

Markus Furrer  
Peter Gautschi  
(Eds.)

# Remembering and Recounting the Cold War

Commonly Shared History?



**WOCHEN  
SCHAU**  
WISSENSCHAFT

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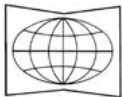
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# Inhalt

Authors Foreword. . . . .	7
INTRODUCTION. . . . .	9
<i>Markus Furrer, Peter Gautschi</i>	
Memory Cultures and History Education. Introduction . . . . .	11
PICTURES . . . . .	27
<i>Anu Raudsepp</i>	
On the Enemy Image in the Cold War Period History Textbooks Used in Estonia . . . . .	29
<i>Daniel V. Moser-Lécho</i>	
China after 1949 in Swiss History Textbooks from 1950 to 2005 . .	47
POLITICAL CULTURE . . . . .	59
<i>Tamas Kanyo-Fischer</i>	
Erud? The Political Culture of the Cold War – Remarks on Hungary . . . . .	61
<i>Alexander S. Khodnev</i>	
The Culture of Memory of the Cold War in Modern Russia, 1991-2015 . . . . .	80
<i>İsmail H. Demircioğlu</i>	
The Culture of Remembrance of the Cold War in Turkey . . . . .	95
RECOUNTING THE COLD WAR . . . . .	109
<i>Markus Furrer</i>	
A view of the Cold War in the Swiss Historical Narrative . . . . .	111

<i>Ueli Bischof</i> The Cold War and Switzerland. Views of History of Central Switzerland Teachers of the Secondary Level I and II . . . . .	129
<i>İsmail H. Demircioğlu, Ebru Demircioğlu</i> The Cold War in Turkish History Textbooks . . . . .	144
<i>İsmail H. Demircioğlu, Ebru Demircioğlu</i> What Do Turkish History Teachers Think About The Cold War? . . . . .	159
DEBATING THE COLD WAR. . . . .	173
<i>Joanna Wojdon</i> Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski (Jack Strong). A Case Study of the Polish Debates on the Cold War . . . . .	175
LESSON DOSSIER ON A HISTORY DOUBLE LESSON FROM SWITZERLAND . . . . .	189
<i>Documented and compiled by Peter Gautschi, Hans Utz, Nora Zimmermann</i> Switzerland's Attitude in the Cold War . . . . .	191
Authors . . . . .	205

## Authors Foreword

Perceptions and images of the Cold War as they appear in textbooks, in the classroom but also in public and in the scientific discourse are topic of this volume “Remembering and Recounting the Cold War – Commonly Shared History?”. These perceptions and images are particularly interesting because they are part of the communicative memory and are thus in the process of undergoing change. It is also the task of history didactics, here understood as a science concerned with investigating, theorizing on and staging the way of how people and societies deal with history and memories, to describe, to analyze and to interpret such moldings of teaching cultures, memory cultures and, of course, individual and collective views of this era.

It was thus a welcome challenge for us at the Center of History Education and Memory Cultures that the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation made it possible for us to, in a first step, explore practices of memory culture and cultural meditation in comparative international studies. The fact that the Cold War is a central topic in history teaching in different countries became also clear to us in the project “Teaching the Cold War – Memory Practices in the Classroom” which we were able to conduct under the leadership of Barbara Christophe together with the research group Educational History and History Education of the university of Umeå/Schweden and the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig/Germany. We wish to thank both institutions which have thus substantially contributed to the creation and success of this volume. Furthermore, our thanks go to Kurt Brügger and Paul Paradise for translating and proofreading all the texts of the here contributing authors who all do not have English as their mother tongue.

The fact that all the participants of this volume have engaged themselves in making public each their specific findings on the topic “Remembering and Recounting the Cold War” in a common language now allows the comparison, the exchange and the search for commonly shared history. In the process of the work we were time and again reminded of the fact that this is also a socially important task: In many countries the perceptions and images of the Cold War have over the last years been used for justifying certain policies. This has partially resulted in a division and a misuse of history. From a scientific point of view this needs to be countered. We stay tuned.

Markus Furrer & Peter Gautschi





# Introduction



## Memory Cultures and History Education. Introduction

### How do memory cultures influence history teaching?

Memory cultures have an effect on history teaching. This influence, which the people involved are often not aware of, takes place in different ways, for example by the fact that historical cultural objectivations<sup>1</sup> are dealt with in history teaching or that learners and teachers bring in their memories.

