1 Making and Unmaking the Cold War in Museums

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In the twentieth-century history gallery of the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin, two cars are displayed at jaunty angles. They are both small, affordable, mass-produced automobiles in shades of green, both parked on a slope above a selection of consumer goods available in their country of origin. They are both instantly recognisable to those who lived through this period in history, and indelibly associated with the nation that produced them. But they are displayed for their contrasts as much as their similarities. One is a Trabant, produced in East Germany from 1957 until 1991; the other a Volkswagen Beetle, produced between 1938 and 2003 and after the Second World War in the West German town of Wolfsburg (Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

The Museum displays them to demonstrate visually the parallels between the two Germanies split during the 40 years of superpower conflict from the late 1940s known as the Cold War. The Federal Republic of Germany (and its Volkswagens) in the west was allied to the United States and the German Democratic Republic (with its Trabants) was a satellite of the Soviet Union in the east. These two blocs participated in a nuclear arms race to develop weapons so devastating that they would never be used; rather, their very existence was intended to deter an attack.

A generation since its conclusion with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the unification of these Germanies, the Cold War is often characterised in popular culture by this nuclear standoff and the accompanying global politics.[1] At a glance, however, the cars and the goods displayed below them in the Deutsches Historisches Museum show rather the everyday experience of the Cold War.[2] In contrast to the fear of nuclear Armageddon, they are intended to generate nostalgia (or in the case of the Trabant, *Ostalgie*) and affection from those who remember, and perhaps curiosity from their children as to why these humble automobiles were so fetishised.

Elsewhere in museums, other vehicles, too, stand in as material metonyms for the superpower conflict. These tanks and spy planes sit alongside uniforms, banners, flags and fragments of the wall that split the German capital. These collections are deployed by curators in an attempt to address the difficult task of manifesting a war that did not happen, a four-decade phenomenon that (in the Global North at least) was an "imaginary war."[3] Their efforts are the subject of this book.

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Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 Cold War exhibits at the Deutsches Historisches Museum. © DHM/Indra Desnica

Materialising the Cold War

Making the Cold War in museums, it transpires, is not simple.[4] As anniversaries roll around, twenty-first-century museums habitually commemorate global conflicts from the previous century. The First World War was the subject of considerable heritage activity in the United Kingdom and elsewhere during its four-year centenary. At the time of writing, we approach the eightieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second World War, and the response is not so coherent. Still less so was the sector response in the lead-up to the thirtieth anniversaries of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 2019 and 2021. For the Cold War was a complicated, sprawling entity and its commemoration likewise complex.

To understand this, Cold War heritage has become a focused topic in its own right and there has been a steady growth in studies of how the Cold War has been remembered and represented.[5] Alongside these sub-fields have emerged analyses of Cold War culture, including empirical work taking stock of Cold War remains in a heritage context and the infusion of everyday objects – like the cars above – with ideologies.[6] Work on the memory of the Cold War has, with some notable exceptions, mostly focused on its verbal and textual representations rather than its material markers.[7] Elsewhere there has grown a sophisticated scholarship on the material cultures and museology of war and violence more generally.[8]

As the anniversaries loomed, however, we discerned at the intersection of these fields a lacunae in the critical analyses of the material culture of the Cold War in museums. Not that we are short of primary sources: 40 years of preparation and readiness endowed a significant material legacy not only in the built environment and infrastructure but also in objects. In the exhibition halls and collection stores of museums are to be found thousands of items manufactured and crafted during the Cold War, for the Cold War and in response to the Cold War. A minority are on display in the small number of dedicated exhibits, but the majority are not.

Intrigued by the role of museum objects in the understanding of the Cold War and its commemoration, we set out to sample existing museum practice in Europe and North America in two projects. The first was a doctorate undertaken by Sarah Harper as a collaboration between the University of Stirling and National Museums Scotland, using the collections of the latter. As a proof of concept, this evidenced the considerable multi-disciplinary potential of museum objects to access not only the military experience of the Cold War but also the material manifestation of peace movements, readiness and technical developments.[9]

We also undertook a survey of existing Cold War interpretative practice in the United Kingdom, Norway and (West) Germany.[10] We examined how the conflict is portrayed, how buildings, images, text and artefacts interact in museums and exhibitions and how they generated specific interpretations. As with more traditional displays relating to the First and Second World Wars, we found that displays in military museums emphasised the importance of moveable technological artefacts: weapons, machines planes, cars and tanks serve as placeholders for the war-like character of the Cold War. But the real or potential use of these weapons is

rarely discussed. Other kinds of objects featured in a more limited way in military museums and, occasionally, elsewhere. Overall, we found these emplotments to be diverse and fractured: each museum chose different paths to staging the Cold War.

