Introduction: the 'what', 'when' and 'where' of the global 1989

Book section

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Laughter and forgetting

One of the central motifs of Milan Kundera's, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, is the ways in which the present works to distort the past and, in particular, how ideologues seek to control the present by manipulating the past. To that end, Kundera tells the story of a photograph taken of two leading Czech communists, Vladimír Clementis and Klement Gottwald, celebrating the takeover of state power by communists in Czechoslovakia in 1948. The picture was later doctored to remove Clementis, following charges brought against him for 'deviationism' and 'bourgeois nationalism'. The erasure of Clementis from the photograph temporarily removed one of the leading architects of the Czech post-war state from the country's history. Clementis was denounced, put on trial and, eventually, executed. In some ways, of course, the very everydayness of this episode is its most disturbing aspect. The routinisastion of coercion within totalitarian states – the use of murder and imprisonment, the control of populations via vast coercive apparatuses, the establishment of insidious networks of corruption – was the norm rather than the exception. As such, the events of 1989 and the disappearance of what Daniel Chirot (1996) calls 'tyrannies of certitude' from most parts of Central and Eastern Europe are acts well worth celebrating.

Alongside the pronounced celebrations which marked the passing of state socialism in 1989 lies a second widely held view – that 1989 serves the *ur*-demarcation point in contemporary world politics. Indeed, both academics and policy makers tend to use 1989 and its surrogate frames (such as Cold War/post-Cold War) as the principal normative, analytical and empirical shorthands for delineating past and present. And as with the celebrations over 1989 and its associated events, such abbreviations are made for often sound reasons. Not only was 1989 a significant event for those people living in the immediate Soviet sphere of influence, it had important ramifications for those inhabiting (now often former) socialist states around the world. Elsewhere, too, the events of 1989 served to disrupt existing patterns: the European Union saw its centre of gravity shift, at least to some extent, from west to east; recent years have seen a rise (or return) of Asian powers which may, in turn, prefigure a shift in the metageography of international politics from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and in the West itself, and in particular its fulcrum – the transatlantic alliance – the loss of the Soviet 'other' has engendered an overriding sense of anomie. No longer quite clear

what it is against, the transatlantic alliance seems equally unclear about what it is for. Alongside this topographical shake-up can be found important intellectual challenges: how to conceptualise the primary fact of the post-Cold War order – US power; how to employ suitable normative frames for capturing issues of sovereignty, intervention and responsibility in the contemporary world; and how to comprehend a complex security climate signified by novel notions of war, shifting meanings of combatant/non-combatant, and the changing character of terrorism both by and against states. In short, it is nigh-on impossible to imagine a world without 1989 – there are few issues which appear untouched by it.

This book does not seek to overturn these two core assumptions – they stand as the principal indicators of the influence of 1989 and its associated processes. But the book does seek to question three issues which lie behind, or perhaps lurk beneath, their easy acceptance. First, although the events of 1989 are, to be sure, acts worthy of celebration, they have also engendered some unintended, yet important, consequences, perhaps most notable amongst them exposure of the chronic weaknesses contained in a hyperventilated form of liberal capitalism. One of the core wagers of this volume is that the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War have produced mixed, paradoxical, even contradictory outcomes. Although the political, economic and cultural orders generated after the fall of communism have, for the most part, been an improvement on what was in place before, this has not always been clear cut. Substantively – as the contributions to this volume make clear – 1989 has bequeathed an ambivalent legacy.

Second, although 1989 can serve as a useful barometer between old and new, we should be careful about the general utility of this shorthand – there have been considerable continuities between the pre- and post-1989 eras. Four chapters in this book make this point forcefully. John Hobson argues that policies of post-Cold War intervention should be seen as the latest exemplars of an older suite of ideas rooted in nineteenth century Western international thought. Aviezer Tucker highlights the impact of totalitarian legacies on Russian and Chinese development since 1989, looking at how the restoration of autocratic rule in these countries has produced a ruling class of post-totalitarian *nomenklatura* which seeks to strip the country's assets rather than engage in contractual politics. Rick Saull's discussion of the Middle East argues that, by removing the one-dimensional straightjacket associated with Eurocentric thinking and by replacing it with a view that embraces the chronic unevenness, multiplicity and complexity of world politics, we begin to see the importance of *local* patterns of development on *global* politics. In her contribution, Saskia Sassen points to the ways in which post-Cold War capitalist expansion constitutes a return to long-established

exploitative practices, albeit on novel scales. In this way, a complex picture emerges in terms of the temporality of 1989, one which embraces important continuities alongside and, to some extent instead of, simple notions of 'all change'.

Third, although the principal events and effects of 1989 took place in Europe, the volume looks beyond this immediate zone of impact in order to explore the many spaces of the 'global 1989'. Laure Delcour indicates the ways in which 1989 has brought into question core aspects of European integration, while William Outhwaite concentrates on the crisis of the European left invoked by the loss of socialism as an 'actual existing alternative' to market democracy. Michael Cox widens this lens to investigate how the post-Cold War era has weakened the Western alliance, perhaps fatally. Fred Halliday goes further still in exploring the diverse impact of 1989 on the thirty-odd former allies of the Soviet Union in the Third World. As with a need for subtle assessment of the multiple times of 1989, so there appears to be an equally pronounced need to understand the fracturing of space engendered by 1989 and its aftermath.

