

In Search of the Lost but Much-Needed Peace: The Origins and Dynamics of the Second Cold War

BOOK REVIEW: RICHARD SAKWA (2023) *THE LOST PEACE: HOW THE WEST FAILED TO PREVENT A SECOND COLD WAR*, YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS: NEW HAVEN & LONDON.

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The author of the book under review, British political scientist Richard Sakwa, is well-known in academic circles and the expert community worldwide. At the beginning of his academic career, he taught Soviet and European politics at the University of California in Santa Cruz (USA) and the University of Essex (UK). For more than 30 years, he was a professor at the University of Kent, where he also served as head of the Department of Politics and International Relations. Professor Sakwa is the author of two dozen monographs and more than a hundred articles on the problems of international relations and European security, Soviet and Russian history, a participant in the Valdai International Discussion Club and an expert at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in London.

Published by the Yale University Press in 2023, ‘The Lost Peace: How the West Failed to Prevent the Second Cold War’ is the result of Richard Sakwa’s long-term research into the process of formation, adaptation, and transformation of the contemporary architecture of international security system. Over the past three decades, the European model of international relations has seen both periods of unbridled optimism about its long-term sustainability and appeal to other regions of the world, as well as bitter disappointments regarding its ability to maintain peace and stability in Eurasia. Divided in 1945 by the Iron Curtain, Europe has come a long way from finding hope for peace in the late 1980s to the loss of this illusion and the growing threat of global military conflict in the early 2020s. The author focuses primarily on the historical period after the collapse of the USSR, while also referring to earlier events in Soviet, Western European, and American history. The monograph summarizes the findings of the author’s previous scholarship and makes predictions about the future development of the international security system in the near future.

The monograph under review is divided into three main parts.

In the first part, *From Cold War to Hot War*, Richard Sakwa assesses the debate around the “peace dividends” that emerged following the end of the bloc confrontation. He explains in detail, based on a study of documentary sources and memoirs, how internal instability in the USSR and the M. Gorbachev’s weakness as a negotiator led Western leaders to conclude that it was possible to obtain unilateral benefits from the end of the Cold War and exclude the USSR from its beneficiaries. The point of no return for the European

system of international relations was the decision of the Clinton Administration in 1994 to expand NATO into the states of Eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Baltic Republics. The author has compiled a list of about 30 statements made by Western leaders made at the turn of 1989-1990, which asserted that NATO would not expand eastward in response to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The reversal of this position, which led to the current severe crisis in Europe and 'The Lost Peace' momentum, was due to Washington's conviction that a neutral unified Germany would inevitably lead to NATO's dissolution, since the alliance would lose its original mission and be unable to formulate a new one. However, at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, instead of making a decision to dissolve NATO, which was fair from Moscow's point of view, Washington announced that the North Atlantic Alliance had become the most successful military alliance in world history; it had defeated the USSR during the Cold War and was prepared to solve new global problems. A popular statement of those years, made by Senator Richard Lugar on August 2, 1993, was: "NATO should go out of area or out of business". This 'out of area' movement has led Russia and NATO to the current standoff in Ukraine, where Russia argues for the preservation of the previous international law system based on the UN Charter (the author calls it 'the Charter International System'), while the United States tries to prove the viability of an alternative model called the 'Liberal Universalist System.'

The second part of the book, *Great-Power Conflict*, focuses on how the major global policy players (the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union) formulate and implement their views of the optimal world order. Particular attention is paid to the genesis of the US global strategy, which rejects the supremacy of traditional 'international law' in favor of 'rules-based' order. According to the author, this step signals Washington's rejection of the previous treaty-based, impartial system of international law and its commitment to unlimited efforts to promote its own interests on a global scale. The other three 'major world league' players (China, Russia, the EU) are forced to respond to US actions in accordance with their national traditions and current capabilities. Thus, Russia, which R. Sakwa describes as a neo-revisionist power (p. 174), has expressed its full-fledged rejection of Washington's destruction of the international legal system. China is focused on building its economic power and technological decoupling with the aim of potentially engaging in a conflict with Washington in the future. Finally, the European Union, due to its internal weakness and increasing fragmentation, is forced to follow in the wake of American foreign and defense policies towards consolidated Atlantism.

