

Konrad H. Jarausch, Christian F. Ostermann and Andreas Etges

# Rethinking, Representing, and Remembering the Cold War: Some Cultural Perspectives

A quarter century ago, the fall of the Berlin Wall, heralded the definite end of the Cold War, confronting the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective camps. Most Red Army installations in East Germany are defunct, grass is growing over former parade grounds, and fences around areas with buried ammunition are rusting away. The Eastern military alliance of the Warsaw Pact has been dissolved and most of its former Central European member states have now joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Though embers of the conflict still smolder, particularly in Asia where the Cold War intersected with decolonization and turned violently hot, the arms race has stopped and concern has shifted to preventing nuclear proliferation to Iran or North Korea. Not only has the Soviet empire crumbled, but the Communist regime that controlled Russia since the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 no longer exists, eliminating one side of the East-West conflict. The other protagonist, the U.S., has found out in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that the transition to a multipolar world is no less complicated. While tensions between Washington and Moscow have reemerged in recent years as a central dynamic of international relations (especially after Russia's seizure of Crimea), leading commentators occasionally proclaim the beginning of a "new Cold War," the new confrontation lacks the Cold War's ideological and potentially globally destructive underpinnings.<sup>1</sup>

It is astounding how rapidly the ideological and political-military confrontation that dominated world politics in the second half of the twentieth century has faded into oblivion, especially in Western Europe. The personal fear, engendered by civil defense drills and exhortations to build fall-out shelters, has completely disappeared. Soviet and East German Army uniforms that once struck terror into the hearts of travelers crossing the Iron Curtain in Berlin are now on sale by street hawkers, offering shiny medals to tourists. While memories of crises fade among the eyewitnesses, an entire generation has grown up in the meantime for whom Berlin or Cuba are but geographical expressions, lacking the sense of danger that pushed the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation. Since 9/11 the threat of international terrorism and the confrontation with Islamic radicalism have replaced

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<sup>1</sup> David Martin on the "New Cold War" on CBS Sixty Minutes, September 26, 2016 and Scott Wilson, "Obama Will Make Public Case for Unity with Europe as Russia Revives Cold War Memories," *Washington Post*, March 26, 2014.

Communism as chief adversary in Western minds.<sup>2</sup> The transition to a “new world (dis-)order” has dimmed the joy over the peaceful revolution in Eastern Europe but created a sense of closure which places the Cold War clearly into the past.

Echoes of the Cold War, referring to the Crisis over Ukraine and to China’s rise within the global system, reveal rather conflicted and simplistic memories of the East-West struggle, depending upon personal experience and political agenda. Some observers recall the Cold War as a period of frightful and perpetual crises between the rivaling superpowers, endangering the survival of mankind, while other commentators recollect the period as an era of extraordinary stability due to superpower hegemony. Similarly, anti-Communists emphasize the repressive nature of the Eastern bloc, though post-Socialist defenders of the prior regimes stress their predictability and order. While former dissidents tell stories of heroic protest within, erstwhile members of the security apparatus still claim that the Soviet system was toppled by subversion from without. Once excited about leading the grand social experiment of Communism, some intellectuals tend to portray the Cold War as a time of ideological commitment, while ordinary citizens rather remember the shortages of consumer goods and the lack of international travel. Often unexamined, such partial memories stand next to each other without yet coalescing into a convincing understanding of the Cold War as a whole, or worse, may lead to dangerous assumptions underlying political perceptions and policy decisions.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of such mixed associations, narratives of the ending of the Cold War also continue to differ between Western triumphalism and Eastern defensiveness. In the West, hardliners tend to emphasize the effect of the costly arms race and attribute their victory to President Ronald Reagan’s staunch anti-Communism as well as his “Star Wars” (Strategic Defense Initiative) initiative. Liberals instead prefer to attribute the peaceful revolution to the attractiveness of capitalist consumer goods as well as to its support of human rights that helped undermine the dictatorships.<sup>4</sup> In the East, post-Communist defenders of the prior regime blame the mistaken policies of Mikhail Gorbachev for leading to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, while erstwhile dissidents rather stress their own contribution to the civic contestations that overthrew the party rule. Such one-

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1996).

<sup>3</sup> See Geir Lundestad, ed., *International Relations since the End of the Cold War: New and Old Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013).

<sup>4</sup> See the controversial volume, edited by Ellen Schrecker, *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History after the Fall of Communism* (New York: New Press, 2004).

sided understandings, repeated in the popular media during relevant anniversaries, fail to do justice to the enormous complexity, multidimensional nature, and interactive character of the East-West conflict.

