

# **1989: From the Global Moment to its Regional and National Memories**

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## **ABSTRACTS**

Die Erwartung, die 2009 geäußert wurde, dass sich die vielen partikularen Geschichten des Jahres 1989 zu einer großen, kohärenten Globalgeschichte zusammenfügen und dass dabei das Bewußtsein der Zeitgenossen, einem besonderen Moment in der Weltgeschichte beizuwohnen, weiter vertieft würde, hat sich nicht erfüllt. Vielmehr werden verschiedene Erinnerungen an 1989 in den verschiedenen Weltregionen gepflegt und die Historiographie beschäftigt sich eher mit der Frage nach dem Zusammenhang des Umbruchs von 1989 im östlichen Europa mit dem Aufkommen des Populismus. Der Beitrag, der dieses Themenheft einleitet, versucht einige Erklärungen für diese Entwicklung zu bieten. Sie ist dabei sowohl Indikator wie Teil eines Abschieds von einer bestimmten Globalisierungsideologie, die weltweit zunehmende Konnektivität mit einem neoliberalen Globalisierungsprojekt verwechselt hat. Selbst wenn man sich, wie es die meisten Beiträge dieses Themenheftes tun, auf den afrikanischen Kontinent beschränkt, wird allerdings bereits mehr als deutlich, dass dies keineswegs einen Rückzug aus globalen Zusammenhängen und ihrer Erinnerung bedeutet, ganz im Gegenteil. Insofern ist die Rekonstruktion einiger wichtiger Momente des afrikanischen Beitrags zum globalen Moment 1989 vielleicht erhellender für das Verständnis dieser Zäsur, als es eine weitere Vereinnahmung der Vielfalt dieses Jahres für eine homogene Erzählung wäre.

The expectation expressed in 2009 that the many particular histories of 1989 would come together to form a great, coherent global history and that this would further deepen the interpretation established by the contemporaries witnessing a special moment in world history has not been fulfilled. Rather, different memories of 1989 are cultivated in different regions of the world, and most recent historiography is more concerned with the question of how the upheaval of 1989 in Eastern Europe is linked to the rise of populism. The article that introduces this thematic

issue tries to offer some explanations for this development that can be seen as both an indicator and part of a departure from a certain ideology of globalization that has confused increasing connectivity worldwide with a neoliberal globalization project. Even if one limits oneself to the African continent, as most of the contributions in this issue do, it is already more than clear that this does not mean a withdrawal from global contexts and their memory, quite the contrary. In this respect, the reconstruction of some important moments of the African contribution to the global moment in 1989 is perhaps more illuminating for understanding this caesura than would be a further appropriation of the diversity of that year for a homogeneous narrative.

In a way, 30 years is a magical number for historians. This has to do with the more technical issues regarding archive access, which in many cases is only possible for the first time 30 years after an event, which by no means can already be considered after that duration of time to be “complete”. Accordingly, subjective memories can be better checked when confronted with documents not understood thus far in their complex interrelationships, even if this does not mean that “the whole truth” is coming out. Myths that have emerged and consolidated in the course of the collective confrontation with historical events, regularly repeated in the media, can be called into question due to new legitimacy claim and, if necessary, can be shaken. As a consequence, historians, most of whom belong to a subsequent generation as well as attack established heroic tales with the instruments of professional historiography, gain greater legroom vis-à-vis contemporary witnesses as time progresses. And here, too, three decades is a sufficient period of time to weaken the dominance of the participants in the interpretation of events.

In this respect, the year 2019 was indeed a major caesura, with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolutions in Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Cold War world order, and the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from many geopolitical constellations into which it had previously ambitiously penetrated. Exactly ten years earlier, Timothy Garton Ash dared to predict that in 2019 a younger historian would write a more globally oriented history of 1989 than would a historian in 2009.<sup>1</sup> As far as I can see, this forecast has been disappointed. Of course, a lot has been published on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of peaceful and velvet revolutions. What is more, there is a new generation of historians who have taken up the subject and are not under the same impression of involvement or concern with the upheavals of 1989 – as was the case with the authors of previous decades.<sup>2</sup> But has a truly global history emerged? Or are there other priorities now being set? On the one hand, the following text follows a hypothesis that we ourselves first presented in 2009,<sup>3</sup> namely that the event complex of 1989 was a *global moment* – being compa-

1 T. G. Ash, 1989! – The unwritten history, in: The New York Review of Books 56 (2009) 17, online: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/23232> (accessed 26 June 2020).

2 For two of the many examples of this confusion between reporting on participatory observations and source-based historiography written by activists of the revolution itself, see Stefan Wolle, *The ideal world of dictatorship. Daily life and party rule in the GDR 1971–1989*, Berlin 2019 (first German edition in 2009); Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel. Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR*, München 2009;

3 M. Middell, 1989 as a global moment, in: U. Engel/F. Hadler/M. Middell (eds.), *1989 in a global perspective*, Leipzig 2015, pp. 33–48.

rable to the bundle or cycle of Atlantic revolutions at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,<sup>4</sup> the revolutions and (civil) wars in the middle of the nineteenth century,<sup>5</sup> or the upheavals at the end of the first and second world wars.<sup>6</sup> We postulated three criteria for such a global moment, combining the results from research on the synchronicity of global events<sup>7</sup> as well as the impact of these events on world affairs<sup>8</sup> and their remembrance across borders.

(1) The global moment bundles together a series of synchronous events that result in structural (tectonic) shifts that take place in a critical juncture of globalization.<sup>9</sup> Insofar, the moment is part of a process that has a significantly longer duration. The example of the Atlantic revolutions offers a good illustration of such a moment because it bundles together the tensions of a deep crisis of traditional empires as well as the distortions of a world order that various powers were trying to shape to their advantage and according to their world perceptions. To this end, these powers engaged in military and political activities across almost the entire globe and entered into alliances with a broad set of social movements on various continents, whose transformational power could by no means be kept under control within a narrow framework of similar ideas about the future. For example, it was not the aim of the powers of England and France, which were struggling for hegemony at sea and on land, to launch a broad movement for the liberation of slaves. The rebellious liberal reformers from Venezuela to Chile did not have this in mind either, since their economy was based much more fundamentally on forced labour. Yet, at least as a programmatic goal, the equality of all people before the law prevailed, even if it would still take a long time until this ambitious idea of an inclusive society was politically realized.

