

## **CHAPTER 2. State of Research:**

### **The Selection of Sources for an Interdisciplinary Project**

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The lion's share of the project's scholarly achievement is the review and evaluation of comprehensive archival material, which has been uncharted territory so far. However, the interpretation of the findings of this research is only possible by including the research of several different fields. Consequently, and apart from the process of developing a fruitful approach to process the archival documents, one of the major challenges of this study was the selection of secondary literature on the various fields and topics relevant for this analysis. In the end, several monographs but also articles proved to be the most relevant for the theoretical approach and method of this study. In this chapter, a short account of the state of research on East German foreign policy, based on the most influential authors, is followed by brief statements on the non-theoretical monographs and articles most influential and relevant to this project. This includes the GDR's foreign policy and divided Germany's foreign policy history, Cold War Studies and the Middle East, and lastly the history of modern Yemen and its current transformation process.

### **1. HISTORY OF A DIVIDED GERMANY'S FOREIGN POLICY: ASYMMETRIC ENDEAVORS AND AVAILABILITY OF SOURCES**

With regard to the history of German foreign policy, the notion of "asymmetry of research" between East and West is more valid than in other policy fields, even more so for the two Germanys' foreign policy in the Arab world, where countless studies on Bonn's activities have been published over the last three decades.<sup>1</sup> The question whether East Germany had the ability to pursue a foreign policy wasn't even formulated in the West before the Berlin Wall was erected and the existence of East Germany could be denied no longer.<sup>2</sup> Actual academic interest of West German

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1 | See for example: Abu Samra, 2004; Berggötz, 1998; Bippes, 1997; Braune-Steininger 1988; Engler, 2007; Hünseler, 1990; Küntzel, 2009; Müllenmeister, 1998; Weingardt, 2002.

2 | Woitzik, 1967, in: Scholtyseck, 2003, 54.

researchers in this foreign policy did not arise before the “Grundlagenvertrag” of 1972,<sup>3</sup> as the hostile relationship of neglect between the two Germanys had festered and engulfed academia as well. The two German signatures under one treaty meant the mutual de facto recognition towards the GDR of the “other Germany” and the attitude of West German research was about to change profoundly. While countless studies on the GDR’s political and social system were published, more and more researchers occupied themselves with East Berlin’s foreign policy as well. When the GDR joined the Federal Republic though, this newfound dedication disappeared over night. East Berlin’s diplomatic staff was dismissed with almost no exemptions, its foreign ministry, the ‘Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten’ (MfAA), was dissolved and with it the GDR’s foreign policy history.<sup>4</sup>

Research tentatively reclaimed the field for further exploration in the late 1990s. Benno Eide Siebs’ study of 1999<sup>5</sup> offers a first overview of the GDR’s international activities after 1976, which neatly complements Ingrid Muth’s study of 2001 on East-Berlin’s Foreign Policy between 1949 and 1972.<sup>6</sup> While Muth focuses on political structures and decision-making processes, Siebs presents a phase-oriented foreign policy analysis focusing on the content of the GDR’s activities. Both studies rely on secondary literature published until the early 2000s, but distinguish themselves by including a wider range of newly researched archival material, mostly from the Political Archive of the Foreign Office<sup>7</sup> and the German Federal Archive.<sup>8</sup> Several studies focusing on singular aspects of the GDR’s international activities followed suit, like an anthology on the GDR’s relations to the Western states, edited by Ulrich Pfeil and published in 2001. Two years later, Joachim Scholtyseck published a concise overview on the state of research on the GDR’s foreign policy in reunified Germany and provided the first comprehensive summary of East German foreign policy development after reunification.<sup>9</sup> Only a few years later Hermann Wentker published his “Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen” of 2007,<sup>10</sup> the most comprehensive overview of the state of research on the GDR’s foreign policy so far. Caution is recommended for studies published in the GDR

**3** | Kriele, in: Hacker, 1989, 33.

**4** | Von Bredow, 2006, 183.

**5** | Siebs, Benno-Eide, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR 1976-1989. Strategien und Grenzen*, Paderborn, 1999.

**6** | Muth, Ingrid, *Die DDR-Außenpolitik 1949-1972, Inhalte, Strukturen, Mechanismen*, Berlin, 2000.

**7** | Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA AA), Berlin.

**8** | Bundesarchiv (BA), branch Berlin.

**9** | Scholtyseck, Joachim, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR, Enzyklopädie Deutscher Geschichte*, Band 69, Oldenburg, 2003, esp. 51-60.

**10** | Wentker, Hermann, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen. Die DDR im internationalen System, 1949-1989*, München, 2007.

by East German social scientists and historians, which usually “put the foreign relations in the right light”<sup>11</sup> in accordance with the SED’s political preferences. Similar sensitivities are needed when dealing with West German publications during German separation, as they were highly politicized as well. Before the de facto recognition of the GDR, interest in the “other” Germany in general and its foreign policy in particular was considerably low. East Berlin’s actions were considered a mere expression of Soviet interests. Due to rapprochement between the two Germanys in the 1970s, this attitude changed profoundly and academia enthusiastically turned towards this “new field”. Nonetheless, these works remained part of the world they described. Political opinion oftentimes was mixed with “objective” analysis and East German publications naturally served as either a negative or positive blueprint. In addition to that, no sources without East German and Soviet approval could be used at the time. Nonetheless, contemporary studies remain an indispensable reference for the perceived interests and scope of action and thus are explicitly included in this analysis.

