



### InsSciDE Work Package 8:

#### Space: European science diplomacy for cooperation in a global space competition

Case Study n°8.1	Science diplomacy in the Cold War: a socio-historical study of French-Soviet cooperation in Space research, 1960s-1970s
Author	Isabelle Gouarné
Consortium Partner n°1	Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)
Additional author affiliation	Research Fellow, CNRS.

### Abstract

Developed from the 1960s on, the diplomatic strategy of rapprochement between France and the Soviet Union was founded on an extensive policy of “scientific and technical cooperation”. Signed in 1966, during General de Gaulle’s visit to the Soviet Union, the scientific cooperation agreement aimed to facilitate and reinforce international links between the two countries, even in periods of diplomatic tension. Indeed, the agreement boosted new international collaborations between scientists in a number of fields, even in such sensitive areas as space research, treated as a “lead sector”. How were these collaborations rendered possible despite the intense competition and the political and even military opposition between East and West? My InsSciDE case study will provide a detailed socio-historical account of this French-Soviet space cooperation, one of the founding experiences of French (and later European) science diplomacy, and thus offer a reflection on science diplomacy *acting* in a tense diplomatic climate.

### Introduction

Today, international scientific cooperation is given high policy priority in all Western states looking to redefine the boundaries of their zones of exchange and to reinforce their position in the international arena. In fact, diplomatic use of scientific cooperation became prominent as early as the 1950s. Rooting in an extensive policy of “scientific and technical cooperation”, the 1960s strategy of rapprochement between France and the Soviet Union was in that respect a founding experience of French (and later European) science diplomacy. A major science cooperation agreement was signed in 1966 during General de Gaulle’s visit to the Soviet Union, with the intention to facilitate and reinforce international links between the two countries, even in periods of diplomatic tension.

This “scientific and technical agreement” led over time to important scientific results and boosted new international collaborations between scientists, in particular in space research areas – considered the “lead sector” of this cooperation. However, these collaborations were far from self-evident, because the geopolitical tensions between the two countries remained strong. How were they made possible, despite the intense competition and the political and even military opposition between East and West? What were the obstacles to cooperation and how were they bypassed? To what extent did these collaborations allow a genuine scientific internationalisation? To what extent did they help realize the initial objective of breaking the bipolar logic of the Cold War?



With these questions in mind, my case study will provide a detailed socio-historical account of French-Soviet scientific space cooperation at its beginnings (1960s-1970s), and thus offer a reflection on science diplomacy *acting* in a tense diplomatic climate. This case study will open a perspective on tensions inherent in science diplomacy, viewed as a complex interplay that involves various scales (local, national, international, transnational) and different types of actors, with diverse, and often contradictory, interests and professional identities.

### **Actors**

Promoted for political and diplomatic reasons, the policy of scientific and technical cooperation between France and the Soviet Union had to be endorsed and implemented by scientific actors and institutions in order to succeed. On the French side, it involved primarily the National Centre for Space Research (*Centre national d'études spatiales*), the National Centre for Telecommunications Research (*Centre national d'études des télécommunications*), the Directorate of National Meteorology (*Direction de la météorologie nationale*) and various research laboratories (affiliated with CNRS, the National Centre for Scientific Research and universities). Key actors on the Soviet side include the Academy of Sciences and its institutes (mainly IKI, the Space Research Institute) and also some closed design bureaus linked to the highly secretive military-industrial complex.

Detailed study of the interactions between diplomatic and scientific actors aims to identify the initial discrepancies in the French case between diplomatic strategies and the interests and expectations of the scientific milieu. What tensions did the science/diplomacy interface give rise to in this historical case, particularly during periods of political tension between the two countries? How did political and scientific interests align?

### **Fields and disciplines, interfaces with technology**

While the scientific and technical cooperation agreement signed in 1966 between French and Soviet governments concerned many scientific disciplines, space research was considered from the outset as a lead sector. This research area, however, touched on technologies and knowledge whose circulation between East and West were very limited because of the military and strategic uses they might imply. My case study will provide new insight on the paradox of Space research as both as a crucial diplomatic instrument and an issue of national security and sovereignty.

### **Politics and policies**

Although French-Soviet Space cooperation was strongly controlled by state institutions of both countries, it led to the formation of a zone of transnational circulations between Soviet and French scientific milieus. This study will reconstruct the contours of this transnational zone by analysing the processes and the flows (of people, technologies, knowledge, instruments and so on) that took place. A comparative study of the first French-Soviet joint scientific projects, some of which succeeded while others failed, will aim at understanding how a collaborative dynamic was set in motion, leading to the formation of durable scientific networks between East and West.

### **Disciplinary/methodological approach**

To tackle these questions, my socio-historical investigation will draw on the study of archival documents from French and Soviet (political and scientific) institutions in charge of the negotiation, definition, implementation and control of the policy of space cooperation in the 1960s-1970s. This study of archival materials will be complemented by memoir literature and also by face-to-face semi-structured interviews with French and Soviet scientists who took part in joint projects. As far as possible, I will take equally into account the Soviet and the French perspectives and points of view.



### **Essential bibliography**

AUTIO-SARASMO S. *et alia* (eds). 2010. *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, London/New York, Routledge.

GOUARNE I. 2016. « Dépasser les tensions Est-Ouest pour la conquête de l'espace. La coopération franco-soviétique au temps de la Guerre froide », *Cahiers SIRICE*, 2016/2, n°16.

KRIGE J. 2006. *American Hegemony and the Postwar Reconstruction of Science in Europe*, Cambridge/London, MIT Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2006b. « Technology, Foreign Policy, and International Cooperation in Space », in S. J. DICK, R. I. LAUNIUS (eds), *Critical issues in the History of Spaceflight*, NASA SP, chap. 8.

\_\_\_\_\_ & BARTH K.-H. 2006. « Science, Technology and International Affairs », *Osiris*, vol. 21, 1, p. 1-21.

REY M.-P. 1991. *La tentation du rapprochement. France et URSS à l'heure de la détente*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne.

STRASSER B.J. & JOYE F. 2005. « L'atome, l'espace et les molécules : la coopération scientifique internationale comme nouvel outil de la diplomatie helvétique (1951-1969) », *Relations internationales*, 2005/1, 121, p. 59-72.