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Negotiated revolutions

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Chapter 6

Negotiated Revolutions

It is incredible how many systems of morality and politics have been successively found, forgotten, rediscovered, forgotten again, only to reappear later, always charming and surprising the world as if they were new, and bearing witness, not to the fecundity of the human spirit but to the ignorance of men.¹

Heeding Alexis de Tocqueville's warning of the 'ignorance of men', this chapter does not make any particular claim of 'newness'. Rather, it looks backwards as well as forwards, illustrating the relative novelty of the concept of negotiated revolution through comparison, both theoretical and empirical, with the great revolutions of the modern era. At all times, the three case studies employed in this book are used to challenge its theoretical assertions. The Chilean case, in particular, is used as a counterfactual to test the central argument – that, as the principal examples of relatively peaceful, yet revolutionary, transformations between autocracies and market democracies, negotiated revolutions have distinct and profound consequences both for the international system in general, and for those states facing similar contexts and pressures in particular.

Homogeneity and Difference

From the Reaganite conception of America as a 'city on a hill', to Germany's *Sonderweg* (special path), and South Africa's 'Rainbow Nation', it is commonplace for states around the world to suppose a degree of exceptionalism. In many ways, this self-identified 'uniqueness' is well founded. At the most detailed level of thick experience, all countries are *sui generis*: the myths and legends that make up national identity are particular to each state, invented or otherwise.² Yet, a retreat into the micro-narratives that divide states from each other fails to do justice to the more general trajectories which unite them, whether this be the triviality of national emblems or the more serious business of shared economies, peoples and history. In the contemporary era, the most powerful of these generic tendencies is modernity itself: the range of political, economic and social processes which have served to recast domestic and international orders over the last four or five hundred

¹ Tocqueville quoted in Wight, Porter and Wight (eds) (2002: 5).

² On nationalism as an 'invented tradition', see Anderson (1991). For a counter-view, see Smith (1986, 1998).

years. The resulting constellations – the states-system, capitalism, patriarchy and the like – are structures that contain a global reach.

In many ways, therefore, global history over the last half-millennium is a shared story: struggles for and against colonialism, the extension of trade around the world and technological advances have, with varying degrees of coercion, brought the world within some kind of public commons. In this sense, modernity is, as Ernest Gellner puts it, a ‘tidal wave’ of homogenizing pressures.³ But the tsunami has not been equally or evenly felt: the commodification of labour, urbanization, bureaucratization, gender equality, universal suffrage and the like may have penetrated even the most inhospitable of environments, but they have not done so in a uniform manner. The systemic dislocations wrought by modernity have provoked a multiplicity of responses: global capitalism and autarky, market-democracy and authoritarianism, fundamentalism and secularism. At its heart, modernity appears to be an inherently contradictory process, one marked by greater affluence but also rising inequality; global forms of governance alongside a drive to local autonomy.⁴

The various reactions to modernity initiated by state leaders and their citizens have prompted diverse evolutionary paths. While some states have reached a relatively peaceful accommodation with these processes, others have been torn asunder by the break-up of old ways of life. Violent revolutions, wars and civil strife have left their own indelible mark on world history. Negotiated revolutions are the latest instalment in this ongoing saga: a reminder of the continuing struggles people face in coping with the dislocating effects afforded by modernity. As such, negotiated revolutions are at the same time both a welcome reminder of the solidarity of world historical processes and a cautionary tale into the particularity of the human experience. Social upheaval is an endemic feature of world history, but the form it takes varies across time and place. In what ways, therefore, do negotiated revolutions conform or contrast to the type of revolutions found under modernity?

Many theorists contend that ‘modern revolutions’, the type ushered in by the French Revolution a little over two centuries ago, pass through a series of stages. Crane Brinton, for example, bases his analysis of revolutionary anatomy on the path of the French Revolution from an initial period of moderacy to the ‘Terror’ of the Jacobins and the ‘Thermidor’ of July 1794.⁵ Jaroslav Krejčí, in turn, argues that revolutions pass through a number of stages: onset, compression, explosion, oscillation, expansion, tightening, reversal, restoration and consolidation.⁶ In numerous texts, Fred Halliday refers to the modularity of revolutionary outcomes as constituting, in turn, a period of grace, domestic radicalism, accommodation and instability.⁷ It is important to be careful about extrapolating in this way from one revolution to another without recourse to

³ See Gellner (1983).