Finally, the third section, *War and International Politics*, is devoted to the dismantling of the strategic nuclear arms control regime and the current escalation of the conflict between Russia and the West. The stages of this process were the "Crimean Spring" of 2014 and the Special Military Operation of 2022. According to Professor Sakwa, the result of the largest military conflict in Europe since 1945, currently underway in Ukraine, has been an unprecedented crisis in the international security system and the threat of a global nuclear conflict. At the same time, processes that are not planned by Western countries and are undesirable for them are emerging. These include the rise of what the author refers to as the "Political East" with the strengthening of the role of China, India

and other countries of the Global South in international affairs. Another example is the emergence of a new type of “global majority”, an association of countries that do not see a place for themselves in the American-centered global economy and security model. In conclusion, the author expresses the hope that thanks to the efforts of Russia and other countries that share its vision of the world, it is the Charter System that will ensure stability in a new multipolar world rather than an “international liberal rules-based order”.

The theoretical framework of the study can be described as eclectic. Such a complex topic as the collapse of the previous world order and the prospects for the formation of a new international political and economic system requires the study of a wide range of state and non-state actors, analysis of hard and soft security issues, challenges to economic development, functioning of multilateral institutions, and assessment of key features of political economies and social movements in Russia and other states. Consequently, in the text of the book, we can observe the implementation of the realist perspective in international relations (neo-realism, structural realism, the theory of hegemonic stability, offensive realism), the liberal perspective (the liberal internationalist school, multilateral governance/multilateralism), and the constructivist perspective (the Copenhagen School).

R. Sakwa summarizes his views on the theoretical foundations needed to build a new system of international relations with the concept of sovereign internationalism. He defines it as follows: “Sovereign internationalism represents an alternative to both neorealism, with its emphasis on the balance of power, spheres of interest, balancing and the like, and to fully fledged liberal internationalism, which includes a whole range of other attributes, including free trade and liberal democracy” (p. 18)

The author also brings back the characterization of international relations as a sphere of ‘power politics’, popular with neo-realists, especially John Mearsheimer (p. 4, 22), into the academic discussion of the reasons for the collapse of the previous world order model. The term ‘power politics’ emerged at the center of discussions about the nature of international relations on the eve of World War II thanks to the book by British scholar and professor at University College in London,¹ Georg Schwarzenberger. This term became widespread during the Cold War as a description of the goals of states and the methods they use in their activities on the international stage. The scholars who apply the concept of ‘power politics’ to the study of international relations assume that it can be effectively used to separate the international arena from the domestic political space. In this space power (coercion) has subordinate importance compared to existing legal norms, including national constitutions, laws and by-laws, as well as decisions of authorized bodies of public administration.

The author formulated the following three research questions for his monograph:

- 1) Did the reduction of ideological differences between the superpowers during the final stages of the Cold War help create conditions for building lasting peace?
- 2) Could the hypothetical de-ideologization of interstate relations under new conditions lead to the restoration of independence for multilateral cooperation structures, such as the UN and CSCE and overcome the division into opposing blocs?

1. *Schwarzenberger G. Power Politics: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations and Post-war Planning.* J. Cape, 1941.

3) Were conditions created in which relations between great powers aimed at achieving the goals of international security and development? Were they doomed to conflict and the reproduction of hierarchical power structures?

According to R. Sakwa, today we know that the answer should be negative in all three cases. His study aims to explain the reasons for this disappointing development of events and also highlights the factors that prevented the consolidation of the ideals of a “positive peace”, which gave way to another round of conflict between the great powers, known as the “Second Cold War”.

R. Sakwa's thesis that the main feature of the era that began in 1945 is ‘the Charter international system’, invented and established by Allied Powers is scientifically novel and makes an important contribution to the discussion on the genesis of the international system after the end of the World War II. In circumstances where the USSR could not agree with its partners in the anti-Hitler coalition that the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany should be followed by a “peace treaty” along the lines of the Versailles Peace of 1919, it was the UN Charter that established the rules of conduct in the post-war international arena. It ensured an unprecedentedly long period of peace on the European continent, established favorable conditions for the disintegration of the European colonial system and provided a smooth transition of the permanent seat in the UN Security Council from the USSR to the Russian Federation.

