



University of Exeter

Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies

Centre for Gulf Studies

Virtual Seminar Series

Tuesday 24 October 2023, 17:00

Mohammed Al Sudairi (ANU, King Faisal Centre) Cold War Worldmaking Between East Asia and the Arab World

Seeking to transcend Western- and state-centric readings of the Cold War, the talk focuses on the various forms of ideational interaction and worldmaking that tied the two ends of the Asian landmass together. More specifically, it looks at how across the ideological spectrum in the Arab world, intellectuals, poets, activists, and scholar-officials incorporated (or co-opted) different imaginaries surrounding East Asia into their discordant political and social projects and visions of utopia. The talk will begin by discussing leftist registers of this ideational engagement, introducing the writings of Arab visitors and long-term residents – the so-called “foreign experts”) *waiguo zhuanjia* –) who travelled to Maoist China. In this regard, particular attention will be accorded to the works of the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani, the Syrian poet Salama ‘Ubayd, and the Iraqi Daoist-Marxist Hadi al-‘Alawi. The talk then shifts to their right-wing doppelgangers who had actively interacted and cooperated with the anti-communist regimes of East Asia throughout the Cold War, exploring the works of the Saudi journalists and officials Shakib al-Amawi, Ahmed Jamjoom, and Hassan Kutbi. The talk concludes by drawing some conclusions on the positionality of East Asia in Arab intellectual thought, and its function in relation to political and social commentaries about the Arab self and non-Arab other.



To register, please go to

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