This, for example, becomes obvious in the history double lesson “Switzerland’s Attitude in the Cold War”<sup>2</sup>: The class is given an introduction into the era of the Cold War in Switzerland by means of a film clip and a reading from the textbook. Then the teacher asks a guiding question about Switzerland’s attitude in the Cold War and launches a fifty minute task-based teaching unit. The students work in pairs, each with a laptop, dealing with six materials on individual aspects of the topic. The teacher circulates from group to group and explains the tasks and materials to them in individual talks, for example the “Civil Defense Booklet”<sup>3</sup> which is a guidebook on the civil defense of the country issued in 1969 by the Federal Council. This publication at the time handed out for free to all households was intended to strengthen the resistance of the people and secure Switzerland’s independence.

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1 Hans-Jürgen Pandel, *Geschichtsdidaktik. Eine Theorie für die Praxis*, Schwalbach/Ts. 2013, 164.

2 See Lesson dossier on a history double lesson from Switzerland in 2015, in this book 191-203.

3 See Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv: <https://www.bar.admin.ch/bar/de/home/service-publikationen/publikationen/geschichte-aktuell/geistige-landesverteidigung-im-kalten-krieg--das--zivilverteidig.html> and the publication: [http://www.rhetorik.ch/Aktuell/11/05\\_08/zivilverteidigung1969.pdf](http://www.rhetorik.ch/Aktuell/11/05_08/zivilverteidigung1969.pdf) (29 June 2016).

56:30	Lm	Selina, may I briefly? (The teacher takes the Civil Defense Booklet and leafs through it.) That is this ominous booklet in which there are many tips about emergency supply, civil protection and many more issues. Also "First Aid" is in there, that is really ok.
		Then there is a special chapter "Second Form of War" at the back of the booklet. This "Second Form" is then explained here, and always after the same pattern: On the left it always says what the enemy intends. And on the right it says what we have to do against it. It says nowhere who the enemy is, but, of course, this is clear to everybody.
		Here for example: The enemy surrounds Switzerland! Then there is a command for this agent named Adolf Wühler. What a name! His name is 'Wühler (ransacker)' and he ransacks society. And his first name is then even 'Adolf'.
58:25	Lm	Here we can see a command this Adolf received from his headquarters, namely ... and so on. Then here there are, so to speak, the guidelines as to how to behave in order to oppose the enemy.
		And here in this presentation you can see how the enemy tries to infiltrate Switzerland. That reaches down to the lowest cells of society.
		The enemy, Adolf Wühler, for example, becomes a member of a club and tries – after practicing gymnastics – when having a beer – to convince his gymnastic companions about communism, for example. However, nowhere it is said that Wühler is a communist. Always there is talk of the enemy.
		At the time, when I served in the military, it was clear to everybody who the enemy was. And we always practiced on the basis of the same scenario. One put a map of Switzerland on the wall. On there an arrow was drawn bold and dark which over Lake Constance pointed into Switzerland. There it said: "Airborne enemy troops followed by tank units penetrate Switzerland". The enemy always came from the East, and the enemy was always marked in red. It was not imaginable any different. And nobody had to explain to us why. It was like that.
59:50	Sm6	Ok.
59:55	Lm	It was also obvious that it wasn't Liechtenstein that attacked Switzerland, but ... well and that was in fact the enemy image. That is only a little example now, but it is enough to show that it always worked according to the same pattern. We go into the hedgehog position, curl up and present the spine. (The teacher continues to circulate.)

By the teacher sharing the memories of his own period of military service during that time in an illustrative way and also when dealing with the topic "Switzerland's Attitude in the Cold War", he adds a very special 'tinge'. This tinge is different from teacher to teacher when treating the same topic

“Switzerland’s Attitude in the Cold War”, from place of school to place of school, from country to country. Therein teaching cultures, memory cultures and, of course, also individual and collective views of history are mirrored. It is also the task of history didactics, here understood as a science concerned with investigating, theorizing on and staging the way of how people and societies deal with history and memories,<sup>4</sup> to describe, to analyze and to interpret such moldings of memory cultures.