For the definition of the global moment, however, it is precisely the quasi-simultaneity of sociopolitical upheavals and (often armed) conflicts that can be traced across the planet that is decisive. This quasi-simultaneity allows a mutual reference to each other – not as a diffusion of a centrally pronounced programme but as a creative adoption of attractive ideas in completely different contexts. Global moments are therefore also phases of a special concentration of intercultural transfer. In case of the 1989 rupture, more recent

4 M. Kossok, *In Tyrannos. Revolutionen der Weltgeschichte*, Leipzig 1989; M. Albertone/A. de Francesco (eds.), *Rethinking the Atlantic World. Europe and America in the Age of Democratic Revolution*, Basingstoke/New York 2009; D. Armitage/S. Subrahmanyam (eds.), *The age of revolutions in global context, c. 1760–1840*, Basingstoke/New York 2010; A. Forrest/M. Middell (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to the French Revolution in World History*, London 2015; M. Maruschke/M. Middell (eds.), *The French Revolution as a Moment of Respatialization*, Berlin/Boston 2019.

5 Ch. Bright/M. Geyer, *Globalgeschichte und die Einheit der Welt. Weltgeschichte als Globalgeschichte – Überlegungen zu einer Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Comparativ* 4 (1994) 5, pp. 13–46.

6 E. Manela, *The Wilsonian moment. Self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism*, New York 2007.

7 P. Grosser, 1989, *l'année où le monde a basculé*, Paris 2009.

8 On this aspect, see also J. Rupnik (ed.), *1989 as a Political World Event. Democracy, Europe and the new international system in the age of globalization*, London 2014.

9 On this conceptualization of the relationship between event and structure in the history of global processes at large, see U. Engel/M. Middell, *Bruchzonen der Globalisierung, globale Krisen und Territorialitätsregimes – Kategorien einer Globalgeschichtsschreibung*, in: *Comparativ* 15 (2005) 5/6, pp. 5–38.

research has demonstrated to what extent the sources of the upheaval and its outcome must be searched regarding the one or even two decades before the revolutions. Some speak of the “shock of the global” for the 1970s;<sup>10</sup> others see at this time the beginning of the current configuration of modernity.<sup>11</sup> Frank Bösch, for example, has particularly focused on the year 1979 through a comparative overview.<sup>12</sup> I would agree with him and especially underline two events that in an iconic way have signalled the fading away of the bipolar world order dominated since 1945 by the USA and the Soviet Union. The one is the Iranian Revolution,<sup>13</sup> challenging (in fact until today) US hegemony in the Gulf, and the other is the disastrous military intervention of Soviet troops in Afghanistan,<sup>14</sup> in the end leading not only to defeat at the international stage but also to enormous tensions at home that contributed to the destabilization of the communist party’s power.

(2) However, pure simultaneity might not be sufficient to qualify a chain of events as a global moment. Rather, what is also required is an attribution of meaning at more than one location, which emphasizes the world-changing character of the events. There is thus a normative element inherent in the term global moment, which should be rooted not in the attribution of the historian, who judges retrospectively, but in the emphasis on the global character by contemporaries. This does not diminish the task of the historian, for he/she sometimes has to uncover this contemporary recognition of the event as world-changing, which may have receded into the background in the meantime. In the case of 1989, many scholars underline the world-changing character of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the dictatorship in Romania, the search of Gorbachev for a new place for his Soviet Union in a post-conflict world order,<sup>15</sup> and the dismantlement of the Soviet Union after the national liberation movements in the Baltic states had been successful.<sup>16</sup> Others highlight with similar enthusiasm the end of South Africa’s apartheid as a milestone in the history of human rights and the eradication of racial discrimination.<sup>17</sup> Both “hotspots” of 1989 together advance narratives that mark the end of a global cold war and the beginning of our times.<sup>18</sup> A strong sense of historical caesura finds expression in a heated discussion about globalization being the characteristic of the new era.

10 N. Ferguson/Ch. S. Maier/E. Manela/D. J. Sargent (eds.), *The Shock of the Global. The 1970s in Perspective*, Cambridge 2010.

11 A. Doering-Manteuffel/L. Raphael/T. Schlemmer (eds.), *Vorgeschichte der Gegenwart. Dimensionen des Strukturbruchs nach dem Boom*, Göttingen 2015.

12 F. Bösch, *Zeitenwende 1979. Als die Welt von heute begann*, München 2019.

13 A. Mirsepassi, *Iran’s Quiet Revolution. The Downfall of the Pahlavi State*, Cambridge 2019.

14 B. Chiari, *Kabul, 1979: Militärische Intervention und das Scheitern der sowjetischen Dritte-Welt-Politik in Afghanistan*, in: A. Hilger (ed.), *Die Sowjetunion und die Dritte Welt. UdSSR, Staatssozialismus und Antikolonialismus im Kalten Krieg 1945–1999*, München 2009, pp. 259–280.

15 Mikhail Gorbachev, *Address by Mikhail Gorbachev. 43rd UN General Assembly Session (1988)*, online: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/%20116224%20.pdf> (accessed 26 June 2020).

16 A. E. Senn, *Gorbachev’s Failure in Lithuania*, New York 1995.

17 S. Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948–1994*, Oxford 2014.

18 O. A. Westad, *The global Cold War. Third world interventions and the making of our times*, Cambridge 2008.

However, this story was, and is still, not bought by everyone worldwide. More than a few saw themselves rather as victims than winners of this globalization<sup>19</sup> and therefore dismantled the myth of the trickle-down effect of welfare structures and policies when introducing seemingly free markets. Others insisted on their independent status in this increasingly connected world and even continued to use their own term (*mondialization*)<sup>20</sup> in order to signify their dissent with any confusion between globalization, American hegemony, and neo-liberalism, while still ironically contributing in a pointed manner to this confusion in public perception.<sup>21</sup> More recent studies have demonstrated that such a diverse reaction to the narrative of the fast-globalizing world was rather the rule than the exception.<sup>22</sup> What made 1989 an important date in the specific calendars of so many regions was obviously not the same everywhere. On the contrary, the importance attributed to the dramatic changes of that year follows different logics and seems over time to tend to neglect the idea of any commonalities than to insist on a simplistic understanding of global causation for each and every particular historical configuration emerging (seemingly accidentally) around the same year.