## **2. SECONDARY SOURCES IN FOCUS I: GERMANY’S DIVIDED HISTORY AND FOREIGN POLICY**

The topic of this study is located at the intersection not only of several disciplines but also fields of research. Apart from current debates on German separation, reunification, and history of German foreign policy, a good grasp of the determinants, players and ideologies of the Cold War is needed. Before beginning with the research for this study, the author had been working on the topic of German divided history in general and German foreign policy in particular for several years.

With regard to the Federal Republic of Germany’s foreign policy, Helga Haftendorn’s work provides an extraordinarily comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis before and after reunification. Apart from her contributions to this study’s approach to foreign policy, her most recent study, “Coming of Age: German Foreign Policy Since 1945,”<sup>12</sup> published in German in 2001 and in 2006 in English, serves as an introduction to the history of German foreign policy and as an indispensable guide to Germany’s role during the Cold War. Even though this analysis contends with the GDR’s international activities, Haftendorn’s monograph initiated countless new trails of thought and led to much greater understanding of East German foreign policy.

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**11** | Scholtyssek, 2003, 53; Siebs, 1999, 19ff.

**12** | Haftendorn, Helga, *Coming of Age: German Foreign Policy Since 1945*, Oxford, 2006; Haftendorn, Helga, *Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung. 1945-2000*, Stuttgart/München, 2001.

Among the monographs and encyclopedias on this topic, “The Handbook of Communism,”<sup>13</sup> published by Stéphane Courtois, offered a combination of in-depth analysis and distinguished interpretation in a very condensed format. In concise articles, Courtois and his research team introduce the communist ideology from its beginnings to its Real Socialist excesses. One of the contributors to the “Handbook,” Klaus Schroder, also published the most comprehensive study on the political system and reality of the GDR, “The SED State” in 1998. With the second edition of 2013, the monograph has established itself as a classic of German studies.<sup>14</sup> It established the major determinants of the GDR’s political system to interpret the relationship between party and state in the GDR. This was complemented by Matthias Judt’s annotated and edited collection of selected document, published in 1998, which presents pivotal original documents in the context of short but well-researched articles.<sup>15</sup>

Ingrid Muth’s monograph on the GDR’s foreign policy before 1972 is not only the first comprehensive study of the GDR’s foreign policy apparatus, but without doubt also one of the most thorough and knowledgeable analyses of the structures and “praxis” of the GDR’s foreign policy of its first two decades of existence. Due to Muth’s two decades of active service for the GDR’s MfAA, however, the reader is advised to keep a certain critical distance when reviewing her findings. While her work is not purposefully biased, she still explicitly remains within the logic of the political system of the GDR.<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, there are good arguments to do so, the most important among them to be able to understand the nature of decision-making as well as to assess success and failure. On the other hand, this “inside” perspective does not generate conclusions beyond the ideological justifications or political bloc restraints of the GDR’s foreign policy: Muth’s institutional analytical view still treats East Berlin’s foreign policy as separate from its dictatorial reality.

Hermann Wentker’s monograph of 2007 remains the most extensive overview on East German foreign policy research. Strockmann rightly criticizes the book as a mere recycling of the various studies published before.<sup>17</sup> However, this is also Wentker’s most important achievement. Even though he does not include a significant amount of new archival material beyond edited document collections,<sup>18</sup> his monograph provides research on the GDR’s foreign policy with a thorough and well-researched summary, interpretation, and assessment of secondary literature on the subject. In addition to that, Wentker introduces an

**13** | Courtois, Stéphane (Ed.). *Das Handbuch des Kommunismus. Geschichte. Ideen. Köpfe*, München, 2010.

**14** | Schroeder, Klaus, *Der SED-Staat, Der SED-Staat. Geschichte und Strukturen der DDR*, München, 2013.

**15** | Judt, Matthias (Ed.), *DDR-Geschichte in Dokumenten*, Bonn, 1998.

**16** | Muth, 2001, 9.

**17** | Strockmann, 2012, 28, FN 107.

**18** | E.g. *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*.

efficient approach to grasp the material and further understanding of the GDR's position in the international system at the same time: Wentker focuses on the dichotomy of heteronomy and autonomy of the GDR's foreign policy, depending on three determinants: the Soviet Union, West Germany, and internal political developments.<sup>19</sup> In this study on the GDR in Yemen, Wentker's fruitful approach is reconsidered and adapted according to the findings of the analysis.