Nonetheless these findings led us to posit the distinct practices involved in manifesting a superpower contest that in the region we studied existed as an "imaginary conflict," which we dubbed "Materialising the Cold War." Under this banner, we set out to find out more in a multi-year project in collaboration with the RAF Museums and Imperial War Museums in the United Kingdom, with the Allied Museum in Germany and with the Norwegian National Aviation Museum. We set out to assess collections, analyse existing displays and evaluate user responses in order to understand how the Cold War is produced and consumed in these European museums. We were curious to see how the characteristics of the Cold War find fixed representations with and around objects and how these have been negotiated (especially compared to the World Wars). We wanted to analyse the relationship between museum objects related to the Cold War and visitors' experiences.

Thus, we hoped to suggest a new framework for Cold War Museology, which we put forward in outputs including an exhibition and an accompanying volume on *Cold War Scotland*, a professional toolkit and a range of digital products.[11] We were keen, however, to engage with scholars and practitioners beyond our partner organisations, so we invited interested parties to an international conference in 2023. From the papers there that focused on the collecting, displaying and consumption of Cold War objects in museums, the chapters in this volume emerged.

The analyses that follow are key in developing a shared understanding of Cold War museology. In particular, they provide an analysis of broader range of objects, institutions and audiences, which gives greater comparative purchase than the research of the core team and our immediate partners. The geographical scope is greater, although we remain focused on Europe rather than the superpowers of the Global South: most of our case studies come from British museums, but we have also included material pertaining to northern Europe, in particular Denmark, Sweden and Norway, because Cold War displays are especially well developed there.[12]

We are able to explore a greater variety of organisations, from national museums to local bunkers. We engage with different methodologies, including tourism studies and critical heritage studies, and different professionals, with authors based in universities and different parts of the heritage sector. The material culture we analyse spreads across the disciplinary spectrum from ephemera to high technologies. Perhaps most importantly of all, the studies here cover heritage practices that engage with a significant range of audiences.

In short, this book is about what it means to bring the Cold War into the museum: what happens when we interpret museum objects through the lens of the Cold War, how curators and audiences assign significance and value to objects as *Cold War* objects and what this process tells us about the memory of the Cold War in early twenty-first-century societies. We bring heritage and museum scholars into a conversation with Cold War historians to explore some key parameters of a Cold War museology. With this volume we seek to embed the Cold War into museum studies to the sophisticated level it has reach in studies of the built heritage.[13]

Remembering the Cold War

Our intended readership is, therefore, relatively broad: from heritage and museum professionals and theorists to historians interested in material culture and science and technology as well as to those working in and with museums as volunteers or collectors. Some of our case studies might also appeal to those generally interested in the objects we introduce, and the places we have visited.

Our approach in this volume builds on the (no longer so) new museology of the 1990s, which moves beyond the technicalities of collection management and categorisation of objects. Instead, like the new museologists we explore how these key tasks for museum professionals are embedded in wider political, social and cultural practices and also reflect cultures of memory and memorialisation.[14] Museums, thus framed, have been key agents for reflecting and forging collective memory.[15] But as most recent scholarship on memory has emphasised, memory is not simply out there, like an abstract idea; memory is a process in which different people and organisations take an active part.[16] This has been especially the case for the memory of the Cold War.[17] While scholars have long interpreted the conflict as a binary, homogeneous and stable tension centred around the nuclear confrontation that structured international and domestic politics from the end of the Second World War to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, research now emphasises its complexity and differentiation.[18] The binaries of the Cold War are seen as less fixed, and some of the most innovative research now emphasises the connections between the blocs within the broader framework of political and military confrontation.[19]