How this could in fact happen is still largely unknown. It was thus a welcome challenge for us at the Center of History Education and Memory Cultures that the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation made it possible for us to, in a first step, explore practices of memory culture and cultural meditation in comparative international studies:

- What is the relationship between history and memory when it comes to historical teaching and learning?
- What perceptions, interpretations and images mark national historical narratives and history textbooks?
- How do teachers convey their own memories and memory cultures in history teaching?
- What effect do contextual references of memory culture have on history teaching, and how is the latter marked by it?

The Cold War lent itself as a topic against the background of which the questions raised can be investigated particularly well because as a most recent era it is still very present in the memory culture in different countries. Or in other words: Where history still smolders (Barbara Tuchmann, 1964), fire does not lack.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the above-mentioned general questions appeared to be especially exciting to us when looked at concretely:

- Where and how do memories about the Cold War spanning the time from the 1990s to the present arise in history teaching?
- In what way do teachers remember events from the Cold War, how do they today recount the Cold War?
- How is the Cold War presented in history textbooks?

The fact that the Cold War is a central topic in history teaching in different countries became also clear to us in the project “Teaching the Cold War –

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4 Peter Gautschi, *Empirie, Theorie, Strategie – drei wichtige Leistungsbereiche in der Geschichtsdidaktik*, in: *kontext : pädagogik*. FHA Aargau Nordwestschweiz Pädagogik 2003, 50 – 55, here 50.

5 See Markus Furrer, *Grundfragen und Themen der Zeitgeschichte*, in: Markus Furrer, Kurt Messmer (eds.), *Handbuch Zeitgeschichte im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach/Ts, 2013, 32; Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die neueste Zeitgeschichte*, in *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 51 (2003), 5-28, here 11.

Memory Practices in the Classroom” which we were able to conduct under the leadership of Barbara Christophe together with the research group Educational History and History Education of the university of Umeå/Schweden and the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig/Germany.<sup>6</sup> In textbooks, curricula and also scientific treatises the Cold War stands for an epoch that covers the time period from 1945/47 to 1989/91 and also constitutes part of the historical canon. Even if no exact starting and end date can be fixed with any certainty, yet contours can be put: Bernd Stöver for example talks of a path into the Cold War between 1917 and 1945, of an escalating total conflict in the years 1945 to 1947 resulting in a division of the world. The Cold War was officially declared to have ended in the 1990s.<sup>7</sup>

Early on politicians, diplomats and also historians were aware that the confrontation between the rivaling super powers after the Second World War was caused by different reasons and were also rooted in classical cultural-geographic preconditions besides the ideological ones. As in the 19<sup>th</sup> century England and Russia, or also France and Russia, were opponents in a cultural-geographic sense, with the outbreak of the First, and then especially the Second World War, the United States followed in the footsteps of England, and Russia transformed into the Soviet Union. The opposing blocs were thus the extreme expression of an ideological and cultural-geographic alloy. The confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union would presumably also have taken place without any ideological dispute.<sup>8</sup>

As a characteristic cipher the term ‘Cold War’, coined by the American journalist Herbert Swope in 1946, rapidly found its way into the West as well as East and stood for this diffuse threat situation and its characteristic of the alloy.<sup>9</sup>

## How can the Cold War be characterized?

How can the conflict be characterized, and to what degree is the term ‘Cold War’ suitable as a designation for the era which finds its way into textbooks?

Used as a bracket term, the term includes economic, cultural and not least social-political phenomena. Used in that way the term implies more

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6 For further details cf. the website of the project: <http://www.gei.de/abteilungen/schulbuch-als-medium/geschichte/teaching-the-cold-war.html> (28 June 2016).

7 See Bernd Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg. Geschichte eines radikalen Zeitalters 1947-1991*, Munich 2007, 467.

8 Dan Diner, *Das Jahrhundert verstehen. Eine universalhistorische Deutung*, Munich 1999, 57.

9 Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg* (cf. note 7), 11-15.

than a geopolitical conflict. Most different developments amalgamate with each other in the common reference framework of an epoch. In relevant history handbooks, history textbooks or also publications on the history of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century you find references to plenty of topics such as the economic boom and the mass consumer society, decolonization, the cultural and social change or for example the crises in the 1970s. All of them are put in relation to the Cold War. The Cold War now had a decisive effect on the epoch beyond the geopolitical contradictions and thus had a bracket function that needed to be clarified.<sup>10</sup>