With his 2013 monograph on the GDR's military relations to the third world,<sup>20</sup> Klaus Storckmann finally is able to step out of the cycle of seemingly endless academic repetition and recycling in the field of the GDR's international military engagement. Based on extensive archival research and three elaborate case studies of Egypt, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, Storckmann presents the meticulous work of an historian. He explicitly focuses on the "coordination process between the GDR and Soviet leadership"<sup>21</sup> and successfully embeds his findings in the micro-level of his case studies on the one hand and, on the macro-level of the Warsaw Pact and GDR's policy towards the "Third World" on the other. Unfortunately, Storckmann's analysis merely oscillates between the two levels described, and as a consequence often misses opportunities to draw further conclusions from his findings with regard to the general Cold War setting and regional implications. But even though Storckmann's study may not be considered comprehensive with regard to the role of the GDR's military relations within the wider framework of foreign policy, Storckmann clearly departs from the well-trodden paths of academic and semi-academic research which had generally relied on exaggerations of the Western media and personal memories than archival findings.<sup>22</sup> Storckmann sketches a clear and thorough framework of the GDR's policies in the Global South and provides significant insights on the decision-making processes of the GDR's foreign policy.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, and despite the apparent lack of involvement by the GDR's military in South Yemen, Storckmann's book adds considerable substance to this analysis.

Finally, the rising number of case studies on the GDR's activities in the Global South all in all does not substantially contribute to the discourse and state of research, as these are mostly limited to indexing archival material and sometimes interpreting it with regard to the respective country. A prominent example for this phenomenon is Haile Gabriel Dagne's slim volume on "The Commitment of the

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**19** | Introduction, Wentker, 2007.

**20** | Storckmann, Klaus, *Geheime Solidarität. Militärbeziehungen und Militärhilfen der DDR in die "Dritte Welt"*, Berlin, 2012.

**21** | Ibid. 15.

**22** | Ibid. 23; 27.

**23** | Ibid. 55-179.

German Democratic Republic in Ethiopia. A study based on Ethiopian Sources”<sup>24</sup> of 2006. While the subtitle clearly is the primary strength of Dagne’s analysis, it is also its biggest weakness, as the Ethiopian sources leave the reader with more gaps, that is, more questions than answers about the East German presence in Addis Abeba. Also, Dagne fully ignores the complex interaction between East German activities abroad and its two major determinants – Moscow and Bonn – and falls short of interpreting the GDR’s engagement in Ethiopia in the wider framework of the Cold War in general and East German foreign policy in particular. As a consequence, case studies like Dagne’s are considered merely episodically in this analysis.

### **3. SECONDARY SOURCES IN FOCUS II: COLD WAR STUDIES, THE MIDDLE EAST AND MODERN YEMEN**

While the Cold War has been depicted as half a century of both conflict as well as strained peace,<sup>25</sup> current research tends to locate its assessments of the global competition between the Soviet Union and the United States of America somewhere in the middle. Despite significant progress over the past two decades, Greiner in 2008 rightly emphasizes vast uncharted territory in Cold War research and the academic discourse – especially with regard to the Soviet Union and its closest allies.<sup>26</sup> With respect to this analysis, the profound change of perspective after Odd Arne Westad’s publication of the “The Global Cold War”<sup>27</sup> in 2005 is most relevant for the evolution of the Cold War discourse: According to Westad, the conflict created the idea of the “Third World”<sup>28</sup> by globalizing the narrative of the Cold War. Part of this development is the newly emerging perspective that comprehensive interpretations of the Cold War as a political phenomenon are only possible when the rigid surface of findings based on the bipolar perspective is scarified. This may be achieved by shifting the analytical focus to ‘smaller actors’ in the conflict as Greiner suggests<sup>29</sup> and is exactly what Anne Applebaum achieved with her well-researched and even better-written narrative “Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe. 1944-1956” of 2013. Celebrated by the media and academia alike,<sup>30</sup> Appelbaum’s book presents an intriguing account of Soviet

**24** | Dagne, Haile Gabriel, *The Commitment of the German Democratic Republic in Ethiopia. A study based on Ethiopian sources*, Berlin, 2006.

**25** | Gaddis, 1987; Soutou, 2011 (2011).

**26** | Greiner, in: Greiner/Müller, Walter, 2008, 16.

**27** | Westad, Odd Arne, *The Global Cold War. Third World interventions and the making of our times*, Cambridge, 2005.

**28** | Westad, 2005, 275ff.

**29** | Greiner, in: Greiner/Müller, Walter, 2008, 7 and 16.

**30** | Levgold, 2013; Lieven, 2013.

domination of Eastern Europe by focusing on the “recipient countries” of Soviet neo-colonial aspirations. Just like her, Fred Halliday focuses on the “small” actors within the Cold War context in one of the subchapters of his regional study “The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology”, in which he sketches the role of the Middle East during the Cold War and beyond. The impact of his writings on this analysis are elaborated upon further below. In addition to that, two other monographs turned out to be indispensable in interpreting the role of the Middle East in the Cold War: Youssef Choueiri’s “Arab Nationalism: A History” published in 2000 and Tareq Ismael’s monograph on “The Communist Movement in the Arab World” published in 2005.<sup>31</sup> Based on the two major ideological concepts of the Arab world in the 20th century, both studies provide an excellent overview of the region’s position and role in a bipolar world.