Coming to grips with the Cold War requires its historicization not just among scholars but also the general public.<sup>5</sup> While key participants have written lengthy memoirs, much of the archival documentation has also become available on the Eastern side, thanks in part to the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. The realization that the Soviet-American confrontation is finally over makes it possible to step outside the mind-set of the two combatants and treat the period truly as having become part of the past. Such a process of distancing can surely be observed in Western film productions. In the much acclaimed TV series “The Americans” (2013–) which is set in Washington in the 1980s, during the Second Cold War, a Soviet KGB couple lives with their two “American” kids under false identities in the US, fighting a literally deadly war against the attempts of the Reagan administration to destroy the “evil empire.” In “Deutschland 83” (2015), an internationally successful eight-episode German TV production, an East German spy living in West Germany informs about Western military planning and “Able Archer 83,” a major NATO exercise that some in the East believed was the cover for a first strike on the Soviet Union. Steven Spielberg’s movie “Bridge of Spies” (2015), set during another major time of confrontation between the superpowers in 1960, tells the story of the most famous prisoner exchange on Glienecker Brücke between West Berlin and Potsdam in East Germany, where the Soviet spy Rudolf Abel was exchanged for U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers. In those three cases Cold War America and its Western Allies are not shown as the by definition superior places, and the main Soviet and East German characters are portrayed with a lot of sympathy. That might also be due in part to a certain nostalgia regarding the good old (bad) days of the Cold War, when the lines were clearly drawn, but when the enemy was also acting according to certain rules.

Finally, the recent methodological shifts of the historical discipline towards constructivism and cultural analysis make it possible to probe a wide range of public representations and to engage individual as well as collective memories. David Lowe and Tony Joel have made a first and highly readable attempt to highlight main features of how the Cold War has been remembered internationally, in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. They discuss “the bomb,” atomic culture and bunkers, cities like Vilnius, Prague, Budapest and Warsaw, and Hanoi,

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<sup>5</sup> For the concept of historicization see Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1–33.

museums and memorials, spies, textbooks and other things. What the authors sometimes lack in depth, they surely make up in breadth.<sup>6</sup> Our volume intends to further this ongoing process of critical reflection on the history, memory, and representation of the Cold War. In contrast to Lowe and Joel, it presents a set of international essays, written by experts in their respective fields.

## Historiography

Writing about the Cold War after its end has liberated historical scholarship from the politicization it had endured – not just in the East, where it had been in the service of the Communist party, but also in the United States where Cold War history was all too often the academic extension of a debate over American foreign policy. With the hindsight of two-and-a-half decades after the end of the confrontation, the twists and turns of Cold War historiography in the United States, from the orthodox school in the 1950s that defended US containment strategy, to the Vietnam era revisionist critique that saw often economically motivated machinations, to the 1970s post-revisionist synthesis, seem less dramatic: They all shared a singular obsession with finding fault for the ongoing conflict, often focusing on America's role in it. The “new” Cold War history since 1989/91 has started to shed this focus on the “blame game” by exploring other issues, such as the impact of ideology and ideas, the vagaries of alliance politics and the idiosyncrasies of junior partners, and more broadly the significance of individual actors, the international system structure, and the role of sheer contingency.<sup>7</sup>

Increasing temporal distance has initiated a shift from arguing *within* to reflecting *about* the Cold War that is revealing the underlying interactive pattern. Instead of focusing either on “Communist aggression” or “capitalist imperialism,” post-Cold War historiography approaches the struggle between the superpowers as a process of mutual escalation. Rather than repeating moral condemnations, the new scholarship analyzes the clashing aims and competing interests of the two blocs which led to conflicting strategies: Incompatible ideologies tended to foster misperceptions which encouraged the demonization of the respective enemy. These fears of subversion prompted the suppression of dissi-

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<sup>6</sup> David Lowe and Tony Joel, *Remembering the Cold War: Global Contest and National Stories* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3 vols.; Petra Goedde and Richard Immerman, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

dence at home and hostile actions abroad that reinforced a sense of danger which required undertaking enormous armaments. Fortunately, Europe escaped large-scale bloodshed, but Asia, Africa and Latin America paid a terrible price in proxy wars, civil strife and insurgencies. Without relativizing the difference between dictatorship and democracy, this emerging research is redefining the conflict as an interaction, promoted by both sides.<sup>8</sup>

An important impulse for historicizing the Cold War has been the unprecedented release of archival documentation of the main actors in the conflict. While the United States accelerated its declassification of Cold War era documents in the 1990s, the demise of the communist regimes and the democratic transitions in Eastern Europe and Russia threw open archival doors that had been firmly closed by party-state control in the former Warsaw Pact. This archival revolution was uneven and witnessed setbacks with renewed narrowing due to the authoritarianism in Russia, highly charged political controversies over the communist legacies in Eastern Europe, and security concerns in post-September 11 America. Yet the new documentation was essential for overcoming Cold War era historiography's limitation, characterized by "one hand clapping" due to an almost exclusive reliance on American and West European sources which often reduced Soviet and Communist actors to superficial caricature.<sup>9</sup> Now the story could be told from both or rather many sides, making it international in perspective and interactive in its dynamic.

