

Call for Papers

Reading the '1979 Moment' in the Middle East

A two-day workshop held on June 15-16, 2017 at the Forum Transregionale Studien,
Berlin, Germany

The year 1979 is one that looms large in the recent history of the Middle East. As the world entered the final phase of the Cold War, 1979 would witness the Iranian Revolution, the siege of the Grand Mosque of Mecca, the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and, at the tail end of the year, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Civil War raged, violence in Syria between the government and the Muslim Brotherhood increased, political violence in Turkey reached a crescendo readying the stage for the 1980 coup, and Saddam Hussein consolidated power over Iraq. Although unrelated to one another in their causality, these events would signal a tectonic shift in the political and social landscape of the Middle East—particularly in the Arab and Persianate worlds—including the emergence of Islamically-inspired political movements, the decline of traditional leftist politics, and a new era of state oppression. The year would also usher in a period of wars in the region that would last throughout the 1980s (the ongoing Lebanese Civil War, the Soviet-Afghan War, and the Iran-Iraq war) and the 1990s (the Algerian Civil War, continued war in Afghanistan and the 1990-91 Gulf War). In all of these conflicts, stretching from North Africa to Afghanistan, various strains of Islamism would emerge as major forces to be reckoned with.

While some historians and scholars of politics in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia have begun to recognize this recent regional transformation, scholars of cultural production have largely ignored the fact that the material conditions for cultural production throughout the region also changed dramatically in 1979 and the two decades that followed, reflecting a new sociopolitical reality. This two-day, interdisciplinary workshop will address this lacuna by exploring the cultural and intellectual legacy, broadly conceived, of the Middle East's '1979 moment' and its aftermath. We invite papers that explore the cultural and intellectual reactions and changes surrounding the decline of leftist and the rise of Islamist political movements in this region that occurred in and around the year 1979. We particularly encourage papers that explore comparative perspectives between Middle Eastern intellectual trends, languages and cultures, as well as comparative approaches that look beyond the region.

Funded by:



In cooperation with:

**TURNING
POINTS**

FIGURES OF THOUGHT / TURNING POINTS
CULTURAL PRACTICES AND
SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE ARAB WORLD



Some of the questions that this workshop seeks to address, but is not limited to, are the following:

- How does 1979, as a relatively recent, pivotal year connect to other dates of significance, regionally and globally, (i.e., 1948, 1953, 1967/68, 1989, 2001, etc.)?
- In what ways did the events of that year create or destroy the imaginative possibilities of social and political movements?
- How have regional and diasporic (Afghan, Arab, Iranian, Kurdish, Turkish, etc.) writers, filmmakers, artists and intellectuals represented the events of 1979 and the wars that dominated the decades that followed?
- To what extent (if at all) have aesthetic approaches to literature, film and art changed after the events of 1979?

Scholars of the humanities and social scientists are invited to submit abstracts of 250-300 words for paper presentations of 20-25 minutes, along with a brief academic bio, to eume@trafo-berlin.de by **March 17, 2017**. Participants invited for presentation will have a version of their paper published online on the TRAFO blog, a blog for Transregional Research, and may have the option to publish their papers in an edited print/open access format as well.

The workshop is convened by Amir Moosavi (EUME Fellow of the VolkswagenStiftung/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation 2016/17) and funded through a grant by the VolkswagenStiftung/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. It is part of the activities of EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE EAST—THE MIDDLE EAST IN EUROPE (EUME), a research program at the Forum Transregionale Studien, and held in cooperation with “Figures of Thought | Turning Points. Cultural Practices and Social Change in the Arab World”, a research project at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) at Philipps-Universität Marburg.

The workshop will be held at the Forum Transregionale Studien, Wallotstraße 14, 14193 Berlin, Germany on June 15-16, 2017. 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.