What have we learned from '1989 and all that'? Perhaps the wrong lessons as Chris Armbruster, Marc Devore and Barbara Falk explore. Armbruster argues that the European experience of violence during the twentieth century engendered legacies that contributed significantly to the revolutions of 1989. In contrast, the revolutions of 1989 provided a model of large-scale transformation relatively unscarred by such violence. Marc Devore traces how the revolution in military affairs led US hawks to believe (erroneously) that cutting-edge technologies could be used to reshape international order. Barbara Falk traces ten poorly conceived lessons which US policy makers drew from the collapse of communism, lessons which were subsequently employed to legitimise the invasion of Iraq. These themes are picked up by Arne Westad in his concluding chapter to the volume. As Westad notes, twenty years after the events of 1989, it is possible to see as much continuities as there have been changes to the basic marrow of world politics. His chapter joins the others in replacing the 'cliché of 1989' with a more sober assessment of the past two decades. What is clear is that we should neither laugh (in triumphalism) about the events of 1989, nor forget (in an attempt to control the past) the lessons of the post-1989 era. After all, as Kundera notes (1981: 3), 'the struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting'. The remainder of this introduction substantiates the importance of this struggle and lays out the general framing for the volume as a whole, understood as investigation of the 'what' (substantive issues), 'when' (times) and 'where' (spaces) of 'the global 1989'.

The 'What' of 1989?

In many ways, the events of 1989 stand as exemplars of what Nicholas Taleb (2007) calls 'black swans': events which stand as 'outliers' from prevailing frames of reference; generate a set of impacts beyond their immediate field; and which are subsequently rationalised via pre-existing tools of explanation. Certainly, all three of Taleb's categories are fulfilled by 1989: the changes which took place in 1989, particularly during the second half of the year, were as surprising to most observers as they were to many participants; their impact has been extensive, if uneven; and over the past twenty years, there have been no shortage of attempts to explain, and sometimes to explain away, their occurrence (e.g. Dahrendorf 1990; Garton Ash 1990; Habermas 1990; Tismaneanu (ed.) 1999; Bunce 1999; Sakwa 1999; Kumar 2001; Outhwaite and Ray 2005). One of the aims of Taleb's book is to illustrate how black swans, for all the surprise they invoke, occur more frequently than we imagine. And certainly, surprise is a constant feature of world history – take as an illustration Lenin's (1968: 842) comment in January 1917 that 'we, the old, may not live to see the decisive battles of the coming revolution'. Before the year was up, of course, the Bolshevik Revolution had begun the process not just of reshaping Russian politics and society, but also broader strands of international relations. Along with the Bolshevik Revolution, the events of 9/11 and the German invasion of Russia in World War II, 1989 stands as an archetype of the continuing capacity of human history, even events and processes of considerable magnitude, to surprise.

Less surprising has been the cottage industry which has sprung up around 1989 over the past twenty years. Some Kremlinologists found that Soviet Studies could quite easily be translated into post-Soviet Studies. Many transitologists who had previously worked on the break-up of authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe and Latin America transplanted their models fairly straightforwardly to the blank canvass provided by events in Eastern and Central Europe. Political theorists and sociologists surveyed the possibilities and challenges of a global era (e.g. Held et al 1999), IR scholars pondered the stability – or not – of a unipolar world (e.g. Wohlforth 1999; Brooks and Wohlforth 2008), while many economists saw 1989 as marking the final victory of Hayek over Keynes, often becoming directly involved in far-reaching privatisation and liberalisation programmes (e.g. Sachs 1994). Regardless of diverse orientation and intention, most of these accounts concentrated on three core issues: first, establishing the (usually endogenous) causes of the collapse of communism; second, assessment of the broader meanings of 1989, mostly in terms of its revolutionary quotient; and third, investigation of the consequences of 1989, particularly in Europe. This book goes beyond these studies by concentrating on the most important, yet often the most

neglected, of these foci – the consequences of 1989 – and by exerting much of its efforts on examination of the world beyond Europe. As such, the book does not provide a history, revisionist or otherwise, of the events of 1989, nor does it seek to establish (again) why 1989 happened when and how it did. Rather, the volume is geared at unravelling the complexities of time, space and substance associated with the global 1989.

As John Hobson points out in his chapter for this volume, for both scholars and policy makers, 1989 serves as an influential 'temporal othering' device, a shorthand used across the political spectrum. For liberals, 1989 marked the shift from 'bad Cold War' to 'good post-Cold War', liberating the world from an era of conservative order and intervention to a novel epoch in which international institutions, multilaterial forms of governance, human rights and humanitarian intervention could bury 'backward' ideas such as sovereignty, power politics and *realpolitik*. For foreign policy realists, 1989 marked the reverse journey, from 'good Cold War' to 'bad post-Cold War' as bipolar stability was replaced by the instability of a unipolar and/or multipolar world, a crisis in global governance, and heightened levels of insecurity stemming from a range of security threats: a rising China, a restored Russia, a plethora of rogue and failed states, and the emergence of transnational terrorist networks such as al-Qaeda. John Mearsheimer (1990) was not the only high-profile realist to argue that we would soon miss the sureties of the Cold War. And nor was Francis Fukuyama (1989) the only liberal to laud the unprecedented possibilities for prosperity and peace inaugurated by the demise of the Soviet Empire.[1]

