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EAST-ECON - Ties Across Divides: New Perspectives on Eastern European Economic Relations from the late Soviet period to the post-communist era (1980s-1990s)

EAST-ECON will provide an innovative perspective on economic relations in Eastern Europe. It will look at the foreign economic ties developed by constituent Republics of the USSR with Eastern European countries in the 1980s and at their development in the post-socialist period. EAST-ECON will map twenty years of economic relations across the 1991 divide, embracing one of the most crucial periods for Europe, marked by the end of the Cold War, the development of independent states as well as by the transition to democracy and the market economy. EAST-ECON is a multidisciplinary cross-period historical study of foreign economic relations and of their political significance that relies on original archival sources and also encompasses the fields of economics and international relations. EAST-ECON will focus on the foreign economic relations developed by Russia, Ukraine and Latvia in the 1980-1999 years, pinpointing five crucial periods: 1980-81, 1985-86, 1990-1991, 1993-1994 and 1998-1999. EAST-ECON relies on original archival evidence, belonging to the foreign relations departments associated with the economic Ministries of constituent Soviet Republics of the USSR, held at US institutions and available through online portals and “scan and delivery” services. Through this still largely unused material, EAST-ECON will provide an innovative analysis of economic relations between Soviet Republics and Eastern Europe and of their development in the post-socialist era. Evaluating unitarily the whole 1980-1999 period will produce a cross-period mapping of economic relations across historical-political divides, compounded by a study of their political relevance on post-socialist realities. On top of its original source base and rigorous methodology, EAST-ECON has also to offer innovativeness not only in its theme and approach, but also in its intimately comparative thematical and chronological character as well as in multidisciplinary and engagement with existing scholarship. The urgency of EAST-ECON’s proposed research has been compounded by Russia’s unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, motivated by the willingness to deny Ukraine its rightful statehood. Describing through rigorous historical methodologies how constituent Republics of the USSR already developed tailored and increasingly more autonomous economic ties with foreign states will demonstrate how countries which officially became independent in 1991, had in fact begun a process of partial autonomization already during the Soviet period. At a time when political and economic relations in Europe have reached a point of rupture unseen in the present century, an in-depth analysis of how such relations were built will: provide academic insight into a topic of crucial importance; equip policymakers with vital information on a period that has not yet been historicised, but which is as of now more than essential in order to fully understand the present developments and set a course for the future.