

ARTICLE

Pan-European Economic Spaces in the Cold War: An Introduction

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The articles in this special issue makes three important contributions to New Cold War History. First, they strengthen the interpretations highlighting the multiplicity and fluidity of the Cold War, which extended well beyond the interactions between superpower and formal bloc-to-bloc divisions to include a diverse array of national actors, including non-European ones such as Japan. Second, they underscore the significance of international organisations as fora for debate, exchange and expertise, as well as active agents – through their secretariats and staff – of pan-European economic cooperation. Moreover, the special issue places particular emphasis on the agency of non-state actors on the ground, including industrial and financial enterprises, business associations, experts and academics. Collectively, the contributions offer new empirical evidence on how these actors and sites structured and sustained pan-European economic spaces throughout the Cold War. Third, while the focus remains on the Cold War, some contributions emphasise the temporal dimension of pan-European economic spaces, tracking continuities from the inter-war period alongside discontinuities that reflect their reinvention during the Cold War decades. Some cases also suggest divergent post-Cold War trajectories, which point to avenues for further research on how pan-European spaces were reconfigured through the persistence, adaptation or transformation of collaborative structures and modes of engagement.

This special issue brings together contributions originally presented at a workshop held in Geneva in June 2022, which focused on the emergence and development of economic spaces that linked European countries despite the Cold War division of the continent into two opposing blocs.¹ The purpose of this introduction is to situate these articles within the recent trends in Cold War historiography and to highlight their specific contributions to it. While expanding the historiography to reveal previously unknown routes beyond the bloc divide, we also underline the ways in which the Cold War continued to shape – whether by constraining or stimulating – the forms, dynamics and trajectories of these exchanges. In so doing, we delineate the contours and define the main features of the pan-European economic spaces under study, and we identify the actors and institutions enabling the exchanges that embodied and structured these spaces.

The New Cold War History and the Economy

In the last three decades, the historiography of the Cold War has decisively shifted away from the bloc-to-bloc narrative, which had long depicted the epoch as defined by the opposition between two

¹We would like to thank the chairs and discussants of the various panels: Sari Autio-Sarasma, Juan Flores, Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, Neil Rollings, Tobias Rupprecht, Glenda Sluga, and Vladimir Unkovski-Korica.

camps dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union; instead, it has increasingly focused on coexisting dynamics propelled by the agency of actors other than the superpowers.² This shift of approach and narrative was certainly prompted by access to Central and Eastern European archives in the aftermath of the collapse of their socialist regimes. Yet it was also spurred by a new attention to international and regional organisations, which, in the wake of historiography's transnational turn, have been increasingly viewed as connecting sites rather than mere diplomatic arenas for state representatives.³ Likewise, research into the role of associations and private actors, along with the use of their archival sources, has also favoured this more comprehensive approach to studying the Cold War.

Within this new historiography, many researchers focusing specifically on Europe have emphasised the permeability of the so-called Iron Curtain, examining the exchanges and transfers across the two blocs and highlighting the involvement of the neutral states between them.⁴ Some scholars have also shown that many of these exchanges were part of a long tradition and reflected the endurance of spaces that were connected before the onset of the Cold War.⁵ Moreover, some new studies have highlighted the extra-European dimension of this pan-European space, thereby challenging a unidirectional narrative that portrays the Global South primarily as a terrain of the European Cold War competition.⁶

The evolution of the historiography of European culture during the Cold War is particularly revealing of this shift in perspective. Culture has long been studied as a medium for expressing and shaping the Cold War ideological rivalries and as a powerful instrument for disseminating them and promoting competing models. It is from this perspective that organisations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom have been the subject of in-depth investigations.⁷ The more recent scholarship has focused on connections rather than antagonism, investigating places and opportunities for encounter and

²For instance: Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations and Theories* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Silvio Pons and Federico Romero, eds., *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War: Issues, Interpretations, Periodizations* (London: Frank Cass, 2011); Federico Romero, 'Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads', *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 685–703.

