

### Rethinking 1968 and the Global Sixties

**Veranstalter:** Chen Jian, NYU Shanghai; Joanna Waley-Cohen, NYU Shanghai; Mary Nolan / Marilyn Young, NYU New York; Masha Kirsirova / Martin Klimke, NYU Abu Dhabi  
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**Bericht von:** Beatrice Wayne, New York University

This three-day conference, titled „Revisiting 1968 and the Global Sixties,“ took place from September 19–21, 2016 at New York University Abu Dhabi, and was hosted by the NYUAD Institute. The conference looked forward to the fiftieth anniversary of 1968 to reassess the global causes, themes, forms and legacies of that tumultuous period, with a focus on Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. International junior and senior scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds presented on topics that ranged from the economy, decolonization, and higher education, to forms of protest, transnational relations, and the politics of memory. This conference followed a first meeting held in NYU Shanghai on March 13–15, 2016.

The conference revisited 1968 from different localities and explored the legacies of the long 1960s from a global perspective. The conference attempted to construct an analytical framework for this time period that balanced the local, the national and the transnational. MARTIN KLIMKE's (Abu Dhabi) introduction raised thematic questions: What are the analytical insights and pitfalls of examining the long 1960s from a global perspective? How do we avoid reifying the 1960s as solely a moment of youth and student activism? Was cultural experimentation political? As the fiftieth anniversary of 1968 approaches, the conference worked to expand and foster critical reflection on the 1960s and its afterlives.

TOBY MATTHIESEN's (Cambridge) keynote address encouraged scholars to move beyond stereotypical depictions of the period and instead explore the broad range of social movements worldwide that combatted colonialism and authoritarianism. Focusing on the Middle East, he traced

the complex transnational solidarities that played out within the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) – which was inspired by Maoism and the Cuban revolution, aided by Cuba, East Germany, and Russia, and supported by Western solidarity movements – as well as the successful efforts to defeat protest movements by security states and religious movements of the region.

The first panel explored different paradigms of transnational 1960s activism. Through his exploration of Eduardo Mondlane and Che Guevara's sojourns in Dar Es Salaam, ANDREW IVASKA (Montreal) captured the key role Dar played in generating political connections. He also stressed the class and personal tensions between groups that did not easily map onto the ideological grids of the Cold War. ROBERT YOUNG (Abu Dhabi) investigated Cuba's extensive documentation of the Tricontinental Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, held in Havana in 1966. He emphasized the originality of the „Tricontinental Magazine“, an organ with radical content and design that played a key role in promoting Che Guevara as a symbol of humanity battling the global forces of oppression. KRASSIMIRA DASKALOVA (Sofia) explored women's activism and state socialist measures towards women in the 1960s Soviet block countries, arguing that these should be included in the global history of emancipatory gender politics. In her view, feminism and communism should not be considered mutually exclusive. JON PICCINI (Queensland) investigated the complex relationship between Australian activists – indigenous, white Australian and visiting students – and policy makers in the 1960s and early 1970s through their connections to Vietnam, China and Malaysia, which helped redefine Australia's domestic policies and geopolitical orientation.

The second panel looked at establishment responses to the protests of the 1960s. ALAN SHANE DILLINGHAM (Mobile) examined how, in response to the student movement and rural unrest in 1968 Mexico, the Echeverria government reformulated its foreign and domestic policies. It launched rural devel-

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opment programs and worked to attain a leadership position in the non-aligned movement. GUYA ACCORNERO (Lisbon) explored student opposition to the Portuguese Estado Novo regime. Interrogating both the possibilities and limitations of social organizing in a right-wing authoritarian context, she found that student action in prerevolutionary protests played an important role in the popular participation that helped bring the Portuguese dictatorship to an end. MASHA KIRASIROVA (Abu Dhabi) examined the politics of space in Tashkent, an important site of Soviet outreach to the decolonizing world. The Soviets sought to create an „absolute,“ anti-colonial utopian space in Tashkent, as well as a „relative“ space, shaped by migration and the Soviet desire to be a model for „backward“ societies. Tashkent was also a „relational“ space, bringing together filmmakers from the USSR and the decolonizing world.