⁴ For more on the double nature of modernity and globalization, see Clark (1997).

⁵ See Brinton (1965).

⁶ See Krejčí (1994).

⁷ See, for example, Halliday (1994).

contingency and particularity. If history tells us anything, it is to be cautious when employing terms like generality and necessity. Yet, there are some general features that can be extrapolated from modern revolutions: causes rooted in systemic crisis; the development of a condition of multiple sovereignty; a call to arms based on a utopian vision; a takeover of state institutions; the attempt to export revolution internationally; counter-revolution; and the growth of stronger, more bureaucratic, often tyrannical states.⁸

Negotiated revolutions move away from these prevalent patterns in five main ways. From a suspicion of revolution which frequently led to counter-revolution, the international, both in terms of structure and agency, actively welcomes the insurgent states. The utopian vision that often resulted in extremism is exchanged for a revolutionary ideology rooted in longer-term principles of freedom, a return to normalcy and a desire to 'catch up' with other states. A violent conflict between rival forces is replaced by the acceptance of mutual dependency, the undesirability of ongoing civil conflict and a greater role for structural, latent forms of violence. From a fight to the finish comes a process in which the old regime and revolutionaries together negotiate the destruction of the old order and the birth of a new nation. Rather than the creation of a stronger, more bureaucratic state, a relatively weak state emerges both in terms of despotic authority and infrastructural capacity, hemmed in by independent actors, both national and international. As such, negotiated revolutions are tangible signs of an imminent modularity in world politics in which radical change is based around the idea of liberation rather than the dream of utopia.

From Burke to Paine

Revolutions are intricately bound up with the international. First, they are, to an extent, reliant on international context. During the Cold War, for example, a relatively impermeable operating environment tended to foreclose opportunities for revolutionary change. Any disruption to the status quo was considered, usually by both blocs, as a hazardous disruption to the global constellation of forces. In this way, the United States favoured authoritarian strongmen, most noticeably in the Americas, even at the cost of democratically elected heads of state. For their part, the Soviet Union rarely intervened openly to help even apparent allies in the developing world, at least at nothing like the level of assistance offered by, for example, Fidel Castro in Cuba.⁹ Over the past two centuries, international

⁸ Even within such a loose taxonomy, there are still exceptions. For example, the Mexican Revolution was an uprising *against* an authoritarian regime rather than a movement *for* an alternative utopian future, at least until the intervention of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río and his nationalization drive during the late 1930s.

⁹ There is increasing evidence, however, that the Soviet Union supported revolutions in the developing world covertly. At a seminar held at the London School of Economics in November 2003, Vladimir Shubin, a Russian expert on Southern Africa, claimed that the Soviet Union were involved in 19 conflicts in the Third World during the Cold War.

statesmen and diplomats whatever their overt political orientation have tended to view revolutions with Burkean suspicion, often backed up by active support for counter-revolutionary measures.¹⁰ Order, time and again, has trumped demands for justice.

However, the end of the Cold War led to an opening up of this closed international order and removed many of the negative connotations associated with revolutionary change. The apparent 'triumph' of market democracy and the collapse of a viable alternative system acted as a spur for radical change around the world. As long as revolutionaries framed their story as one of a return to normalcy (Chile), emancipation from the Soviet yoke (the Czech Republic) or as liberation from a system whose time had long since passed (South Africa), as long as they agreed to abide by a series of neo-liberal reforms and signed up to a welter of international institutions and normative frameworks, so the great powers welcomed what had previously been outcast states into the community of nations. Burkean suspicion was supplanted by an almost Paine-like enthusiasm. Just cause was given a rare opportunity for realization.

International assistance for negotiated revolutions varied from the normative (the recognition of the legitimacy of the revolutionary struggle) to the material (aid packages, election monitors and so on). The revolutionary transformations in the Czech Republic and South Africa succeeded because of the structural opening afforded by the end of the Cold War and the active support of international agencies – state departments, key individuals and global institutions alike. In Chile, the international played a major role in the transition, witnessed for example by the example effect of democratization in neighbouring states, the US government's partial funding for the 'No' campaign against the dictatorship, and the pressure applied by Washington on the junta to accept the result of the 1988 plebiscite on whether the military regime should stand down. But this support stopped some way short of actively welcoming a revolutionary transformation that could upset the Chilean economy and destabilize the region. As a result, the end of the Pinochet era in Chile was greeted by a whimper compared to the wholesale celebrations around the world that marked the collapse of communism in the Czech Republic and the end of apartheid in South Africa.