³Sandrine Kott, *A World More Equal: An Internationalist Perspective on the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024); Sandrine Kott, Eva-Maria Muschik and Elisabeth Röhrlich, eds., *International Organizations and the Cold War: Competition, Cooperation, and Convergence. Histories of Internationalism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025); Daniel Stinsky, *International Cooperation in Cold War Europe: The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 1947–64* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

⁴In a very rich literature, see for instance: Jari Eloranta and Jari Ojala, eds., *East–West Trade and the Cold War* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2005); Sari Autio-Sarasma and Katalin Miklóssy, eds., *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Simo Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen, eds., *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015); Poul Villaume, Ann-Marie Ekengren and Rasmus Mariager, eds., *Northern Europe in the Cold War, 1965–1990: East–West Interactions of Trade, Culture and Security* (Tampere: Juvenes Print, 2016). For a comprehensive overview of the historiography concerning the diverse European actors involved in overcoming the Cold War, see Angela Romano, 'Pan-Europe: A Continental Space for Cooperation(s)', in *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West: National Strategy in the Long 1970s*, ed. Angela Romano and Federico Romero (London: Routledge, 2021), 31–49.

⁵Johan Schot and Vincent Lagendijk, 'Technocratic Internationalism in the Interwar Years: Building Europe on Motorways and Electricity Networks', *Journal of Modern European History* 6, no. 2 (2008): 196–217; Alexander Badenoch and Andreas Fickers, *Materializing Europe: Transnational Infrastructures and the Project of Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Michel Christian, Sandrine Kott and Ondřej Matějka, 'International Organizations in the Cold War: The Circulation of Experts beyond the East–West Divide', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Studia Territoria*, XVII (2017): 35–60; Małgorzata Mazurek, 'Measuring Development: An Intellectual and Political History of Ludwik Landau's Scale of World Inequality', *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 2 (2019): 156–71.

⁶Sara Lorenzini, 'Comecon and the South in the Years of Détente: A Study on East–South Economic Relations', *European Review of History* 21, no. 2 (2014): 191–3.

⁷See for example Pierre Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme: le congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris, 1950–1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1995); Michael Hochgeschwender, *Freiheit in der Offensive? Der Kongress für Kulturelle Freiheit und die Deutschen* (München: Oldenbourg, 1998); Roman Krakovský, 'Une représentation de la guerre froide: le camp de la paix et le camp de la guerre en Tchécoslovaquie (1948–1960)', *Relations internationales* 129, no. 1 (2007): 21–35.

exchange, such as translations, festivals and film co-productions; it has thus been able to highlight the persistence and even growth of cultural exchanges between the two blocs.⁸

A similar evolution of approach and narrative can be observed in relation to economic aspects of Cold War Europe. When Cold War historians first turned their attention to economic questions, they emphasised separation and asymmetry, as their interpretive framework was based on the notion of two largely autonomous and ideologically opposed economic systems, each integrated to varying degrees into the economy of its respective superpower.⁹ Some scholars also argued that the economy was used as a tool in the East–West confrontation. They contended, for instance, that through instruments such as the Marshall Plan and the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom, established in 1949), the US government deliberately structured a sphere of prosperity designed to oppose communism and economically pressure the Soviet Union and its allies.¹⁰ We do not seek to deny the relevance of these studies; rather, we aim to highlight additional dynamics that complicate the picture. Already in the 1970s some scholars had pointed to the existence of trade flows between Eastern and Western Europe, challenging the notion of strictly separated economic spheres and calling into question the supposed closure of socialist countries.¹¹ Recent historiography focusing on economic aspects and actors has built on these works to detect and show the links that were maintained or developed during the Cold War, for instance in relation to factory locations¹² or financial entanglements between Western banks and states and socialist European countries.¹³

⁸ Among others, see: György Péteri, 'Nylon Curtain — Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East-Central Europe', *Slavonica* 10, no. 2 (2004): 113–23; Jessica Gienow-Hecht, 'Culture and the Cold War in Europe', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1: Origins, 1945–1962*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 398–420; Ioana Popa, 'La circulation transnationale du livre: un instrument de la guerre froide culturelle', *Histoire@Politique* 15, no. 3 (2011): 25; Peter Romijn, Giles Scott-Smith and Joes Segal, eds., *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012); Thomas Lindenberger, Marcus M. Payk and Annette Vowinckel, eds., *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western Societies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Caroline Moine, *Screened Encounters: The Leipzig Documentary Film Festival, 1955–1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018); Simo Mikkonen, Jari Parkkinen and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *Entangled East and West: Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction during the Cold War* (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018); Sune Bechmann Pedersen and Christian Noack, eds., *Tourism and Travel during the Cold War: Negotiating Tourist Experiences across the Iron Curtain* (London: Routledge, 2019); Sune Bechmann Pedersen and Elitza Stanoeva, 'Tourism Diplomacy in Cold War Europe: Symbolic Gestures, Cultural Exchange and Human Rights', *Contemporary European History* 34, no. 1 (2025): 125–41.