Since the mid-2000s, the opening of access to documents from the PRC Foreign Ministry has also brought China's role in the rise and fall of the Cold War system into sharper relief. This fresh evidence broadened the Cold War lens to the global south, where local and regional players and tensions influenced the East-West struggle as much as they were affected by it. In this global Cold War, American and Soviet policies appear as rival versions of European modernity that struggled with each other to often violent effect in Third World countries. Recent trends in Cold War research focus on South-South relations, manifested most concretely in the Non-Aligned movement, and, in the direction of transnational approaches, on the role of non-state (sometimes domestic) actors that transcended, undermined and fortified the Cold War "system."<sup>10</sup> In terms of periodization, the 1970s, marked by detente and economic shifts, are emerging as the crucial decade in the

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> See the stream of documentary disclosures in the Cold War International History Project Digital Archive at [www.cwihp.org](http://www.cwihp.org).

<sup>10</sup> Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, and Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); see also idem, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

transformation of the polarized structure and its legacies for today. Nonetheless, entire swaths of the globe, from the Middle East to parts of Latin American and South and Southeast Asia remain largely underdeveloped in terms of historical coverage, due in no small measure to the continued lack of archival access. Even a quarter century after the Cold War's end, its historicization as a global conflict still remains a work in progress.

The globalization of approaches to the Cold War has, ironically, also raised new questions about the role of Europe in the East-West conflict. Much of the traditional literature treated the confrontation as a “grand game” between Washington and Moscow, in which the rival superpowers were the only relevant actors globally while their allies were reduced to the role of simple pawns.<sup>11</sup> No doubt, many contemporaries shared this conviction, and confrontations such as the Cuban Missile Crisis reinforced the notion that the Europeans had little impact on crucial decisions. But such a top down view misses the repeated and complex efforts of European countries to reassert some degree of input, agency, in some cases even independence within and between the conformity of the blocs, from Tito's break with Moscow and his later nonaligned initiatives to de Gaulle's withdrawal from the NATO command structure. Not surprisingly the Washington-Moscow perspective also had and continues to have difficulties in dealing with German *Ostpolitik*, the reconciliation between Bonn and its Eastern neighbors which helped lay the foundation for the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Much of the recent European scholarship therefore seeks to bring the efforts of the old continent to overcome the confrontation back into the picture.

The new emphasis on social and cultural questions has opened the Cold War lens methodologically as well, profoundly transforming interpretations of its history. Already before 1989/91 some sociologists had probed the domestic impact of the East-West confrontation, exploring the potential convergence of the rival blocs as advanced industrial societies. After the peaceful revolution some scholars also started to analyze the survival and return of civil society in the East, while others turned towards examining the impact of human rights on containing the Second Cold War and on subverting the Cold War divide.<sup>13</sup> At the same time

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**11** Alexander von Plato, *Die Vereinigung Deutschlands – ein weltpolitisches Machtspiel: Bush, Kohl, Gorbatschow und die geheimen Moskauer Protokolle* (Berlin: Links, 2002).

**12** Frederic Bozo et al., eds., *Europe and the End of the Cold War: A Reappraisal* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Andreas Wenger et al., eds., *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965–75* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2008).

**13** Jürgen Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship in Modern German History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2010) and Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2010).

historians approached the conflict as an ideological struggle between the Congress of Cultural Freedom and other Western cultural agents and the Communist “peace movement,” shifting attention from the arms race to the competition for “hearts and minds.” More recently a veritable explosion of “Cold War culture” studies has begun to treat virtually all cultural manifestations of the second half of the twentieth century as somehow related to the Cold War.<sup>14</sup> Going beyond military hardware and diplomatic crises, the focus on culture has initiated a reconceptualization Cold War history.

The cultural turn in historical writing can, as Siegfried Weichlein shows, open up new subjects for investigation and suggest novel arguments for interpretation. Considering the very conception of a Cold War as a product of representations in high and popular culture shifts attention to differences in ideas, values and lifestyles between East and West. It raises questions about how an entire way of thinking, speaking and writing was refocused into an increasingly polarized outlook not just by politicians like Stalin or Truman but also by intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre or Raymond Aron. Such a perspective also suggests that the antagonism between the totalitarian view of Communism and the neo-fascist understanding of capitalism was inculcated by textbooks, novels, and films. Seen in this light, culture was not a passive reflection of Cold War politics but an active contributor to the East-West confrontation by coloring ways of thinking and behaving that left a deep imprint, even after the conflict was resolved. The essays in this volume demonstrate that representation and memory offer important new insights into the dynamics of the Cold War.<sup>15</sup>

## Representation

A constructivist perspective inspired by Stuart Hall suggests that the Cold War did not just “happen,” but that it was the product of a transformation of cultural representation.<sup>16</sup> While it built upon a traditional cleavage between Eastern and

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<sup>14</sup> Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy and Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Cf. Annette Vowinckel, Markus Payk and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> See the contribution by Siegfried Weichlein in the volume. He is directing an interdisciplinary project on Cold War culture at the Université de Fribourg in Switzerland.