According to R. Sakwa, the USSR under the protection of the Charter international system received a legal basis for sovereign internationalism and ultimately for multipolarity as a diversity of countries and social systems. Moscow acquired the opportunity to protect loyal members of international community through multilateral diplomacy (p. 318). On the other hand, the United States was able to put into practice the idea that the freedom of choice of the states, oriented towards Washington, can be implemented even if it threatens the security of other countries. Thus, at the peak of the Cold War, conditions were set for American global supremacy and the liberal transformation of the world that followed in the 1990s. Richard Sakwa correctly notes that Mikhail Gorbachev's calls to strengthen the Charter international system could not be heard in Washington, as they contradicted the U. S. model of liberal internationalism. At the level of political and diplomatic discourse, a confrontation emerged between Gorbachev's vision of a ‘Common European Home’ and the United States' narrative of ‘common ideals’, on which an alliance of shared values was supposed to be built.

The decision of the Clinton administration to expand NATO to Eastern Europe was driven by a set of geopolitical considerations. It became Washington's first major step towards building a system of institutions for a unipolar world, based on the rules of hegemonic world order (p. 6) and the convictions of hegemonic stability theory, which gives the leading state the mission to build and maintain an open and liberal world economy. (p. 116) Richard Sakwa is skeptical about the sustainability of the “dual hegemony” system, military and economic at the same time. This hegemony-leadership requires from the United States, as the world's most powerful country, not only immense resources to

create and maintain it, but also a willingness to sacrifice its own interests in favor of the abstract principles of the “common good” and the benefits of long-term stability.

At the final stage of the Cold War, the struggle between the USA and the USSR for the right to set world order agendas intensified. As the author notes, Washington did not support M. Gorbachev’s expectations for abandoning bloc thinking and building interstate relations based on the principles of trust and pluralism. These ideas were not alien to the states of Western Europe during the period under review. But, having found itself in the process of transforming its initially predominantly economic association into a political union with supranational governance institutions in the late 1980s, the renewed and expanded European Union did not support Gorbachev’s pan-European agenda. The author’s conclusion that the USA did not plan to work for the “common good” at the final stage of the Cold War, but acted in their own selfish interests, seems justified to us.

Of the many aspects of the crisis in European security system, R. Sakwa identifies three, in our view, as the most important.

The first is the confrontation between the liberal international order and sovereign internationalism during the Cold War. The former was supported by the United States and its allies in Europe and beyond, while the latter was supported by the USSR and China. We agree with the author’s thesis that the ideological origins of liberal internationalism go back to the Enlightenment with its ideals of progress, rationalism, free trade, and interstate cooperation. According to Richard Sakwa, the two basic pillars of the liberal international order are: 1) An open trade and financial system embodied in the GATT/WTO alliances and the Bretton Woods institutions; 2) An extensive military infrastructure, which began to be constructed in April 1949 with the signing of the Washington Treaty and establishment of the NATO military bloc under US hegemony. As the author correctly notes, during the first Cold War, the term ‘liberal’ should have been interpreted as “anti-communist,” and not at all “liberal democratic,” as is commonly thought today. The liberal international order should therefore rightly be viewed as a ‘hegemonic international order’ led from Washington (p. 6). The opposing sovereign internationalism was weakened during the period under review due to the China-Soviet standoff, the socialist countries’ lag in the scientific and technological revolution, and the rapid development of post-industrial society. The USSR and its allies were characterized by a conviction that the protection of human rights belonged to state structures, rather than to institutions of society operating within or outside national borders. In the final stages of the Cold War, sovereign internationalism was rapidly losing its adherents and was no longer able to offer anything attractive in the face of the pressure of the liberal international order.

The second aspect is the failure to anticipate the establishment of what Sakwa calls a ‘positive peace order’. He defines it as follows: “A positive peace order in our case is one in which the actors cooperate within the framework of the broader international system guided by the principles of sovereign internationalism and international law” (p. 10). According to the author, this order goes back to the idea presented by US President J.F. Kennedy in his speech at the American University in Washington in June 1963: ‘peace is a process — a way of solving problems’. The tragedy of the post-Cold War period in

world politics is that this process never began. The practice of negative peace, focused on conflict *management* rather than conflict *resolution*, continued to dominate interstate relations. But, as the current proxy war between Russia and the political West in Ukraine shows, even conflict management according to the recipes of the Cold War ultimately proved to be ineffective.