Whereas the historian Wilfried Loth rather recognizes an aggregate state in the East-West conflict which has emerged in different dosages, Bernd Stöver puts emphasis on the epochal dimension of the conflict. He focuses on the dominant and all-embracing ideological confrontation which, at all levels, had its impact on society, economy, culture and sports as well as on science and education and not least on international politics. Both the ideological constructs in East and West understood themselves as drafts of the absolute new order which explains the all-embracing threat perception and the total utilization of all resources and areas of life. Because of the nuclear stalemate the conflict was carried out on substitute fields until one of the two powers of the conflict failed to exert its influence. Such substitute fields at the same time opened up political leeway to other powers, amongst others the People's Republic of China, and also made the conflict not simply appear as bipolar.<sup>11</sup>

In the West the conflict went along with a virulent anti-communism whose roots lie in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and which marked the inter-war period as anti-Bolshevism. At times this reached grotesque proportions in the Western states of the inter-war period. Enemy and stereotype images could not only be found with the opposing power but also within one's own societies. Anti-communism assumed an important stabilizing inner-societal function. At the same time the West was faced with a mobilization dictatorship of the USSR. Even if in the historiography on the Cold War, not least in connection with the question concerning the guilt for the conflict, the high secu-

10 A selection: Bernd Greiner, *Kalter Krieg und Cold War Studies*“, Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte: [https://docupedia.de/zg/Cold\\_War\\_Studies](https://docupedia.de/zg/Cold_War_Studies) (29 June 2016); David Eugster, Sibylle Marti (eds.), *Das Imaginäre des Kalten Krieges. Beiträge zu einer Kulturgeschichte des Ost-West-Konfliktes in Europa*, Essen 2015; Ruud Van Dijk, William Glenn Gray, Svetlana Savranskaya, Jeremi Suri, Qiang Zhai (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Cold War*, 2 vol., New York 2008; Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, Thomas Lindenberger, (eds.), *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies*, New York 2012.

11 Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg* (cf. note 7), 461.



rity needs of the USSR are brought to the forefront, a diffused and hardly graspable threat potential was emanating from that country.<sup>12</sup>

The ideological contrast in the Cold War gained broad contemporary attention. The 'obligation for modernization' was also a 'norm without alternative'. The world could (almost) only be divided up into a Western-democratic and an Eastern-socialist one. For both sides modernization theories in the era of ideologies (Karl Dietrich Bracher) constituted a common denominator and basis. Viewed from the inside, the Cold War and the anti-capitalism and anti-communism resulting from it had an internal integrating effect on the societies, as a world view which distinguished the society from a demonized external and internal enemy. Enemy images boomed. A monolithic ideological belief was prevalent.<sup>13</sup>

Seen as a global conflict, the Cold War with its inner-societal tensions had a national and regional effect. The conflict was global from the beginning alone already because of the exertion of territorial dominance and control of regions outside Europe with the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and the Two-World Theory by Zhdanov. In 1949, as a consequence of the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, a third of the world population lived in a communist social system and with the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 the conflict took an almost exclusive place in the 'Third World'. Whereas the term of the Cold War proved to be an accurate picture in Europe, a great number of bloody proxy wars were then triggered in the non-European world in which – as in the case of the Vietnam War – the super powers could also happen to get involved directly.

## Why are the memory cultures so strongly marked by the Cold War?

The reason why the Cold War had such a deep effect on societies and why it was a nationally determining factor lies in the strongly ideologizing component. Due to its global dimension the Cold War is nowadays part of 'shared history'. Everybody was involved. However, each society and each nation has different memories. This is not simply a question of the former Western/

12 See also Luc van Dongen, Stéphanie Roulin, Giles Scott-Smith (eds.), *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War. Agents, Activities, and Networks*, Basingstoke 2014; Bernd Greiner, *Antikommunismus, Angst und Kalter Krieg. Eine erneute Annäherung*, in: "Geistige Gefahr" und "Immunisierung der Gesellschaft". *Antikommunismus und politische Kultur in der frühen Bundesrepublik*, ed. by Stefan Creuzberger, Dierk Hoffmann, Munich 2014.

13 Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Geschichte als Erfahrung. Betrachtungen zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart/Munich 2001, 24.