(3) The last dimension of a global moment – which appears to be a possible forgetting of the common origins of many local situations – consists of anchoring the moment in a collective memory. But who is the collective of global memory today? There are surprisingly few studies that consider this question, with most studies of collective memory – together with the growing interest in memory and remembrance – still focusing on the national, or at most the regional (European or African), level. Around the turn to the new millennium, authors, such as Charles Maier, were optimistic about being able to predict the development of global memory, and there is evidence that these predictions have captured something important – such as the increasing importance of the post-colonial in the international debate on memory.<sup>23</sup> But few empirical studies have followed since then. This undoubtedly has to do with the fact that there is a much greater demand for assessments of national and, to some extent, European memory culture because collective memory has been recognized by politicians as a factor of social stability within their own politics. Accordingly, the community of memory researchers is being asked how collective memory is changing, where dangers threaten, and where it can be used

19 D. Held/A. G. McGrew, *Globalization/anti-globalization. Beyond the great divide*, Cambridge 2007.

20 Among many others, see O. Dollfus, *La mondialisation*, Paris 1997.

21 Ch. Maurel, *La World/Global History: questions et débats*, in: *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 104 (2009) 4, pp. 153–166.

22 M. B. Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary. Political ideologies from the French Revolution to the global war on terror*, Oxford/New York 2009 started from the assumption of a converging global imaginary, but later he himself insisted on differences, see M. B. Steger/P. James, *Globalization matters. Engaging the global in unsettled times*, Cambridge 2019. For the German context, see D. Kuchenbuch, "Eine Welt". Globales Interdependenzbewusstsein und die Moralisierung des Alltags in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38 (2012), pp. 158–184 and J. Eckel, "Alles hängt mit allem zusammen". Zur Historisierung des Globalisierungsdiskurses der 1990er und 2000er Jahre, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 307 (2018), pp. 42–78.

23 Ch. S. Maier, *Consigning the 20th Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era*, in: *American Historical Review* 105 (2000), pp. 807–831.

for specific political purposes.<sup>24</sup> In my view, there is currently no comparable demand for the study of convergence or divergence of global memory.<sup>25</sup> In other words, there is no such field as global memory studies, which in turn could lead to empirical studies; however, there is undeniably a demand for powerful narratives of history leading to our present. And this demand provides the emerging global history with a powerful position while emphasizing interrelationships, which have often been neglected until recently, as well as the opposing trends of fragmentation. Global history advances the idea of a multiplication of paths towards modernities instead of an all too simple Eurocentrism. Moreover, it attributes growing importance to global challenges, such as climate change, pandemics, hunger, and malnutrition, to the further development of humanity. Whether these narratives, however, will supersede the older narratives of striving for a bounded community and sovereignty, as expressed, for example, in the invention of nations, remains an unanswered question for the time being. Comparative studies that ask about the meaning of an event in a restricted context and then establish the hypothesis that an event is placed high up in the ranking of remembered historical events in very different contexts must obviously have global resonance. With regard to the year 1989, we have already established such evidence through a worldwide survey among students in 2009, albeit with very limited resources, that is to say in the form of an online questionnaire sent out by email only.<sup>26</sup> The research design can undoubtedly be refined, but the problem remains: as long as global memory is conceived of as a simultaneous reference to different events that took place simultaneously, it remains precarious whether this is really a shared memory.<sup>27</sup> These hints at methodological difficulties and gaps in literature seem necessary in order to understand the situation in 2019 with regard to the memory of the year 1989. It seems that there is a growing interest among professional historians in the question of what may have caused the various events of 1989 to occur together or at least made them communicate with each other. At the same time, the collective memory of a global moment may be disintegrating before our eyes into different parts that explicitly want nothing to do with each other.

The underlying geography of collective memories is not easy to grasp, and we are far from knowing or even understanding all its facets. But perhaps one can get to the bottom

24 S. Berger/Bill Niven (eds.), *Writing the History of Memory*, London 2014; S. Berger/E. Storm (eds.), *Writing the History of Nationalism*, London 2019.

25 Routledge has started in 2018 a book series on "Memory Studies: Global Constellations", and the first 18 volumes address issues like slavery and slave trade, colonialism, transregional war scenarios, and imperial features but are often collective volumes with contributions privileging nevertheless a national perspective. See <https://www.routledge.com/Memory-Studies-Global-Constellations/book-series> (accessed 20 June 2020).

26 H. Ellermann/D. Glowsky/K.-U. Kromeier/V. Andorfer, *How Global are Our Memories? An Empirical Approach using an Online Survey*, Leipzig 2006; some of the results have been published: H. Ellermann, D. Glowsky, K.-U. Kromeier, and V. Andorfer, *How Global are Our Memories? An Empirical Approach using an Online Survey*, in: *Comparativ* 18 (2008) 2, pp. 99–114.

27 For a methodological inspiration for the study of a shared approach towards the past even across historical frontlines, see T. Frank/F. Hadler, *Disputed territories and shared pasts. Overlapping national histories in modern Europe*, New York 2010. The many studies of imperial memories from a postcolonial point of view feed similar research designs.

of this geography by asking where “1989” actually took place. The most common answer puts Eastern Europe in the spotlight, where first the dissolution of Soviet hegemony and then the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself comes to mind. This perception is particularly noticeable in the eyes of the former counterpart in the Cold War – the United States – which, due to the increasing dominance of the US-American worldview, became the hegemonic understanding of “1989”. Lifting the material and psychological burden of the previous decades-long confrontation not only released the Eastern Europeans, who were becoming increasingly economically drained, but also provided hope for new opportunities in the West. The fact that this perception was accompanied by an often unreflected triumphalism of a market-radical neo-liberalism did not necessarily mean that this version of history would prevail in the long run.<sup>28</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that in 2019 a new narrative was considered in addition to the already familiar narrative of the self-liberation of peoples and nations from the Soviet/imperial yoke and of the alternative-less drastic remedy for the transformation to a market economy. This new narrative originated from the current political transformations in East-Central Europe as well as from extensive research into the relationship of the socialist camp to global interdependencies. Although initial ideas focused on the establishment of socialism in the Soviet Union, and later in its satellite states of the Eastern bloc, as well as were based on the belief that socialism meant nothing other than a turning away from a globalization that was almost automatically identified with the market and capitalism, projects such as the Exeter-centred network “Socialism Goes Global”<sup>29</sup> make it very clear that the communist parties and the governments of the real socialist countries did indeed pursue their own globalization projects<sup>30</sup> and became active worldwide in advancing it.<sup>31</sup> This, undeniably, was long known to the Communist International, which gathered allies around itself in all parts of the world and tried to bring them to toe their – often wavering – line. The fact that this global alliance, especially in the crisis of the late 1930s and early 1940s, was committed to prioritizing support for the world’s first socialist state – which was fighting against the initially superior pincer movements of the Axis powers, Germany and Japan (which cost many of Communist Parties supporting the Soviet Union legitimacy at home) – does not necessarily speak against the idea of an independent

28 For a potpourri-like reminder that being victorious at a certain point in time and dominating the upcoming historical narratives falls more often apart than not since it is more likely that the losers will try to make sense of their defeat by reinterpreting it, see S. F. Kellerhoff, *Erinnerungspolitik*, in: *Die Welt*, online: <https://www.welt.de/geschichte/article181399614/Erinnerungspolitik-Die-Sieger-bestimmen-die-Geschichte-Von-wegen.html> (accessed 26 June 2020).

