

barer politischer Entscheidung. Dies mag für den mehr von der wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Seite kommenden Leser eine Enttäuschung darstellen. Trotz dieser aus dem methodischen Ansatz herrührenden Einschränkungen handelt es sich um ein höchst lesenswertes Buch und einen wertvollen Beitrag zur deutschen Zeitgeschichte, der zahlreiche Anknüpfungspunkte für weiterführende Forschungsarbeiten bietet. Nicht zuletzt wäre es spannend, das Subjekt-Objekt-Verhältnis umzudrehen und den Umgang der vermeintlichen Adressaten des westdeutschen „Wirtschaftswunder“-Diskurses mit diesem Exportversuch in den Mittelpunkt weiterführender Forschung zu stellen.

**Frank Bösch: *Zeitenwende 1979. Als die Welt von heute begann*, München: C. H. Beck, 2019, 512 pp.**

Reviewed by  
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Scholarship that falls under the rubric of “contemporary history” inherited from the first generation of post–Cold War historiography an easy periodization: the alpha and omega of our present world lies in the moment that falls somewhere between the fall of the Berlin Wall, German reunification, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The dissolution of the bipolar Cold War order, so the argument goes, made space for a new constellation of problems that

would come to define the world we now inhabit. The years 1989, 1990, or 1991 thus appear, varyingly, as the beginning or ending of countless monographs, edited volumes, articles, conferences, and documentaries.

With *Zeitenwende 1979*, Frank Bösch positions himself among the growing collection of historians determined to reassess this periodization and the assumptions that undergird it. Bösch joins scholars who have redirected their attention toward the 1970s, the decade that ushered in the era “after the boom” (*nach dem Boom*) of early post-war reconstruction, as the historians Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael have argued.<sup>1</sup> Like the political scientist Claus Leggewie, the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, and the historian Niall Ferguson, Bösch wants to put a finer point on this assessment by designating 1979 as the global watershed of our present. His contribution to this scholarship is to analyse, together, the wave of crises that swept the globe during this year. Over ten chapters, each addressing a different event and geography, Bösch demonstrates how these crises initiated a series of “international structural developments” (p. 15) that laid the groundwork for the themes that preoccupy the world today.

These themes are, by nature, familiar to us. In chapters on the Iranian Revolution and Pope John Paul’s visit to Poland, Bösch argues that religion assumed a new significance around the world. He places particular emphasis on the strengthening of political Islam. Chapters on the onset of the Nicaraguan Revolution and the height of the humanitarian crisis surrounding the Vietnamese “boat people” allow Bösch to show the evolution of powerful transna-

tional solidarities from below. These case studies also underscore the emergence of a new concern with the integration of refugees. Bösch's accounts of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as well as the political and economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping in China highlight the rise of the Middle East and China alongside growing tensions between Western Europe and the United States. Bösch points to the start of Margaret Thatcher's tenure as prime minister as heralding the mainstreaming of neoliberal thought and an accompanying crisis of expertise. The oil crisis of 1979, interpreted together with the nuclear accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant, lead Bösch to stress the start of a new era of ecological thought and energy consciousness, especially regarding nuclear energy. A final chapter on the German premier of the American TV miniseries *Holocaust* frames the increasing power of the media and heightened attention to the experiences of victim groups. Together, Bösch's wide-ranging analyses point to the increasing vulnerability of both the Soviet Union and the United States and signal the beginning of the end of a bipolar global order a decade prior to its formal collapse.

The figures at the heart of Bösch's study range from charismatic political and religious leaders to the passionate, if sometimes also clueless, ordinary people who joined activism networks on behalf of the "Third World". What united this hodgepodge assembly of historical actors was their consciousness – modest though it sometimes was – that the events they witnessed constituted a break with the past. Although it would take decades for the contours of their new global preoccupations to come more clearly into focus, they

recognized the gradual replacement of the Cold War order with a multipolar world, characterized by plurality, simultaneity, and global interdependence.

Bösch weaves throughout this global study a second, narrower, national inquiry. He explores how each moment in question resonated in Germany – West and, to a lesser degree, East – and shaped its policies. That the Federal Republic enjoyed considerable economic importance in Iran and vice versa, for example, meant that neutrality toward Khomeini's revolution was not an option. As a sense of isolation pushed China westward in the 1970s, the Federal Republic was able to develop a new Far East policy with Beijing against Moscow. And Bösch reads West Germany's strong support for the Vietnamese "boat people" as a kind of compensation for Nazi Germany's treatment of the Jews. Bösch shows, in other words, the influence of an intensifying globalization on the values and behaviours of the Germans. More subtly, he also offers an assessment of how Germany has gradually come to find itself playing a key role on the international political stage.

As with all monographs that claim a global reach, one could take issue with Bösch's choice of case studies. Why did he select these ten events over others? Why not present the collapse of the Pol Pot regime as a vehicle for discussing the shifting influence of the Soviet Union and the waning force of Marxism-Leninism in addition to the heightening power of China? Why not engage with the history of the Uganda-Tanzania War and the end of the brutal regime of Ugandan president Idi Amin? Bösch's monograph offers virtually nothing on late-twentieth-century developments on

the African continent as its inhabitants negotiated post-colonial identities. Why not dwell on the first direct elections to the European parliament as a way to explore the promises of the European Union but also the inbuilt difficulties it has faced? And, more synthetically, why not dig more fully into the question of gender? The year 1979 lies solidly in the midst of second-wave feminism. Bösch does take up this theme briefly in his discussion of Thatcher's challenges to patriarchal norms. He could have devoted much more attention, however, to the changes at the intersection of power and gender, which helped inaugurate our contemporary world – one fundamentally shaped not only by Thatcher but also by the leadership of women like Angela Merkel in Germany, Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia, and Christine Lagarde at the International Monetary Fund as well as by Pussy Riot, the Me Too movement, and the ongoing global fight for women's reproductive rights.

These criticisms, however, are mostly quibbles that do not overshadow the book's strengths. Bösch's breadth will stimulate specialists in many fields interested in broadening their appreciation of the pre-history of our present moment. And he offers to scholars of Germany a new lens for understanding how the country came to occupy its position as a global leader. One hopes that the book will be translated in order to reach a wider audience.

Note:

- 1 A. Doering-Manteuffel/L. Raphael, *Nach dem Boom. Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970*, Göttingen 2008.

**Piotr H. Kosicki / Kyrill Kunakhovich**  
(eds.): **The Long 1989. Decades of Global Revolution**, Budapest: CEU Press, 2019, 284 pp.

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The year 1989 is still alive. It has been in very different mass movements in the post-socialist era: Occupy (2011), Arab Spring (2011), Ukrainian Euromaidan (2013/14), Brexit (2016), Hong Kong (2019/20), and recent anti-government protests in Belarus (2020/21). Even this brief list signals the timeliness of mapping the globalization of 1989 beyond the former Eastern bloc. *The Long 1989*, a book of nine chapters edited by Piotr Kosicki and Kyrill Kunakhovich, aims to explore these manifold historical and geographical interconnections and entanglements three decades after the revolutionary events.<sup>1</sup> The book sits within an array of recent works that aim to step out of national and regional frames and contribute to global and “long” historical understandings of 1989.<sup>2</sup> Their new perspectives reconfigure our understandings about the region through global comparisons, interconnections, and circulation, thereby contesting how 1989 has been appropriated and canonized by the West and simultaneously internalized and regionalized within Eastern Europe by anti-communist and nationalist narratives.

But how to spatialize 1989? As a critical geographer and global historian, I am es-