One of the striking elements of negotiated revolutions is the transformation that they induce in foreign policy. Rather than building up armies in order to shore up their regimes from internal and external enemies, both the Czech Republic and South Africa have sought to join and strengthen international institutions and organizations. In the Czech Republic, post-revolutionary foreign policy has turned firmly to the West, hence accession to NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004, and the commitment by the Czech government to military action in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq. And South Africa, once the

¹⁰ The importance of counter-revolution lies in what Philip Windsor calls 'the vulnerability of the great powers'. In order to maintain their position, status and credibility, great powers are forced to quell moments of disorder, intervening in order to demonstrate their steadfastness against threats to their hegemony. This 'system-pressure' is, as Windsor points out, a kind of 'weakness-in-strength'. For a fuller discussion of this, see Bisley (2004).

world's 'polecat', now plays an active part in a number of international agencies, standing as a pivot between north and south and as a standard bearer for developing nations. Both states pursue a form of internationalism that sees them punch above their weight in global bodies.

From Utopia to Normalcy

By eschewing the obedience to a particular ideology that served to legitimize many of the excesses carried out in the name of revolutions in the past, negotiated revolutions avoid the patterns of domestic and international terror, counter revolution, autarky and war that have characterized many previous revolutions. Negotiated revolutions seek to build a new order without the despotic coercive control exerted by their predecessors, one that boasts a commitment to democratic political relations defined by a written, liberal constitution; regular, free elections competed over by a range of political parties; the separation of the state from the security apparatus and the military; and an internationalist perspective which demands an active role in relevant international institutions and organizations. Economically, negotiated revolutions undergo programmes of liberalization and privatization that open up the domestic market to foreign competition, establish an independent financial sector and maintain trade policies in keeping with prevailing international regimes. Socially, negotiated revolutions foster a relatively open environment featuring a free media and education system; enshrine equality of race, gender and religion in law; and develop a means by which to reconcile past injustices, usually by way of a truth commission.

In this, there are some notable differences between Chile, South Africa and the Czech Republic. It was only when the opposition in Chile renounced ideology and proceeded through elite pacts that the movement gained the trust of both business elites and leading social sectors. In the other two cases, although revolutionaries moved away from any concept of total victory, ideals were never removed from the revolution itself. Nelson Mandela powerfully evoked principles of peaceful change, liberation and freedom. For his part, Václav Havel consistently framed his actions, along with those of the revolutionary movement in general, as embodiments of his concept of 'living in truth'. At all times, revolutionaries in South Africa and the Czech Republic paid overt homage to ideals in a way that Chilean leaders expressly disavowed.

Truth commissions are perhaps the best means of assessing the novel role of ideology in negotiated revolutions. All revolutions require some mechanism for dealing with the injustices of the old order, a means of moving from old to new which establishes the authority and legitimacy of the incoming regime while also providing an outlet for people's sense of outrage and thirst for revenge. In the past, these needs were satiated through a mixture of firing squads, guillotines, show trials, gulags and purges. Negotiated revolutions, founded on principles of restorative rather than punitive or retributive justice, institute truth commissions as

an innovative way of dealing with these issues.¹¹ The character and outcomes of truth commissions closely reflect the nature of both the polity and the particular society within which they take place: secretive and repressed in Chile, kept firmly behind closed doors by an old guard determined to cling onto power; messy and violent in South Africa, a perambulating Pandora's box held in full gaze of a disorientated public; uncertain and limited in the Czech Republic, where the main body of evidence was police files held over from the communist era. There is, therefore, no single route map for societies escaping from, or seeking to escape from, entrenched conflict. In South Africa, the truth commission has been a valuable symbolic tool representing the birth of a new nation; in Chile, it was only the arrest of the former dictator in 1998 that moved the transition on apace; in the Czech Republic, a flawed law – *lustrace* – has failed to provide a sense of resolution between an autocratic past and a democratic future.