For all their differences, both of these positions agreed that something substantial had taken place in 1989. The great debate about how to categorise the events of 1989 – as revolutions (rectifying (Habermas 1990) or otherwise), refolutions (Garton Ash 1990) or as part of a wave of liberal democratic transitions (Rustow 1990; Huntington 1991; Ackerman 1992) – tended to concentrate on three issues: the failure of revolutionaries to conjure novel utopian visions; the considerable continuities between old and new regimes; and their relative lack of violence. To start with the first of these, what many observers failed to note was the *liberal* utopia that underpinned 1989. Ideas of freedom, justice and equality may not have been new, but they were certainly utopian. As such, participants took these ideals seriously, whether this meant invoking shock therapy programmes in the interests of promoting radical economic freedom or establishing regimes which legitimised freedom of expression, even for

[1] Fukuyama would likely reject the depiction of him as a liberal. However, for the purposes of this chapter, I am taking neoconservatism to be an offshoot of a broader family of 'kinetic liberal interventionism'. On this, see Dodge (2009).

former communists, neo-Nazis and other unsavoury types. Not all anti-communist activists proved to be cuddly – xenophobic nationalists and market fundamentalists were just as implicated in the fall of communism as liberal intellectuals. Not only this, the experience of 1989's 'heartland states' over the past twenty years has served to illustrate the contradictions of revolutionary (in this case, liberal) utopianism in a way which will be familiar to students of past revolutions: the restrictions of political freedoms in order to provide security and order; the continued importance of state activism in the economic sphere in order to redistribute public goods, manage inequality and reduce other distortions of the market; and the requirement of a strong public sector which can curtail the abuses of uncivil society when it tends towards extremism and violence. Indeed, one of the ironies of 1989 has been exposure of the *limits* of unfettered political, economic and cultural liberalism. By ushering in an era of liberalism without critique, 1989 actually served to *renew* critiques of liberal utopianism, critiques which continue to gain strength both in the West and the wider world. These issues are tackled directly in this volume by John Hobson, William Outhwaite, Barbara Falk and Laure Delcour.

A second question mark over the effects of 1989 focuses on the considerable continuities between old and new, whether seen in terms of state personnel or broader social relations. In his chapter for this volume, Aviezer Tucker examines the 'privitisation of the *nomenklatura*' in post-communist Russia and China, arguing that the late-totalitarian elite managed to align its interests (maximising wealth and status) to its rights, successfully transferring power from the political sphere to the economic realm. Tucker's point is powerfully made. Although the newness of past revolutions is often exaggerated (Kumar 1987; Halliday 1999; Lawson 2005), there is something particularly old-fashioned about the 1989 variant. Rather than seeking to establish a new order, revolutionaries in 1989 rushed to embrace what they *imagined* the West to consist of: better politics (represented by pluralism and democracy), better culture (particularly in terms of music, fashion and food), and better economies (whether understood as Nordic or Anglo-Saxon variants of capitalism). Both old elites and activists approached the events from positions of mutual weakness – neither had the stomach for an extended conflict and neither had the capacity to win victory outright. As such, roundtables replaced guillotines. And roundtables provided plenty of scope for old regimes to transform themselves into new elites. Sunset clauses for the old guard, the restoration of 'recovering communists' in Russia, China and elsewhere (Jowitt 1992), and the emergence of so-called 'red barons' are common themes in those states which experienced negotiated transformations.

The third issue which clouds the revolutionary legacy of 1989 surrounds their limited use of violence. For many scholars and laypeople alike, the very essence of revolution lies in its violence. But such a view disguises a much more complex relationship between revolution and violence than is commonly understood. If violence and revolution are co-determinous, then of the 1989 revolutions, only the Romanian uprising would qualify as a revolution. Yet given the partial nature of social, political and economic change in Romania since 1989, it is difficult to see how it warrants the label revolution. Social change in the form of great scientific breakthroughs or widescale parliamentary reform programmes have no necessary link with violence. In fact, as Johan Galtung (1969) and others point out, violence in its structural forms such as repression, exploitation, marginalization, sexism, racism and so forth is used to *suppress* rather than instigate change. Violence is a means of order – the stifling of change – as much as a signifier of upheaval. Often, revolutions have been relatively peaceful seizures of power; violence stems from battles *after* the initial takeover of state power, resulting from the need by these regimes to shore up their rule in the face of domestic and international attempts at counter-revolution, a cycle that can be observed in France (in particular in the Vendée) after 1791, Russia during its four-year long civil war after 1917, and in Iran, by way of its war with Iraq and the brutal measures employed against the regime's 'un-Islamic' foes after 1980. Hannah Arendt (1963), in a survey of the connection between violence and revolution, found that violence only became associated with revolutionary change through the 'Terror' of the Jacobins during the French Revolution. The close link between revolution and violence is, therefore, a relatively modern connection. Violence has been neither a constant nor indispensable aspect of revolutions. And as such, the relative lack of violence in 1989 need not disqualify the transformations from being seen as revolutionary. Indeed, as Chris Armbruster makes clear in his chapter, the most significant legacy of 1989 may be their provision of a novel means of organising synchronous political and social change without recourse to high levels of overt violence.

Armbruster argues that it is best to see the events of 1989 as 'negotiated revolutions' (see also Lawson 2005). And certainly, the transformations succeeded in generating political, economic and social orders some way removed from their communist era predecessors: ideological monism gave way to open societies; the homogeneity of political life under communism was replaced by the pluralisation of political relations; and the tired, stagnant formula of central planning made way for the uncertainty of market relations. However, it would be foolish to claim that everything has changed in post-1989 orders. In reality, some power relations proved to be so entrenched as to be unalterable, other measures have been

blocked, and there are many things incoming elites neither wished nor attempted to change. No revolution can start from year zero and reinvent social structures from scratch. Rather, the story of revolutionary change, in 1989 as in other times, is bound up with compromise between social action and structural constraints, utopian ideals and the politics of the possible.