Researchers have also started to emphasise more systematically the agency of non-Western actors beyond what had previously been seen as the transatlantic American-European core of the Cold War: rather than appearing as proxy wars of an essentially European and transatlantic conflict, the violence in Africa, Asia and Latin America during this period now appears as part of "world making after Empire" that was anchored in the superpower confrontation rather than directly caused by it.[20]

Most recently, scholars have also paid less attention to political ideologies – the conflict between liberal capitalism and democracy, on the one hand, and state-socialist authoritarianism, on the other hand. Rather, they have moved towards analysing how the Cold War happened primarily through people's imaginations: scenarios of a nuclear war that never happened, of friends and enemies and of utopias of a better world.[21] These imaginary superstructures were not simply opposed to the material structures, as classic Marxist analysis would have it. Rather, they were deeply sutured to and enmeshed with the material world and often helped create it in the first place – they allowed people to make sense of the Cold War and associate emotions with it.[22] From this perspective, the Cold War then appears not only as a period of twentieth-century history but also as a political, socio-economic and cultural constellation.[23]

This state of the field leaves Cold War museology with a number of challenges that go beyond what heritage scholars have focused on in the built

environment and archaeologists have faced when addressing challenges of the Cold War. The fundamental challenge is how to materialise ideas and imaginaries in the museum context: how do we collect, display and interpret ideas and imaginaries?[24] From this fundamental question flow a number of other issues that pertain to the material-imaginary nexus that a Cold War museology needs to wrestle with.

The first of these is the question of a potentially limitless profusion of objects that can be deemed to be Cold War: a fighter jet, a nuclear submarine, a submachine gun and a rocket to a soldier's uniform, a lapel badge, a can of Coca Cola, a peace movement banner or a computer, everything is potentially "Cold War." We might therefore arrive at categories of analysis that turn every museum of twentieth-century material culture into a Cold War museum, simply because they collect and display object that pertain to the period of the Cold War. Cold War museology needs to grapple with what Paul Cornish has called "the extremes of collecting."[25] This is not only a practical issue of collection management, but it also has conceptual implications about how to display such diverse objects and with what stories. In particular, it is important to reflect on the extent to which museum collections and displays reflect some of the core assumption of this Cold War constellation, especially with regard to military masculinity, the gendered division of labour within societies and the racial hierarchies of international relations.[26]

The second complex of issues a Cold War museology needs to grapple with revolves around the question of display and audience engagement. Given that some of the key features of the Cold War are highly abstract, showing the Cold War through objects is especially challenging. One way around this, especially popular in war museums, has been to rely on the aura of large technological objects to communicate the war-like character of the Cold War. But as with displays and exhibitions on other conflicts, this method raises the question of whether "war machines" turn museums into "gigantic children's toyshop[s]."[27] For the victims of weapons of war are rarely, if ever, shown.[28]

Third, the abstract nature of the Cold War also raises questions around the ways in which museums display experiences – and the authenticity of the experiences they purport to show. This has often been framed as a conflict between the "reconstruction" of experiences and authenticity, on the one hand, and their "simulation," on the other hand.[29] But these two sides are best seen as poles on a spectrum or ideal types as opposed to actual positions. For showing experiences through museum objects is always a process of taking stuff out of one context and placing them into another, of constant decontextualisation and recontextualisation as museum objects always have "multiple context-bound affordances."[30] Just as there is "interplay between various forms of remembering" with artefacts,[31] there is also an interplay between various experiences when diverse audiences consider exhibitions.

Cold War museology therefore refines our understanding of Cold War history as well: it unsettles the stable and static nature of the Cold War and has the potential to highlight a much less settled "everyday geopolitics."[32] This core characteristic of the museology of war and conflict can often be uncanny and unsettling for audiences.[33]

Locating the Cold War

A museology of the Cold War also requires us to think about the relationship between material objects and space. In particular, in this collection we are interested in the relationship between landscapes, physical infrastructures and other immovable features of Cold War heritage, on the one hand, and moveable objects, on the other hand. What happens when objects are taken from their original site to the museum? And what happens when objects from multiple sites are reassembled at a specific site, such as a bunker museum, to create a specific feeling of authenticity?