<sup>16</sup> Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications & Open University, 1997).



Western Europe, the confrontation between socialism and capitalism resulted from a profound intellectual realignment. Resuming the conflict between Lenin and Wilson, a new “othering” between Communism and Democracy took the place of the joint effort to vanquish Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo.<sup>17</sup> Inspired by conflicting interests in shaping the post-war world, the emergence of this new clash involved a changed classification of “us versus them,” transforming former allies into antagonistic camps of peace versus freedom. Within three years Berlin’s reputation changed from the murderous Nazi capital into the valiant “outpost of freedom.”<sup>18</sup> In 1946 Winston Churchill’s famous “Iron Curtain” speech in Fulton suggested an apt metaphor of division that thereafter symbolized the polarization of Europe. By extolling the moral superiority of the central values of equality versus liberty in their respective blocs, scholars and educators collaborated in the justification of the conflict, while popular culture productions such as spy-novels and movie thrillers reinforced the confrontation.

Though the concept of the Cold War was an American invention, David Reynolds argues that West European scholars were complicit in spreading the narrative of a struggle between Communism and democracy to their national audiences. Preoccupied with the loss of empire, British historians accepted the notion of bipolarity and attempted to carve out a special role as sophisticated advisors to the crude but powerful Americans. While French scholars tended to blame Yalta for the Cold War and tried to reassert an independent great power role, they could not resist the pull of bloc confrontation in siding with the West. In Germany historians wrestled with Nazi responsibility for World War Two and the Holocaust, but often blamed the division of the country as well as of the entire continent on the Cold War. More directly affected than their neighbors, they sought security in the Western alliance, while hoping at the same time for a magic policy to supersede the East-West conflict. Ultimately European academics sought ways to escape from superpower domination and contributed to overcoming the conflict.<sup>19</sup>

Not surprisingly, Vladimir Pechatnov states that Soviet and Russian scholars have tended to blame the Western camp for waging a Cold War against Russia. In Marxist terms, historians denounced the tendency of monopoly capitalism

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<sup>17</sup> Arnold Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917–1918* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1959).

<sup>18</sup> Scott Krause, “Outpost of Freedom: A German-American Network’s Campaign to Bring Cold War Democracy to West Berlin, 1941–1963” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> See David Reynolds’ contribution to this volume. Cf. idem, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).



to stabilize itself through imperialist expansion, seeking not only to control Western Europe, but also to retain the former colonial possessions. Understandably Soviet-bloc academics tried to defend the fruits of the victory in the “Great Patriotic War” over Nazi Germany which liberated their own country and gave it control over the entire Eastern half of the European continent. In many ways the orthodox Soviet version saw the Cold War as a heroic struggle against Western subversion and encirclement, led by the all-powerful United States. As a matter of pride and profound geopolitical anxiety, Moscow wanted to be recognized as equal superpower with world-wide influence and their possessions ratified through international agreements like the Helsinki Conference, establishing a form of co-existence that reduced the danger of nuclear war.<sup>20</sup> Only dissidents in samizdat publications dared challenge this defensive aggressiveness. The loss of empire and the break-down of socio-economic support systems have confronted Russian historians with new challenges in the period after 1991.

Regarding the United States, Christopher Moran reveals that the Central Intelligence Agency sought to uphold the moralizing narrative of the Cold War by suppressing the critical memoirs of whistleblowers. During the 1970s former employees who had become disaffected with the cloak-and-dagger operations of the CIA decided to divulge some of the dirty secrets of American intelligence operations. When Victor Marchetti, Philipp Agee and Frank Snepp tried to publish their indictments of illegal actions and mistaken policies, the intelligence community was aghast, since these disclosures threatened to rob Washington of its political righteousness. Hence the CIA directors asked the courts to suppress the texts, which created successive scandals, since the left-wing public was eager for details which supported its critical views. Shamefully, conservative judges restricted the freedom of speech by upholding the contracts which had sworn CIA employees to secrecy. But the whistleblowers’ evidence of massive wrong-doing ultimately buttressed the case of revisionist historians who blamed U.S. imperialism for the Cold War.<sup>21</sup>

Falk Pingel’s textbook analysis demonstrates how the concept of a Cold War gradually came to dominate the European curriculum in recent history. In the initial post-war years school books in East and West still referred to the hopes

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**20** See Vladimir Pechatnov’s contribution to this volume. Cf. idem, *Ot soĩtĩ uza – k kholodnoĩ voĩne: sovetско-amerikanskіe otnosheniĩ a v 1945–1947 gg.: Monografiĩ a* (Moscow: MGIMO, 2006).