If 1989, therefore, can be understood as the relatively peaceful victory of a revolutionary form of liberal utopianism, one which in keeping with past revolutions has witnessed continuities as well as important ruptures, what have been its principal legacies? As William Outhwaite notes in his chapter, one of the unintended consequences of 1989 has been a depression of left-wing politics in the West. To some extent, as Outhwaite points out, the events of 1968 in Europe and the emergence of a virulent form of economic neoliberalism in the 1980s begun these processes in the generation before 1989, but they were certainly underlined, reinforced and emboldened by the events of 1989. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that it is no longer clear what it means to be 'left' after the fall of actual existing socialism. The attempt to construct a Third Way by the Blair and Clinton administrations, as well as by their continental imitators, proved to be short-lived experiments, while the new Millennium saw the left fracture painfully and powerfully over international issues – something it appears to do in each generation. In the 1930s the split came over the Spanish Civil War and Stalinist purges; in the 1960s over the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the 1968 uprisings in Western Europe. In the noughties, the war on terror split the left on familiar issues: internationalism and imperialism, sovereignty and solidarity, universal aspirations and particular struggles. In more general terms, the left has turned away from issues of representation and redistribution in favour of those of recognition (Fraser 2008). This hollowing out of political and economic opposition in the West appears, at least in part, to have been met by renewed interest in issues abroad, whether this be campaigns for debt relief, the war on poverty, or the fostering of support for global civil society. These social movements are, of course, important. But as a substitute for a radically left-wing alternative to current conditions, they provide thin gruel indeed.

In this sense, as Fred Halliday argues in his contribution, if 1989 was a failure for socialism, particularly in Europe, it can also be seen as defeat for liberal capitalism. The dark side of capitalist accumulation, captured powerfully in Saskia Sassen's chapter, has been sharp increases in inequality and criminality – much of the world is poor and insecure. Most troublingly, it is clear that the 2008 financial crisis was not something external to the system, but a process which arose from a conjuncture of inefficiencies and perversities endemic to the

system itself, most notably the shift towards a form of 'casino capitalism' (Strange 1986).[2] The latest failure of capitalism was also a failure of the economics discipline – the 'efficient market hypothesis', ideas of 'self-correction' and support for no-holds barred deregulation became commonplace ideas within an economics profession that 'mistook beauty for truth' by employing a range of techniques which, although looking good on paper, turned out to bare little resemblance to how economies actually functioned (Krugman 2009). As Saskia Sassen notes, the 2008 crisis had its roots in fundamental shifts in ideas about, and practices of, the international political economy during the two decades preceding 1989. Indeed, the central ideas and ordering mechanisms of the contemporary international political economy (self-regulation, marketisation, neo-liberalism, privatisation etc.) were already ascendant – and had taken institutional form – well before 1989, hence the immediacy of shock therapy policies in (and on) 1989 heartland states. In general, the idealization of the market – by academics and policy makers alike – acted as a blinker on real world events; markets turned out not to be perfect and rationality turned out not be utilitarian, at least not much of the time. And the consequences of this utopian occlusion – on peoples, societies and markets around the world – proved to be painful in the extreme.

Given this, it could be argued that 1989 should be understood as a conjunctural rather than an epochal shift (Rosenberg 2005). In other words, 1989 did not mark the emergence and institutionalisation of a novel set of political, economic and social relations. Rather, it emerged primarily out of collapse and implosion – the disappearance, virtually without a shot, of the Soviet Union and, with it, the *final* strand of the Cold War order, much of which had already melted away. The shifts and reconfigurations of social, economic and political power relations associated with 1989, dramatic and extensive though they have been, are for the most part contained within existing forms of social, political and economic order rather than marking a fundamental epochal transformation in the nature of these configurations. Those states and other actors at the centre of 1989 sought not to generate novel institutional alliances or to remake international relations in their own image but to actively give away power, for example by joining international organisation's ranging from the European Union to International Financial Institutions such as the World Trade Organisation. To put this in old language, the organic tendencies of the old have reasserted themselves, in a new context,

[2] Strange borrowed the idea of capitalism and, in particular, financial markets functioning as a casino (i.e. as a constant gamble based on ever riskier speculations) from perhaps the world's most influential economist during the early part of the twentieth century, John Maynard Keynes.

and on a vaster scale. In more concrete terms, the failures of Western capitalism, political institutions and cultural mores since 1989 (Jentleson and Weber 2008; Khanna 2008; Zakaria 2008) have fostered new forms of opposition to Western order: political Islam, freed from its focus on the communist enemy (Gerges 2007); Latin American populism, no longer subject to Western concerns over 'extended deterrence'; and renewed forms of authoritarian rule in China and elsewhere, even if these now appear more as forms of political coercion than as alternative means of economic or ideological competition. In this sense, although the end of the Cold War has been felt mostly strongly in Europe, trends elsewhere have been both unanticipated and, on occasion, counter-cyclical. We have been here before, of course (e.g. Spengler 1926; Kennedy 1989). But this time, as Michael Cox and William Outhwaite both make clear, relative Western decline may be for real.

The 'When' of 1989?