⁹ For an overview of the literature, see Angela Romano, 'Parallelism, Asymmetry and Convergence in Cold War Europe', *Politique européenne* 76, no. 2 (2022): 146–72.

¹⁰ The study of US and Western embargo policy is part of this historiography: see Michael Mastanduno, *Economic Containment: CoCom and the Politics of East–West Trade* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Ian Jackson, *The Economic Cold War: America, Britain and East–West Trade, 1948–63* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001); Sheldon R. Anderson, *A Dollar to Poland Is a Dollar to Russia: US Economic Policy toward Poland, 1945–1952* (New York: Garland, 1993), 140–7.

¹¹ Marie Lavigne, *Les économies socialistes soviétique et européennes*, 3rd ed., revised and updated (Paris: Armand Colin, 1979); Christopher Thomas Saunders, ed., *East–West Cooperation in Business: Inter-Firm Studies* (New York: Springer, 1977); Christopher Thomas Saunders, ed., *Industrial Policies and Technology Transfers between East and West* (New York: Springer, 1978); Christopher Thomas Saunders, ed., *East–West Trade and Finance in the World Economy: A New Look for the 1980s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985).

¹² For example: Valentina Fava and Luminita Gatejel, 'East–West Cooperation in the Automobile Industry: Enterprises, Mobility, Production', *Journal of the Transport History* 38 (2017): 11–19; Aleksandra Komornicka, *Poland and European East–West Cooperation in the 1970s: The Opening Up* (London: Routledge, 2023).

¹³ Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, 'The Role of a Creditor in the Making of a Debt Crisis: The French Government's Financial Support for Poland, between Cold War Interests and Economic Constraints, 1958–1981', *Financial History Review* 27, no. 1 (2020): 73–94; Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, 'Banking on Détente: Barclays, Paribas, and Société Générale in Poland, 1950s–1980s', *Business History* 65, no. 4 (2021): 699–718; Fritz Bartel, *The Triumph of Broken Promises: The End of the Cold War and the Rise of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022); Catherine Lefèvre, 'From Détente to Debt: UK–Polish Political and Economic Relations during the Development of the Polish Debt Crisis (1970–1981)', *The International History Review* 47, no. 1 (2024): 70–87; Catherine Lefèvre, 'Financing Foreign Policy: UK Government–Bank Relations During the Development of the 1981–2 Sovereign Debt Crisis in Poland, Romania and Hungary', *Contemporary European History* 35, no. 1 (2026): 1–16.

The articles in this special issue extend these lines of research through case studies that focus primarily on sites, actors and institutions involved in promoting and facilitating exchanges across the Cold War divide within the economic sphere broadly defined. Besides trade, economic cooperation and financial transactions, this includes the circulation of economic knowledge, the organisation of production and various forms of industrial relations. Likewise, the investigation of the economic sphere encompasses the questions of the membership, scope and operations of international economic fora.

Pan-European Spaces and the Cold War

The Cold War constitutes the point of departure for all the contributions to this special issue, representing the political and historical reality that the actors examined endeavoured to transcend or circumvent. The existence of this pan-European perspective per se calls into question the primacy and solidity of the blocs. In this regard, recent studies have revealed how the European countries in the socialist bloc, which were long considered ‘satellites’ under the rigid control of the Soviet Union, were able to defend and pursue their national interests notwithstanding their powerful ally. At times they even used the bloc’s economic organisations, such as COMECON, to ensure their national sovereignty on economic matters.¹⁴ In parallel, research has shown that the European Community defended the specific interests of its member states, pursuing a policy of openness towards the East that differed from and was independent of that of the United States.¹⁵

In his article in this special issue, Simon Godard shows that the socialist economic knowledge produced in Western European schools enabled several socialist economists in Central European countries to break free from Soviet orthodoxy, as the circulation of Western interpretations of Marxist political economy constituted a means of elaborating alternative economic approaches. Aleksandra Komornicka demonstrates how the economic and technological success of Japan, which in Poland was seen as a state not part of the monolithic capitalist West, presented an alternative development model – one that suggested opening the economy and relying on foreign trade with non-socialist countries. The article by Benedetto Zaccaria reveals the links of Italian party elites, trade unions and Christian-oriented movements to the Yugoslav model of industrial democracy in a common search for a ‘third way’ in industrial relations.