To merely access the highly complex history of modern Yemen is a task of several years of study. At that point, the researcher usually is able to realize that he or she has not progressed much toward understanding the multilayered and oftentimes contradictory social and political identities and loyalties of Yemen’s actors, as a colleague put it during a conference. Nonetheless, the researcher has to begin somewhere. Paul Dresch’s “A History of Modern Yemen” spans the full 20th Century history of Yemen and has already become a “classic” for researchers of modern Yemen since its publication in 2000. Dresch’s work distinguishes itself by its thorough historical analysis, dense writing style and inclusion of a wide range of Arab literature on the topic. He recounts the story of Yemen as more of a separated than divided history which inevitably to Yemeni unification in the early 1990s. His approach clearly has a focus on the state-founding and -building period until the early 1970s. As a consequence, Dresch’s depiction of South Yemeni society and the political power constellation of the 1950s, in addition to his assessment of the revolutionary years of the 1960s, are indispensable for the foundations of the argument of this study.

Robert Burrowes’ “Historical Dictionary of Yemen”<sup>32</sup> closes the huge gap in encyclopedias of the modern Middle East in the English language. Though the “Dictionary of Yemen” still has to live through several reviews and expansions – especially after the final downfall of Ali Abdallah Saleh in 2012 – it offers the most comprehensive and easiest access to a wide range of topics, events, and especially political actors in Yemen’s modern history. The brief overview of the most important references used by Burrowes offers a solid starting point for any researcher new to the topic<sup>33</sup> and the majority of monographs introduced by him have been used in the research for this study. Apart from its informative character, the “Dictionary” has to be considered a comprehensive comment on most of

**31** | Choueiri, Youssef M., *Arab Nationalism. A History*, Oxford, 2000; Ismael, Tareq Y., *The Communist Movement in the Arab World*, New York, 2005.

**32** | Burrowes, Robert D., *Historical Dictionary of Yemen*, Plymouth, 2010.

**33** | Burrowes, 2010, 461-465.

political developments in Yemen. Bearing this very personal approach in mind, Burrowes' interpretation of events and development is an invaluable companion to any analysis of modern Yemen history.

The current state of research on South Yemen has to be considered rather underwhelming, as current research is concentrated among a very small circle of researchers<sup>34</sup> and the most recent piece of work on the PDRY is rather a popular than an academic book. The majority of thorough, well-informed studies so far have been published by Marxist scholars. As a consequence, the danger of simply transferring ideologically inspired opinions to this analysis remains. Keeping this in mind, this study, however, will not and cannot dispense with this research – the PDRY simply remains a niche topic, in which today mostly socialist-oriented researchers take interest. Of the older of these studies, especially Robert Stookey's "South Yemen: A Marxist Republic in Arabia"<sup>35</sup> of 1982, Joseph Kostiner's "The Struggle for South Yemen"<sup>36</sup> of 1984, Helen Lackner's "P.D.R.Yemen: Outpost of Socialist Development in Arabia"<sup>37</sup> of 1985, and Tareq and Jacqueline Ismael's "The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen: Politics, Economics and Society"<sup>38</sup> published the year after, contributed to this study.

Without doubt, it is mostly authors who embrace some version of socialism and/or who lived through Real Socialism's failure that provide us with the most thorough and balanced analyses of the role of the Soviet Union in the Cold War and the socialist movements in the Middle East. The most prominent – but also moderate – example among authors writing on South Yemen is Fred Halliday with his "own particular version of historical materialism."<sup>39</sup> Halliday's works have to be reviewed with a critical eye, especially in regard to the role of the Soviet Union in the region, as he usually tends to explain negative events and changes in the region and South Yemen by the overpowering policies of the "West" and its allies.<sup>40</sup> However, two books by Halliday provided invaluable insights for this study: "The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology" of 2005 and "Revolution and Foreign Policy: The case of South Yemen 1967-1987" of 1990. The

**34** | This obviously has not changed since the early 2000s when Dahlgren decried the fact even for the most active discipline in Yemen, anthropology, that "anthropological Yemeni studies have in the last decades concentrated on the Northern Yemeni tribal society," Dahlgren, 2000, 1.

**35** | Stookey, Robert W., *South Yemen. A Marxist Republic in Arabia*, Boulder, 1982.

**36** | Kostiner, Joseph, *The Struggle for South Yemen*, New York, 1984.

**37** | Lackner, Helen. *P.D.R. Yemen. Outpost of Socialist Development in Arabia*, London, 1985.

**38** | Ismael, Tareq Y./Ismael, Jacqueline S., *The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Politics, Economics and Society*, Marxist Regimes Series, London, 1986.