**21** See Christopher Moran’s contribution to this volume. Cf. idem and Christopher J. Murphy, eds., *Intelligence Studies in Britain and the US: Historiography since 1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

for peaceful cooperation in the future. But during the 1950s the contest between the superpowers and the division of Germany started to permeate the texts with each side blaming the other. A decade later the bi-polar paradigm of the capitalist versus the communist countries was firmly established as cause of successive crises, although the concept of the Cold War remained largely a Western invention. During the 1970s most West European books and their East German counterparts started to refer to coexistence between the blocs and even voice some hope for convergence of advanced industrial societies so as to avoid further confrontation. But during the second Cold War, various attempts at East-West reconciliation through textbook consultations remained fruitless. Nonetheless towards the late 1980s mutual portrayals became less hostile, thereby facilitating a peaceful end of the conflict.<sup>22</sup>

According to Paul Bleton, spy fiction was also a central instrument for anchoring the Cold War in popular culture since it masqueraded as entertainment while spreading a political message. In the early years of the East-West conflict authors like John le Carré or titles like the James Bond series reinforced the ideological hostility by portraying the other side as dangerous subversion which had to be stopped at all costs. Not only in the Anglo-American countries, but also in France a whole “culture industry” sought to satisfy the ravenous appetite of the public by producing cheap paperbacks. The spy genre apparently owed its attraction to a combination of adventure story and crime thriller, in which a usually male hero overcame all sorts of dangers due to his quick wit, physical stamina or technological gadgets, only to be rewarded by exciting sex. During the 1970s, however, the spread of détente undercut the Manichaeism of the plots, sowing doubt about the morality of a particular side.<sup>23</sup> As a result of this gradual loss of certainty, espionage novels lost their glamour and even contributed to overcoming Cold War hostilities.

Christoph Classen shows that film and television played perhaps an even more important role in creating Cold War mentalities due to their pretended realism. Direct propaganda documentaries were less effective than regular action thrillers, since a didactic tone and crude stereotyping could not compete with the excitement of an attention-grabbing plot. Especially after the building of the Wall, numerous tunnel or escape films presented riveting accounts of Commu-

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<sup>22</sup> See Falk Pingel’s contribution to this volume. Cf. idem, *The European Home: Representations of 20th Century Europe in History Textbooks* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> See Paul Bleton’s contribution to this volume. Cf. idem, *Les anges de Machiavel: Essai sur le roman d’espionnage: Froide fin et funestes moyens, les espions de papier dans la paralittérature française, du Rideau de fer à la chute du Mur* (Quebec: Nuit Blanche, 1994).

nist repression and heroic flights to freedom. In Eastern Europe, movies showed evil and decadent capitalists whose sinister designs had to be foiled by upstanding socialist counter-spies. Even more effective were, however, the indirect dramatizations of dictatorship in Westerns where an outsider defeated villains and reestablished law and order or in “sandal-epics” like the Ten Commandments where freedom loving Jews outwitted dictatorial Egyptians. On television several long-running series like “I Spy” also followed similar plot-lines. But with détente, movies and TV gradually became more complex and abandoned cliché-ridden oversimplifications.<sup>24</sup>

Cultural representations therefore contributed considerably to the rise of a Cold War mentality by justifying and dramatizing the East-West conflict. No doubt, political analysis and decision-making in Moscow and Washington initiated the struggle between Communism and democracy. But the reorientation from cooperation in the Grand Alliance to hostility between the rival blocs required intellectual support in order to convince the public. Western academics like Hannah Arendt or Zbigniew Brzeziński helped by elaborating a “totalitarianism theory” which equated the brown and red dictatorships, whereas Eastern intellectuals like Christa Wolf still claimed to be fighting Fascism, only in a new, more devious American guise.<sup>25</sup> While writers of textbooks gradually included the Cold War in their descriptions of the recent past, the mass media of both sides reinforced mutual stereotyping through their popular culture productions which dramatized the dangerous consequences of the conflict. Only the fear of nuclear annihilation in movies like *Dr. Strangelove* and the differentiation of plots in the later Len Deighton novels slowly undercut bipolarity and questioned the necessity of a continuation of the Cold War.

## Memory

In spite of the physical ruins and mental aftereffects left behind by the East-West conflict, the memory boom in cultural studies has largely ignored the subject of the Cold War. Though Maurice Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory would be open to being applied to the East-West conflict, Pierre Nora’s nostalgic evocation

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<sup>24</sup> See Christoph Classen’s contribution to this volume. Cf. idem, *Bilder der Vergangenheit: Die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im Fernsehen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1955–1965* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Eckart Jesse, ed., *Totalitarismus im 20. Jahrhundert: Eine Bilanz der internationalen Forschung*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1999).

of the French heritage in its *lieux de mémoire* seems inappropriate for that topic. Moreover, the normative power of the moral imperative to remember the Holocaust has overshadowed concerns with recollections of other historical events like the First World War, even if the media seeks to revive different legacies during anniversaries. The conceptualization developed by Jan and Aleida Assmann might, however, be useful, since it distinguishes a deeper cultural memory from a more current communicative memory.<sup>26</sup> The related differentiation between individual remembrances, group recollections and public commemorations also offers a useful method to engage the impact of the East-West conflict.<sup>27</sup> While generally ignoring the topic itself, the discussion of memory provides some conceptual tools for addressing the legacy of the Cold War.

