

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.

Reviewed by  
Zoltán Ginelli, Budapest

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-

pecially excited about the editors' ambition of "tracing the diffusion of revolution" (p. 4). Martin K. Dimitrov looks at conditions facilitating successful "learning from diffusion" across political regimes vis-à-vis Eastern Europe, China, and Russia (and the Soviet Union), while Mehmet Döşemeci explores how after the Arab Spring "the 2011 script had gone global" (p. 223). *Diffusion* is complicated, as Dimitrov demonstrates, as its dynamics include both learning and resisting, while ideas and practices often travel across political regimes and agendas. As Adrian Guelke and Tom Junes aptly show, South African anti-apartheid communists "copied" Polish anti-communists' non-violent resistance, mediatized indirectly through the "Leipzig way".

But what does diffusion actually mean? The answers in the book are provocative yet sometimes disappointing. Dimitrov's critique of the "classic theories of diffusion" is confusing without references to theorizing diffusion, including to any geographers. The static and unidirectional concepts of diffusion and transfer have been questioned by approaches to the geographies of knowledge, science and technology studies, and mobility studies. The "mobilities turn" has shown how political ideas, knowledge, symbols, practices, technologies, and policies are mobilized by various actors operating on different scales and are shaped in transit within networks of circulation. The authors resort to political theory's rather insular idealist and institutionalist views and leave actor-based and structurally conditioned mobilities under-conceptualized.

The volume's novelty lies in showing how the "myth of 1989" – as Valeria Korablyo-

va writes, a "peculiarly Western European reading of 1989" – had been mobilized from South Africa to China to Ukraine. Döşemeci claims that this resulted in the Eurocentric "policing of the category of revolutions in the uni-ideological world since 1989" (p. 217), which concealed the novelties of revolt in non-Western/European spaces, such as in the Arab Spring. As Döşemeci argues, the term has been "historically tamed" to present "revolution as a period of transition between a non-democratic past and a democratic future" (p. 215), following a "geopolitical bifurcation of the uprisings along the world's democratic divide" (p. 216) that framed Arab states' political struggles simply as an "orderly transition to democracy". This Eurocentric conceptualization of revolution is also demonstrated by Samuel Helfont's critical analysis of Francis Fukuyama's biased narratives of the Middle East. As Dimitrov points out, a similar bias exists in the Western-centric narratives of post-1989 communist China: as if only autocracies learn from democracies, and not the other way around.

However, the book often builds on such myths. Korablyova claims that "the revolutions of 1989 were not an affirmation of the supremacy of the Western political system, but rather an alternative to the West", labelling this "radical democracy", "civil democracy", "self-democratizing civil society", or "performative democracy" (p. 248). The authors' views of an essentialized "ethos" of East Central European 1989 and the role of the "rule of law" or "human rights" demonstrate an antagonistic interplay between "catching-up" with liberal, democratic visions and Eastern European exceptionalism, characteristic

of semiperipheral positioning. They also often project their own political views and de-emphasize aspects or actors that contradict their narratives. Helfont envisions that “the Middle East may one day become a bastion of liberal democracy” (p. 208) but positions post-colonial critics (e.g. Timothy Mitchell) merely as “realists” occupying the vacuum of failed Fukuyama-style liberal narratives. Jeffrey Stout, after discussing how Martin Luther King’s “dialogical democracy” influenced the Polish historian Adam Michnik, concludes in a dense commentary on Donald Trump and constructs a questionable pantheon of “civil rights activists [that] most fully embodied the ideal of dialogical democracy” (p. 101). István Rév’s intellectual history of non-radical (“non-Marxist”) and non-violent anti-revolutionary political change – “not inventing anything” – focuses exclusively on a specific liberal clique.

This may lead to selective readings of the political pluriverse and alternatives of 1989. Many things were “not invented” in 1989: nationalism, racism, Christian democracy, or the “totalitarian thesis” (classifying both fascism and communism under totalitarianism). The latter continues to fuel problematic anti-communist revisionism about Sovietization and state socialism, while anti-totalitarianism legitimated political elites’ economic consensus of supporting neoliberalism. However, it was not obvious that 1989 would result in a market economy free from authoritarian rule.<sup>3</sup> General Wojciech Jaruzelski’s introduction of martial law in 1981 in Poland is a clear indication. Tobias Rupprecht has shown that liberal democratic enthusiasm around 1989 concealed alternatives of illiberal non-democratic change: in the 1980s

and 1990s, Pinochet’s “Chilean model” was popular amongst elites supporting authoritarian neoliberalism in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Russia.<sup>4</sup> Another concern is essentialization. For Korablyova, the Ukrainian Euromaidan introduced a unique democratic revolution. Dösemeci essentializes the 2011 Arab Spring and the Occupy movement as having introduced disruptive, anti-capitalist “social arrest” instead of “social movements” in 1989. We may recall other forms of revolt: historical precedents of university and factory occupations, samizdat networks, and radio or press infrastructure, or workers’ labour unionizing. Why and how had anti-capitalist and anti-systemic protests and organizations been overturned by the 1989 “liberal consensus” is not discussed in the book.