What these processes share is a commitment to the generation of a foundational narrative for a new nation out of which a collective rather than a disjointed history can emerge. As such, they fulfil the age-old need to provide an outlet for the victims of the old regime, a moment when innocent people get the chance to tell stories which would otherwise go unheard, a weapon of the weak turned back against seemingly almighty oppressors. But at the same time, they perform this task in a novel fashion – by trading truth for punishment. For all their flaws, TRC's represent central elements in the ideological differentiation of negotiated revolutions from past examples of revolutionary change. They are one element of the attempt to reconcile what were apparently intractable differences. As such, TRC's are a crucial step in the argument which states that real conflicts and social cleavages cannot, nor should they be, emasculated behind a façade of consensus but that conflict by civil war, firing squad or show trial is disastrous for a nation's future well being. For that reason and that reason alone, they represent the distinctiveness of negotiated revolutions from the modern revolutions of the past two centuries or so.

From Festivals of Violence to Festivals of Hope

In the modern era, revolutions have been seen as festivals of violence, fights to the finish in which one side vanquishes the other, an ultimate victory in which a new order is instituted while the ashes of the old are still burning. Of course, history tells a somewhat different story: the 1789 Revolution ushered in a decade of domestic strife in France, opening up the way to dictatorship and war; the Bolshevik Revolution was followed by a four-year civil war in which foreign armies and their proxies fought fiercely with the Red Army; the two-stage Chinese Revolution was separated by a battle for domestic hegemony which lasted for three

¹¹ This is not to say that truth commissions originate with negotiated revolutions. In fact, they first appeared during the 1980s in Latin America as a means of hearing from, and compensating, families of those who had 'disappeared' under military dictatorships. As they have developed, truth commissions have become far more complex, reaching their apogee, at least to date, in South Africa.

decades. Even after these revolutions, the new regimes struggled to impose their authority on their wider societies, hence Robespierre's Terror, Stalin's forced collectivization and purges, and Mao's Cultural Revolution, all attempts to shore up revolutionary regimes from opposition at home and abroad, real and imagined.¹²

Negotiated revolutions offer a radically different conceptualization of violence than past examples of revolution. Negotiated transformations are not violent fights to the finish but relatively peaceful processes in which deals are struck between revolutionaries and their adversaries. First, overt violence is contained – both sides seek a settlement of previously irreconcilable differences without recourse to coercive power, although, of course, these conflicts featured varying degrees of overt violence leading up to the revolutionary dénouement itself. Second, violence tends to appear in latent, structural form rather than as an explicit policy tool. Structural violence emits an unfortunate residue for the incoming regime; the social legacy imparted by authoritarian rule on the new order remains a difficult and pressing issue for Czech, South African and Chilean leaders. Yet this is a long way removed from the divisiveness and rupture experienced by past revolutionary states. Third, the outcome of the revolutionary struggle is not the battle between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces common to previous revolutions. This is because the proselytising vision offered by these states is one rooted in the underlying principles, norms and practices of the international system itself: support for multilateralism and international organizations; a liberal view of progress; and a concern for welfare and development. In this way, negotiated revolutions avoid the extreme levels of violence, both domestic and international, which have plagued so many revolutions in the modern era.

Of course, there is no necessary or inexorable link between this lack of overt violence and negotiated revolution. Many revolutionaries and members of the old regime in South Africa and the Czech Republic would have been content to continue fighting in the hope of ultimate victory. Miroslav Ransdorf, Deputy Chairman of the Czech Communist Party, remains convinced that if the communist regime in the Czech Republic had not lost its nerve, they could have restored order through the use of force. One current member of the South African government told me with a certain degree of regret that the struggle had not afforded him the chance to drive a tank victoriously through the streets of Pretoria. One only has to look at the heated debates that dominated the pages of *The African Communist* during the late 1980s and early 1990s and at the levels of violence which continue to plague South Africa today to realize the centrality of violence to that transformation. The crucial point is that, if a negotiated revolution is to succeed, both sides must renounce violence as a legitimate policy tool. As the old regime tends to retain control of the coercive apparatus longer than any other means of authority, this decision is primarily the preserve of the old guard. Hence the

¹² The proclivity of revolutionary regimes to domestic tyranny is evidenced today by Fidel Castro's regular crackdowns on domestic dissent in Cuba.

concern over the night of 5 October 1988 that the Chilean junta might not accept the result of the plebiscite which ended its rule, the relief among leaders of the 1989 general strike in the Czech Republic that the army was not called in to restore order, and the uncertainty among leading ANC cadres over whether the armed forces would play a neutral role during the negotiating process and the 1994 elections. In each case, the role of the coercive apparatus was critical but uncertain. In each case, elites chose not to use the force available to them.