In the first panel on Africa, FRANÇOISE BLUM (Paris) incorporated France’s May 1968 into a global perspective by examining simultaneous revolts in French-speaking Africa. She found linkages between these different movements, noting that May protests in Congo, Madagascar and France all involved youth revolt, protests against elders, and challenges to a shared colonial-rooted school system. OMAR GUEYE (Dakar) focused on the events of May 1968 in Dakar, arguing that despite connections between Senegalese students and France, their activism did not have the same causes or effects as the May events in Paris; rather, theirs was a fight against neocolonialism that brought together students and trade unionists and led to concessions from Senghor’s government. JEFFREY BYRNE (British Columbia) employed the case of Algeria to demonstrate how 1968 became a turning point in the Third World Movement. Byrne looked at geopolitics, economics and the global hydrocarbon sector to emphasize the role that Cold War competition between the great powers played in the non-alignment strategies of Third World countries.

In the second panel on Africa, OPHELIE RILLON (Paris) examined how urban youth in Mali rejected political and cultural norms imposed by their socialist and mili-

tary governments through their bodily practices. By exploring youth interactions with yéyé, rock-and-roll, and Afro-Cuban influences, she showed how the body could showcase the political dimensions of these dynamic cultural movements. BAHRU ZEWDE (Addis Ababa) problematized the iconic status of 1968 through his analysis of the revolutionary Ethiopian student movement, which reached its zenith in 1969. Haile Selassie’s authoritarian government continued to be pushed by students even after granting concessions, demonstrating the important role a small group of radical militants can play in shaping a movement. DAN HODGKINSON (Oxford) analyzed Rhodesian student activism from 1965 to 1974, demonstrating two different political modalities: White liberal Rhodesian students embraced counterculture practices from the West, including drugs and music; Black students rejected cultural experimentation while embracing Black Nationalism and drawing on older models of national liberation. PEDRO MONAVILLE (Abu Dhabi) discussed student reaction to political turmoil in the Congo, focusing on their participation in Pierre Mulele’s armed rebellion and their efforts to make their rebellion known outside of the Congo. Monaville emphasized the importance of examining the 1960s from an African perspective, rather than only acknowledging Third World activism when it shaped Western thought.

The next panel concerned the Middle East. SHOHEI SATO (Kanazawa) examined the late 1960s in Abu Dhabi, exploring whether rebellious ideological forces played a role in the region. His findings complicate the idea of a 1960s connected through shared independence struggles, as the British decision to withdraw from that area of the Persian Gulf was based on domestic economic policy rather than any indigenous emancipatory movement. ELIZABETH HOLT (Annandale-on-Hudson) examined the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an organization founded by the CIA in 1950. As a cultural front in the Cold War, the CCF worked to create a literary culture for a non-communist left and infiltrate the solidarity network represented by Bandung. Holt emphasized that the CIA certainly viewed the

sixties as a global moment. ABDULLAH AL-ARIAN (Doha) looked at Egypt's sweeping transformation following protests in 1968 and 1972, exploring the role that these protests played in the transition from Nasser's radical socialist regime to Sadat's U.S.-inclined, economically liberal rule. He found that street marches, sit-ins and streets brawls played a key role in the decline of Nasserism, and many of the features that scholars identify with the Sadat period actually emerged in the late Nasser era, as a response to the mass mobilization of youth.

In the second panel focused on the Middle East, ISLAH JAD (Birzeit) looked at women's activism within the Palestinian national movement. She emphasized that the trigger for Palestinian women's activism was their own local context, rather than a reaction to a global feminist movement. Women's advocacy within the Palestinian movement was influenced by the ideology of the nationalist movement itself, as well as colonial modernizing impositions. EMAN MORSI (Hanover) examined Egyptian and Cuban literary narratives of everyday access to meat. Exploring theater that engaged with this trope in the 1980s and 1990s, Morsi moves beyond fixed ways of understanding the 1960s to consider the utopian ideas that informed memories of the period. MOHAMED EL SHAHED (Cairo) analyzed the 1963 publication „Misr tabni“ (Egypt Builds), a showcase of architectural practice in Egypt in the postwar period, arguing that debates around modern architecture in Third World discourses were in dialogue with the West, yet critical of Western practices and ultimately shaped by their national contexts.