**39** | Cox, 2011, 1110.

**40** | Halliday on the ongoing conflicts in Middle East: "the increasing pressure put upon [South Yemen] by Saudi Arabia, and indirectly, the USA. It was therefore a case of U.S.-inspired 'destabilization' that in the end backfired," in: Halliday, 1979, 380.

latter already anticipates Halliday's position as presented in "The Middle East in IR." His foreign policy analysis aims to include South Yemen's agency as a self-directed actor on the one hand while upholding an "outside" view rather distanced from South Yemen's socio-political condition on the other.<sup>41</sup>

Noel Brehony's well-written story of the PDRY,<sup>42</sup> initially published in 2011, made a decisive step to fill the gap in English literature on the formation of the NLF. It clearly is not an academic analysis in the strict sense and one may criticize Brehony's journalistic approach. However, the book benefits from Brehony's references to personal discussions and interviews with a significant share of the relevant actors. The narrative is based on the big names of English Yemen research, among them Dresch, Halliday, and well-known Marxist Robert Stookey,<sup>43</sup> but also includes a high number of Arab original press releases, official party documents, and minutes. Brehony, former Chairman of the British-Yemeni society, successfully weaves together his interviewees' perspectives with the junctions of events, while clearly labelling the personal statements and attitudes as such. Some of his conclusions though should be handled with care. For example, Brehony comments on political and social reforms of the NLF/NF regime: "Though there were obvious flaws in the regime's economic policies, its social goals were both progressive and well-intentioned."<sup>44</sup> The tendency to relativize the autocratic Marxist regime in Aden is probably explained by personal contacts and friendships, a circumstance to keep in mind when discussing Brehony's perspective.

The strength of the current research on Yemen clearly lies with the ongoing workshops and conferences and its tightly-woven academic community. Thus, there does not exist "one" monograph representing the most relevant findings, and even a long list of articles and papers wouldn't do justice to the thriving research of today. The following selection merely reflects the references of this analysis and does not aim to represent current research on Yemen. In 2009 Brian Whitaker, former Middle East editor of the Guardian, published "The birth of modern Yemen," which further closes the gap between Yemeni unification and current events. To connect the developments of the last decade with Yemen's divided history, such as the emergence of the "Southern Movement", the protests of the "Arab Upheavals" and the following transition process, and finally the reinvigoration of the Houthis movement, this analysis heavily relied on many of the contributors to the recently

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**41** | Halliday, 1990, 178-218.

**42** | Brehony, Noel, *Yemen Divided. The Story of a Failed State in South Arabia*, London/New York, 2013 (2011).

**43** | Stookey, 1982.

**44** | Brehony, 2013, 69.

published anthology “Why Yemen matters: A Society in Transition”<sup>45</sup> which offers up-to-date research and expertise on a wide range of topics. Among them are well-established authors like Marieke Brandt, Noel Brehony, Laurent Bonnefoy, Susanne Dahlgreen, Gerhard Lichenthäler and Lackner herself.

#### 4. PRIMARY SOURCES: BETWEEN ARCHIVAL AND PERSONAL DEPTHS

“If one looked for the concrete impact of the [MfS’ work abroad on the secret services in the Global South], a look into the [relevant] countries would be most promising.”<sup>46</sup>

ILKO-SASCHA KOWALCZUCK, RESEARCHER AT THE STASI-ARCHIVE

The archival research for this project was guided by the analytical method of turning points and catalyst events determining phases of political development.<sup>47</sup> The four phases suggested in this study bring together internal turning points of South Yemeni politics and turning points in Aden’s bilateral relations with both Moscow and East Berlin. The reasons for the partial congruency of East German and Soviet engagement between 1970 and 1986 and for the discrepancy between East-Berlin’s and Moscow’s policy before and after are explained in the respective phase chapters. The most relevant dividing line with regard to the availability of sources can now be detected between the “Phase of Expansion”, from 1970 to 1978 (Phase II), and the “Phase of Consolidation and Continuity”, from 1978 to 1986 (Phase III): only one of the three included archives provides material on the topic for the time after 1980 that is comparable to the periods before: the Stasi Archive, or the BStU.<sup>48</sup>

The initial research was conducted at the Political Archive of the German Foreign Office<sup>49</sup> (PA AA). Here, Germany’s 30-year blocking period for archival material applies in a very restrictive way. In addition to that, there is only limited access to certain files issued even before this period, due to security reasons and the protection of individual rights. As a consequence, the material of the PA AA mostly supported the analysis of the first two phases of East German foreign policy in South Yemen until about 1980. For the argument of these two phases,

**45** | Lackner, Helen, (ed.) *Why Yemen Matters. A Society in Transition*, SOAS Middle East Issues, 2014.

**46** | Kowalczuck, 2011, 260.

**47** | On guidelines for archival research and the interpretation of historic sources: Budde/Freist/Günther-Arndt, 2008, 159; Baumgart, 1977; Burkhardt, 2006.

**48** | BStU – Bundesbeauftragte(r) für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR.

**49** | German: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes.

the material of the Aden representation and embassy as well as the MfAA of the GDR have proven indispensable to the overall findings of the study.