The lack of a recourse to armed conflict by old regime elites in Chile, South Africa and the Czech Republic contrasts starkly with the decision by the Chinese politburo to employ the army against student protesters in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, a policy which helped to successfully defuse large scale opposition to the regime over the subsequent decade. It is now common knowledge that in East Germany, Erich Honecker came close to deploying the armed forces against protesters, until he was persuaded otherwise by Mikhail Gorbachev among others. In Romania, Nicolae Ceausescu's elite force, the Securitate, failed to defend the leadership against a determined uprising. Neither China nor Romania experienced negotiated revolutions, yet East Germany did. In each case, it was a conjunction of elite action, domestic opposition and external forces, both structural and agential, which determined the immediate path of the insurrection.

These examples serve up two main lessons. First, as has been stressed throughout this study, violence and revolution are tied together contingently rather than by necessity. Second, revolutions do not follow settled, inexorable paths. They are critical junctures which may lead in any one of a number of directions. At all times, revolutions are a complex interplay between changing structural conditions and collective action. One element which differentiates negotiated revolutions from past revolutions is that, once the revolutionary situation is in place, actors from both sides of the barricades choose roundtables rather than guillotines.

From Guillotines to Roundtables

The great revolutions of the modern era are all marked by a particular event, an icon which comes to embody the very essence of the revolutionary struggle itself. The storming of the Bastille, the raid on the Winter Palace and the Long March undertaken by the remnants of Mao's army are all revolutionary mementos par excellence, symbols of the might of the revolutionary struggle and the relative weakness of the old regime. Negotiated revolutions do not lack for these great moments. The daily demonstrations in Wenceslas Square and the release of Nelson Mandela aptly indicate the emotive appeal of these transformations. Yet while the central motif of past revolutions has been explicitly associated with armed rebellion, negotiated revolutions take on a somewhat different character – the power of the masses to be sure, but not that of the mob. Rather, the control of fervour and the dignity of protest rise above the social context defined by the old regime. Central to this success is the process of negotiation between old and new elites.

As argued in Chapter Two, revolutions must be relatively quick in order to differentiate them from processes of transition and longer-term evolutionary change. This does not rule out some degree of variation – after all, the whirlwind of talks held in three short weeks in the Czech Republic seems light years away from the three years of tortuous stop-start negotiations in South Africa. But what unites these cases with past revolutions is that the outcomes were neither inevitable nor miraculous, neither the necessary consequence of particular structural alignments nor the intended, rational consequence of individual actions. Negotiated revolutions are marked by uncertainty and flux, moments when the outcomes were unclear and the path to peaceful resolution unlikely. As such, these processes serve as powerful examples of the dynamic interplay between structure and agency, necessity and contingency, cause and outcome.

Again, a counterfactual helps to clarify this point. In the early 1990s, Burma, now Myanmar, appeared to contain all the necessary ingredients for a negotiated transformation. The end of the Cold War removed the last vestiges of international support for the military junta. The regime ruled over an inherently unstable, corrupt, devalued political order; the economy was in a parlous state; and the atomized social order shut off the elite in Rangoon from the views of the general public. Opposition coalesced around a popular leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who represented a viable alternative, boasted considerable domestic and international legitimacy, and possessed the necessary resources by which to challenge the authority of the military regime. Although some reforms were initiated, including the onset of roundtable talks, the opposition failed to oust or even significantly dent the authority of the military regime. In a way reminiscent of how the military junta in Chile successfully saw off opposition protests in the early 1980s, Burma's generals kept a firm grip on power. Despite displaying the right credentials, neither a transition nor transformation has taken place in Myanmar over the last decade. This failure serves as a warning to those who ignore the intricacies of revolutionary processes and who postulate from the lofty heights afforded by hindsight on the inevitability of historical processes which, on close inspection, reveal a logic quite removed from their suppositions. Revolutions, negotiated or otherwise, do not come, nor are they made. Rather, they are an intricate conjunction of historical context, social conditions and political action.