If the above analysis stands up to scrutiny, 1989 marked neither a distinct end nor a distinct beginning in world historical time. Indeed, in ascertaining the time – or times – of 1989, it is important to ask when 1989 started, not in the sense of the opening of the border between Hungary and Austria in September 1989 which was decisive in extending protests against communist rule, nor in the sense of the landslide victory won by Solidarity in the June 1989 elections in Poland (on the same day, so it happened, as the massacre in Tiananmen Square) which acted as an important stimulus for opposition movements throughout the region. This much we know. But part of any assessment of the impact of 1989 must consider which events it is to be judged *against*. For example, if we mark our temporal cards from 1945-1989, then the events appear to herald the end – or at least the winding down – of the Cold War, whether we consider this as a single frame with multiple dimensions (Westad 2005) or as divisible into two discrete stages (Halliday 1983). If, following Eric Hobsbawm (1994), we prefer to see the twentieth century as somehow 'short' – sandwiched between the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the events of 1989, we get a second, more birds-eye, view on proceedings. And it is possible to go back still further: to 1848 and the Springtime of Nations (*Völkerfrühling Wiosna Ludów*), which, like 1989, also witnessed first-hand the mobilising force of nationalism, the apparently spontaneous eruption of protests in major European cities, the enduring power of ideas of freedom, equality and justice, and the (mostly peaceful) loss of nerve by the old guard; to 1789 as François Furet (1999) prefers, and what he considers to be the final burial of the modern revolutionary *geist* – or illusion – first witnessed in France; or perhaps to 1648 as some political theorists prefer, with 1989 marking

the end of an era of state sovereignty first ushered in by the Peace of Westphalia. Beyond Europe, there are still other alternatives. As Rick Saull notes in his chapter for this volume, the Cold War in the Middle East operated with logics distinct from its European variant: the relationship between authoritarian states backed by the United States and revolutionary forms of state nationalism supported, at least in part, by the Soviet Union; the various punctuation marks (1948, 1967, 1973, 1987) provided by the Arab-Israeli conflict; the fluctuating role of petro-dollars in regional politics; and the mobilising power of strands of political Islam. In short, if 1989 stands as a point of historical reckoning, much is staked in terms of when observers choose to *start* counting as well as when they decide to stop doing so.

Many of the contributors to this book engage with the notion of 1989 as constituting some kind of 'rectifying', 'recuperating' or 'catching up' model of revolutionary change, an idea first associated with the German critical theorist Jürgen Habermas (1990) in the immediate aftermath of the revolutions. To some extent, Habermas has a point – 1989 did mark the end of a detour, albeit an exceptionally powerful one. State socialism matched liberal capitalism in offering a distinct take on what was considered to be the most authentic articulation of modernity: both were revolutionary creeds which sought to govern on this basis. In this sense, both liberal capitalism and state socialism can be seen as quintessentially modern. As such, it was no surprise to see ideas associated with the holy trinity of modern social theorists (Weber, Marx and Durkheim) appear both to explain 1989 and its consequences: from Weber, we saw the limits of the iron cage of bureaucratic rationality as captured not just by socialist state managers but also by their counterparts in the West and in international organisations; from Marx, we were reminded of the necessary inequities and exploitation inherent in the accumulative practices of industrial capitalism; and from Durkheim we could bare witness to the anomie of modern life – the lack of solidarist scripts that arise from the break-up of old forms of order (what the novelist Monica Ali calls 'the limits of autonomy'), intensely present in both the contemporary West and post-1989 states. All in all, the events of 1989 reinvigorated many old debates about what it meant to be both human (Latour 1993) and modern (Gray 2007). In short, 1989 reawakened commentators to many of the contradictory aspects of modernity of which great modern theorists were well aware and which social science is charged to study.

To some extent, therefore, dreams of a radical alternative to capitalism did fade after 1989. But, for two reasons, such dreams were never realistic. First, one of the great mistakes of Marx's theory (and, by association, those of neo-Marxists such as Immanuel Wallerstein) was its underestimation of capitalism's capacity for 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter 1942)

– the capacity of capitalism to conjure new, dynamic forms of accumulation and profit. In this sense, what did for state socialism was the shift in Western economies to consumer based, service led economies, the emergence of computer based technologies and the rise of financial innovations following the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in the early 1970s. Second, as Chris Armbruster notes in his chapter, state socialism contained chronic internal weaknesses. Stalinist purges, a militarised economy and the normalisation of revolutionary ideology into a self-perpetuating bureaucratic creed replete with its own ruling class – the *nomenklatura* – undermined the Soviet system from within. By 1968 or thereabouts, there were precious few communists – or at least Marxist-Leninists – left in the Eastern Bloc. A Czech professor returning to Prague in 1970 after two years in the Netherlands complained that 'there were far too many communists over there. At least in Prague, I won't have to meet any.'[3] In this sense, what Isaac Deutscher (1960) described as 'the great contest' was anything but that, however it appeared to participants at the time. It was a contest which contained a pre-determined victor, something captured evocatively by the post-War US ambassador to Moscow, George Kennan (1947), in the long-telegram sent to his political masters at the onset of the Cold War. Gorbachev, 'new thinking' and other such *événements* were certainly significant in terms of the *timing* of Soviet collapse, but longer-term trends better explain how and why the system failed. We did not know precisely *when* communism would implode, but that it would at some point in time was not in question.