The second major source of documents was a section of the German Federal Archive (SAPMO-BArch).<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, the working process of the Central Committee (CC)<sup>51</sup> did not file submissions in accordance with the actual decision-makers at the top of the hierarchy, but with the inquiring office or section<sup>52</sup> which clearly hampers focused research in the files of the SAPMO. As a consequence, and in combination with the sheer volume of documents available, research there requires significantly more time in the future to fully evaluate all sources relevant for the GDR's activities in South Yemen. The material of the BArch is included in this study mostly to close gaps in the findings obtained from the other archives included. The research focus for this project was on the SED party material, especially the work of the Central Committee and Politbüro of the SED, as well as documents of the ministries involved.

The GDR's activities in South Yemen were part of Moscow's wider strategy in the Middle East. A significant part of East German engagement was occupied with the security apparatus. The East German State Security (MfS),<sup>53</sup> also known as the "Stasi", was highly active in Aden. As advisors to several South Yemeni ministers and policy-makers in various fields, the officers were highly involved in the installation of state institutions, policy generation, and even day-to-day politics. As a consequence, the focus of archival research of this study was on the files of the BStU. Since January 1992, these files have been open to the public, academia, and the media. They have proven to be quite a treasure trove on a wide range of topics.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the files produced by the Main Administration A (HV A),<sup>55</sup> the MfS section occupied with international affairs, for the most part have been destroyed by the HV A itself. Between November 1989 and January of 1990, when the GDR's citizens occupied the MfS building, about 100 trucks are said to have left for a paper mill close by.<sup>56</sup> The meagre remnants of the HV A files contending with the two Yemens do not offer much valuable information.<sup>57</sup> On the

**50** | German: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR at the Bundesarchiv.

**51** | German: Zentral Komitee (ZK).

**52** | Storckmann, 2012, 45.

**53** | German: Ministerium für Staatssicherheit.

**54** | Stasi-Records Act, first issued on December 29 1991, also see Version of 2012 of the Stasi-Records Act.

**55** | German: Hauptverwaltung A.

**56** | Müller-Enbergs, 1998, 17; Möller, 2004, 48.

**57** | HV A files on the PDYR almost with no exemption (BStU MfS HV A Nr. 778) merely contain the annual report on political conditions in the country: e.g. BStU MfS HV A Nr. 40, 75, 109, 125, 151, 162, 167, 172, 383, 385, 388, 391 and 394.

other hand, the files of other sections involved in relations with South Yemen have been saved and oftentimes provided copies of HV A case files.

Studies and analyses on the Stasi in general and the HV A in particular mention their advisory activities in the Global South. In this context, the PDRY usually is either only mentioned in enumeration or not mentioned at all.<sup>58</sup> Gieseke, for example, states that “at all times good relations”<sup>59</sup> had existed between the MfS and South Yemen. Documentation on the GDR’s and especially the MfS’s involvement in the establishment of South Yemen’s state security apparatus is incomplete and the most of the available files appear to have been destroyed with the files of the HV A. Fortunately, other Sections were involved in the process as well and the databases of HA II, III and especially HA X offer a broad overview of the cooperation between the MfS and the Yemeni “Committee for State Security” (KfS), which mostly allows us to corroborate the findings with a second source. These agreements and protocols describe the measures of cooperation and planned implementation in great detail. Other documentation is available, for example the files of the MfS’s Section of Finances, and coded information can also be decoded by researching other files: The coding used for the “young nation states” by the HV A and its subunit HV A/III reappears in other Sections of the MfS as well. Financial, material, and personnel support for these “young nation states” were grouped under “Planteil III.”<sup>60</sup> All activities of delegations, advisory groups, finances or payments of solidarity in or for South Yemen were coded with a “C”<sup>61</sup> or “o3o.”<sup>62</sup> Also, one of the few comprehensive files on the PDRY of Section X not only provides a history of the development of the KfS, but also the full structure of the PDRY’s Secret Service.<sup>63</sup>

The former Stasi documents have a downside which cannot be ignored in the process of research. Firstly, the Stasi Files are the result of the work of a former secret service and thus their content regularly concerns security interests of not only other states but also the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as individuals still active in public life. Secondly, the MfS was not a “secret service like any other”, but also a political secret police without a clear separation of the two. Many of the results now conveniently accessible to the researcher have been acquired by betrayal, blackmailing, and sheer brute force. Consequently, for the sake of state

**58** | For example Howell, 1994.

**59** | Gieseke, in: Kaminski/Persak/Gieseke, 2009, 231.

**60** | Zusammenstellung des MfS für Hilfeleistungen an junge Nationalstaaten 1978, December 15 1978, in: BStU MfS Abt. Finanzen Nr.1393, 149.

**61** | “MR C“, in: Bericht über die finanzökonomische Anleitung in der Ministerratsgruppe der VDRJ in der Zeit vom 3.7. bis 5.7.1987, BStU MfS Abt. Finanzen Nr.85, 66.

