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The Soviet Union and the process of state-building in post-colonial Arab countries. Una rassegna bibliografica

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This research is aimed at analysing the Soviet Union's foreign policy towards the Arab Middle East, to outline its main features and objectives. The study intends to fill a gap concerning the relations between the Soviet Union and some Arab countries, a topic on which there is a relevant historiographical debate but still leaves room for scrutiny. As a matter of fact, the main objective of the research is to investigate whether there was a concrete intention – and actual capacity– within the Soviet leadership not only to exert its influence over the broader Middle East, but to have an actual impact on the state-building of postcolonial Arab countries, and their adoption of political and institutions elements of the Soviet socialist-Leninist models of development. To this purpose, the study will focus on a selected number of Arab countries that used to have the closest relationship with Moscow, namely Egypt, Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, for each of these countries, a limited period of time will be taken into consideration, when Soviet influence reached its peak and state-building policies in these transforming countries might have drawn from the Soviet model. On the one hand, the analysis of specific case-studies will allow to investigate the relationship between Moscow and each of these Arab regimes; on the other, such a large geographical scope will permit to understand the elements and the objectives of the broader Soviet policy towards the Middle East. For what concerns the paper that will be discussed in this seminar, its purpose is to present a preliminary review of Soviet, Arab and “western” literature, with a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it will provide an historical background on the formation of Russian foreign policy towards the Arab world; on the other, the analysis seeks to highlight the basic features that have characterized it and that might have been at the core of the Soviet relation with the postcolonial Arab Middle East.