In this sense, therefore, 1989 was an end – an end that Francis Fukuyama (1989) was at least half-right to see as that between two rival ideologies: liberal capitalism and state socialism. But the twenty years since 1989 have ably demonstrated the ways in which political, military, economic and cultural forces find ways to reconfigure themselves along new lines. Capitalism may be the only game in town in terms of organising economies, but this comes at the cost of recurring crisis, something painfully illustrated by the global meltdown of 2008. But if there is no economic alternative to capitalism, this is not the case when it comes to political relations. In fact, it is not clear whether capitalism thrives best under authoritarian or democratic forms of governance. After all, some of the most rapid periods of growth – and the most unyielding forms of capitalism – have occurred in authoritarian states (Chang 2007): contemporary China or General Pinochet's Chile for example. As such, it is not just the European Union and the United States, but the 'soft dictatorships' (Kenney 2006) of China and Russia that offer powerful models for combining

[3] A story told during a conversation with Profesor Jan Sokol at Charles University, Prague, 4 April 2001.

order and wealth creation in the contemporary world (Gat 2007; for an alternative view, see Deudney and Ikenberry 2009). Culturally, along with a certain flattening of language, style, music and food lies a mix and match of various hues and colours, creative heterogeneous fusions even amidst a certain homogeneity of aspiration. Barack Obama's Kenyan/Hawaiian origins are, in this sense, just the leading-edge of a much broader trend.

Alongside these uncertainties regarding economic, political and cultural relations lie contradictions in terms of the world's military relations, a process captured well by Marc Devore's chapter for this volume. On the one hand, US military might provides it with full spectrum dominance on an unprecedented scale, something aided by organisations such as NATO, whose twenty-six members includes ten postcommunist states. On the other hand, this dominance is threatened by a certain democratisation in the means of violence – what can be seen as the 'other side of the revolution in military affairs'. Indeed, the widespread availability of Kalashnikovs and hand-held rocket launchers, alongside techniques of asymmetrical warfare such as suicide bombing, provide the means for small, determined groups to hold out against US force and, indeed, to counter it effectively, as demonstrated by the events of 9/11 and the unsuccessful invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Devore traces this dynamic to the emergence of the revolution in military affairs in the final years of the Carter administration. Devore chronicles a fight between traditional military elites convinced of the need for modernisation within existing structural command and control systems, and political elites dazzled by the possibilities of high-tech warfare. In the final analysis, Devore concludes, the revolution in military affairs served as a utopian occlusion, blinding political leaders to the realities of military conflict which, regardless of stealth bombers, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), techniques of precision bombing and so on, remain gruesome fights to the finish.

Such lessons – one of the ten chronicled by Barbara Falk in her chapter – stem from a delusion which appears to be shared by nigh-on the entire US political elite. As Falk notes, the fusion of overwhelming American power allied to powerful ideologies such as neo-conservatism has engendered a sense in which US power is not just good for the United States, but also a tool which can – and should – be used to reshape the world in its own image. Of course, this powerful cocktail of power and utopian ideals has not gone unchallenged. First, there is the challenge to US military hegemony noted by Devore and others. Second, there is the political challenge to American primary represented by alternatives models of governance: China, Russia and, to some extent, the European Union. Third, although much of the world is led by – or wants to be led by – American cultural

trends, there is a certain unorthodox blend to this picture: Bollywood films, Chinese restaurants and other such global cultural formations are generating an increasingly complex, sometime hybridised, array of cultural forces. And economically, sovereign wealth funds, protectionist policies and forms of economic nationalism indicate a process of renationalisation, even as this sits alongside moves towards global, regional, transnational and local scapes (Mann 1997; Weiss 1998). In short, the most recent phase of capitalist accumulation is serving to fracture global space.

The 'Where' of 1989?

As Saskia Sassen notes in her chapter for this volume, the fracturing of spatial relations is not a new phenomenon, albeit one which is only now taking global shape. Indeed, as John Hobson and Rick Saull point out, the Cold War may only have *appeared* to delineate a certain singularity to world events because of a Eurocentric gaze on the conflict. After all, although the bipolar order was stable and relatively peaceful in Europe, this was not the case for many states and regions around the world where the post-1945 period was decidedly hot. In short, Europe was the central front of strategic and diplomatic calculations, but it was the Third World that generated the majority of the crises and nearly all of the casualties of the Cold War – over twenty million people all told. As Arne Westad (2005) puts it, both East and West imposed a 'regime of global intervention' which continued, at least to some extent, the exploitation of the colonial era. For the Soviets, this was premised on a general creed (albeit with Stalinist reservations) of revolutionary internationalism and a Leninist desire to attack capitalist via its weakest link. For the US, responses to Third World uprisings were captured by NSC-68 (which followed the outbreak of the Korean War), détente (at least in part formulated as a result of post-colonial revolutions), and the acceleration of the Cold War under Ronald Reagan's administration in the early 1980s (undertaken, to some degree, because of the challenge posed by the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union). What James Mann (2009) calls 'the rebellion of Ronald Reagan' should, in this sense, be seen as a manifestation of a longer-term commitment by the United States to counter the Soviet challenge wherever it appeared.

To some extent, therefore, the Cold War can be understood as an inter-imperialist rivalry (the Soviet 'empire of justice' vs. the US 'empire of liberty'), as a contest between two revolutionary regimes, or, as noted above, as a confrontation between rival visions of modernity. But however it is described, as Fred Halliday points out, it was a conflict which, despite the chronic deficiencies which would eventually lead to its downfall, most

participants thought the Soviets could win. Indeed, even in the early part of the 1980s, the correlation of forces looked somewhat favourable for the Soviets: Tanzania, Algeria and Nicaragua were showcases for leftist progressivism; there was a general, much lauded, drive towards 'Afrocommunism' and, in 1982, at the moment of the death of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet net stretched to thirty-one component states. This net included states run by Soviet clients (e.g. Cuba and Vietnam), states oriented towards socialism (e.g. Ethiopia and Nicaragua), two independent communist states (China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), a group of what the Soviets considered to be 'less advanced states of socialist orientation' (e.g. Algeria and Iraq), and several more marginal cases (e.g. Ghana and Surinam). Despite some of the more delusional aspects of these claims and regardless of structural Soviet weaknesses elsewhere, not least economically, there was good reason for the Reagan administration to develop a counter-offensive against what appeared as a picture of Soviet rude-health.