This general museological question has particular relevance for the Cold War. Just as the Cold War seems limitless conceptually, so it also appears as without clear boundaries geographically: the Cold War stretched from underground to outer space and everything in between. Many of the social and cultural theories that emerged during the Cold War posited the irrelevance of space (most prominently perhaps Paul Virilio); however, as some of the most innovative research on Cold War heritage has shown, spaces and places mattered significantly for the Cold War as "conflict produces and redefines space," in the case of the Cold War also spaces of the mind.[34]

The Cold War worked, first, in delineating military from civilian spaces within society, leading to a system of "parallel landscapes" of the Cold War where military activities where assigned to "defined sites and spaces"[35]; second, it does this through the representation of spaces and places in maps; and, not least through the way in which spaces and places were "embedded in material practices."[36] Like other forms of heritage scholarship, a Cold War museology should therefore overcome the binary of materialism versus constructivism when thinking about the authenticity of objects displayed in spaces.[37] This will also allow for more systematic considerations of different layers of time that frame the experiences and memories of museum audiences.[38]

The built heritage of architectural and environmental Cold War structures is often defined by decay, recovery and restoration – a heritage in decline that is deemed to require protection. In fact, the field of built Cold War heritage is more advanced partly because it was a response to the decommissioning of military sites at the end of the Cold War that demanded criteria that could be used to determine which sites were significant as Cold War sites and for what reasons. Given that mainly airforce sites, bunkers and some radar stations were affected by the decommissioning it is perhaps no coincidence that it is these fields that most research on Cold War heritage has focused so far.[39]

Such official initiatives often responded to – or were accompanied by – local explorations and projects by enthusiast groups, such as bunkerologists or aircraft enthusiasts. These individuals and groups highlighted the value of preservation and often founded local museums, many of which have now become extremely popular visitor attractions and profitable businesses.[40] As Steven Leech has noted, it was often such initiatives for local museums at former Cold War sites that endowed such sites with significance as Cold War heritage.[41]

In tackling the issue of the relationship between spaces and objects, inspiration can be drawn from how heritage scholars have forged new ways of understanding the presence of conflict and trauma in the built environment and what this means for conceptualising the impact of war on everyday life in diverse, global locations (past and present).[42] For example, Sharon Macdonald defines "difficult heritage" as that which does not fit the "selective and predominantly identity-affirmative nature of heritage-making"; events and material that are thus silenced, ignored or destroyed.[43]

Museums exist at and between places and spaces, meaning not only that their material contents can bridge markedly distinct Cold War locations, events and actors but also that the stories that museums might tell through objects lack the kind of coherence that audiences might appreciate. In particular, for the standard Cold War interpretation of a frozen conflict, it is difficult to identify heroes and villains in the ways that war museums have done for other conflicts.[44]

Networks, Narratives and Values

To return from places to things, as Odd Arne Westad reminded us in his keynote lecture at the conference that gave rise to this book: the Cold War was essentially about material, about stuff, big and small.[45] It was about the ways in which states competed in making more material than their respective opponents or enemies: more nuclear missiles, more bombs, more guns, more tanks, more uniforms; this is the aspect that conflict archaeologists have summarised under the term "matériel culture," the culture of objects with a direct relationship to military mobilisation.[46] The Cold War was about the competition of states, about access to the material required to make this stuff as well – and about the competition about who produced the best stuff, from guns, to planes to kitchen to other everyday consumer goods.[47] But it was also about the many everyday items that protesters might use or repurpose to give a voice to their concerns, such as the rattle bottle that the Scottish protester Kristin Barrett carried with her on peace marches in the 1980s, repurposing a blue mass-produced and mass-consumed fabric softener bottle.[48]

Our book provides some responses to Westad's observations and the challenges outlined above by highlighting how the Cold War is made, unmade and remade through materialisation in museums. We suggest three elements of a museology of the Cold War, each of which engage more general museological questions, while highlighting Cold War specificities.

The first theme, and section of the volume, we dub "networks of materiality." Contributions discuss how artefacts were or became part of broader networks, either of objects or systems, or of humans and things.[49] The theme is especially apparent in Sarah Harper's chapter on Cold War objects in the collections relating to the Royal Observer Corps at National Museums Scotland. By problematising the relationships and networks between objects and the places in which they are collected and displayed she engages with a fundamental question of all museum and heritage scholarship: the location of the authenticity of objects and the issue of who has a say over that authenticity.[50] Meanwhile, Johannes-Geert Hagmann's, Holger

Nehring's and Samuel Alberti's chapters highlight through object biographies how artefacts from the period of the Cold War defy straightforward historiographical and museological definitions and how their Cold War meanings are created by and through interactions between people, places and other things.