The third aspect is the triumph of Atlanticism over pan-continental Europeanism in the contemporary period of history. Endless debates about whether the leaders of the United States and Western European countries promised Gorbachev that NATO would not advance eastward even an inch are incidental evidence of a more significant phenomenon: the non-negotiated settlement of the Cold War in 1989-1991. The end of World War II was formalized, at least, in the form of the UN Charter, which has been the basis for the entire system of international law and global political relations has been built for over 70 years. The end of the Cold War, however, was only formalized in the form of several non-binding declarations. A perfect example is the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, approved on November 21, 1990 by the leaders of 34 states participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Later, the Charter marked the beginning of the institutionalization of the CSCE, leading to its transformation into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the creation of several permanent bodies, including the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Still, the influence of the OSCE on processes in real European politics has turned out to be minimal, allowing Atlanticism to survive and even strengthen in this century.

The “Lost Peace”, studied by Professor Sakwa was the world of unilateral concessions by Gorbachev to Ronald Reagan and George Bush Sr. It was a world of unjustified expectation in Moscow that there would be a change in the nature of international relations and a move towards universal harmony. Can this temporary and obviously artificial state of affairs between the two superpowers and their leaders be described as “peace”, the crisis and subsequent collapse of which can be characterized as a “loss”? This question, important for understanding the historical process in the 1980s, remains unanswered in the book. In general, one should agree with the author’s opinion that the decision of the Allied Powers in World War II to limit themselves to adopting the UN Charter rather than a full-fledged peace treaty was a forced and erroneous one. Their hopes that they could thus “kill two birds with one stone”, i.e., sum up the results of the war, and also establish the UN as the first truly global multifunctional organization in history to regulate the entire complex of interstate relations in the post-war world, were largely unjustified. This groundbreaking move in the realm of international relations — not to negotiate a peace treaty, but to establish a post-war system of interstate relations, as if a treaty had really been signed — spared the planet from a direct military confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, the two superpowers, for nearly half a century. However, this approach could not be maintained indefinitely. In the new era, characterized by elements such as unipolarity and the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as the political and economic hegemony of the United States, this approach to addressing the

fundamental political and legal challenges has proven to be ineffective and unproductive. In the absence of significant international competition, the liberal internationalism of the United States at the beginning of the 21st century started to take on features that were initially unexpected: foreign policy radicalism and a greater interest in aggressive expansion. It has increasingly been characterized as a liberal hegemony actively using means such as organizing new coups d'états ("color revolutions"), as well as illegal, that is, not approved by the UN Security Council, trade and economic sanctions. Having recognized the limitations of "soft power", the United States has placed its bets on creating a hierarchical framework for the global political and economic order, with Washington and its closest European allies at the top. The author persistently and convincingly leads the reader to the following conclusion: only the European powers' concentration on their own security, without taking into account the interests of extra-regional players, involving all countries in the negotiation process, respecting the principle of equal and indivisible security and with the goodwill of all parties, can bring back the lost peace to the continent and restore freedom and political subjectivity to Europe.

In the book's Conclusion, R. Sakwa asks: was there an opportunity in the post-Cold War era to manage great power relations to ensure that peace and development took primacy over conflict and hierarchy? The negative answer to this question follows logically from the entire book, which proves that the United States, as the winning power in the Cold War, never seriously considered the prospect of mutually beneficial cooperation and the rejection of its own hegemony. During the Cold War, the main contradiction in the international system was the confrontation between the right of nations to self-determination and the principle of territorial integrity, reflected in the Preamble to the UN Charter. In the new era, another fundamental contradiction has been added: between the principle of indivisible security and the freedom of sovereign states to choose their military and political allies. This leads to the major concern with which the author concludes his study: the conflict in Ukraine may prompt the Western bloc to dismantle the Charter multilateralism altogether. In its place, Washington may try to put up a forum such as The Union of Democracies, presenting it as an alternative to the UN. Then, according to R. Sakwa, the prospect of 'positive peace', as opposed to the mere absence of war, seems "more unrealistic than ever".

В поисках утерянного, но очень нужного мира: зарождение и развитие Второй Холодной войны

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