In the panel on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, JULIANE FÜRST (Bristol) examined countercultures among Soviet youth between the thaw and stagnation, focusing on Soviet hippies in the *Maiak* and *Psichodrom* in Moscow. Their interactions with global counterculture created a lasting legacy of cultural globalization in Russia. MADIGAN FICHTER (Philadelphia) explored youth in Belgrade who were interested in international student activism and Western counterculture. Although Belgrade students were eager to portray themselves as full participants

in a global youth culture that crisscrossed the socialist-capitalist divide of the Cold War, they came to focus on exclusively local problems in the period after 1968. In his analysis of politics and cultural production in Turkey in the long 1960s, KENAN BEHZAT SHARPE (Santa Cruz) proposed the „Mediterranean 60s“ as a conceptual category, arguing that developments in Turkey displayed strong parallels to Greece and other countries in Southern Europe.

JEAN ALLMAN's (St. Louis) public lecture entitled „Toward a Post Mortem of the African Revolution: Rethinking the Global Sixties“ underscored that the 1960s began as an African decade. People believed the decolonization of the continent was poised to change the economic and political map of the world. Using the foundation and history of the Institute for African Studies in Ghana as a case study, she argued that a key casualty of this time period was the loss of a radical political imagination that sought a destiny outside the hardened lines of the Cold War.

The last workshop panel looked towards Latin America. JOAQUIN CHAVEZ'S (Illinois) paper analyzed hippie culture in San Salvador through the lens of *La Banda del Sol* (The Sun Ban), a folk group from the late 1960s and early 1970s. He demonstrated the centrality of artists to the cultural transformations that took place in El Salvador in this period, and the impact that the hippie movement had on the ethos of revolutionary movements that followed. MARY KAY VAUGHN (College Park) examined student mobilization in Mexico City in 1968, government reaction towards it, and the subsequent opening of the political system. Vaughn argued that the student movement in Mexico was not on the left side of the political spectrum in the traditional sense, but rather a pro-democratic, non-sectarian, and anti-authoritarian movement that integrated countercultural expression with political demands for freedom. VICTORIA LANGLAND (Ann Arbor) focused on the role that conspiratorial connections played in Brazil, finding that suspicions about global communist influences on the Brazilian student movement had a material impact on the trajectory of the movement. She found that contemporaneous beliefs, hopes, and sus-

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pictions about transnational connections in the global 1960s affected the course of events in local places.

The conference concluded with a roundtable panel on legacies and pedagogy. The chair, CHEN JIAN (Shanghai), suggested the impossibility of divining a universally accepted definition of the global sixties. Instead, he underlined that one of the goals of the conference was to produce fresh conceptions of the crisis in global capitalism and communism, revolution, and liberation during that period and a new understanding of the alternatives people posited. JEREMY VARON (New York) drew attention to the commonalities of experience in different geographical locales that emerged throughout the conference, but also warned of the complex politics inherent in labeling any experience typical or normative. In his view, the legacy of the global sixties remains in the enduring debates of the era and the imperative to confront these abiding questions. QUINN SLOBODIAN (Wellesley) queried the different uses of the term „global“ throughout the conference and, referring to CIA’s use of global as a conceptual category, cautioned against the uncritical usage of this term. He underscored that revolutionary struggles did not advocate for a planetary unity but for the building of solidarities between different social groups across the world. LINDA GORDON (New York) elaborated on the role that class, race and women played in these papers, highlighting the need for a further interrogation of masculinities in narratives of the global sixties. While the conference papers were very successful at capturing the complexity of the decade, she reminded the conference participants that 1968 is in a real sense still on-going, both in the debates that arose from that era and in the social organizations that emerged during that time. Overall, the conference achieved a capacious focus, providing a deeply global rendering of the sixties that went beyond filling in neglected geographies to bring new insights into the complexities and breadth of the broad emancipatory struggles that characterized this historical period.

#### **Conference Overview:**

#### *Welcome Remarks & Introduction*

Martin Klimke (NYU Abu Dhabi) / Chen Jian (NYU Shanghai) / Mary Nolan (NYU)

*KEYNOTE ADDRESS: „Red Arabia: Anti-Colonialism, Independence, and the Sixties in the Gulf States“*

Toby Matthiesen (Pembroke College/Cambridge University)

*PANEL I: „Paradigms Of Transnational Sixties Activism“*

Chair: Mary Nolan (NYU)

Andrew Ivaska (Concordia University): „Liberation in Transit: Eduardo Mondlane and Che Guevara in Dar Es Salaam“