Nehring's chapter raises an important point about Cold War classification in museums: it is slippery and while inherently material, it also resides in the people who deal with the material not the objects themselves. Similarly, while an object (like a computer) might appear inherently Cold War, that era was also inconsistent in its reach and we cannot assume automatic qualification for Cold War categorisation. Hagmann weaves together the biographies of one object – the Bell Systems travelling-wave maser – to argue that Cold War displays must evolve with developing perspectives on existing collections. The travelling-wave maser becomes a case study of the multi-dimensional opportunities presented by objects once collected for one reason (in this case history of science) and reinterpreted in light of new angles (society and social value, for example). Finally in this section, Alberti demonstrates how a quintessential Cold War artefact – a British Vulcan bomber, capable of carrying nuclear weapons – was never deployed in an explicitly Cold War context and how the Cold War meanings that attach to it emerge from the stories that museum curators as well as former crew tell about it.

Our second theme builds on these approaches by asking what it means for these material networks if and when they are displayed and interpreted in museums. Here we explore the relationship between spaces, places and things, a relationship that Alberti's and Harper's chapters already touch upon. This section engages the key museological question we began to unpack above, of the relationship between moveable objects and the location at which they are displayed and what it means if objects are removed from the spaces at which they were originally used.[51] These chapters are not only about how the material fits within the museum collection but also the relationships with the people who have touched and been touched by them – the range of expectations, meanings and intentions bound up by each object. For example, Jim Gledhill highlights the ways in which three museums in Berlin engage use objects to reveal previously secret matters of espionage, highlighting the importance of multi-perspectival approaches to the Cold War.

Authors in this section also demonstrate how the landscape of material afterlives – whether that be the museum display case, airfield or a refurbished bunker – differentiates meanings and alters how the Cold War features in an object's curatorial narrative. Rosanna Farbøl's chapter, considering Denmark, offers an analytical survey of what happens when bunkers pass from use as parts of the defence infrastructure into part of national heritage – and then become museums. Also for Denmark, Bodil Frandsen and Ulla Varnke Egeskov provide a fascinating report on how, as curators, they created a Cold War Museum from scratch at the former government bunker Regan Vest.

Two of the chapters in this section consider the ways in which private experiences are reflected in museums and collecting more generally. Peter Johnston's study of the British Army on the Rhine and its limited material presence in museums emphases the human dimension of material that deals with the absence of

conflict and a perpetual state of preparation. He advocates for the importance of capturing personal stories associated with events that never happened. Similarly, Grace Huxford takes us away from the military aspects of a Cold War museology by exploring the private and personal museums that British Army personnel posted in West Germany created to preserve their memories of the conflict. Such an exercise of de-centring spaces and private place making also brings groups into focus that might otherwise be neglected in a Cold War museology based around military and technological objects: women and children and their engagement with the military components of the Cold War. Johnston's and Huxford's chapters also highlight that the imaginary of the Cold War was not necessarily utopian and infused with meanings of hope and fear. Neither author finds expectations of a better world or an impending apocalypse, but objects pertaining to a continuous present that often manifested as boredom.[52] Closing the section, Adam Seipp considers the ways in which popular local history, heritage, museum objects and landscape interact at a popular German Cold War museum site, Point Alpha at the former West–East German border.

Our third theme addresses the values and representations that such discussions about the relationships between objects and things give rise to. Cecilia Åse and her colleagues problematise the relationship between military displays in Swedish museums and political culture and highlight some of the problematic aspects related to it, especially regarding the status of a particular form of military masculinity in contemporary Swedish political culture.[53] In particular, they analyse how different conceptualisations of time have been used in museums to generate various normalising and standardising narratives of Sweden's Cold War. Those temporal interpretations rely heavily on masculine and masculinised notions of Cold War experience, a gendered framework that the authors argue skews audience views of this history. Karl Kleve's chapter offers a case study about the relationship between local and national memories in the Norwegian Aviation Museum in Bodø in Norway and the ways in which they create social values. He considers the local memory of the U2 incident in 1960, when an American spy plane was shot down by the Soviet Union on its route from Peshawar to Bodø and its pilot captured and how this became embedded in the town's identity.