The construction of pan-European spaces was intended to transcend bloc logic, particularly the constraints and barriers constructed through ideological confrontation. In her article, Angela

¹⁴For example, Randall W. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Justine Faure and Sandrine Kott, eds., ‘Le bloc de l’Est en question (numéro spécial)’, *Vingtième siècle* 109, no. 1 (2011); Simon Godard, ‘Creative Tension: The Role of Conflict in Shaping Transnational Identity at Comecon’, *Comparativ* 27, no. 5/6 (2017): 65–83; Laurien Crump and Simon Godard, ‘Reassessing Communist International Organisations: A Comparative Analysis of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact in Relation to Their Cold War Competitors’, *Contemporary European History* 27, no. 1 (2018): 85–109; Pál Germuska, ‘Balancing between the COMECON and the EEC: Hungarian Elite Debates on European Integration during the Long 1970s’, *Cold War History* 19, no. 3 (2019): 401–20; Elena Dragomir, ‘Breaking the CMEA Hold: Romania in Search of a “Strategy” towards the European Economic Community, 1958–1974’, *European Review of History* 27, no. 4 (2020): 494–526.

¹⁵Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2009); Angela Romano, ‘More Cohesive, Still Divergent: Western Europe, the US and the Madrid CSCE Follow-Up Meeting’, in *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s*, ed. Kiran Klaus Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 39–58; Sara Tavani, ‘The Détente Crisis and the Emergence of a Common European Foreign Policy: The “Common European Polish Policy” as a Case Study’, in *Europe in a Globalizing World 1970–1985*, ed. Claudia Hiepel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014), 49–68; Angela Romano, ‘G-7s, European Councils and East–West Economic Relations, 1975–1982’, in *International Summitry and Global Governance: The Rise of the G-7 and the European Council, 1974–1991*, ed. Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol and Federico Romero (London: Routledge, 2014), 198–222; Benedetto Zaccaria, *The EEC’s Yugoslav Policy in Cold War Europe, 1968–1980* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Angela Romano, ‘The EC and the Socialist World: The Ascent of a Key Player in Cold War Europe’, in *Europe’s Cold War Relations: The EC Towards a Global Role*, ed. Ulrich Krotz, Kiran Klaus Patel and Federico Romero (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 51–69.

Romano draws attention to how the European Community used two major pan-European cooperation fora – the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) – to overcome the socialist bloc's policy of non-recognition, assert itself in the continental economic discussions and shape the pan-European space in ways that would acknowledge its existence, competence and rules. Michel Christian and Viktor Petrov examine the strategies developed by the Bulgarian authorities to circumvent the embargo policies imposed by the United States on the countries of the socialist bloc. Specifically, the United Nations International Development Organization (UNIDO) functioned as a vital gateway to advanced and restricted technological domains such as automation and computing; it enabled Bulgaria to overcome the limitations imposed by the CoCom and to reconnect with Western European technical and economic networks.

At the same time, as the article by Thomas David, Pierre Eichenberger and Sandrine Kott on the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) demonstrates, relations between private economic actors were closely intertwined with shifts in diplomatic relations on both sides of Europe within the constraining framework of the Cold War. In 1954, under pressure from its American and German members and due to prevailing anti-communism, the ICC refused membership to the socialist states' actors, even though some Western businessmen were tempted by the promises of communist markets. Ten years later, with the early steps of détente, the process was started to revise the decision through the creation of an ICC Liaison Committee with the Chambers of Commerce of the Socialist Countries, initially limited to Central Europeans and then extended to the other socialist bloc countries. The International Vienna Council (IVC), examined in Yohann Morival's article, was the first formal employers' association (established in 1973) that was meant to bring together representatives from both sides of Europe. Similarly to the ICC Liaison Committee, the IVC explicitly set itself the task of identifying practical solutions for establishing commercial relations between countries whose economic systems were widely perceived as incompatible. In this respect, all the contributions in this special issue underscore that, although these processes of opening were primarily driven by economic objectives, they remained deeply conditioned by political equilibria and constantly modified by the agency of diverse actors.