29 J. Mark/P. Apor, *Socialism Goes Global. Decolonization and the Making of a New Culture of Internationalism in Socialist Hungary, 1956–1989*, in: *The Journal of Modern History* 87 (2015) 4, pp. 852–891.

30 O. Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization. The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev*, New York 2014; U. Müller, *Der RGW als Schlüssel zu einer transnationalen Wirtschaftsgeschichte des östlichen Europas in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Vereinigung Weltwirtschaft und Weltpolitik (IWVV) – Berichte* 2 (2015), pp. 32–50.

31 U. Müller/D. Jajecniak-Quast (eds.), *Comecon revisited. Integration in the Eastern Bloc and Entanglements with the Global Economy* (= *Comparativ* 27 [2017] 5/6), Leipzig 2017.

and thus alternative globalization project.<sup>32</sup> Especially with regard to the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, many studies have since brought to light the innumerable dimensions of this global commitment in the then so-called Third World.<sup>33</sup>

Another facet of this research became particularly relevant for the new narrative for the interpretation of 1989, namely the economic involvement of real-socialist states in the international division of labour. Scholars, like Johanna Bockman, claim that red globalization was by no means as alternative as one might assume in view of the endlessly emphasized difference between socialism and capitalism during the Cold War.<sup>34</sup> Instead, socialist managers had early on abandoned the ideas of the greatest possible social equality and had become kindred spirits of the drivers of the neo-liberal course, which became equated with keywords like Reaganomics and Thatcherism.<sup>35</sup> In this narrative, 1989 is less a liberation of the oppressed from communist dictatorship than the release of neo-liberal potential that had already emerged and grown in the period before 1989. The radicalism with which many transformation economies tackled the redistribution of social wealth from 1990 onwards, together with the origins of the oligarchs who have now gained fabled wealth and influence, serve as evidence for the thesis that ultimately seeks to explain why a populist protest movement has been developing for several years, specifically in the countries that were previously called socialist, that criticizes the democracy that has been achieved and, in extreme cases, offers the necessary voter support for the formation of new authoritarian regimes. This protest, so the thesis goes, is based on the unfinished revolution, which has not been able to keep its promise of freedom and equality and instead has continued tendencies that had already generated massive discontent before 1989. So it is rather disappointment with the lack of change, or at least the failure to complete it, that is playing into the hands of the populists.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly enough, this argument is also found in the arsenal of views of history, which made its mark noticeably in Poland<sup>37</sup> and later in Hungary, stressing that the revolution of 1989 either was not a revolution at all or that it got stuck early on because its leaders were (too) quick to compromise with the forces of the previous regime.<sup>38</sup> As a result,

32 M. Middell (ed.), *Kommunismus jenseits des Eurozentrismus*, Berlin 2019.

33 J. Mark/A. M. Kalinovsky/S. Marung (eds.), *Alternative Globalizations. Eastern Europe and the postcolonial world*, Bloomington 2020.

34 J. Bockman, *The Long Road to 1989. Neoclassical Economics, Alternative Socialisms, and the Advent of Neoliberalism*, in: *Radical History Review* (2012) 112, pp. 9–42.

35 J. Bockman, *Socialist Globalization and Capitalist Neocolonialism. The Economic Ideas behind the NIEO*, in: *Humanity* (2015), pp. 109–128; J. Bockmann, *The Origins of Neoliberalism between Soviet Socialism and Western Capitalism. A Galaxy without Borders*, in: *Theory and Society* 36 (2007) 4, pp. 343–371.

36 B. Iacob/J. Mark/T. Rupprecht, *The Struggle over 1989: The rise and contestation of eastern European populism*, in: *Eurozine* (2019) online also at <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2019/09/09/the-struggle-over-1989-the-rise-and-contestation-of-eastern-european-populism/#more-6519> (accessed 26 June 2020).

37 The situation in Poland had been carefully examined in a conference "Poland 1989: Negotiations, (Re)Constructions, Interpretations", organized by the Alexander Brückner Centre for Polish Studies in Halle and the Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, Gdańsk in late October 2019. See the report online at <https://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-8586> (accessed 26 June 2020).

38 J. Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe*, New Haven 2010). For an example of such kind of revisionist literature from Hungary, see R. Tökés, *A harmadik magyar*



this version does not consider 1989 a caesura but rather sees the coming to power of the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) in Poland and Viktor Orbán's new Fundamental Law (2011) in Hungary as a ways to bring about the changes promised. Vladimir Putin's new history policy for Russia also departs from Gorbachev's central idea that the country had moved into the European house through perestroika and glasnost and in the future lived there in a comfortable apartment, enjoying the greatest admiration from its neighbours. Bitter frustration over a suspected betrayal of the 1989 agreements by the West is mixed in with Putin's new positioning of Russia in history through the successful efforts to be taken seriously as a strong global player. The emphasis on imperial traditions and reputation as well as a revived repertoire of a nationalist politics of history seem to be copied from the successful model that China has developed in dealing with the memory of 1989 – including a ban on alternative versions.<sup>39</sup>

The echoes of this criticism of the liberal success story reach far beyond Eastern Europe and can be traced back to South Africa's African National Congress (ANC), where former youth leader Julius Malema denounced the extraordinary corruption under President Jacob Zuma while calling through his newly founded oppositional party for a radical redistribution that challenged the ANC's inclusive policies of the past 30 years.<sup>40</sup> One could certainly include here the occasionally successful Syriza party in Greece and Podemos party in Spain, although the reference to an apparently failed 1989 is much less explicit.<sup>41</sup>