Peter Robinson and Milka Ivanova highlight the ways in which tourism to museums at Cold War sites in Britain and Bulgaria turn such museums into "arenas of articulation" of values and broader socio-economic questions around the question of "dark heritage" and "dark tourism."[54] Finally, Jessica Douthwaite's chapter tackles the central museological question of how values are assigned to objects in alerting us to the ways in which images of colour help us understand museum display of the Cold War and how certain colours and colour combination have an impact on the experiences and emotions of the Cold War in museums.[55] Douthwaite uses a feminist approach inspired by critical heritage studies to interpret the range of colours that museum practitioners associate with this era. Being attuned to the colour of collections, displays and design, she argues, punctures stereotypical interpretation, while questioning predominant colourways also adds complexity to seemingly obvious narratives.

Cold War Absences

We offer these studies as one step towards a Cold War Museology. Other steps are called for: it is important to reflect on what is missing, the silences and absences of collections and how one might address them. Rhiannon Mason closed the conference that gave rise to this volume by reflecting on the museal silences that she and Joanne Sayner identified. This was as an apt lens to reflect this concern, where "silences in the historical record as collected by museums" have combined with the ways in which museums' "structures of knowledge… produce silence."[56] Only the simplest, most memorable, much popularised signifiers – the military hardware, visions of nuclear apocalypse, elite-level politicking and the fact and fancy of espionage – are visible in most museums that deal with the Cold War. While military, political and technological topics represent Cold War time, geography, affect and memory, their over-emphasis belies a plethora of silenced interpretations as-yet under-examined by museum practitioners and researchers alike. As Alberti and Nehring have argued elsewhere, through a collaborative, reflective Cold War museology, "there is *potential* energy to harness, not only across different kinds of collections, but also across different media."[57]

The countless Cold War feelings and perceptions of individuals, communities and nations may never be materialised in the simple sense, but in this volume we demonstrate how the intangible might be grasped through techniques specific to museums and the museological approach. In this sense, we argue that contemporary museums have an opportunity to lead the way in debunking and demystifying mainstream interpretations about the Cold War. We also argue that we need to think about time when materialising the Cold War in museums. As the Cold War stretched across several decades and it was not homogeneous, there needs to be attention to the importance of chronological contexts, so as to give audiences an idea as to how these contexts have framed emotions, perceptions and ideas. This will also sharpen awareness of how legacies of the Cold War have continued into our own world, and how they have influenced memories. In this respect, there is an omission in this collection that seems glaring at the time of writing: the relationship between Cold War heritage and interpretations of Russia's war against Ukraine as the start of a new Cold War. We hope that our studies will aid in the formulation of these analyses in due course.

For while museology can push the boundaries of social and cultural memory, it can never be entirely independent of it – museums cannot remove themselves completely from their own societies, cultures and assumptions. In particular, they cannot simply generate collections that fit their museological preferences: while we would like to see collections that are more inclusive of non-Western experiences, of experiences of people of colour and women and while we strongly advocate a de-centring of a Cold War museology away from military and technological objects, we are challenged by the partial history of collecting during and after the Cold War. And that history of collecting mostly focused on such objects because it – and they – reflected assumptions about nationhood and technological development that the later new museology came to critique. This is why the preponderance

of chapters in our volume still consider technological or military objects or analyse objects in their specific (military) locations. It is therefore perhaps no coincidence that science and technology museums in the broadest sense: collecting, displaying and telling stories about "curious devices and mighty machines" have given them a heightened sense for the challenges of abstraction and complexity that come with science and technology.[58] It will take a generation of retrospective collection development to reflect a greater diversity of voices in the stories of the Cold War.