Eastern bloc borders; it happens at a collective as well as an individual level. Inevitably, almost every individual became a contemporary witness at the end of this global conflict almost lasting over two generations. How do societies remember the immediate prehistory to their present in times of profound uncertainty about their own identity? We notice that the United States has taken care of the fact that dozens of official sites of remembrance were included in the prestigious list of the National Register of Historic Places. In Russia such sites of remembrance seem lacking because the Russian collective memory of the Cold War is to a much stronger extent focused on the loss of its former role as a super power. The memories in the reunified Germany are complex. And in former Western neutral small states like Switzerland they are rather vague.

Thus, in the area of memory cultures, differences become not only apparent between the West and the East but practically between all national states and their societies as well as within these states themselves, which was the reason why the topic lent itself particularly well for our questions concerning historical didactics and memory cultures. Germany's remembrance of the Cold War is marked by the division into East and West with, however, having totally different societal and political reference points in both the parts. The GDR, like the other Eastern people's republics, was part of the communist system and a Soviet satellite. Whereas a liberal democracy came into existence in the West and, on the basis of the economic boom and social market economy, the West German society developed a feeling of having changed from the losing side to the winning side; the Eastern society went through another phase of dictatorship. The communist social system was, however, not only a dictatorship but was also committed to the idea of equality and turned out to mobilize the masses. A weakness as well as a reason for its later collapse was not least rooted in this fact, namely that this promise could be kept less and less over the post-war decades and the system subsequently lost credibility and support in wide circles of the population.

The Cold War which away from the epicenters in the East and the West also certainly had its 'hot' phases was thus not entirely a military-diplomatic conflict. The bloc confrontation taking shape along ideological conflict lines, accompanied by a constant threat discourse, also marked the field of culture considerably. The Cold War as a war of culture defied already existing concepts of society, concepts of everyday life, media cultures as well as art, religion and philosophy and shaped them profoundly. All this has a coining effect on the remembrance.

Memory cultures about the Cold War are characterized by a broad societal emotionalization. It lifted the confrontation out of the heights of the

reason of state and made it a conflict lying between but also within societies. The Soviet Union as well as the United States and other Western states promoted ideologies as a way of missionizing their citizens; ideologies were perceived as a role model for the world from large parts of the respective society. Due to the inherent plebiscitary character of democracies, in particular Western democracies tended to adopt widespread emotionalization and hysteria.<sup>14</sup> From a historical-scientific perspective three significant effects can be determined: First, it put a cover over all those rivalries and conflicts which had marked world politics before the Second World War. Second, it froze the international situation and thus stabilized the relatively unstable and highly provisional state of the post-war order. And third, it furnished the world with an enormous amount of weapons, which still has its effect on the post-phase of the Cold War.<sup>15</sup>

The end of the Cold War also had far-reaching effects, namely that the pillars having so far supported the international architecture and structures of the inner political systems in fact collapsed. What remained was a shaky and in many places collapsing world.<sup>16</sup>

## **In what way do history and remembrance about the Cold War differ?**

Historiography about the Cold War as well as the respective memory cultures were and still have been part of the scientific discussion since the beginning of the conflict. The earliest perception from the Western perspective is referred to as 'traditional school'. It focuses on the threat caused by the Marxist Leninist claim to the world revolution. Its symmetrical counterpart can be found in the Soviet reproach of imperialism directed against the U.S. foreign policy. A so-called 'revisionist view' following in the West from the 1960s on was oriented towards the Marxist Leninist interpretation and criticized the 'traditional school'. It interpreted the Soviet expansion policy in the first place as striving and acting with the purpose of securing the existing state of things. The 'post-revisionist approach' emerging from the 1970s on sought to bridge both the preceding concepts of interpretation and recognized the problematic issues of how to write history and how to deal with memory cultures as regards perception and communication problems of the antagonistic powers. All three interpretations remained time-related partial explanations,

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14 See Eric Hobsbawm, *Das Zeitalter der Extreme. Weltgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1998, 206.

15 See Hobsbawm, *Das Zeitalter der Extreme* (cf. note 14), 319-321.

16 See Hobsbawm, *Das Zeitalter der Extreme* (cf. note 14), 322.

and ideological position references were manifested by them. Historical research has always been and will always be faced with current political developments.<sup>17</sup> The 'post-revisionist view' fitted into an era of international as well as German-German détente policy, but like the others simply blanked out that the Cold War contained many elements of a classic power conflict. The ideological contrast between the East and the West spawned numerous ideas which, for example, resulted in a theory of convergence, which means a rapprochement between the capitalist and socialist system. Only the end of the Cold War opened the retrospective view onto the fight of two global systems of order basically excluding each other.