However, as Halliday makes clear in his chapter, 'recognising the global *extent* of the Cold War is not equivalent to saying that it was *in the Third World* that the global conflict was decided any more than recording military conflict in the Middle East or the Pacific during World Wars I and World Wars II is equivalent to saying that it was these theatres that decided the outcome'. Indeed, as both Laure Delcour and William Outhwaite also discuss, the most obvious centre of gravity for discussion of 1989 is Europe. And here, as elsewhere, consequences have been mixed. Although the European Union has expanded, this has not been without cost, whether this be to decision making capacities or a more general loss of nerve. The failure to ratify the proposed EU constitution and to deal effectively with important international processes in its near abroad (Georgia and Turkey in terms of foreign policy; the financial crisis in terms of economic policy) has left the Union curiously short of drive just as it appears to have maximised its basic capabilities. A certain sense of *Ostalgie* permeates European politics – and not just in the Eastern half of the continent. Despite attempts at 'rethinking the left' for the 'new times' after the end of the Cold War, there has been a pronounced turn towards anti-politics, a search for forms of political authenticity in older notions of 'civil society' and 'moral economy' and an accommodation with prevailing patterns of stratification and authority rather than the conjuring of novel ideals and policy prescriptions (Kumar 2001; *European Journal of Social Theory* 2009).

To some extent, the desire of states to maintain control over their foreign and economic policies – despite claims to the contrary – stand as important markers of the post-1989 world. There has been a certain renationalisation of security functions (for example via

new anti-terrorist legislation), economic policy (most credit crunch policy has either been state based or inter-state based) and identity politics (captured, for example, by the rise of anti-immigrant parties and movements). As with our understanding of time, therefore, 1989 appears to have brought us a complex spatial panorama in which we are both closer in terms of an acceleration of intersocietal integration, particularly in terms of economies, peoples and ideas, but also further apart in that this homogenisation has a doppelgänger in the form of a return to the local, whether visited in claims of local autonomy, ethnic identity, or anti-immigration. Again, therefore, there is a fundamental contradiction in play: combined interactivity alongside uneven differentiation; universality and fragmentation; singularity and fracture.

Given this picture, it is difficult to establish any type of concrete hold on the multiple vectors which constitute contemporary global space. As Bob Jessop (2002, 2007) and others (e.g. Cerny 2006) argue, there is a new bargain emerging in terms of how states manage relations of regulation and accumulation, a process Jessop describes as a shift from Keynesian welfare states to Schumpterian workfare regimes. Part of this story, to be sure, is marked by a shift from national frames towards multinodal global, regional, transnational and local scales. We may not inhabit what Jürgen Habermas (2001) calls a 'postnational constellation', but there is a sense in which the fundamental relationships between states and markets, and between private and public spheres are being recast – a message which forms a core part of Saskia Sassen's chapter. Of course, in and of itself, this is not a new phenomenon. Marx talked of capital's 'complex synthesis of multiple determinations' in the *Grundrisse* some 150 years ago, while the liberal notion of complex interdependence remains a useful depiction for much of the functioning of the international political economy, reminding us that the picture is, to a great extent, issue- and/or region-specific (e.g. Keohane and Nye 1973).

To some extent, therefore, as many contributors to this book note, there is a sense of *plus ça change*. Russia has, despite the emergence of previously submerged conflicts in Chechnya, Transdniestr, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, largely held together. Former communist parties have continued to win votes, sometimes, but not always, following a change of name.[4] And for some states – China, North Korea, Cuba – the Cold

[4] Interestingly, it was Western European rather than Eastern European communist parties which seemed most effected by the collapse of state socialism. The Italian communist party, for example, spent much of 1990 being called *La Cosa* (literally 'the thing') before settling on a new title – *Partito Democratico Della Sinistra* (the Democratic Party of the Left). In

War did not end, at least not in 1989/1991. As such, claims of a 'new Cold War' look far fetched (Buzan 2006). There will, no doubt, be a certain rescaling of global political order in order to accommodate the many challenges to Western international order. And perhaps, over the longue durée, the last 300-400 years of Western domination will come to be seen as an exception as power returns once more to Asia. In the meantime, we will continue to cast around for apt frames for the contemporary conjuncture, whether this is understood as imperial (e.g. Ferguson 2008; Hardt and Negri 2000), a case of 'one superpower, many great powers' (Kagan 2008), or as Richard Haass (2008) prefers, 'nonpolar'.

