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## Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

Looking back half a century in history reveals a string of events considered decisive for the era commonly referred to as the Cold War. Developments such as the military coups in Chile and Argentina, the Nicaraguan Revolution or the Guatemalan Civil War are usually contextualized within this discussion, while simultaneously proving that this period of time was by no means a peaceful one.

Traditionally, historical and political academic research has focused on the dualism of the two superpowers, with Europe as the epicenter of conflict. This special edition, however, follows the more recent approach of categorizing the Cold War as a global phenomenon with a special focus on the “third world.” Crucial for this perspective is the work of Odd Arne Westad, especially his 2005 volume *The Global Cold War*.<sup>12</sup> By focusing on the dynamics in and between countries at the periphery of the traditional bipolar system and its arena, one can begin to appreciate the complexity of

this ideological, military and cultural conflict.

To this end, all five articles of this edition are taking a closer look at the relationships between state and non-state actors in the GDR (German Democratic Republic), the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and Latin American countries. Common ground for the studies is this relational approach, which draws attention to the complex dynamics between all actors involved. The starting point for the research was Berlin, a place of particular importance during these decades, and the Latin American Institute of the Free University of Berlin, which, having been founded in the context of the Cold War, celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Furthermore, the articles of this issue all emphasize political and cultural forces with discussions of power relations and importance of ideological aspects.

The first article by Vera Dickhoff, Markus Buderath and Carl Magnus Michel makes the case for a novel analytical approach to understanding Cold War phenomena. On the basis of an actor-relationship analysis of project-based development aid financed by the West German organization Brot für die Welt in Colombia, they intend to illustrate arguments as to why applying conventional post-Cold-War theory to the Cold War era could deliver theoretical benefits. Specifically, the authors suggest that Saskia Sassen’s thesis on the potential globality of localized actors and struggles is not, as initially

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1 Odd A. Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

2 Further reassessment of the Cold War period based on new conceptual frameworks can be found in Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

suggested by Sassen, bound to the modern phase of globalization. Using the structural idea of global assemblages, the article endeavors to show how localized political interactions could be constitutive of a Global Cold War, thus linking Sassen's theoretical approach with that of Odd Arne Westad.

The subsequent article by Janaina Ferreira dos Santos and Marie Holthaus puts its focus on two state-level actors by analyzing the cultural dimension of the Global Cold War, taking as a starting point the cultural and scientific cooperation between the GDR and post-revolutionary Nicaragua in the 1980s. Since cultural and scientific knowledge were crucial categories of the East-West division, greatly influencing domestic as well as foreign policies, exchange in these areas was an important part of East Germany's diplomatic efforts. The authors focus on the complex and contradictory nature of cooperation in these fields, highlighting further how the export of "official culture" from the GDR to Nicaragua reflects a form of both practical cooperation and ideological propaganda.

Cooperation also plays a role when it comes to the third article by Johanna Habel and Anairis Díaz Maceo, which focuses on the continuity and change of ideological structures in the Global Cold War by taking a closer look at the solidarity communication between Cuba and the GDR before and after German reunification. In the first part of the article, the authors lay out the

communication of solidarity between the Cuban state and the GDR, and to citizens in both countries, in the period of 1974 to 1990. This constructed solidarity affected the relations between the two states after the events surrounding German reunification until 1995, the structure of relations shifting from a state level to solidarity and friendship groups.

The fourth article by Georg Sturm and David Kristen also deals with solidarity, analyzing the instrumentalization of Chilean exiles in the GDR and conducting a content analysis of media coverage. Realizing a quantitative as well as qualitative examination of the newspaper *Neues Deutschland* articles dealing with Chile and Chilean exiles in the GDR after the 1973 military coup, the article shows the extraordinary importance of Chile for the GDR. The authors argue that the solidarity with Chile and the admission of refugees was stylized in order to underline the moral superiority of the GDR's ideological framework in the context of the Cold War. In addition to that, the article suggests that the related media coverage can be understood as a tool for system stabilization throughout the legitimation of the GDR's political work, especially among its own population.

Finally, the fifth article by Vincent Kammer and Carla Venneri explores the bilateral relations of the Federal Republic of Germany with Paraguay during the Stroessner dictatorship (1954-1989), one of the longest and most repressive regimes in Latin America. It argues

that relations between the two states, shaped by anti-communist discourses and oriented towards economic goals, centered on development projects. The paper explores the technical and financial aid provided by the FRG to Paraguay in several economic sectors, relying on diplomatic communications between the two states as sources.

All articles, as well as the overall idea for this special issue, are the result of the seminar “Latin America’s Global Cold War,” given by Prof. Dr. Markus-Michael Müller at the Latin America Institute of the Free University of Berlin. The interdisciplinary profile of the seminar participants, including students of history, international relations, ethnology and political science, made this pluralistic approach possible. With this diverse background and the unifying focus on Latin America, the eleven authors aim to deliver a contribution to Cold War research, placing these events in a global perspective, both in the geographical and academic sense.