Jay Winter's reflections on the changing European attitudes towards war suggest some of the difficulties which accepted rituals of commemoration face in dealing with the Cold War. In spite of its all-encompassing nature and ideological hostility, the East-West conflict has not left behind as many military or civilian cemeteries as the two World Wars. Since the huge conventional and nuclear armaments were never actually used on the continent, the character of the Cold War is less tangible, making it difficult to recapture.<sup>28</sup> To be true, confrontation between the blocs did leave behind plenty of physical remains such as the Berlin Wall, military bases and former missile sites, which are now abandoned. It also created a sizable group of victims of Communist repression, clamoring for monetary compensation as well as public acknowledgement of their suffering. On some sites like the border crossing point Checkpoint Charlie a tourism industry has even developed that attracts thousands of visitors. But somehow the Cold War, nonetheless, appears more difficult to remember, because it was largely a contested state of mind.

In contrast, Vietnam was a place where hundreds of thousands of American soldiers did fight the Vietcong in one of the deadliest proxy wars of the Cold War. This part civil war and part post-colonial struggle has left plenty of physical remains. While much has been written about the American remembrance of the

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<sup>26</sup> Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2008), 109–118; Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Cf. also Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, eds., *Verletztes Gedächtnis: Erinnerungskultur und Zeitgeschichte im Konflikt* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Jarausch, "Survival in Catastrophe: Mending Broken Memories," in *Shattered Past*, 317–341.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Vietnam War, Jennifer Dickey's contribution takes a critical look at how the war has been presented in museums and historic sites in Vietnam. The official Vietnamese master narrative of the "War of National Salvation against the Americans," or the "American War," as it is called here, more or less excludes references to the larger context of the Cold War. Instead it is celebrated as the victory of "national unity achieved through heroic sacrifice," in a narrative that does not engage the local population, but is mainly aimed at international tourists.<sup>29</sup>

Muriel Blaive shows in her essay that the recovery of Cold War memory through every-day history might even destabilize the very concept. In Western recollections the confrontation is, indeed, conceptualized as Cold War due to the media repetition of political rhetoric. But on the Eastern side of the border, references to the second half of the twentieth century are generally framed as "life under Communism," accentuating the dictatorial regime rather than the international conflict. In oral interviews many Czech citizens admit their own cooperation in upholding a repressive regime without any pangs of conscience, since there seemed to be no alternative to it. Their justification for maintaining the border to Austria revolved around arguments of self-protection as reason for policing their own behavior and intercepting others trying to flee to the West. This collaboration perspective is rather antithetical to anti-Communist celebrations of heroic attempts to escape from dictatorship to freedom.<sup>30</sup> Ironically, the post-Communist media are now supplanting that local memory with an imported Western version of the Cold War while citizens struggle to sort out their personal recollections of the fallen dictatorship.<sup>31</sup>

Even where the notion of the Cold War has been accepted, dealing with the physical remains of military sites has proven rather complicated as Wayne Cocroft's article shows. Since many installations were abandoned once the East-West conflict had subsided, communities faced the unenviable task of deciding what to do with old bunkers, airfields or missile silos. It generally took local initiatives, supported by former service personnel, in order to gather the funds necessary for conserving the sites. Many of the installations were physically large, contained complicated equipment, and needed to be cleared of explosives that were left behind. On a broader national level, politicians and academics had to

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<sup>29</sup> See Jennifer Dickey's contribution to this volume. Cf. idem, Samir El Azhar and Catherin Lewis, eds., *Museums in a Global Context: National Identity, International Understanding*, (Washington, DC: AAM Press, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> See Muriel Blaive's contribution to this volume. Cf. idem, ed., *Clashes in European Memory: The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Marci Shore, *A Taste of Ashes: The Afterlife of Totalitarianism in Eastern Europe* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2013).

be convinced of the importance of historic preservation for objects from a recent past that many were only too happy to forget. As a result, the degree of musealization remains rather fragmentary, with some command posts preserved and made accessible to the public, but the vast majority decaying for lack of interest and financing.<sup>32</sup> Though the Cold War is included in some larger museums, the preservation of its sites still remains in its infancy.