From Tyranny to Weakness

In the past, the causes, events and outcomes of revolutions were closely bound up with the state. First, the revolutionary situation emerged out of a crisis rooted in the state. Defeat in war, economic collapse and the like served to fatally destabilize the old regime. Second, revolutionary events were largely ordered around a fight for control of the state. Third, the revolution was considered to be over in the short term when one side seized control of key state apparatus. Finally, in the long term, in order to shore up their regime from opposition both at home and abroad, revolutionaries built vast state bureaucracies and armies, exerting domestic

authority through rigorous mechanisms of surveillance and control. As a result, post-revolutionary states possessed a double strength. In Michael Mann's terms, they enjoyed both a considerable infrastructural capacity and a despotic potency, strengths which more often than not spilled over into tyranny.¹³

This pattern is not repeated by negotiated revolutions. Like past revolutions, negotiated revolutions stem from systemic crisis in which the declining legitimacy of the old regime is of cardinal importance. But at no point does the old regime collapse. There is no process to mirror the French defeat in the Seven Years War, the Russian trauma over defeat to Japan in 1905 and the First World War, or the Japanese invasion of Manchuria for the Chinese. These events fatally undermined the old regime, providing staging posts in the slide towards a revolutionary situation. But in negotiated revolutions, both the old regime and belligerents approached the negotiating table from positions of mutual dependence. Neither side in the Czech Republic or South Africa, nor for that matter in Chile, had any hope of outright victory. It was the weakness of both sides which compelled them to negotiation.

The process of the revolutions themselves is also distinct from the fight over the state common to past revolutions. Negotiators deal with a set of issues far removed from those which concerned previous revolutionaries: the make up of transitional bodies, the electoral process, the role of a constitutional convention and so on. Again, the example of Chile is a reminder of the relative partiality of that process compared with the more wholesale processes which took place in South Africa and the Czech Republic. In Chile, debate was restricted within parameters prescribed by the old regime's *Leyes de Organicos*. Root-and-branch constitutional change was put off, remaining out of the reach of reformers throughout the subsequent decade. In contrast, negotiators in South Africa and the Czech Republic were able to achieve far-reaching changes as the first step to establishing a new order.

Similarly, the outcomes of negotiated revolutions fall some way short of the tyranny which marred revolutionary states in the past. Because negotiated revolutionaries seek to 'catch up' with democratic states, they sign up to a raft of international treaties, institutions and ordinances which restrict their freedom of manoeuvre, particularly over fiscal policy. The negotiations themselves circumscribe the potential for radical change, witnessed for example by the sunset clauses and power-sharing agreements which formed a central part of the negotiations in South Africa. Because they face neither substantial domestic nor external opposition, revolutionaries have no need to build up mass armies or extend coercive control around the country. In fact, in all three cases, incoming governments sought to contain rather than expand the authority of the armed forces and security apparatus. Such revolutionaries have no desire to export their revolution abroad by force. Equally, no counter-revolutionary force is unleashed to contain or overthrow the new regimes. The outcome of negotiated revolutions is to strengthen the liberal international order.

¹³ For more on this, see Mann (ed) (1990).

Whither Revolution?

In the contemporary world, while citizens of what Robert Cooper calls the ‘post-modern world’ enjoy what seems to be a perpetual peace, around a billion people, or one in six of the world’s population, live in countries mired in civil war or at high risk from falling into such conflict.¹⁴ Neither of these worlds is without its problems. In advanced market democracies, uncertainty, social dislocation and the difficulties associated with managing freedom – what the novelist Monica Ali calls the ‘limits of autonomy’ – all present their concerns for policy makers.¹⁵ In Cooper’s ‘pre-modern’ world, poverty, disease and increasing inequalities generate friction which all too often spills over into open conflict.¹⁶ As numerous scholars, among them Stuart Hall and Anthony Giddens, point out, modernity has fashioned a world without certainties, one in which people must get by without either the absolute values or the social institutions that sustained order in the past. Given the incongruity and uncertainty that characterizes modernity, a continuation of the constitutive role played by processes of radical change seems assured. The question is, which of modernity’s prophets – Marx, Kant, Weber or Hobbes – is the best guide to the dislocations of the contemporary era; perhaps Nietzsche is more suited to a world devoid of absolutes? What, if any, is the future of revolutions in all this?¹⁷