However, while populist versions – from the right as well as from the left – question the balance of the claimed transformation since 1990, the new historiographic narrative of a transformation of Eastern Europe into the Western variant of globalization that has been taking place since the 1960s has seen an enormous success as well as not only an astonishingly speedy societal dissemination and but also an equally astonishing lack of fundamental critique. Regarding the latter point, Eastern Europe's realignment to dominant economic and political norms generated remarkably little criticism or reflection at the time. The reorientation of its elites from state socialism to liberal capitalism happened remarkably quickly considering that they had based their former legitimacy on a rhetoric of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, and anti-Westernism.<sup>42</sup> Resistance on the part of the population also hardly existed, at least in comparison to Africa and Latin

köztársaság születése, Budapest 2015. 1989 is downplayed in this version and the establishment of the new (authoritarian) regime highlighted as the beginning of a new era. While liberals and populists agree in the anti-communist orientation of their narratives, they differ in attributing the current misery to either the long-lasting effects of the former communist regime or the lack of its consequent eradication.

39 On the prohibition of events in Hong Kong under the pretext of the fight against the Coronavirus that recall the uprising on Tiananmen Square in Beijing, see <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/hongkong-untersagt-gedenken-an-das-massaker-von-1989-a-72a0f1ab-7ecd-4bb6-babc-0c84e5601f04> (accessed 26 June 2020).

40 For his political programme at the moment of the 2019 elections, see the BBC portrait "Julius Malema – South Africa's radical agenda setter", <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-14718226> (accessed 26 June 2020).

41 J. Mark/B. Iacob/T. Rupprecht/L. Spaskovska, 1898: Eastern Europe in Global History, Cambridge 2019, p. 4.

42 Ibid., pp. 10–11.

America, where the deregulated capitalism of the Washington Consensus was met with much stronger protest.<sup>43</sup>

The consequences of this narrative are varied. First of all, the authors agree on a successful repositioning of Eastern Europe in the course of a fundamental economic, political, and cultural repositioning of the world after 1989. This repositioning includes the integration of Central and South-Eastern Europe into an expanding European capitalism as well as new integration between Japan, China, Taiwan, and Singapore in East Asia, which is simultaneously looking for new markets for cheap labour in South Asia, just as Europe is by no means limited to the continent itself.<sup>44</sup> The role of Russia, which remains indispensable as a supplier of energy and raw materials, remains unclear, however.

This integration of East-Central Europe into a European realm of expanding capitalism was successful but at the price of an elite compromise, leaving Eastern Europe only the junior role, which since 2015/16 has been combined with the additional function of a highly questionable moral firewall against immigration. The dirty work of migration defence is undertaken at the many borders between the Aegean Sea and Hungary, and the European Union can continue to argue about a humanitarian compromise that meets its high normative standards. From the point of view of liberal commentators from Eastern Europe, this cynicism seems like a rejection of the values for which the transformation was based<sup>45</sup> as well as like a call to rehearse post-colonial thought and action, for which the Global South has more to offer.<sup>46</sup>

While the debate in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe about what was actually meant by 1989 is ongoing, the changes happening since 1989 in Western Europe and the USA have become completely disconnected from the turmoil of that year. Without a doubt, the communist and socialist parties and milieus have broken up and lost their binding force,<sup>47</sup> mostly in favour of right-wing populist formations in the party spectrum.<sup>48</sup> And Donald Trump laments the deindustrialization of parts of the USA, with the aim of maintaining the dissatisfaction of white workers as the basis for his polarizing policy, whereas the Democrats focus on the Sun Belt as the region promising future voters and stronger ties with production centres elsewhere in the world.<sup>49</sup> But in neither of

43 M. Boatca/W. Spohn (eds.), *Globale, multiple und postkoloniale Modernen*, München 2010.

44 For a short and comprehensive summary of research on the new economic regionalization, see S. Babones, *Economic Zones in a Global(ized?) Economy*, in: M. Middell (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, London 2019, pp. 619–625.

45 I. Krastev, *3 Versions of Europe Are Collapsing at the Same Time*, in: *Foreign Policy*, 10 July 2018, online: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/10/3-versions-of-europe-are-collapsing-at-the-same-time/> (accessed 26 June 2020).

46 D. Kołodziejczyk/C. Şandru (eds.), *Postcolonial perspectives on postcommunism in Central and Eastern Europe*, London/New York 2016; Mark et al. (eds.), *Alternative Globalizations*.

47 With the argument that this decline started much earlier than 1989, see D. Bell/B. Criddle, *The Decline of the French Communist Party*, in: *British Journal of Political Science* 19 (1989) 4, pp. 515–536.

48 C. de La Torre (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*, London/New York 2019; C. R. Kaltwasser/P. Taggart/P. Ochoa Espejo/P. Ostiguy/B. Stanley (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford 2017.

49 R. Brownstein, *Democrats' Future Is Moving Beyond the Rust Belt. The partisan and generational struggles for control of the nation's direction will be decided in the Sun Belt instead*, in: *The Atlantic* 9 January 2020, online: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/01/rust-belt-trump-democrats-sun-belt/604678/> (accessed 26 June 2020).

these two constellations does the reference to 1989 play a greater role. A distancing still dominates that connects 1989 only with Eastern Europe and wants to understand it as a catch phrase for what had been achieved in the West in 1968, namely civil rights, liberal democracy, and a transnationally embedded capitalism. What is also meant is an idea of emancipation that pushes social issues into the background and instead places the cultural management of identities in the foreground – the definitive departure of the old left in favour of a new left oriented towards identity politics, even if crisis after crisis are marked by social upheavals that again and again challenge this focus on cultural cleavages.<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly, the memory of 1989 is also alive in Central and South America and at the same time not part of a common global interpretation. The end of dictatorships and constant interference by the big neighbour in the north is remembered positively by the Latin American left, but a comparison between the situation in Eastern Europe and in Latin America finds little resonance. The same can be said about the situation in the Middle East, where the connection of current crises to the transformed world order are more than obvious. The region became part of the cycle of coloured revolutions stretching into the Arab Spring – which can be read as an echo of 1989, as was done in some of the former Soviet republics, from Ukraine to the countries in Central Asia – but the references to the former revolutionary outbreak remain weak in comparison to the reference to Muslim transnationality.<sup>51</sup>