The Temporality and Spaces of Pan-European Economic Exchanges

Several articles in this special issue show that these pan-European economic spaces were not static; rather, their geography and boundaries evolved over time, as did the nature of the exchanges they fostered and the actors who participated in them.

Some of the articles place these connections that transcend the Cold War within a broader historical trajectory. Godard highlights the existence of a forum for the exchange of socialist and communist economic knowledge dating back to the inter-war period. Likewise, David, Eichenberger and Kott argue that the role played by West German employers in contacts with Eastern European partners must be understood in light of geographical proximity and a history of interactions extending back to the nineteenth century. At the same time, they underscore the importance of temporality, arguing that the creation of the ICC Liaison Committee both was spurred by and followed the unfolding of détente.

Indeed, most articles in this special issue agree with the view that the long détente in Europe spanning the mid-1960s to the end of the Cold War was the most fertile period of time for East–West connections.¹⁶ In this vein, Romano provides new evidence in support of considering the CSCE

¹⁶Wilfried Loth and George-Henri Soutou, eds., *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965–75* (London: Routledge, 2008); Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations and the Cold War, 1965–1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2010); Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow and Bernd Rother, eds., *Overcoming the Iron Curtain: Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945–1990* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012); Poul Villaume, Rasmus Mariager and Helle Porsdam, eds., *The 'Long 1970s':*

as a driving force in furthering discussions on how to promote pan-European economic relations and also providing new vigour to the role of UNECE. In doing so, she contributes to a more complete understanding of the CSCE that has so far mostly been studied from a political perspective. Similarly, Morival shows that the Helsinki Conference also marked the starting point for the creation of the IVC. The contributions to this special issue nevertheless demonstrate that détente was rooted in the persistence of exchanges that, though constrained, were never entirely broken off, even during the Stalinist period.¹⁷ The UNECE constituted one of the international spaces where such exchanges endured.¹⁸

From a spatial perspective, several of the articles in this special issue enrich the new Cold War historiography that foregrounds the role of small and medium-sized neutral countries in maintaining or re-establishing contacts. This is most clearly the case of neutral and non-aligned countries situated in border regions – such as Austria, Finland, Switzerland and Yugoslavia – that provided privileged spaces for exchanges across the blocs.¹⁹ Yugoslavia was a point of reference for its model of industrial democracy, as explored in Zaccaria's article. Geneva was the site of the pan-European organisation par excellence – the UNECE – and later on hosted the intense negotiation phase of the CSCE, both analysed in Romano's article as the crucial fora for discussions on pan-European economic matters (and beyond) in the 1970s. It was in Vienna – a veritable bridge between East and West – that the employers' organisation studied by Morival was able to carry out its cross-bloc activities. Vienna also hosted UNIDO, whose programme, as Christian and Petrov's article demonstrates, provided the framework for Bulgaria's development of information technology capabilities with the assistance of Western expertise.

Some contributions in this special issue extend this line of inquiry by highlighting the role of countries in the core of the continent. David, Eichenberger and Kott emphasise the specific role played by West German and Hungarian actors in re-establishing dialogue across the Iron Curtain within the ICC. Aleksandra Komornicka shows that Poland was the socialist European country most closely connected to Western European markets. Komornicka also draws attention to non-European influences in the promotion of pan-European economic cooperation. She illustrates how the emergence of new global economic powers such as Japan, and particularly its competition in sectors such as automobiles and electronics, encouraged the expansion of Western European companies into Eastern Europe, and concurrently served as a model for the opening of socialist economies.

By examining the roles of neutral and core European states as well as non-European actors such as Japan, the special issue demonstrates how these varied spaces shaped cross-bloc dialogue and economic engagement. It therefore highlights the multifaceted, fluid geography of the Cold War, extending beyond superpower interactions and formal bloc divisions.