The political difficulties of remembrance are particularly evident in Berlin, one of the flash-points of the Cold War. In her contribution, Hope Harrison demonstrates how determined the citizens of the city were to eradicate all traces of the divisive Wall in order to resume their previous lives. Only a small minority of intellectuals and SED-victims pushed for the preservation of some remnants and the establishment of a memorial at the Bernauer Strasse, where the most dramatic flights had taken place. The development of a Master Plan was complicated by the politics of the SPD-PDS coalition government in the city, because the post-Communist junior partner did not want to be reminded of its previous misdeeds. In the debate between dramatizing the experience of fear by reassembling pieces of the barrier from different sites and using only authentic remnants in their actual places the advocates of historic preservation ultimately won out over proponents of more dramatic staging. The resulting concept supported a decentralized approach, including all extant remnants, but at the same time it also upgraded the Bernauer Strasse memorial with a new museum, a virtual recreation of the Wall and a park hinting at its extent.<sup>33</sup>

Sybille Frank's essay suggests that a lack of public provision encourages private initiatives which commercialize the past. In order to exemplify the rise of a Cold War heritage industry in Berlin it analyzes a dispute over the international crossing-point of the Berlin Wall at Checkpoint Charlie. In 2004, the private Wall Museum at Berlin's former Allied border control point inaugurated a temporary Wall victims' memorial on the site. It comprised a replica of the Berlin Wall and more than 1,065 crosses, each displaying the name of one Wall dead – none of whom, however, had actually died at the border crossing. While the Berlin Senate scandalized the private Wall memorial as inauthentic, market-led trivialization of a serious period of German and world history, the Wall Museum promoted its memorial as a pilot project for a new public culture of remembrance that offered international Cold War tourists emotional Wall stories at a place of international

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<sup>32</sup> See Wayne Cocroft's contribution to this volume. Cf. idem and John Schofield, eds., *A Fearful Heritage: Diverse Legacies of the Cold War* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> See Hope Harrison's contribution to this volume. Cf. idem, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953–1961* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

attention. With news coverage gradually changing sides to the museum's viewpoint, the Senate eventually had to adopt new concepts of heritage display to retain authorship.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Hanno Hochmuth illustrates the difficulty of doing justice to the multiple legacies of the Cold War in Berlin, since traces of both sides compete with each other. The city is full of remnants of the East-West conflict such as the American monitoring station on top of the Teufelsberg or the Soviet military memorial in the Treptower Park. One such institution is the German-Russian museum in Karlshorst, the site of the surrender of the Wehrmacht in World War Two. Intended to explain to Russian soldiers the reasons for being stationed in Germany, its revised exhibit continues to focus on the Second World War. Its counterpart is the Allied Museum, created after the fall of the Wall as a nostalgic gesture of thanks to the Western forces stationed in Berlin, and located on the premises of the American movie-theater and library in Dahlem.<sup>35</sup> Since both institutions tell only part of the story and the commercial Wall Museum is too triumphalist, a group of scholars, politicians and museum curators including the editors of this volume has advocated the construction of a more comprehensive Cold War Museum. The establishment of a picture gallery and a "black box" already anticipates some of its future content.<sup>36</sup> The challenge will be to find an innovative and balanced method for its implementation.

## The Cold War as Culture

As illustrated by the contributions to this volume, a cultural approach to the Cold War provides a chance to escape its polarizing logic by questioning the very construction of the concept. Without in any way displacing traditional documentary accounts of the arms race or international crises, the inclusion of a cultural perspective can illuminate a whole new set of aspects of the East-West conflict. On

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Sybille Frank, *Wall Memorials and Heritage: The Heritage Industry of Berlin's Checkpoint Charlie* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Hanno Hochmuth, "HisTourismus; Public History und Berlin-Tourismus," in: *Vergangenheitsbewirtschaftung: Public History zwischen Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft*, Christoph Kühberger ed. (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2012), 173–182.

<sup>36</sup> See Konrad H. Jarausch and Christian Ostermann, "A Proposal for a 'Cold War Center: Exhibition at Checkpoint Charlie'" (MS, June 8, 2010). Cf. Jürgen Reiche and Dieter Vorsteher, "Zentrum Kalter Krieg. Ausstellung am Checkpoint Charlie" (Berlin, February 1, 2011); Julia Danylow and Andreas Etges, "A Hot Debate over the Cold War: The Plan for a 'Cold War Center' at Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin," in: Jennifer Dickey et al., eds., *Museums in a Global Context*, 144–161.



the one hand, it makes it possible to “link changing lifestyles, mass consumption and mass culture as well as educational systems with the overarching systemic conflict between the US and the USSR.” It thereby illuminates the deep and distorting imprint of the confrontation on popular culture and daily life.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, a cultural approach also raises the question how the notion of a “Cold War” was itself created among the political leaders of the superpowers and then transmitted to their populations as a way of thinking about the rivalry of Communism and Democracy. Going beyond the conventional analysis of clashing ideologies, such a perspective addresses the creation as well as dissemination of the core concept in order to explain how such a metaphor could dominate international discourse for half a century. It therefore frees scholars to reflect on their own role in the conflict.