**62** | Vorschlag zur Verschlüsselung [suggestion for coding; handwritten note], 1980, in: BStU MfS BCD Nr.20802, 59.

**63** | Strukturen des MfS der VDR Jemen; Zur Lage des MfS der VDR Jemen; Kadersituation des MfS der VDR Jemen, in: BStU MfS Abt. X Nr. 234, Part 1 of 2, 93-107.

secrecy, but even more so for the individual dignity of the persons observed, the researcher not only has to be aware of these circumstances of the files' creation, but also has to consistently reconsider their genesis during the writing process.

### Interviews with Contemporary Witnesses

A central methodological topic of this study is the proper inclusion of contemporary perspectives without overemphasizing these interpretations and losing touch with the fact of contemporary perceptions. Firstly, this analysis clearly has to overcome "outdated" policy papers and strategic analyses of the analyzed time period. Naturally, these do not necessarily provide reliable information on a country's policies or the international events this study is looking at. On the other hand, these analysis are invaluable to understanding the international perception of policies and events – what is assumed by political decision-makers may prove more powerful with regard to impact than actual facts. This study aims to strike the right balance between finding an appropriate analytical distance from these statements while providing them with sufficient room to speak for themselves. This is intended to be achieved by treating writings of the analyzed time period first and foremost as a primary sources on the respective topic.

The same approach applies for the However, in addition to the limitations of the personal perspective of contemporary writing, memories of course change over time. On top of that, the topic of the GDR's foreign policy turned out to be a highly sensitive topic for the political actors involved. The interviewer necessarily had to distance herself from the oftentimes very personal accounts of memory on the one hand, while showing the empathy necessary to interpret the given information on the other. What all interview partners had in common was a certain resentment toward the complete eradication of their profession as GDR diplomats.<sup>64</sup> This attitude is understandable and inevitably has to be taken into consideration when using the results of the interviews for this analysis, as the procedure of the voluntary dissolution of the GDR and its inclusion into the Federal Republic seemed to have different effects on the potential and actual interview subjects. One of the interviewees, for example, summarized the attitude of the former political functionaries of the GDR toward their past:

"It's the same with our own people. The reflection of the circumstances is changing. Some fully block off certain topics, others opt for a 'soft line', trying to justify their political decisions afterwards. [...] The focus is on defense not reproduction [of policies and events]."<sup>65</sup>

This observation already has to be considered relevant for the selection of partners, as not all contemporary witnesses able to offer information were also willing to do

<sup>64</sup> | Pfeiffer, 1997.

<sup>65</sup> | Interview with Hans Bauer June 20 2011.

so. Furthermore it turned proved difficult to avoid the “mechanism of justification” described above. This was to be achieved by creating a positive and open interview atmosphere between interviewer and interviewed. To support this intention, the transcripts and notes which resulted from these meetings had been reviewed in a reciprocal exchange to assure the proper use of the perspective provided by the contemporary witnesses. These interviews are considered biographic primary sources, offering a very personal perspective. As part of the research for this study they serve two major purposes: Firstly, and most importantly, they illustrate or comment on certain policy decisions, developments, and events and thus help to interpret archival material. Secondly, and only in a few selected cases, they are used to support a line of argument in case archival material was contradictory. The latter of the two ways of processing the interviews is used carefully, taking into consideration the unsteady ground of personal accounts of history.

In the following, all interview partners who supported this research project with their personal account of East Germany’s foreign policy activities are introduced in alphabetical order, while pointing out the relevance of their experiences for this study and summarizing the most important topics of the interviews. Due to the East German policy in the diplomatic sphere to train and assign their personnel with a regional focus, all of my interview partners from the MfAA had worked together at one point or the other in their careers,<sup>66</sup> which significantly added to the worth of the interviews: by offering different perspectives on the same topic, they can be considered more than just the sum of their parts.

First of all, a written and published account on personal experiences in South Yemen can be introduced here, as the slim volume is approached in the same way as an interview – as a personal memory of events. Günther Scharfenberg, East German ambassador to the PDRY in the 1970s, published his memoirs and notes in 2012. Scharfenberg served as ambassador to Aden from September 1972 to May 1978. Before the posting, Scharfenberg had proven his abilities in foreign policy by substituting for the Head of Section Arab States of the MfAA, Karl-Heinz Lugenheim, from August 1970 to February 1971, and then for Wolfgang Bator in the Section International Relations of the CC in fall 1971. Thus, Scharfenberg’s interpretations of foreign policy making in Aden regularly offer a perspective beyond South Yemen and tend to include the GDR’s approach to the region, as well as details about the East German foreign policy apparatus.