Human Rights, East–West Détente and Transnational Relations (London: Routledge, 2016); Angela Romano, 'British Policy Towards Socialist Countries in the 1970s: Trade as a Cornerstone of Détente', in *The Foreign Office, Commerce and British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. John Fisher, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Richard Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 465–85; Oliver Bange and Poul Villaume, eds. *The Long Détente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s–1980s* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2017).

¹⁷Vincent Legendijk, *Electrifying Europe: The Power of Europe in the Construction of Electricity Networks* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008); Frank Schipper, *Driving Europe: Building Europe on Roads in the Twentieth Century* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009); Stinsky, *International Cooperation in Cold War Europe*.

¹⁸For the Czechoslovak case, see Ondřej Fišer, 'From Internationalization to Development: Czechoslovak Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation in the Gottwald and Novotný Eras (1948–1968)' (PhD diss., Geneva University, 2022).

¹⁹For instance, Muriel Blaive and Berthold Molden, *Grenzfälle: Österreichische und tschechische Erfahrungen am Eisernen Vorhang* (Weitra: Verlag Bibliothek der Provinz, 2009); Sandra Bott, Jussi M. Hanhimäki, Janick Schaufelbuehl and Marco Wyss, eds., *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2016); Laurien Crump and Susanna Erlandsson, eds., *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Smaller Powers* (London: Routledge, 2019).

The Actors Enabling Economic Exchanges across the Cold War Divide

Recent historiography has shown that several individual and collective actors, often non-state actors, developed contacts that fostered interactions across the divisions of the Cold War, with the explicit aim of circumventing, overcoming or even subverting them.²⁰ Likewise, several institutions initiated or enabled these exchanges. The latest scholarship has brought to the fore the role of several international and regional associations and organisations in promoting and facilitating such exchanges.²¹ Even when considering economic organisations within the blocs, such as COMECON or the Economic Community, recent studies have shown that they were not necessarily obstacles to the development of East–West trade. On the contrary, and under specific circumstances, they acted as instruments and promoters of East–West economic exchanges.²²

Several articles in this collection argue in a similar vein. In their contribution, Christian and Petrov highlight the significance of UNIDO, a relatively under-researched organisation within the United Nations system. They emphasise its pivotal role in facilitating the circulation of information technology expertise between Western and Eastern Europe; in so doing, they also challenge the triumphalist narrative of national technological success that Bulgarian elites spread at that time and that rendered the contribution of this organisation largely invisible. In her article, Romano reveals the pivotal role that EC Commission representatives played in building close relations with the UNECE Secretariat. As Zaccaria's article likewise demonstrates, the European Commission was able to function as a sounding board and a source of encouragement for the Italian reception of the model of industrial democracy developed in Yugoslavia.

Beyond multilateral organisations, the contributors to this special issue innovate by investigating a range of non-governmental actors. In her article, Komornicka draws attention to the efforts of Western multinational firms (French Thomson, West German Grundig and British Ferranti) to convince their governments to break the embargo advocated by the United States, thus recognising these firms as co-producers of the policies of détente.

This special issue extends its focus beyond individual multinational firms to also include international business organisations. Morival analyses the IVC, a club of private business leaders that aimed to foster contacts between the economic elites of Eastern and Western Europe. This association formed part of a broader Viennese ecosystem in which various private organisations worked to encourage economic relations across the East–West divide. These included the Council for New Initiatives in East–West Cooperation, founded in 1974 to promote economic relations between the two parts of Europe, and the *Wiener Institut für internationale Wirtschaftsvergleich* (Vienna Institute for International Comparative Economics), established in 1973 as a documentation centre on Eastern European economies for Western firms.

The ICC was another international business association that functioned as a significant forum for exchange across the blocs. In the East–West contacts organised via the ICC from the 1960s onwards, David, Eichenberger and Kott identify the key role of individual actors – such as Ödön Kallós, president of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, and Rudolf Freiherr von Schröder, an influential German banker – in promoting connections between economic systems governed by fundamentally different rules.

