Our group investigates the long-standing relations between German and Arab intelligence agencies. Running for five years, the project covers East and West German, and Syrian, Iraqi and Egyptian intelligence.

Intelligence agencies are a mainstream feature of modern states. But political scientists’ knowledge about why and how they have spread across the globe remains very shallow. What is so important about intelligence agencies? Do they really function similarly across the world? Do governments exchange knowledge about how to run them? These are some of the bigger questions this project seeks to answer.

We base our work on German and Arab archives and interviews with German and Arab contemporary witnesses and experts. Our project is the first to address German-Arab intelligence relations, but we do rely on a large pool of existing literature: academic texts, memoirs of former intelligence officers, writings by victims of surveillance, investigative journalism and yes, occasionally spy fiction by John le Carré, Gerard Villiers, Ian Fleming and others!

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Research project Dr. Sophia Hoffmann
Dr. Hoffmann is working on a theory that explains transnational intelligence relations. Her research spans East- and West German intelligence, and its relations with Syrian, Iraqi, Egyptian and Yemeni intelligence. An important part of her work is to develop a comparative methodology for intelligence agencies: along what parameters can intelligence agencies be compared? To conceptualize transnational intelligence relations, Dr. Hoffmann uses theories and methods of international political sociology.

Research project Noura Chalati, MA
Noura Chalati’s dissertation focuses on the cooperation between the numerous Syrian and East German intelligence agencies between 1960 and 1990. This PhD project understands intelligence agencies both as bureaucratic, secretive institutions and violent actors.

Research project Ali Dogan, MA
Ali Dogan’s dissertation compares the West German Bundesnachrichtendienst with the Iraqi Intelligence Service between 1969 and 1990. He examines the function of both intelligence agencies within the framework of raison d’état, which grants intelligence agencies extraordinary powers.