Fritz Balke, considerably younger than the other interview partners, is the only interviewee who remained involved with actual German foreign policy making after reunification. Through contacts to West German foreign policy personnel, he was recruited as election observer 1996 in Palestine and 1997 in Yemen. In

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**66** | For example, Günther Scharfenberg (ambassador in Aden from 1972 to 1978) had shared an office with Freimut Seidel (ambassador to Aden from 1986 to 1989) in East Berlin, in: Scharfenberg, 2012, 14.

the GDR, Balke had been Vice-Consul in North Yemen from early 1969 to the end of 1972. The Sana'a consulate, and later on the embassy, had depended on the communications and trade infrastructure of the comparably large embassy in Aden. Thus Balke visited the South on a frequent basis. After several other placements, Balke was assigned to East Germany's relations with both Yemens in the Section Near and Middle East of the MfAA in East Berlin. In the late 1980s he returned to Aden twice, on the occasion of the YSP Conference in 1987 and accompanying the Head of the CC Section IV to renegotiate party relations between the SED and the YSP. Furthermore, he witnessed two meetings of Honecker with the PDRY's new President Al-Beidh after the "1986 crisis" in Moscow on the occasion of the CPSU Party Congress and the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution in 1987. Balke's comments on the GDR's engagement in both Yemens are characterized by a very frank and open attitude, granting a glimpse of day-to-day friction in the political process and the existing variety of opinions among diplomatic personnel about East Germany's foreign policy making.

Due to regular publications and presentations, Wolfgang Bator is one of the most well-known former GDR foreign policy personnel today. In the GDR he pursued both a diplomatic and an academic career as a major expert on the Near and Middle East. He has been occupied with the region since he first left for Syria in 1958. He served as ambassador in Libya and Iran and was a member of the Section International Relations of the CC.<sup>67</sup> In the early 1970s he was nominated as the new ambassador to South Yemen, but withdrew himself for personal reasons. His interview focuses on the GDR's activities in the Near and Middle East and gives a personal account of the diplomatic service and day-to-day work in the East German embassies. As Bator explicitly takes a Marxist-Leninist stance and argues along its ideological lines, his comments on the relation between foreign policy and ideology support the interpretation of the discrepancy between ideological theory and political reality of this study.

According to the leftist newspaper "junge Welt", Hans Bauer is still working as an attorney in Berlin to "defend former citizens of the GDR against political prosecution and criminalization, [...] advocating for rehabilitation, justice and historic truth."<sup>68</sup> Bauer had been a public prosecutor of the GDR and was recruited by the Stasi in 1982. Together with Volkbert Keßler,<sup>69</sup> both of them high-level party functionaries (nomenclature) of the CC of the SED, he served for the HV A in the PDRY from 1982 to 1985.<sup>70</sup> Due to his new position as an official Party-Secretary of the Department of

**67** | German: Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen (IV).

**68** | Rupp, Rainer, Interview with Hans Bauer, "Strafvollzug in der DDR zielte auf vollwertige Wiedereingliederung", in: junge Welt, June 21 2012, 3.

**69** | Brief HA XX Kienberg an HV A Stellvertreter, January 28 1982, in: BStU MfS AP Nr.68777-92, 27f.

**70** | Vermerk über die Einstellung der inoffiziellen Zusammenarbeit mit dem GMS „Leonhardt“ Reg. Nr. XV 3481/1982, October 11 1988, HAXX, in: BStU MfS AP Nr.36630-92.

the Attorney General in South Yemen, Bauer was able to “entertain official contacts in political-operative cooperation [as well as] unofficial cooperation [with the MfS] which had been terminated” in fall 1988.<sup>71</sup> During his years in Aden he emerged as a trusted advisor of the Attorney General of the PDRY.<sup>72</sup> Even though Bauer’s account on his actual work in the PDRY remains vague, his interview offers an interesting account on some details of his political and juridical work in Aden and the intensity of East German engagement in this field and thus helps to assess the impact of East German presence on South Yemeni internal development.

Werner Sittig had been the last serving ambassador in the PDYR. He and his family arrived in Aden in August 1989. Sittig witnessed the beginnings of Yemeni unification and was supposed to become the East German ambassador for unified Yemen in Sana’a. German reunification prevented that from happening. After his early return to East Berlin, he became Head of the Section Near and Middle East. He supported this study with a lengthy phone call about his experiences.

Heinz-Dieter Winter had joined the MfAA in 1960 in the Section Southeast Asia. He had started his diplomatic career in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, and advanced first to Head Deputy and then Head of the Section Near and Middle East until the late 1980s. From 1986 until his resignation in 1990, he served as Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and visited South Yemen on several occasions, the last time in 1990. From 1988 he had been assigned to the Section Near and Middle East. His interview is especially valuable regarding the assessment of structures and procedures of foreign policy making, the role of the Near and Middle East for East German foreign policy, and the final years of East German foreign policy. Last but not least, Winter provided the author with an inside view on the internal discussion on the ‘1986 crisis’ in Aden and the GDR’s resulting policy turn.

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**71** | Ibid. 48.

**72** | Operative Einschätzung des GMS „Leonhardt“ – Vorg.-Nr.XV 3481/82, August 28 1986, HV A/III/AG/018, in: BStU MfS AGMS Nr.10208-88, 67.