Cold War ended in 1991. The term Cold War, however, has been continuously changing ever since. Major international affairs, and especially a “hot” war (that has not been seen by two generations of Europeans) might help us retrospectively understand a historical process that is unfolding right before our eyes. Investigations into conceptual changes over recent international affairs do not merely offer new interpretative contexts for the up-to-date meanings of the Cold War. It can also contribute to resolving a general uncertainty about the question: Which Cold War are we thinking of, or which one do we want to talk about? Examining the concept of the Cold War, old or renewed, is not an activity for its own sake. The application of historical concepts is closely related to the understanding of the investigated phenomena, in this case the nature of current international relations that have cooled down once again. We cannot begin the interpretation of new events of historical significance with confuse concepts. If we pay attention to the old and new nuances of the Cold War as a concept, we can arrive at multi-layered interpretations. That is, in the long run we can achieve a more qualitative dialogue about a historical problem that is very relevant to our time.

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 105.