²⁰This comprises some wide-ranging works such as: Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War: A History of Détente, 1950–1991* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Eloranta and Ojala, *East–West Trade and the Cold War*; Gertrude Enderle-Burcel, ed., *Gaps in the Iron Curtain: Economic Relations between Neutral and Socialist Countries in Cold War Europe* (Crakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2009); Michel Christian, Sandrine Kott and Ondřej Matějka, eds., *Planning in Cold War Europe: Competition, Cooperation, Circulations (1950s–1970s)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

²¹Kott, *A World More Equal*; Kott, Muschik and Röhrlich, *International Organizations and the Cold War*.

²²Simon Godard, *Le Laboratoire de l'internationalisme: le CAEM et la construction du bloc socialiste (1949–1991)* (Paris: Presses de Sciences-Po, 2021); Angela Romano, 'Untying Cold War Knots: The European Community and Eastern Europe in the long 1970s', *Cold War History* 14, no. 2 (2014): 153–73; Romano, 'G-7s, European Councils and East–West Economic Relations'.

Some non-governmental actors examined in this special issue were closely affiliated to political parties. Godard's article explores the role of communist educational institutions – such as the German *Marxistische Arbeiterschule* (MASCH) and the French Workers' University – in circulating Marxist knowledge during the inter-war period, as well as the legacy of these institutions in Europe in the 1950s. Likewise, Zaccaria's article foregrounds the importance of Italian political parties and trade unions in the reception and adaptation of the so-called Yugoslav model of industrial democracy, as well as the ways in which specific Italian political dynamics shaped and at times constrained this process.

Finally, while the contributors to this special issue emphasise the importance of private actors in these exchanges and the multi-positionality of some of them, they also acknowledge the involvement of state and official actors. As Morival notes, 'although it is presented as a private club, the IVC was more of a liaison organisation for business leaders, national civil servants and representatives of international organisations involved in East–West economic cooperation'. Indeed, this entanglement of private and public initiatives constitutes one of the defining characteristics of the construction of pan-European spaces during the Cold War.

Conclusion

Overall, the articles in this special issue enrich and expand the scope and arguments of the New Cold War History. They uncover how a diverse range of previously understudied and unknown economic actors in various fora and through diverse – sometimes interconnected – channels enabled the fragmentation of Cold War divisions and the overcoming of Cold War logic and (some) barriers. Taken together, these articles make three important contributions.

First, this special issue strengthens the interpretations highlighting the multiplicity and fluidity of the Cold War, which extended well beyond the interactions between superpower and formal bloc-to-bloc divisions to include a diverse array of actors and spaces. Neutral and non-aligned countries offered flexible and privileged arenas for exchange, while core European states such as West Germany, Hungary and Poland played crucial roles in re-establishing cross-bloc dialogue. In addition, we bring to the fore how these European spaces were also shaped by non-European actors, particularly Japan, which both competed in key economic sectors and served as a model for socialist economies pursuing selective engagement with global markets.

Second, this special issue highlights the actors who were central to the creation and shaping of pan-European spaces. It underscores the significance of international organisations as fora for debate, exchange and expertise, as well as active agents – through their secretariats and staff – of pan-European economic cooperation. Moreover, while acknowledging governments and international institutional stakeholders, the special issue also places particular emphasis on the agency of non-state actors on the ground, including industrial and financial enterprises, business associations, experts and academics. Collectively, the contributions offer new empirical evidence on how these actors and sites structured and sustained pan-European economic spaces throughout the Cold War.

Third, some of the contributions assembled here emphasise the temporal dimension of pan-European economic spaces, tracking continuities from the inter-war period alongside discontinuities that reflect their reinvention during the Cold War decades. By tracing how networks, institutions and practices were adapted or newly created, they show that these interactions were shaped by both long-term historical trajectories and the distinct dynamics of the post-war era. While the focus remains on the Cold War, the cases of the ICC and the IVC also suggest continuities and transformations beyond 1989: the former appears to have adapted its engagement in Eastern Europe, whereas the latter struggled to redefine its role. These divergent post-Cold War trajectories point to promising avenues for further research on how pan-European spaces were reconfigured after the collapse of the socialist

bloc, and on the persistence, adaptation or transformation of collaborative structures and modes of engagement in a changing political and economic landscape.

In investigating this variety of actors and moving across the decades of the Cold War, the articles in this collection thus offer a balanced understanding of the political and economic motivations that prompted cooperation between capitalist and socialist countries as well as of the tactics and actions put in place to effect it.