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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITLE: *Cultural and Ideological Connections in Cold War Turkey: Political Paths, Media and Representations*

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/S: Fulvio Bertuccelli

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

This panel takes inspiration from the historiographical debate that has developed over the last thirty years from the need to adopt a pluralist and multidimensional approach in understanding the Cold War in its various facets (Westad 2012), with specific reference to the Turkish case. The conflict between the Western and the Eastern blocs indeed implied a wide range of local responses resulting from the interaction between global and local dynamics which affected not just high politics but societies' inner social and cultural dynamics as well (Saunders 1999, Robin 2001, Richmond 2003). By geographically and spatially extending the field of investigation and taking advantage of a wide range of disciplines, such as Cultural Studies, Intellectual History, Literature and Translation Studies, the "cultural turn" in Cold War studies has been building a new relation with the traditional disciplines on the subject (Political History, International Relations or Diplomatic History). In this perspective, this panel assumes that adopting a plural and "decentralized" perspective (as suggested by Westad 2005 and Mooney and Lanza 2013) is now an inevitable step towards gaining new insights into the complexity of spatially and chronologically diluted Cold War competition.

Undoubtedly, Turkey's position in the Cold War is not an uncovered topic although most scholarly production focuses on the country's foreign policy and diplomacy. In the last fifteen years there have been however works addressing the study of the cultural dimension of the Cold War questioning the relationship between global context and local manifestations (Üngör and Örnek 2013, Örnek 2015, Gökay 2012, Rajak et al 2017, Özkan and Gürakar 2021). Furthermore, we are witnessing the proliferation of scholarly research focusing on individual protagonists or specific periods (Aytürk 2014 and 2017, Pekesen 2020, Bora et al. 2014). However, the cultural and ideological dimension of the Cold War in Turkey is a relatively recent focus and there are many issues, actors, literatures, and media as yet unexamined.

In this perspective, the panel is intended to be a moment of interdisciplinary discussion between scholars aiming to rethink the interpretative paradigms of Turkey's political and cultural history and to explore the connections between the Turkish Cold War dynamics and the MENA area.

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Papers:

1) Hilal Yavuz, *A borderland approach to the relationship between the Soviet Union and Turkey during the early Cold War*.

This paper delves into Turkey's interactions with the Soviet Union in the years following World War II, a period that marked the beginning of the Cold War era, which would persist for nearly half a century. Using theoretical frameworks and analytical tools from borderland studies, it explores the Soviet-Turkish border as a compelling case study and demonstrates how border-related issues can reflect a range of temporal and spatial dimensions that extend far beyond the physical confines of the borderland. It explicitly contextualizes how the evolving dynamics of the Soviet-Turkish border influenced the experiences of Armenians as a minority population within Turkey. Examining the events in sequence aims to reveal the complex layers of interaction

and their impact on minority groups, offering insights into the broader implications for border studies and minority experiences during a transformative era in global history.

2) Halit Serkan Simen, *Making of a revolutionary culture in the Cold War Turkey: the case of Revolutionary Path movement*.

The period between 1960 to 1980 witnessed a race for political, ideological, and cultural supremacy in Turkey, similar to other parts of the globe, driven by Cold War's struggle for cultural and political hegemony. The '78 Movement, a constructive and destructive repositioning of the '68 movement in a radical sense, aimed to advance the anti-imperialist and anti-fascist struggle in all domains. While various associations and political groups rallied behind these aims, one of the most notable movements was the Revolutionary Path Movement (*Devrimci Yol Hareketi*). Focusing on contemporary primary sources related to the Movement, this study will analyze how Revolutionary Path created a discourse and practice of "Revolutionary Culture" tailored for its advanced cadres (*kadro*) and the masses/people (*kitleler/halk*). Amid the political and ideological climate of Cold War Turkey, efforts were made to create a comprehensive common culture for the public by cultivating a series of revolutionary attitudes and values. Due to its numerical and influential capacity, surpassing that of other political movements and parties, Revolutionary Path acquired a distinct discourse, expertise, and influence following its emergence as it was exemplified in the Resistance Committees and Fatsa municipality experiences. Therefore, this paper aims to highlight the creation of an alternative revolutionary culture prior to the 1980s, which has received little attention, and to provide a contribution to the political and cultural history of Turkey during Cold War.

3) Ali Açıkgöz, Carlo Sanna, *Between the two poles: the anti-communist center-left discourse in the Republican People's Party in the Cold War period (1950s-1970s)*.

Most of the existing literature dealing with the left in Turkish political history and party politics during the Cold War period focused mainly on the cultural and political movements located at the far or extreme ends of the spectrum. Even when dealing with the Republican People's Party (RPP), which after the turn to multi-party politics embarked in a slow but steady path towards the "left of center" and social democracy, important research has been carried on about its relations with the movements of the far-left.

Far less attention has been dedicated to the development, within the RPP, of a debate around these topics in the light of its rising internal movement of the "left of center". This paper aims to explore the evolution of the discourse within the RPP during the Cold War, answering the questions: What are the main ideological demarcation lines of the RPP's left of center from other political movements on the Turkish political spectrum at that time? How were these discussions reflected in the overall political strategy of the RPP in the 1960s and 1970s? Who were the intra- and extra-party allies and opponents for the center-left movement in this era? The main sources will be: memoirs and public writings of relevant political actors of the RPP, journals/newspapers close to the RPP such as "Ulus", "Barış", "Kim", "Toplum".

