

Book Review:

## Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World

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*Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, edited by James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung, 2020, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Recent decades have witnessed the diversification of Cold War studies, especially enriched by the growing prominence of the transnational approach in history. However, the dominant research paradigm for the history of the Cold War period often continues to observe this period through a binary lens, dividing the world into blocs and spheres of influence, and the geographies of the research into this period tend to be limited. Meanwhile, scholars of area studies often stay within their regions when studying state socialism. Postsocialist and postcolonial approaches have not been contemplated together until recently. When it comes to the history of globalization, it has been thought of in the singular for too long, ascribing its agency solely to Western capitalism.

*Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, a volume edited by James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Steffi Marung, brings together scholars who move the lens of analysis of the Cold War period beyond the East-West divide. The chapter authors seek to reclaim the term globalization, thinking of it in the plural and dedicating attention to the agency of socialist and postcolonial states in the processes and geographies of post-1945 globalization. The chapters focus on political, economic, and cultural interconnections and transfers between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the decolonising countries in Africa and Asia.

The book comprises four thematic sections. The first section under the title *Red Globalization?* tackles alternative visions of the global economy, China's global opening-up policy and labour migration with the focus on the migration from Vietnam into CMEA countries. The following section focuses on socialist development projects, encompassing East Germany in the Arab Middle East, agrarian modernization in the eyes of Soviet Africanists, and architecture and global urbanisation during the Cold War. The third section explores cultural encounters, similarities and differences and their narrations, with the contributions focusing mainly on the Soviet Union (with the exception of the chapter by Bogdan C. Iacob on the Balkans and UNESCO). The final section is dedicated to global encounters as they relate to the late period of state socialism. It provides an examination of solidarity networks, such as between Solidarność and the Global South, and the reception of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in East Germany.

The edited volume represents a challenge to the dominant view that sees the period of state socialism as characterised by decades of isolation which considers the opening up of socialist countries as only being made possible by the fall of state socialism in the years following 1989. The book goes beyond Soviet internationalism, exploring multiple globalizing projects that came from the socialist world and emphasizes significant variations across the Eastern Bloc. The contributions show transfers of ideas and expertise not as a one-way street, not "simply an export story from North to South" (p.8), but rather as a circulation that informed politics, culture, economy and ideas of modernization at both ends. With half of the chapters focusing on the Soviet Union, however, it would have been interesting to see more perspectives and further examples of the aforementioned variations across the former socialist world including, but not limited to, Yugoslavia.

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The introduction to the book by the editors can be read as an individual piece that provides an insightful overview of the existing literature and prevailing paradigms. More importantly, it is also a compelling discussion on the processes and geographies of globalization during the Cold War and their legacies.

“Alternative globalization” does not mean that the book assumes the existence of an alternative socialist world completely separated from the capitalist world order, even though the political elites of the Eastern Bloc countries narrated their internationalism as constructing such an alternative world. After all, socialist globalization did not take place in a vacuum. While these efforts were an alternative, they were also entangled with the Western Bloc and advocated the kind of progressive ideas of equality and development that existed across blocs. During the *détente*, Western and Eastern European companies worked side by side on development projects in Africa. At the same time, these entanglements took place in the context of a strongly polarised world of the Cold War.

Taking the abovementioned into consideration, the editors and chapter authors understand socialist globalization as alternative but also entangled, inspired by the concept of *“geteilte Globalisierung”* coined by Shalini Randeria. This understanding sees globalization as shared and divided, connecting and separating at the same time. In the words of the editors, it is globalization “that consists of competing but unequal projects in an interconnected but still politically divided world” (p.12).

This book reminds us that alternative globalizations helped shape different forms of capitalism and global integration in the post-1989 era. As such, they demonstrate that the fall of state socialism does not only need to be interpreted solely as the victory of capitalist globalization. Rather, it was through interactions with socialist interconnectivities that the capitalist globalization from the West developed. Today, we see the legacies and instrumentalizations of Cold War interconnections, as evidenced in the foreign policies and networks of contemporary Russia, China or Hungary. At the same time, the Eastern European left does not draw on legacies of anticolonial internationalism as much as their counterparts in the West and South, which is a legacy of both the top-down nature of the internationalism of communist regimes and their re-Europeanisation in late socialism and since (p.21).

This edited volume is a significant contribution to knowledge that broadens our understanding of the global Cold War setting. It challenges both the dominant research paradigms and current hegemonic narratives about this period. The book can be taken as a starting point and its chapters as an inspiration and introduction to discovering and exploring the work of its authors more widely. Due to its broad implications, it does not only appeal to historians of the post-1945 world. Rather, it is equally interesting to scholars studying contemporary societies that once took part in socialist globalizing projects and postcolonial and postsocialist contexts across Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia.

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