As said, the findings are incomplete and there are certainly some dissenting opinions on the assessments presented here. Anything else would be surprising, given the profound rupture that 1989 represents for the various regions and for global history. At first glance, the position of those who identify “1989” with events happening in Eastern Europe in particular has prevailed; they present it as a genuine contribution of the region to a global transformation that has dragged on for many decades and in which Eastern Europe was, as it were, belatedly included or fought its way into. However, such an unbroken positive review is now seldom heard. Rather, there is talk of a collapse of several versions of the narrative of history,<sup>52</sup> as if something new had been created in 1989 that touches the world everywhere, but in completely different ways. Indeed, notions of a new regionalism<sup>53</sup> and multiple modernities<sup>54</sup> are gaining in importance, which help to overcome

50 A. Reckwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten. Zum Strukturwandel der Moderne*, Berlin 2018.

51 D. Reetz, ‘Alternate’ Globalities? On the Cultures and Formats of Transnational Muslim Networks from South Asia, in: U. Freitag / A. von Oppen (eds.), *Translocality. The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, Leiden / Boston 2010, pp. 293–334.

52 Krastev, *3 Versions of Europe*.

53 F. Söderbaum, *Rethinking Regionalism*, London 2016. While the prognosis that large-scale regions become an important spatial format for the future global order has over the past years and especially with the Coronavirus crisis transformed into the prediction that it will be the dominant feature given the fragility of global connectedness and the lack of resilience of individual societies at times of stress. One can follow this shift in an exemplary way when comparing Parag Khanna’s last two books: P. Khanna, *Connectography. Mapping the global network revolution*, London 2016 and P. Khanna, *The Future is Asian. Global order in the twenty-first century*, London 2019.

54 Sh. N. Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities*, in: *Daedalus* 129 (2000) 1, pp. 1–29.

naïve notions of a unity of the world produced by a complete marketization of social interactions.

If in 2019 we observe a regionalization of the memory of 1989, then this may not be a sign of a new fragmentation of the world alone, but rather of an awareness of the many overlapping processes of repositioning and the shaping of distinguishable globalization projects. Such processes of a regionalization of remembrance are related to new developments in global historiography. There is no doubt that global history has taken a great leap forward, expanding so much in the first 10–15 years of the twenty-first century that even some have spoken of the dominant perspective within the field of history. In the face of the previously prevailing criticism of meta-narratives and master narratives, this has been a quite extraordinary renaissance of world history in a new guise, no longer focusing primarily on the intellectual invention of the unity of the world but instead on the creation of that unity by the many actors in a large number of highly diverse global processes. This transition from older universal history to more recent global history has indeed fascinated new generations of historians as well as the public, as the full shelves of the world history departments in bookstores testify to. Global history has become more empirical and follows an imperative for research, and the great synthesis of world history continues to attract attention.

However, the growing enthusiasm for this new kind of history of global interdependence – for the history of fragmentation in a globalized world – has perhaps overlooked the fact that society is slowly becoming worn out regarding a discourse on “the global”. This fatigue is partly due to the emphasis on globalization, but to be precise it refers to an ideology of globalization that makes globalization appear to be a quasi-natural process without alternatives. In the name of this ideology of globalization, the worsening of social inequality in many societies<sup>55</sup> has been legitimized, and a dramatically growing porosity of any rule-based multilateralism comes more and more to the fore in international relations. The huge profits that have resulted from the possibilities of outsourcing production steps to low-wage countries, on the one hand, have actually enabled many millions of people to escape hunger and very rudimentary living conditions and, on the other hand, have also made the severity of modern capitalism’s exploitative conditions felt in peripheries that had previously been less affected by it. This mixture of positive and painful effects of global processes after the end of the Cold War has led to a shift in the discussion of global interdependence in the 2010s.

First, criticism from the left can be heard, which already made great demands for years for an alternative globalization that should promote equality and solidarity instead of inequality and competition. Second, at the latest with the migration crisis of 2015/16, when the unsuitability of the European regulations of the Dublin III agreement became glaringly apparent, criticism from the right began to intensify. The perspective of a multicultural society was openly rejected,<sup>56</sup> and restrictions imposed on immigration

55 T. Piketty, *Le capital au XXle siècle*, Paris 2013.

56 T. van Rahden, *Demokratie. Eine gefährdete Lebensform*, Frankfurt am Main 2019; R. Chin, *The Crisis of Multicul-*

were demanded with zeal. Interestingly enough, situations became particularly violent in countries and regions that were, comparatively, affected very little by immigration or that benefited from opportunities for the export of goods or capital as well as from a further democratization of tourism. The consequences of the previous globalization processes – which by no means made everyone a winner, for example leaving behind large belts of rust where industry had been outsourced to other regions of the world – inspired a nationalism that knew how to use the trauma of lost hegemony and the phantom pain of past significance to mobilize support among a broad group of the population for the programme of “Brexit” and “Make America Great Again!”

However, this increasing demand for sovereignty and control over global flows, which is nothing new, is not limited to those states and societies that have to console themselves regarding the loss of their former world position or that still fear such a loss. This demand can also be observed with the Chinese globalization winners, who, on the one hand, present themselves as guarantors of the multilateral and the development of a global infrastructure, but, on the other hand, link this with an intensified ethnonationalism at home. The search for new ways of defining sovereignty vis-à-vis the seemingly untamed flows of capital and the power related to it finds many different forms – for example, not only in the form of nationalism but also of pan-Islamic, pan-African, and pan-Asian identities – but at the same time follows similar patterns of refusal of the former globalization ideology – sometimes marked as neo-liberalism.<sup>57</sup>

These tendencies in the political culture of today's world can perhaps explain why interest in a global moment like 1989 has not increased but rather decreased in recent years. It goes without saying that this is not the end of the matter, and the diversity of publications is evidence of a continuing interest in the upheaval of 1989, which takes inspiration from two new sources. The first source, as mentioned above, is the opening of some archives, which play an important role. One need only to think of the now at least partially possible investigation of the political processes that led to German unification and the transformation of the East German economy. In this context, the study of the so-called Treuhandanstalt (Trust Agency) stands out as a central agency for the rapid transformation – and integration – of a former realsocialist economy into a capitalist economy in East Germany and the expropriation, disempowerment, marginalization, and social deprivation that occurred in the process.<sup>58</sup> The same applies to the investigation of the emergence of a group of oligarchs in the Eastern European transition economies, which was made possible by the political conflicts between these oligarchs over

turalism in Europe: A History, Princeton 2017 refers to 1989 as the point of departure for the strengthening of Islamophobia with the fatwa against Salman Rushdie and the debate on wearing headscarves in French public schools. She concludes: “This was the pivotal juncture when Islam itself came to be seen as a central threat to ‘liberal values,’ not just in Britain, but across all the major Western European powers” (p. 190). Presenting Islam as illiberal ideology and way of life, allowed to stigmatize immigrants without an openly racist language but with almost the same effects.