Like other historical epochs the history of the Cold War not only continues to be written but also to be rewritten. As an epoch-determining phase preceding the present and recent contemporary history there arise relevant references from a perspective concerning the science of history as well as the memory cultures which, however, need to be differentiated in a reflected way. History is a science, and remembrance is an individual and social process through which past events are reanimated and imagined from the present perspective each time and under current needs.<sup>18</sup> Whereas the former is oriented towards a rational criteria of reasonability and inter-subjectivation, the latter is an expression of a subjective and also collective recollection of real or imagined past events. The aim of such a kind of remembrance lies less in the reconstruction of the most exact picture possible of past events but rather in the construction of a self-image which serves to produce meaning and identity. Within the framework of scientific discussions concerning memory cultures as well as of discourses new entrances to the past are opened up, or dug up so to speak. Thereby at times new things upsetting us are brought to light, but undesired things consciously also concealed and blanked out. Dealing with the past is not only different from country to country, as is shown on the example of the Cold War, but it is also subject to change over time.<sup>19</sup>

Looking back onto the Cold War is not only a matter amongst historians themselves but it is strongly characterized by discourses concerning memory cultures. This phenomenon appears to be typical of dealing with contem-

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17 See Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg* (cf. note 7), 16-18.

18 Peter Gautschi, Barbara Sommer Häller, Markus Furrer, *Umgang mit Geschichte und Erinnerung in Schule und Hochschule*, in: Peter Gautschi, Barbara Sommer Häller (eds.), *Der Beitrag von Schulen und Hochschulen zu Erinnerungskulturen*, Schwalbach/Ts. 2014, 7-36, here 10-11.

19 Cf. Gautschi, Sommer Häller, Furrer, *Umgang mit Geschichte und Erinnerung in Schule und Hochschule*, (cf. note 18), 8.

porary history.<sup>20</sup> On the example of the Cold War different aspects stand out in particular: A level of fierce historic-political discourses and debates become apparent which can easily be politicized. Especially in states which look back onto a communist 'people's democratic' past it is a difficult matter for people to come to terms with the domestic political past of their own dictatorship. Taboos as well as defamations go along with it.

Where coming to terms with the past is not impeded by blanking it out, the politics of history shadows of the past become visible. In South America, for example, looking back onto the period of the military dictatorships and the colonels' regimes which at a transnational level took violent and brutal action against opposition members. Exactly because the Cold War is still prevalent in diverse forms and is yet over, it also assumes an important place in the memory culture. It became a weighty cipher for current politics of history. By the 1990s the end was declared in a prominent way and since then there have been warnings against a revival.

Historians further deal with the 'heritage of the Cold War' and bring up the question as to how the structures laid down and consolidated at the time still continue to have an effect on society, politics and economy. For Bernd Greiner the Cold War is in fact also a historical epoch which left lasting marks which survive in the deep structures of political and social life. For this reason the Cold War ranks among the unique periods he says.<sup>21</sup>

The post-Cold-War phase of almost thirty years is itself characterized by different phases of looking back and remembering: After the optimistic 1990s marked by hope for peace in an era of rule of law, from the mid-2000s on an era followed in which the post-war order broke apart and new rivalries and global crises opened up a new view of the Cold War. As contrast to it – at least for the northern hemisphere the Cold War virtually proved to be a time of peace – even if under a constant threat of violence.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the question arises as to how the Cold War can be told nowadays and what narratives exist at the different levels – in comparison between different nations and societies but also individually. To what extent do such narratives create a sense of togetherness or do they rather divide the world anew? What we know already now is that the epoch of the Cold War

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20 See Alexander Nützenadel, Wolfgang Schieder, *Zeitgeschichtsforschung in Europa. Einleitende Überlegungen*, in: Alexander Nützenadel, Wolfgang Schieder (eds.), *Zeitgeschichte als Problem. Nationale Traditionen und Perspektiven der Forschung in Europa*, Göttingen 2004, 7-24.

21 See Bernd Greiner, *Spurensuche zum Erbe des Kalten Krieges*, in: Bernd Greiner, Tim B. Müller, Klaas Voß (eds.), *Erbe des Kalten Krieges*, Hamburg 2013, 9-41, here 9.

22 Cf. Andreas Rödter, 21.0. *Eine kurze Geschichte der Gegenwart*, Munich 2015, 345.