4) Güldeniz Kıbrıs, *"A Handful of Turks facing the threat of extinction": cinematic portrayals of Turkishness in the Russian-dominated sphere*.

The Cold War period in Turkey witnessed the golden age of Turkish cinema in terms of production and consumption. During the 1960s, Turkey became the fifth biggest film producer worldwide. Among the local productions, action/adventure films with historical settings occupied a unique place due to their propagandistic representation of the Turkish national identity as opposed to its others. This paper focuses on the representations of Turkic-Muslim communities in Turkish cinema in the 1960s-1980. Through close reading in combination with film analysis, it examines nine films: *Hacı Murat* (dir. Natuk Baytan, 1967), *501 Numaralı Hücre* (*Cell No. 501*, dir. Nusret Erasm, 1967), *Hacı Murat Geliyor* (*Hacı Murat is Coming*, dir. Natuk Baytan, 1968), *Kafkas Kartalı* (*Caucasus Eagle*, dir. Yılmaz Atadeniz, 1968), *Kafkas Şeytanı Aslan Bey* (*Caucasus Evil Aslan Bey*, dir. Yavuz Yalınkılınç, 1968), *Osmanlı Kartalı* (*Ottoman Eagle*, dir. Osman F. Seden, 1969), *Kafdağını Terk Edenler* (*The Ones Who Left Kaf Mountain*, dir. Natuk Baytan, Gündüz Yıldırımgeç, 1971), and *Hacı Murat'ın İntikamı* (*The Revenge of Hacı Murat*, dir. Yavuz Figenli, 1972), and *Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?* (*When will the Sun Rise?*, dir. Mehmet Kilic, 1977). The representations of Russia, the Soviet Union, the idealized Turkic-Muslim man and woman, and their heroism will be discussed in relation to Turkish nationalism. The article assumes a link between the political-historical context and these popular cultural products. Therefore, the films will be connected to the Cold War context.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I – SHORT BIO OF PROPONENTS

Chair:

Fulvio Bertuccelli is currently adjunct professor of History of Islamic Countries at the University of Bologna. Among his recent publications are *Challenging the “cultural hegemony” of the left in Cold War Turkey: the case of the Yeniden Milli Mücadele (National Struggle Anew) movement (1970-1980)*, in “Twentieth Century Communism” (1/2021), *Il movimento socialista in Turchia (1960-1971). Ideologia e politica tra due colpi di Stato* [The Socialist Movement in Turkey (1960-1971). Ideology and politics between two military coups], Aracne, Roma 2023, and *Minorities and Diasporas in Turkey. Public images and issues in education* (co-edited with Mihaela Gavrilă and Fabio L. Grassi), Sapienza Università Editrice, Roma 2023.

Presenters:

Hilal Yavuz is Ph.D. candidate at Freiburg University with a project focusing on the margins of modernity and the concept of otherness in Turkey in first half of the twentieth century. She has also actively participated in various social projects and NGOs. In 2018, she served as a Turkish language instructor at the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Russian-Armenian University in Yerevan, thanks to the Turkey-Armenia Fellowship Scheme sponsored by the Hrant Dink Foundation. In 2022 she received a DAAD Research Grant, which allowed her to study Islamic Studies at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. Her most recent project on racial segregation, authoritarian regimes, and genocide in Rwanda was published on the Diyarbakir Institute for Political and Social Research website as part of the “Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: World Experiences Series”.

Halit Serkan Simen is a PhD researcher at the European University Institute (Florence/Italy),

Department of History, nearing the completion of his dissertation that focuses on the formation of the ruling elite of the early modern Ottoman Empire within the general political transformation and the struggle between power groups. In addition to these studies, he has researched and written about the political and cultural history of Turkey in the 1970s. Currently, he studies on the political movements of the recent period with a historical perspective and primary source analysis.

Ali Açıkgöz received his PhD from Bilkent University, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, with a final dissertation on the party change and role of ideas in the case of the Republican People's Party between 1965 and 1973. He took his MSc from Global Studies master's program at Lund University with a Swedish Institute Swedish-Turkish Scholarship. His research agenda is studying Turkey from a comparative perspective and focusing on issues of party politics, ideas, paradigms, and social democracy. His works appeared in international and national journals, online venues, such as "Turkish Studies", "Birikim", "Yurt ve Dünya" and "Daktilo 1984", and edited volumes.

Carlo Sanna is a PhD candidate at the University of Cagliari, Department of Political and Social Sciences. He was Visiting Researcher at Bilkent University, Ankara, for the Fall semester 2021/22. He is currently working on his dissertation on the organizational and ideological change in the Republican People's Party (RPP) of Turkey from 2010-2020. His main research interests are the political history and party politics of the Republic of Turkey. On these topics he published articles in scientific journals and chapters in edited books, and participated at various international academic conferences.

Güldeniz Kıbrıs defended her Ph.D. dissertation supervised by Prof. Erik-Jan Zürcher titled "*Benevolent Conquerors, Besieged Homelands and Threatened State: The Reproduction of Political Myths in Cold War Turkey*" at Leiden University, Department of History & Middle Eastern Studies in September 2022. Currently, she is teaching about nationalism and the history of modern Turkey at Koç University in Istanbul. Her research interests include peripheral perspectives on national identity, everyday life, and critical legal studies in relation to the Cold War political/historical context.

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