



Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program

Research Report

The opinions, recommendations, and conclusions of the grantee are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IREX or the US Department of State.

Please respond to the following questions, using the form below as a template. Research Report, along with your Final Report, is due within 30 days of the end of your grant. Please e-mail your Final and Research reports to iaro@irex.org.

1. Title of Research Proposal:

Red Globalization: The Political Economy of Soviet Foreign Relations, 1956-68

2. Topic of Research

I look behind the scenes through the use of archival material to elucidate the logic behind Soviet economic relations with rich and poor countries alike, as well as those in Eastern Europe. I choose a particular time in Soviet history after the death of Stalin when the Soviet economy started engaging the world economy, as Soviet leaders actively sought economic relations with all the countries of the world.

3. Relevance and Contribution to Field

By looking at the expressed opinions and actual practice of the highest Soviet officials behind the propaganda lines, I hope to contribute to what is turning out to be a dwindling volume of new scholarship on Soviet foreign relations. I also hope to study the impact of the world economy on Soviet political thinking and foreign policy practice, thereby contributing to ongoing discussions in the field of Cold War history.

4. Approach and research methodology; list of research sites

I have concentrated on archival material from different departments and ministries within the Soviet state apparatus, concentrating on the highest organs. I thus looked at Gosplan, the Ministry of Foreign Commerce, and different industrial ministries in the archive of the economy (RGAE); at the Council of Ministers in GARF; and the Communist Party archive at RGANI. All archives were in Moscow.

5. Research findings and preliminary conclusions

What I have found at the archives is that, far from acting like a Superpower, the Soviet Union's economic impact on both the developed and developing world was rather small by comparison with the West. Furthermore, the Soviet Union could not exploit its economic leverage for much political gain, as the United States, France or Great Britain often did; the institutions that the Soviet Union set up to engage the world economy were so counter-productive to Soviet interests, that the Soviet Union often found itself exploited economically by western private companies, Third World governments and even its allies in Eastern Europe, who received subsidies in the form of Soviet raw materials for decades. I argue that, in view of these very real economic limitations, we should rethink the paradigm of a bipolar world dominated by two superpowers, a paradigm that tends to obscure the agency and aims of governments that more often than not looked to follow their own objectives rather than those of the Superpowers; this is especially true of those countries that were often considered "allies" of the Soviet Union. I also argue for the moderating characteristics of the capitalist world economy, which contributed heavily to the perceived need for reform among the Soviet leadership, a perception that began with Khrushchev, through Kosygin and ended with devastating consequences (for the Soviet system) with Gorbachev. The Soviet leadership was not blind to these limitations, and I was able to perceive a change in policy aims and directives over time; this change, however, had little actual impact on the conduct of both Soviet economic relations and Soviet diplomacy.

6. Future research agendas

I hope to further research this topic with the aim of finishing the dissertation within two years. Beyond that I hope to continue my research into the impact of the Soviet Union on the world economy as well as on particular countries, notably Cuba. I will also be looking at the impact of the world economy on the Soviet Union, as I do not think that the theoretical literature on the international impact on domestic policies and developments is sufficiently developed.

7. Policy recommendations

It is in this last aspect that I think lies the type of policy recommendations that will emerge from my conclusions. The United States often insists on embargoes and other such policies that have proven inadequate time and time again. These hard line policies are today at work against such unsavory countries as Cuba, North Korea and Iran. It is, however, economic engagement of these countries that more often than not elicits the type of moderation that the United States seeks, whereas continued confrontation only allows for the more hard-line leaders (or hard-line tendencies among them) of these countries to come to the fore.