

Call for Papers

Arab-Soviet Internationalism – Socialist Internationalism, International Organizations and the Politics of Revolution in the 20th and 21st Centuries

A three-day workshop held on July 13-15, 2022 at the Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin, Germany

The German Historical Institute in Moscow, Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe (EUME), a research program at the Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien, the Texas State University, and the Orient-Institut Beirut invite scholars in the fields of anthropology, history, literary studies and the political sciences to apply to take part in a workshop on »Arab-Soviet Internationalism – Socialist Internationalism, International Organizations and the Politics of Revolution in the 20th and 21st Centuries« to be held in Berlin 13-15 July 2022, at the Forum Transregionale Studien.

The workshop is convened by Elizabeth Bishop (Texas State University), Andreas Hilger (German Historical Institute Moscow), Jeffrey G. Karam (LAU / EUME Fellow of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation 2021-22), and Sana Tannoury-Karam (EUME Fellow 2020-22).

Researchers are keenly interested in the interconnected histories of anti-colonialism, Cold War, decolonization, the legacies of emancipatory politics, and post-coloniality. In doing so, their analyses highlight the agency of Third World actors, drawing linkages between cultural, political, economic, regional, and individual histories. In addition, researchers underline the global reach and multi-dimensionality of socialist activities that transcended a western-centric sphere/focus. At the same time, by interweaving different methodological approaches and thematic dimensions of interconnected histories, such new accounts question traditional periodizations of transnational and international relations in the 20th and 21st centuries. Indeed, conflict zones and narratives of the post-colonial world after the end of the Cold War reveal recurrent patterns, while activities and argumentations of leftist forces during the 1920s and 1930s seemed to predate constellations and debates at least of the 1950s and the 1960s, and into the 21st century.

In such a general context, relations between the Arab world and the Soviet Union serve as a case in point. Through its various institutions and international infrastructure, particularly the Communist International (“III International”), the USSR paid special attention to political possibilities in the Middle East. After World War II, Moscow developed intensive relations with Arab communities which continued to shape international and regional constellations after 1989. Soviet relations with peoples, movements, and states in the West Asia/North Africa region were multidirectional and fragile. They reflected Soviet plans for the West Asian/North African region, Arab attraction and interest in Soviet ideological and material promises and an Arab dissatisfaction with all possible varieties of alienation or foreign domination. The mutual influences and repulsive forces in various dimensions of bilateral,

transregional, and transnational relations, their detailed development, and interconnections across borders of space, politics, and times, constitute important – while insufficiently-referenced, in the light of this importance – research fields.

We envision a workshop that brings together expertise from various historical schools and social science disciplines to richly-differentiated landscapes of Arab-Soviet and post-Soviet relations, and build hypotheses on and from traditional narratives about “the” Socialist-Arab alliances in the 20th century, as well as any enduring impact on current affairs. Such a workshop engages with trajectories of relationships that begin with revolutionary hope post World War I, heightened revolutionary nationalism during the 1950s, sometimes ends with disenchantment by the 1960s and 70s or leads to lasting relations until today. Central questions include:

- To what extent did compliance with the “21 Conditions” leave local political parties vulnerable to state violence?
- To what extent did energy policy considerations and competition in the oil/gas sectors influence diplomatic relations?
- How can we best frame varied socio-political descriptions of Arab supporters of Arab-Soviet/Russian cooperation?
- What were some varied reasons for focus of cooperation on selected international organizations?
- What generalizations can we hazard, regarding the nature of concrete decision-making processes in diplomatic and security contexts?
- What evidence permits statements regarding interconnections between academic, cultural, and political protagonists?
- What roles can we ascribe to external, third forces, during and/or after the World Wars?
- Where do developments characteristic of the Cold War and decolonization interact, where not?
- What significance did Arab observers attribute to the Soviet ‘Great Terror’ and World War II?
- Did changes in Soviet/Russia leadership and foreign policy courses – from Lenin to Stalin, to Khrushchev, to Brezhnev, to Gorbachev, from Jeltsyn to Putin – affect different dimensions of Arab-Soviet/Russian relations?
- Did a division of labor characterize different countries in the Eastern bloc, in their relations with Arab-majority populations?
- What possible impact did ideology (and/or institutions in which Soviet ideas developed) on approaches to Arab-majority populations?
- What role did arts, culture, and the academy play in Arab-Soviet internationalism?

Finally, the workshop will discuss significant continuities and discontinuities in Arab-Soviet/Russian relations and will explore future research questions in the productive field of the entangled histories of the Arab regions, socialism, and post-socialism. In this context, individuals’, organizations’, states’, and groups’ cooperation or non-cooperation in international organizations – governmental as well as non-governmental – appear to constitute one promising direction for further inquiry, since they are focal points for both national and social approaches to global relations. In addition, the workshop will promote such a discussion along with complementary structural – biographical, cultural, economic, political, technological – categories.

In general, proposals may address, but are not limited to the following:

- Arab-Soviet encounters with and in governmental and non-governmental international and regional organizations (as Comintern, OIC, UN, etc.);
- Technology of transnational relations (impact of developments in communication and transport; communications networks);
- Role of minorities and individuals, balanced with the role of mass movements;
- Ideologies, heresies, and dissident trends (Stalinism, Trotskyism, Pan-Arabism, nationalism, etc.);
- Post-Soviet remembrance, narratives, and terminologies;
- Epistemologies of political and economic relations;
- Migration and the social demography of transnational socialism;
- Media: individual;
- Security cooperation through intelligence networks, deception, and disinformation campaigns;
- Journalists, the press, and communications at the dawn of cybernetics;
- Socialist Orientalisms: Representations in the academy and communist parties;
- Alternative futures: Chinese and Yugoslav socialisms, dissident and unorthodox socialisms, national leftist movements.

Applications should include:

- a **brief academic bio** (including name, affiliation/status, titles of relevant works/PhD thesis, and research interests; max. 100 words);
- a **short proposal of the paper to be presented** (max. 200 words).

Please submit your application to arab-soviet-internationalism@dhi-moskau.org by **December 15, 2021**.

Successful applicants will be invited to expand the proposal to a draft essay of around 5,000-6,000 words that will be pre-circulated among the workshop participants.

All applicants will be informed of the acceptance of their papers by January 31, 2022. The deadline for the first draft of the pre-circulated essay will be May 16, 2022.

The conference language of the workshop is English.

Funding is available to cover the costs of accommodation and travel for a limited number of participants. Thus, participants are encouraged to secure complementary funding for travel if their home institution offers this option.

Outcomes

We plan to publish (selected) papers from the conference in institutional online-formats and/or in print. We will discuss a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal and/or an edited book of accepted papers.

For any further information, please contact Andreas Hilger via andreas.hilger@dhi-moskau.org or colleagues at EUME via eume@trafo-berlin.de .