A cultural view suggests that representation played a key role in the construction of the competing camps by transforming the former Allies into enemies and the erstwhile foe Germany, or rather its now two separate parts, into an ally or enemy, depending on which successor state belonged to one or the other camp. Confronting each other in journals and conferences, intellectuals strove to prove the superiority of the ideas of their own side, by extolling freedom or peace respectively. Cultural productions such as novels and films made ideology tangible, by creating human figures whose struggles illustrated the implications of a belief system. The labors of propagandists attached certain styles such as socialist realism to the East or abstract expressionism to the West, even if the connection was tenuous at best. Different social groups responded to such messages, with feminists admiring the various reforms of Communism while youths instead flocked to American life-styles, symbolized by rock music and jeans.<sup>38</sup> The cultural struggle also involved a polarization that forced contemporaries to choose sides and a policing of boundaries that treated dissidents as heretics. “Othering” was therefore central to the ideological competition of the Cold War.

A cultural approach also makes it possible to reflect on the paradoxical ubiquity as well as disappearance of Cold War memories. The older generation which lived through the East-West conflict still retains many recollections of the fear of nuclear bombs or international crises and the relief of détente that inspire stories of the “duck and cover” exercises in school. Not just victim groups, but

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<sup>37</sup> Vowinckel, *Cold War Cultures*, 347. Cf. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

<sup>38</sup> Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Cf. Michael Lemke, *Vor der Mauer: Berlin in der Ost-West Konkurrenz* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2011).

also former soldiers stationed on both sides of the Iron Curtain talk about having to participate in maneuvers that were designed to obliterate the ideological enemy at the risk of their own annihilation. Nonetheless, public memory culture is curiously silent on the topic, except for occasional triumphal references in the West about “winning the Cold War” and apologetic disclaimers in the East about having prevented World War Three by deterring a NATO attack. In contrast to the World Wars, there is no Europe-wide holiday, no central memorial location, no systematic reflection on its legacy.<sup>39</sup> It is almost as if the Cold War that held the entire globe in suspense during the second half of the twentieth century had never happened.

The essays in this volume therefore underline the importance of rethinking Cold War historiography in terms of representation and memory. Lowe and Joel have argued that “the Cold War not only persists but grows in its remembering,” though this “global contest” is being told in many different “national stories.”<sup>40</sup> The military sites that are being preserved in various locations are a step in the right direction by recalling the danger of nuclear annihilation. The commercialization of other places through a “heritage industry” shows considerable interest but does not adequately fulfill the public desire for information. The Cold War sections in the big national museums of history like the Smithsonian, the Deutsches Historisches Museum etc. are too brief to do the job, while the East European efforts to remember the Communist dictatorship or Soviet control in places like the “House of Terror” in Budapest are too ideologically one-sided. Instead a new institution is necessary that connects the global conflict with its local implications, treats the confrontation as an interactive process and pays attention to its cultural construction. Berlin would be the perfect place to do it. Lowe and Joel agree that the city “is universally recognized as the quintessential Cold War city both ‘then and now’.” No other place on the globe “comes close to symbolizing the contracted struggle between East and West on the same level as Germany’s capital.”<sup>41</sup> The realization of a new Cold War museum at Checkpoint Charlie – one of the most famous “sites of memory” of the conflict – would make a huge contribution towards a more sophisticated understanding of the Cold War.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Klaus-Dietmar Henke, ed., *Die Mauer: Errichtung, Überwindung, Erinnerung* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2011). Cf. Vojtech Mastny and Zhu Liqun, eds., *The Legacy of the Cold War: Perspectives on Security, Cooperation, and Conflict* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Lowe and Joel, *Remembering the Cold War*, 245.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>42</sup> Sven Felix Kellerhoff, “Den Grusel am Checkpoint erlebbar machen,” *Die Welt*, September 20, 2012. Cf. Claus Leggewie, *Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung: Ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt* (Munich: Beck, 2011).

The international initiative to create a museum of the Cold War in Berlin is especially important because it could convey a positive message. Although the world repeatedly teetered on the brink of self-destruction, reason ultimately prevailed and the hostile blocs found a way to de-escalate tensions so as to preserve peace. The reality of the danger of the nuclear arms race and of successive international crises should not be forgotten although they passed without incinerating the globe. The pervasive fear of Communist repression also needs to be recalled in order to honor the freedom drive of the suppressed populations, though the Western transgressions in supporting military dictators and ideological witch-hunts should be admitted as well. But more importantly, the non-violent ending of the Cold War through international understanding from above and the peaceful revolution from below needs to be emphasized. In order to guard against a relapse into military confrontation and ideological hostility, the fact that it was possible to overcome decades of deadly conflict sends a signal of hope that surely has universal significance.<sup>43</sup>

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**43** Konrad H. Jarausch, "Die Teilung Europas und ihre Überwindung. Überlegungen zu einem Ausstellungskonzept für Berlin," *Zeithistorische Forschungen*, online-edition, 5 (2008) Nr. 2, <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Jarausch-2-2008> (page last visited on October 29, 2017); and Wolfgang Thierse, "Das Haus für die weltgeschichtliche Dimension," *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 19, 2012.