As part of its research focus on the Cold War during the directorship of Detlef Junker, the GHI undertook a major collaborative project that sought to explore relations between two nations more fully than had previously been attempted. Plans to compile a comprehensive handbook on German-American relations over the half century from the collapse of the Third Reich to the fall of the Berlin Wall were announced in June 1995. The participants in the initial workshop on the project agreed that to do justice to the depth and breadth of German-American relations in this time period, it would be necessary to look beyond state actors and diplomatic relations. The proposed handbook would thus include extensive treatment of cultural, social and economic ties between Germany and the U.S. as well as their multifaceted political and military relations. Although “Germany” usually meant the Federal Republic for the U.S. during the Cold War, the handbook would also give attention to the points of contact between the U.S. and the German Democratic Republic.

The basic structure of the handbook was proposed at the June 1995 workshop. The handbook would consist of two chronologically defined volumes: the first covering the period from the beginning of the Allied occupation of Germany in 1945 to upheavals of 1968, the second 1968 to the unification of the two German states in 1990. Each volume would be divided into five thematic sections: Politics, Security, Economics, Culture, and Society. Each thematic section would open with a comprehensive survey essay and include a series of shorter, narrowly focused chapters.

Detlef Junker served as general editor of the project; he was assisted by associate editors Philipp Gassert, Wilfried Mausbach, and David B. Morris. In all, 132 scholars, divided roughly equally between Germans and Americans, contributed 146 essays to the handbook.

Die USA und Deutschland im Zeitater des Kalten Krieges was published in 2001 by the Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart. The English edition, The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, followed in 2004 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Major funding for the project was provided by the German Federal Ministry of Economics’ ERP-Sondervermögen Transatlantic Program.