Conclusions and openings

Yogi Berra, the famous American baseball player and pundit once said that, 'it is tough to make predictions, especially about the future'. 1989 is no exception to his maxim. Some twenty years after the fall, it is difficult to recall the sense of surprise and excitement which emerged from the removal of the Soviet empire first in Eastern and Central Europe, and some two years later, from its own backyard. As the international media moved from city to city, and increasing numbers of Europeans came onto the streets in order to chase away the old order and to welcome in the new, there was a sense of the world shifting beneath people's feet. In some ways, the events of 1989 stand as epigraphs for a 'runaway world' (Giddens 2002) which precludes easy analysis. Perhaps world politics over the last twenty years has occupied some kind of 'liminal space' (Kumar 2001), serving as an 'interregnum' (Cox, Booth and Dunne (eds.), 1999) or as 'abnormal times' (Fraser 2008). More likely, though, the Cold War only appears simple in retrospect. For those who lived through the period, the Cold War seemed anything but straightforward and the outcome of the conflict anything but certain, even during its final endgame. As such, this book does not seek to provide a 'post-factum' flattening of the Cold War into a monochrome story with a pre-determined outcome. Rather, the contributors seek to question how effectively the end of the Cold War works as a tool of 'temporal othering' between old and new, and indeed, between good and bad.

However imperfect any simple frame (e.g. East-West) is for understanding the complexities of international politics between 1945 and 1989/1991, it is clear that this conflict ended because of the defeat of one of the competitors by the other. And what followed was not the replacement of the Soviet Union by a single foe but by a multitude of

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contrast, both the Czech and Hungarian communist parties continued to function as normal, more or less unapologetically. Indeed, today, of nineteen parties associated with the 'European Left' movement, eight are former communist parties.

contenders: authoritarian capitalists, virulent nationalists, Islamic terrorists and more. Given this picture, it is unsurprising that our concepts and frames have struggled to keep up. At the heart of understanding the global 1989 are striking contradictions: heightened interactivity alongside increased differentiation, simultaneous closeness and distance, the homogeneity of globalisation alongside the fracturing of public space. Such is both the blessing and curse of 1989: it has allowed us to leave behind some of the more obscuring, constraining blinkers of the pre-1989 era. But it has not yet offered us much in their place. We are in an era where we know what we are post (Cold War, Westphalian, imperial and so on), but have little sense of where we are and what is to come. In this sense, the post-Cold War era offers a profound lesson for academic enquiry as well as for policy makers, reminding us of the need to ask good questions rather than look for easy answers, to use imagination rather than fulfil the requirements of 'normal science', and to work on developing sound judgements rather than following the latest fad. Our task in this book is to both problematise the place of 1989, but also to make sense of the major trends which have arisen from it over the past twenty years.

To that end, one of the central arguments in this book is that 1989 represents, at least for the most part, a triumph of *chronos* (sequential time) over *kairos* (qualitative temporal change) (Hutchings 2008). Although there have been, and there remain, claims to the exceptional in 1989, a fundamental rupture in world order does not appear to have taken place. Rather, much akin to the bionic man, the post-1989 era is quicker, stronger, faster – we have seen the acceleration of important reconfigurations in how we organise politics, economics and social life, but also the emergence of some curious contradictions: the linear time of the Cold War replaced by a fractured time of uneven development; the end and then, more recently, the return of history (Kagan 2008); the emergence of simultaneous time alongside a sense of temporal dislocation. For all its surprise, 1989 did not spring *de novo*, but had antecedents – 1789, 1848 and 1968 amongst them. And it has generated its own mimicries, from negotiations between Maoists and old regimes loyalists in Nepal to second generation authoritarian transformations in Serbia and elsewhere. 1989 also faces competition from other dates which stand as way-stations on important trends in contemporary world politics, not least 1979, marker of both the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, events which, via many twists and turns, provided impetus to the development of radical political Islam *and* US neoconservatism. The joining of these radical ideologies in armed conflict has engendered a new revolutionary conflict, one which will shape core aspects of world politics for many years to come. In this sense, it is not Viktor Yushchenko or

Nelson Mandela, Hugo Chavez or Naomi Klein who best personify the present conjuncture, but Irving Kristol, Abu Musab al-Suri and their fellow-travellers.

Given this, much as it is important to recognise the importance of 1989, one of the lessons of this book is that years and dates rarely acts as sound guides to complex processes. In fact, rather like seeking to capture democracy only via elections, dates may serve to obscure more important, longer-term trends. In short, dates offer us punctuation marks to world history, but they should not be seen as the masters of world historical development. Our goal in this book is to draw together trends that, quite often, are seen only in parallel or as zero-sum: homogenisation and heterogeneity; modernity and jihad; Stalinist terror and Gorbachevian 'new thinking'. Each chapter in the book disrupts a prevailing wisdom and exposes 'uncomfortable truths' – in this sense, they represent high-water marks of academic enquiry and critical engagement. Of course, no book can – or should – close down a particular subject, and this is no exception. There are a range of topics not dealt with here: detailed survey of the normative landscape of the post-Cold War world, attention to the re-masculination of public space which has accompanied a relative decline in the position of women globally, and the emergence of the 'dark side of globalisation' as represented by people trafficking, transnational criminal networks, the illicit drugs trade and so on (Halliday 2008). And there are many regions which have, at least in terms of extended discussion, slipped beneath our radar. What we offer, therefore, is not a definitive guide, but a series of openings about one of the iconic historical landmarks of our time. 'Out of the crooked timber of humanity', Kant wrote, 'no straight thing was ever made'. Our intention in this book is not to carve a straight line out of humanity's crooked timber. But we do aim to make sense of the complexities, contradictions and paradoxes of the post-1989 world. Ten years ago, a major study claimed that, following 1989, 'everything we know is up for grabs and what comes next is anyone's guess (Verdery 1999: 83). This book seeks to provide the clarity afforded by an extra decade of hindsight.

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