Political theorists often highlight political ideologies and strategies but seldom capture underlying structural dynamics. Dimitrov’s claim is striking: “had these strategies of resisting peaceful evolution been followed, China today would more closely resemble North Korea” (p. 80). He attributes “successful learning” to the availability of time since “strong economic performance and strong repressive capacity may increase the ability of a state to survive crises” (p. 63), but the political economic conditions of success are de-emphasized. Most authors seem to support that, in time, democratic uprisings shake off dictators, but they do not discuss how the “transitology” of an inevitable shift from socialism to capitalism legitimated neoliberal change. The book’s political narrative and intellectual history differs from recent studies, which situate the “long 1989” within long-term structural processes, such as capitalist cycles of accu-

mulation and indebtedness, which frame social movements' "conditions of possibility" according to their integrated position in the capitalist world-system.<sup>5</sup> Its dominantly liberal narrative carries the danger of depoliticizing pre-1989 global visions of progressive politics, which has become an issue since the post-1989 "return to Europe" deglobalized the region's history and since Eurocentric civilizational divisions took over previous anti-colonial solidarities in a "re-whitened" Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the book raises awareness of local entanglements. Vera Exnerová shows that the rise of a new transnational ideology of Islamism in Afghanistan and Central Asia emerged not solely in direct opposition to Soviet rule, but out of internal power struggles within Muslim societies. Her work resonates with Artemy Kalinovsky's studies on development in Central Asia (Tajikistan), which contest Eurocentric views by narrating the "long 1989" from decolonization to post-socialist neoliberalism.<sup>6</sup> The narrative of Guelke and Junes may be extended by a recent book on the global history of anti-apartheid, in which two chapters explore the interrelations between South African apartheid and socialist Eastern Europe by focusing on race and solidarity and Polish relations, including the role of Polish diaspora and refugees.<sup>7</sup> As for China, Dimitrov is correct in claiming that "Tiananmen was not copied by mass protests in Europe" (p. 69), but these connections should not be underestimated.<sup>8</sup> Shifting solidarities are demonstrative: in Hungary, the anti-communist, liberal democratic opposition party of Fidesz held sympathy protests condemning the Tiananmen massacre, but after their authoritarian turn in 2017, Vik-

tor Orbán wreathed the Monument to the People's Heroes to foster foreign relations with communist China.

*The Long 1989* takes us yet one step further towards globalizing 1989. Perhaps more focus on spatial epistemologies and global dimensions of race, class, and gender may lead us to more globally integrated and less exceptionalist understandings. But the most difficult challenge still lies ahead: to follow Dimitrov's call to trace "learning across authoritarian regimes" (p. 86) and extend the "long 1989" to understand how former revolutionaries have mobilized their legacies of 1989 for political legitimation – as signaled by Orbán's "second revolution".

#### Notes:

- 1 The book is based on a twentieth anniversary conference, "The Global 1989: A New Generation", at Princeton University, organized in 2009 by co-editor Piotr H. Kosicki.
- 2 J. Simensen, *The Global Context of 1989*, in: G.-R. Horn/P. Kenney (eds.), *Transnational Moments of Change. Europe 1945, 1968, 1989*, Lanham 2004; G. Lawson et al. (ed.): *The Global 1989. Continuity and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge 2010; J. Mark et al., *1989. A Global History of Eastern Europe. Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, Bloomington 2019. See also the research projects: 1989 After 1989 (2015–19) at the University of Exeter led by James Mark and the Research Network 1989 led by Chris Armbruster.
- 3 Mark et al., 1989.
- 4 T. Rupperecht, *Formula Pinochet. Chilean Lessons for Russian Liberal Reformers during the Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 51 (2016) 1, pp. 165–186; T. Rupperecht, *Pinochet in Prague. Authoritarian Visions of Economic Reforms and the State in Eastern Europe, 1980–2020*, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 18 (2020) 3, pp. 312–323.
- 5 M. Á. Éber et al., 1989: Szempontok a rendszerváltás globális politikai gazdaságtanához, in: *Fordulat* 21 (2014), pp. 11–63; Á. Gagyí, So-

- cial Movement Studies for East Central Europe? The Challenge of a Time-Space Bias on Postwar Western Societies, in: *Intersections: East European Journal of Society and Politics* 1 (2015), pp. 16–36.
- 6 A. M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development. Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan*, Ithaca 2018.
- 7 P. Betts et al., *Race, Socialism and Solidarity. Anti-Apartheid in Eastern Europe*, in: A. Konieczna/R. Skinner (eds.), *A Global History of Anti-Apartheid*, Basingstoke 2019; K. Christiaens/I. Goddeeris, *Solidarity or Anti-Apartheid? The Polish Opposition and South Africa, 1976–1989*, in: *ibid.*
- 8 P. Vámos, *The Tiananmen Square “Incident” in China and the East Central European Revolutions*, in: W. Mueller et al. (ed.), *The Revolutions of 1989. A Handbook*, Vienna 2015.