

Cold War vs. Hot War in 2022

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February 2022 will go down in human history as a large-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine. After the Second World War, there were no military actions on the territory of Europe on such a scale as is happening on the territory of Ukraine.

The Russian–Ukrainian war has its own post-Soviet history.

The initial big mistake of the West was that with the collapse of the USSR, many politicians and experts in the West considered that the Cold War of the times of the Soviet Union was over. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia was economically so weak that it had no way to continue the Cold War

with the West. Russia's economic inability to continue the Cold War was perceived by the West as Moscow's refusal to use the means of this war. This illusion of the end of the Cold War was created by the West itself and strongly believed in it. In fact, Russia has never given up its ambition to at least control the post-Soviet space.

The economic failure of Yeltsin's Russia to continue the Cold War actually meant not the end, but the "freezing" of that war (Papava, 2014b). With rising energy prices, Russia has become increasingly stronger economically and has already begun to consider the possibility of restoring a new liberal empire by economic means (Papava and Starr, 2006). Note that the means of economic imperialism are still in the arsenal and are actively used by Moscow to influence the former Soviet countries (Papava, 2021).

Along with the proclamation of liberal methods of restoring the empire, Russia did not abandon the use of the military way of pressure on the former Soviet republics, the most obvious example of which was the five-day war with Georgia in August 2008 which ended with the Russian occupation of 20 percent of the territory of Georgia (Papava, 2008). The continuation of aggressive actions in the post-Soviet space was the occupation and annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea by Russia in 2014. If in the first case of the Russian military aggression against Georgia the West mainly limited itself to expressing protest and humanitarian aid to the affected side, then in the second case; that is, annexation of Crimea, the West has already moved to apply economic sanctions against Russia (Papava, 2014a). In practice, these Western economic sanctions against Russia proved to be ineffective since they did not apply to the member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union with which Russia does not have customs-free trade (Papava, 2015).

As a result, Moscow has the feeling that Russia will tolerate any economic sanctions if they are imposed against it in the future. In other words, the behavior of the West towards Russia after the Russian–Georgian war and after the Russian annexation of Crimea contributed to the emergence and growth of a sense of impunity in Moscow.

The military actions against Ukraine in 2022, as well as those against Georgia in 2008, are "justified" by Moscow by the fact that the alleged entry of Ukraine (and Georgia) into NATO threatens the national security of Russia (Sommerlad, 2022). Despite the fact that the US and NATO declared that the doors of this organization were open for Georgia and Ukraine to join it, some Western countries

(primarily France and Germany) directly blocked this process (Wintour, 2022). This behavior of some European leaders regarding the membership of Ukraine and Georgia in NATO also “gave great courage” to Russia in relation to these post-Soviet countries.

Avoiding the start of a Third World War, the West has clearly stated that NATO forces will not be involved in hostilities on the territory of Ukraine (Popli, 2022). Based on this, the West adheres to the use of tough economic sanctions against Russia (BBC, 2022). Unfortunately, in the development of economic sanctions against Russia, world leaders were not unanimous at the beginning which was most clearly manifested in the issue of excluding Russia from the SWIFT system (Sevastopulo et al., 2022). Moreover, the EU and the US do not yet intend to impose economic sanctions on Russia’s energy products, its largest export (Sorkin et al., 2022). At the same time, the decision of Chinese companies pausing new purchases of Russian oil for fear of falling under Western sanctions is somewhat encouraging (Bloomberg News, 2022).

Unfortunately, the inconsistency and slowness of the West in taking tough measures against Moscow contributed to the build-up of Russian military aggression against civilians in Ukraine.

The situation that is developing in relations between the West and Russia against the backdrop of its open war against Ukraine testifies to the feeling that Ukraine does not have proper support from the West (ET, 2022).

There is a confrontation between the Cold War means used by the West against Russia which, in turn, is waging a Hot War against Ukraine. A question of vital importance is on the agenda – is it possible to stop a Hot War by the methods of the Cold War?

The answer to this question is ambiguous, given that the economic sanctions imposed by the West against Russia, as noted above, are not full-fledged and have many serious “holes.” Of course, the economic sanctions currently applied by the West (and, at the same time, inferior ones) against Russia will have their negative results on the economic development and military power of Russia but this, most likely, will not happen in the near future. Meanwhile, Ukrainian military and civilians are dying for the sovereignty of their homeland.

“Cold War versus Hot War – 2022” will only be more or less effective when the means used by the Cold War are comprehensive and tough. And for this, world leaders need to get out of the illusion

that Russia will not get to their countries and begin to act quickly in the name of the democratic future of their own countries and the whole world.

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