Of course, there is no finite answer to the first of these questions. Karl Popper famously quipped that ‘the social sciences have not as yet found their Galileo.’¹⁸ Social scientists engage in prediction, a process Popper saw as more akin to prophecy or sophistry, at their peril and it is neither the role of this study nor my goal more generally to muse over the future shape of world politics like a modern-day soothsayer. However, this study has taken a stand on the second of these questions: the role of revolutions, or at least the part played by negotiated revolutions, in contemporary world politics. In the first instance, negotiated revolutions demonstrate the possibility of states ‘catching up’ with the West in a way which would have been recognizable to Trotsky almost a century ago. On the other hand, negotiated revolutions contest some of the core features of world politics, not least the role played by unfettered markets. All too often, states undergoing negotiated revolutions have seen a commitment by international actors to establishing free markets fail to be matched by a nurturing of the social and political institutions which are germane to the functioning of a consolidated market democracy. Heeding Polanyi’s lesson as to the necessity of nurturing a ‘market society’ alongside a ‘market economy’ is critical if international agencies are to

¹⁴ Figures taken from Paul Collier, ‘How to Stem Civil Wars: It’s the Economy Stupid’, *International Herald Tribune*, 21 May 2003, p. 13.

¹⁵ For more on this, see Mulgan (1997).

¹⁶ For more on this, see Cooper (2000).

¹⁷ This question is considered at some length in Foran (ed) (2003). See also two pertinent, if somewhat conservative, articles by Snyder (1999) and Nodia (2000).

¹⁸ Popper (1957: 1).

deal more effectively with societies facing similar pressures and going through comparable processes in years to come.

Above all else, it is clear that the management system of contemporary world politics, whether that be the bequest of an imperial power or hegemon, a coalition of great powers or multilateral centres of governance, needs to take ongoing pressures for radical change seriously. The example of South Africa, one of the most remarkable testimonies to the politics of the possible of this age, or any other, reminds us of what can be achieved through human agency. Even in the most inhospitable of domestic environments, belligerents convened a common future based on mutual respect for what appeared to be inalienable differences. Not everything in South Africa has changed – nor has it done so in previous revolutions. But in South Africa, a radically new order has been instituted which bears little resemblance to its predecessor. Contrast the case of South Africa with the current state of affairs in West Asia, particularly in Iraq, and it becomes clear that there is no inevitable set of conditions which dictate that future transformations will be carried out along relatively peaceful lines. Rather, the prospect and actuality of violent conflict remains one of depressing familiarity to people all around the world. In Burma, Cuba, North Korea and other such societies, authoritarian regimes hold an unsustainable grip on their publics. If the events of 1989 and after tell us anything, it is that even the most apparently unyielding of systems is inherently unstable. The essential question of our times is, will this instability be resolved through the pitched battles and firing squads common to times of yore or via the round tables and negotiated settlements which offer an alternative path out of seemingly intractable conflicts?

The three case studies in this book are reminders of the persistent capacity of world historical processes, inherent in human agency, to surprise: there were few academics, activists or mystics who foresaw the collapse of communism, the end of apartheid or the overthrow of the Pinochet regime. As such, it does not seem out of place to see negotiated revolutions as a contemporary form of what E.H. Carr calls a 'realistic utopia': the promotion of peaceful change rooted in the conditions of the age, yet which carry with them the possibility of progress.¹⁹ Over upcoming years, we will see whether negotiated revolutions traverse the recalcitrant line between idealism and realism, avoiding the perils of an overly optimistic, naïve altruism on the one hand and the crudeness of a raw struggle for power on the other. That is both the ultimate question and the fundamental challenge to come.

¹⁹ Unfortunately, Carr's vision of a world in which 'British policy must take into account the welfare of Lille or Düsseldorf or Lodz as well as the welfare of Oldham or Jarrow' looks unrealistic even today, 65 years after it was first proposed. Carr (1939: 219).