Another important issue our book does not address is the role of museums and exhibitions during the Cold War itself – a rewarding question that historians have begun to address.[59] There is great potential to build on these and our studies to explore the ways in which material objects in museums are related to the Cold War confrontation. Possible examples include the ways in which museum collections were influenced significantly by donations from a ministry defence or key industries for the purposes of Cold War propaganda. This has been especially the case for nuclear devices.[60] Questions arise here as to the political role of museums, or the ways in which their collections and displays can become part of political controversy.[61]

Furthermore, a potential and especially controversial avenue for exploration is the relationship between museum collections and conflicts. This concerns the ways in which museum objects reached the museums, and in particular whether they had been looted or stolen as part of military operations.[62] Inter-disciplinary scholars such as Christine Sylvester and Lisa Yoneyama have provided us with stimulating studies of how the Cold War proxy wars in Asia and elsewhere have been dealt with in western and non-western memorialisation practices. Sylvester and Yoneyama encourage us to examine "the larger question of war authority" when it comes to the memories and material curated for museum display.[63] Similarly, Eastern Europe is emerging as a distinct and important field within museological scholarship and, influenced by anthropological and ethnographic approaches, has raised important points of reflection about how museums in "the West" have reified notions of Western superiority in the Cold War, while at the same time harnessing images of an authentic life under socialist dictatorships.[64]

Such museological challenges are not specific to the Cold War – Cold War objects are but one of the many types of objects for which such questions of provenance, cultural responsibility and power arise. If there is a specific Cold War challenge to interpreting what Frederik Rosén calls the "heritage-security nexus," it is that the concept of "Cold War" tends to make relationships of power and violence invisible.[65] Through our approach of "materialising the Cold War," we sharpen our awareness for these questions of provenance and power.

Cold War museology – like heritage more generally – is as much about the present and the future as it is about the past.[66] It makes sense of a key period of twentieth-century history in our time – and in the negotiation about assumptions about what Cold War museums might look like in the future, what objects are likely to be deemed significant and which ones are not. This is not simply a negotiation about a set of criteria that we might devise on what does and does not constitute "Cold War significance."[67] Apart from practical questions of which objects can be

kept and displayed, it also involves a reflection of what kind of museum and what kind of stories and experiences are needed and wanted to engage diverse audiences.

Throughout this volume, our contributors explore how memory – whether individual or collective – influences construction of historical narratives in museums. The cumulative effect of these chapters is to highlight where and how comfortable memories of the European Cold War affect museum interpretation, while revealing how museums work to destabilise such comfort through challenge, dispute and disturbance.[68] These endeavours are especially significant where the silences are invisible or unknown; comparative memory-work addressing a loosely related geographical terrain provides the context in which to unearth diverse museological absences. This finding chimes with the work of the Unsettling Remembering and Social Cohesion in Transnational Europe (UNREST) project which assessed "dominant" approaches to war and conflict across a selection of European museums.[69]

The case studies in this volume address the politics of Cold War memory in Europe explicitly and robustly. Yet authors are also cognisant of the realities of the museum setting, in which as UNREST researchers came to find, the "complex and multi-layered roles" undertaken by museums are "major constraints" on institutions' abilities to apply agonistic memory as an interpretative framework.[70] Our chapters highlight that curatorial difficulties are often rooted in contemporary Cold War events and experiences that were and remain secret, unknown or obscured today, or which have become increasingly contentious due to emerging twenty-first-century geopolitical concerns. Again, national identity – and its Cold War roots – frames how institutions assess both those tricky contemporary narratives and translate for present-day audiences, in these cases Scandinavian, German and British.

The cumulative intent of the chapters in this volume is to call for a reflective museology, in which the difficulties associated with forming judgements about Cold War history are foregrounded to encourage active management of museum practice and museology of this period. As part of that process of materialising the Cold War in museums, we encounter the ways in which the Cold War was both made and unmade, the spaces and places where this happens and what this means for museum collections, interpretation and audience engagement. This is what a Cold War museology is about.

Notes

1 See for example Brian Knappenberger, dir., *Turning Point: The Bomb and the Cold War*, Netflix: 2024.
2 On the iconic status of the Trabant and its role in the GDR, see Daphne Berdahl, "'Go, Trabi, Go!': Reflections on a Car and Its Symbolization over Time," *Anthropology and Humanism* 25, no. 2 (2000): 131–41; Eli Rubin, "The Trabant: Consumption, Eigen-Sinn, and Movement," *History Workshop Journal* 68, no. 1 (2009): 27–44.
3 Matthew Grant and Benjamin Ziemann, eds., *Understanding the Imaginary War: Culture, Thought and Nuclear Conflict, 1945–90* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).
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