57 M. Burchardt/G. Kirn (eds.), *Beyond Neoliberalism. Social analysis after 1989*, Cham 2017; D. Harvey, *Spaces of neoliberalization: towards a theory of uneven geographical development*, Stuttgart 2019.

58 M. Böick, *Die Treuhand: Idee – Praxis – Erfahrung 1990–1994*, Göttingen 2018.

the further shaping of their societies or their relations with the West. Material resulted from these changes, which investigative journalists brought to light during court cases.<sup>59</sup> But this also applies to a whole series of documents that provide new clarification of the international negotiations between the great powers over the shaping of the world order after the Cold War.

The second source, however, is the question of what a new generation born after 1989 can do with the upheaval of that time and how they evaluate the behaviour of their parents' generation.<sup>60</sup> Still dominant is the sharp demarcation between civil rights activists, who undoubtedly formed a small minority in 1989, and the followers of the regime, who not only constituted the majority of the population, but also without whose reversal the victory of the 1989 revolutions would hardly be explainable. However, the opposition at that time has since spread across the various political camps of the post-revolutionary orders after 1989. They therefore are still fighting over whether the upheavals were actually about the renewal of socialism or about the quickest possible transformation to a competitive capitalist system.<sup>61</sup>

However, both factors – the opening of archives and the instrumentalization of remembrance in and for a generational conflict – initially privilege individual societies in which not only serious change has taken place, but also a firmly anchored awareness of a caesura has emerged.<sup>62</sup> And this is certainly the case in many societies, however without necessarily merging into a common memory of 1989.

The contributions in this issue provide strong evidence of this regionalization of memory with regard to Africa. The continent experienced a turbulent period around 1989, when the proxy wars of the great powers of the Cold War came to an end, giving way to peaceful solutions that not only required but also made possible the integration of opposing groups fighting against each other a merciless guerrilla warfare for more than a decade. From the Horn of Africa to the southern part of the continent, the many conflicts of this global cold war ended, as Chris Saunders reminds us in his contribution to this volume.

59 H. Pleines, *Oligarchs and Politics in Ukraine*, in: *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 24 (2016) 1, pp. 105–127; R. Olearchyk, *Ukraine's oligarchs jostle for influence with President Zelensky. Akhmetov edges closer to country's leader while weakening rival Kolomoisky*, in: *Financial Times* 19 February 2020, online: <https://www.ft.com/content/1821b882-4366-11ea-bea0c7a29cd66fe> (accessed 26 June 2020). The most spectacular case is perhaps the Russian critic of Putin, Michail Chodorkowski, now exiled in London but a permanent source of insights into the economy of Russia.

60 M. Gloger, *Generation 1989? Zur Kritik einer populären Zeitdiagnose*, Bielefeld 2012.

61 See a series of interventions in the German weekly *Die ZEIT*, as a result of an article printed in June 2020 by Anne Hähnig, *Der Osten braucht eine neue Elite!*, online: <https://www.zeit.de/2020/23/buergerrechtler-ostdeutschland-osten-vorbilder-widerstand> (accessed 26 June 2020).

62 The example of East and West Germany is a particular one since built its memories on an unequal process of mutual interest in developments on the other side of the iron curtain still before 1989. As the authors in F. Bösch (ed.), *A History Shared and Divided: East and West Germany since the 1970s*, Oxford 2018, argue, the majority of the GDR population looked at the FRG while West Germans were much more interested in US-American developments. Remembering the East as economic, environmental, and political disaster while constructing an unbroken success story for the West corresponds, however, much more to the mental situation of the 1980s than of the 1950s or 1960s.

But this does not necessarily mean that this caesura is still remembered today as a global moment. On the contrary, the societies concerned evidently regard the fact that they are no longer the playground for a global competition of superpowers on which local allies tested their weaponry as a matter of regaining national sovereignty. The global loses its meaning and the national arena and the pan-African space once again become the essential frame for the contemplation of history as Ulf Engel demonstrates in his review of the current discussion about 1989 in Africa in this issue. The fact that in 1989, under the impression of the events in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the rule of communist parties there, the introduction of single-party systems (together with the constitutional amendments that had been prepared) was abandoned in several African countries at relatively short notice<sup>63</sup> gave wings to the idea of a third wave of democratization.<sup>64</sup> But in the context of negotiating a reorganization of the economic, financial, and political relations between the Global North and the Global South, the transregional learning process of 1989 and 1990 – when various actors carefully watched world politics for features to be followed in a process of fundamental political reorientation and repositioning – has receded into the background. The main focus is now on the conditionality of development cooperation, and democratization appears to be primarily a consequence of the Western demand for good governance.<sup>65</sup> Thus, in this case, the more spatially organized narrative of the relationship between the Global North and Global South overlaps the more temporally organized narrative of the global moment of 1989.

The same can be said for other outstanding events on the African continent. The abolition of apartheid in South Africa can be placed in many contexts. It undoubtedly can be explained in relation to the long-lasting struggle in the country for a multiethnic society with equal rights of political participation for all. However, it is also a consequence of decades of international struggle against racism and for equal civil rights. Moreover, it certainly only became possible after the tensions of the Cold War had eased to such an extent that Western societies and their political elites were prepared to place principles of democracy above loyalty to alliances during the Cold War. Like a mirror, the Soviet bloc paid increasing attention to its own economic interests, which in turn reduced the fear of a communist takeover sufficiently on the other side, thereby allowing South Africa to take tentative and later courageous reform steps.

These reform steps included the removal of the nuclear weapons that South Africa possessed. The process is described in detail by Anna-Mart van Wyk and Robin Möser, who combine their absolutely amazing findings from South African and international archives, which one would expect to be inaccessible given the sensibility of military security issues at stake. This step reduced the risk of humanity's self-destruction and the

63 U. Engel, Africa's "1989", in: U. Engel / F. Hadler / M. Middell, 1989 in a Global Perspective, Leipzig 2015, pp. 331–348.