Robert Young (NYU Abu Dhabi): „Disseminating the Tricontinental“

Krassimira Daskalova (Sofia University): „The Cold War, and Women’s Movements and Feminisms in Eastern Europe“

Jon Piccini (University of Queensland): „Australia, the Long 1960s, and the ‘Winds of Change’ in the Asia-Pacific“

*PANEL II: „The Establishment Responds“*

Chair: Kostis Kornetis (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid)

Alan Shane Dillingham (Spring Hill College): „Mexico’s Turn Toward the Third World: Rural Development and Grassroots Opposition during the Global Sixties“

Guya Accornero (University Institute of Lisbon): „The Revolution before the Revolution: Student Protest and Political Process at the End of the Portuguese Dictatorship“

Masha Kirasirova (NYU Abu Dhabi): „Building Anti-Colonial Utopia: The Politics of Space in Soviet Tashkent in the ‘Long 1960s‘“

*PANEL III: Africa I*

Chair: Erin Pettigrew (NYU Abu Dhabi)

Françoise Blum (Centre d’Histoire Sociale du XXème Siècle): „1968: A Post-Colonial Phenomenon? The „Mays“ of France and Africa“

Omar Gueye (Cheikh Anta Diop University): „May-68 in Africa, Dakar in the Worldwide Social Movement“

Jeffrey Byrne (University of British

Columbia): „1968: Counter-revolution and Retrenchment in the Third World“

*PANEL IV: Africa II*

Chair: Jean Allman (Washington University)

Ophelie Rillon (CNRS, Paris): „Rebellious Bodies: Urban Youth Fashion in the 1960/70s in Mali“

Bahru Zewde (Addis Ababa University): „1969: Ethiopia’s 1968“

Dan Hodgkinson (Oxford University): „Subversive Communities and the ‘Rhodesian Sixties’: An Exploration of Transnational Protests, 1965–1973“

Pedro Monaville (NYU Abu Dhabi): „Student Activism, Revolutionary Propaganda, and the Making of a „Second Vietnam“ in the Congo“

*PANEL V: Middle East I*

Chair: Matthew MacLean (NYU Abu Dhabi)

Shohei Sato (Kanazawa University): „Rebellion and Retreat: The Late 1960s in the UAE“

Elizabeth Holt (Bard College): „The Congress for Cultural Freedom and their Arabic journal Hiwar (1962–67)“

Abdullah Al-Arian (Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar): „From Helwan to Cairo: The Revival of Protest Culture in Egypt on the Eve of Sadat (1968–1972)“

*PANEL VI: Middle East II*

Chair: Masha Kirasirova (NYU Abu Dhabi)

Islah Jad (Qatar/Bir Zeit University): „Modernising Palestinian Women: Between Colonialism and Nationalism - Reflections on the 60s and the 70s“

Eman Morsi (Dartmouth College): „Let Them Eat Meat: The Literary and Artistic Afterlives of Castro’s and Nasser’s Dietary Utopias“

Mohamed El Shahed (American University in Cairo): „Egypt Builds: A Reevaluation of the History of Modernism“

*PANEL VII: Eastern Europe / Soviet Union*

Chair: Tim Brown (Northeastern University)

Juliane Fürst, (University of Bristol): „From the Maiak to the Psychodrom: Counter-cultural Youth in the Soviet Union between

Thaw and Stagnation“

Madigan Fichter (Holy Family University): „East Looks West: Belgrade’s Young People Evaluate Western Counterculture and Student Activism“

Kenan Behzat Sharpe (University of California): „A Mediterranean 60s: Politics and Cultural Production in Turkey and Beyond“

*PUBLIC LECTURE: „Toward a Post Mortem of the African Revolution“*

Jean Allman (Washington University)

*PANEL VIII: Latin America I*

Chair: Paulo Horta (NYU Abu Dhabi)

Joaquin Chavez (University of Illinois at Chicago): „Operación Amor’: Hippies, Musicians, and Cultural Transformation in El Salvador“

Mary Kay Vaughan (University of Maryland, College Park): „Mexico 1968: Events, Assessments, and Antecedents“

Victoria Langland (University of Michigan): „Transnational Connections of the Global Sixties as seen by a Historian of Brazil“

*ROUNDTABLE: Legacies / Pedagogy*

Chair: Chen Jian (NYU Shanghai)

Quinn Slobodian (Wellesley College)

Linda Gordon (NYU)

Jeremy Varon (New School)

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