64 S. P. Huntington, The third wave. Democratization in the late twentieth century, Norman/London 1993.

65 H. Asche / U. Engel (eds.), Negotiating regions. Economic partnership agreements between the European Union and the African regional economic communities, Leipzig 2008; S. Koch, A Typology of Political Conditionality Beyond Aid: Conceptual Horizons Based on Lessons from the European Union, in: World Development 75 (2015), pp. 97–108.



devastation of a huge region, which undoubtedly had to do with the larger disarmament movements on the streets of many countries, including in the Global North, and with the progress of the negotiations concerning the reduction of nuclear weapons between the United States and the Soviet Union. This disarmament was part of a multitude of transnationally communicating movements towards a less dangerous world. The decision by the South African regime to dismantle its nuclear capacities cannot be explained by the international situation only; it has to be considered against the domestic changes as well, for example the power vacuum in 1989 after P.W. Botha had suffered a stroke and decided to transfer parts of the political authority he had centralized in his own hands to his possible successor, Frederik de Klerk. This opened up the opportunity for those who saw nuclear bombs as inappropriate for South Africa's national security (challenged rather by "bush wars", as de Klerk formulated it once) and costly with regard to its international reputation, which dominated the debate. In de Klerk's eyes, the transition of power from a white minority to a black majority was already complex enough and should not be further burdened with the nuclear question. And it should not be forgotten that the dismantlement of nuclear capacities was a strong symbolic act that helped secure international support from many sides for the transition. De Klerk referred directly to the Eastern European examples of revolutionary change when announcing his decision to release Nelson Mandela and to lift the ban on the ANC. This reference, however, was a contradictory one – the exact aim of the governing elites was to avoid the collapse they were observing in Eastern Europe and to open up avenues for a negotiated transition from one regime to its successor. In contrast, it can be argued that the international debate about disarmament was the strongest and most direct connection of the South African transformation to the global arena.

Thirty years later, the topic of disarmament is back on the agenda, after the "peace dividend" at the end of the Cold War had calmed spirits. A new bellicism, sitting at the threshold of deployable nuclear weapons, perpetuated the illusion that interventions legitimized by humanitarian law could be carried out without major human sacrifices. The most important treaties from the 1980s and early 1990s have been terminated or called into question because the Soviet-American bilateralism of the Cold War no longer seems appropriate and new world powers are securing their rise in the resulting vacuum. Nevertheless, the moment when South Africa scrapped its nuclear weapons – thus setting an example, which is still unique today, of the ideal of a world free from nuclear weapons – now seems more like an episode in the regional history of Southern Africa. However, it cannot be ruled out that the new danger posed by the arms race, with its hypersonic weapons and biological materials, drones, and cyber warfare, will soon lead to a renewed search for models of disarmament. For the time being, global history in this area, as for many other topics, perhaps must come to terms with the fact that it stockpiles knowledge and keeps it ready when it is needed.

Timothy Scarnecchia's article makes use of the now possible access to contemporary reports and observations in British and American archives. It reveals interesting details about the end of the conflicts in southern Africa, some of which invite us to redate



individual stages of the expiring Cold War. He complements what Chris Saunders concludes from historiographical and South African sources. It is exciting to read how the British and American diplomats interpreted the change in the attitudes of their Soviet counterparts. One can find in the reports their ideas on the supposed priorities of Soviet foreign policy. The central fears of the Western diplomats were directed at the export of armed revolutionary endeavours – above all through the supply of arms to liberation movements and the training of cadres during their stay in the Soviet Union or other countries of the Eastern bloc – at the intended establishment of a one-party state and the associated prevention of a political consolidation of any opposition as well as at the nationalization of the means of production, for example in extractive industries or in the financial sector. With great satisfaction, Western diplomats reported to their respective foreign ministries that Soviet negotiators were increasingly distancing themselves from these three building blocks of Soviet foreign policy, which had previously been considered central to the country's strategy, not only due to pressure from international political circumstances but also out of a well-considered self-interest. Thus, Soviet diplomats articulated a desire for stabilizing their position and offered the prospect of withdrawing Cuban troops from Angola. This corresponded to Gorbachev's ideas of a new world order, which would be supported not through escalation of conflicts in various parts of the world, but through reduction and which expected a symmetrical response from the USA. Soviet diplomats were also of the opinion that a nationalization of key industries in South Africa would not be to the advantage of Soviet economic interests. Rather, they recognized the opportunities to profit from the wealth of mineral resources from southern Africa and made great efforts to build economic relations, even if this had little effect on the turmoil of the Yeltsin years. Finally, these diplomats also indicated that they could imagine a post-apartheid South Africa that would establish a democratic balance between the various population groups through a multiparty system.

The comparisons between the political tensions in South Africa and the nationality conflicts in the crisis-ridden Soviet Union are interesting. Soviet diplomats obviously took a detached view of the efforts of radical representatives of trade unions, the South African Communist Party, and the ANC to push uncompromisingly for the enforcement of the rights of those who were oppressed and marginalized under apartheid. Frightened by the comparable inflexible attitude of nationalist leaders in the various republics of the Soviet Union, who were beginning to detach themselves from the Russian centre of the union, they developed little sympathy for similar attitudes among representatives of the black population in South Africa.

Thus, the sources that have now become newly accessible are not simply a source of information about new facts; they allow us to gain interesting insights into the way in which actors of 1989 saw and formulated the circumstances of that time. We should not forget, however, that these are initially only the reports of one side about the other; the Russian perception of American and British policy would have to be compared and would only complete the mirror cabinet into which Timothy Scarnecchia has guided us so eloquently.

This issue is a product of larger international conference held in the summer 2019 in Leipzig that was meant as a continuation of the 2009 conference with which we presented for the first time the global character of 1989. During the conference, we realized that there is a growing distance between the segments of historiography, suggesting that the global character of the series of events forming the global moment of 1989 is about to fall apart. However, we believe, as explained above, that this is only a farewell to an all too naïve and simplistic understanding of global moments guiding all region-specific processes into the same direction to produce global homogeneity. This obviously is not the case, and such a narrative is not attractive to today's historians and their audiences. Global moments bring processes of very different character and direction into contact and allow for a momentous intensification of transregional learning. The lessons learned are then integrated into very different repositories of knowledge about what seems best for the respective societies and how to reorganize global connectedness.