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Only a Bright Moment in an Age of War, Genocide and Terror?

On the Significance of the Revolutions of 1989

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Abstract

1989 was described as 'annus mirabilis', and its peaceful revolutions hailed as one of the great moments in human history. In subsequent years, the re-emergence of war, genocide and terror led to re-interpretation: Europe became a dark continent, the 20th century its darkest hour. Was 1989 merely a bright moment in a sea of violence?

This contribution acknowledges European war, genocide and terror and examines in some detail the contribution of this history to the peaceful revolutions of 1989. It is argued that horrific violence – Stalinist terror, World War II, the Cold War as well as genocide, ethnic cleansing and deportation – resulted in a legacy that contributed to the revolutions of 1989 in the following ways:

Stalinist terror resulted in the persistent illegitimacy of relations of domination, which ultimately resulted in a structural stasis leading to the breakdown of the Soviet empire;

The global Cold War integrated the Soviet project in the world order and provided its raison d'etre but its winding down provided the opportunity to peacefully overcome the Soviet legacy;

Yalta, ethnic cleansing and Soviet 'nationality policies' resulted in diligent determination to build independent states - beyond 1989.

In view of this legacy the revolutions of 1989 are re-assessed for their significance. It is argued that the negotiated revolutions were more than a utopian moment as they provide a model of large-scale and rapid transition that is not marred by violence. To be sure, only a select number of countries underwent a negotiated revolution, but this was not limited to Central Europe. The true and lasting global significance of 1989 is that it provides clear-cut alternatives of organising synchronised political and social change in the 21st century. Contrary to received historical wisdom, revolutions may in future be the non-violent means of organising large-scale and rapid change, if negotiated.

Table of contents

A dark 20th century? European war, genocide and terror

> "Thanks to war, occupation, boundary adjustments, expulsions and genocide, almost everybody now lived in their own country, among their own people."
> *Tony Judt (2005) Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945, p. 9*

Global public awareness and scholarly attention shifted quickly from the peaceful revolutions of 1989 to the war in the Gulf and then in the Balkans. While participants and observers alike experienced 1989 as 'annus mirabilis', the return of genocide and ethnic cleansing in Europe, and then the wider world, prompted a re-examination of the darker aspects of 20th century European and world history. Scholarly interpreters spoke of the age of extremes, identified Europe as a dark continent, marred by war, genocide and terror, and generally identified the 20th century with unparalleled human suffering. Even democracy was reinterpreted as including a dark side of ethnic cleansing (e.g. Hobsbawm 1994, Mazower 1998, Mann 2005).

Intellectually, the aftermath of 1989 seemed to parallel the years after World War II, echoing the literature on totalitarianism, war and genocide and, more generally, the negative dialectics of the enlightenment. Significantly, after 1989 many a project of mourning and remembering the victims was launched. In Europe this included uncomfortable questions about collaboration and collusion with fascist and communist perpetrators of violence, particularly of the Soviet and Nazi variant.

20 years after 1989 it seems as if the legacy of the Cold War and the age of extremes is yet more war, genocide and terror in the 21st century. While not all may share predictions about a clash of civilisations, there exists a palpable uneasiness about the future of humanity - if not the rule of law and democracy globalise but war and terror. That the 'war on terror' should lead to the suspension of democracy and human rights, the destruction of countries and the rise of a newly militarised economy only add to the worries. As an antidote to dark visions of past and future, scholars have begun to reappraise 20th century history for its minor utopias and brighter moments (e.g. Winter 2006, Judt 2008). It seems as if achievements such as the declaration of human rights, the welfare state and the emancipation of women need excavating to be transported into the 21st century.

Narratives and evaluations of the 20th century, in which the events associated with 1989, including the demise of the Soviet Union, are invariably seen as the endpoint, move between describing 'dark' and 'light' phases. While there is some recognition that projects of peace, human rights, liberty and prosperity, such as the

European Union, have emerged from the ashes of war, the description of 'dark' and 'light' is usually kept separate. This is also the case for 1989. While histories of the Soviet era may well focus on terror and genocide, historians of 1989 are likely to focus on resistance, dissidence and opposition before 1989. In doing so, they inadvertently paint a lighter picture of the Soviet era, since spaces of oppositions and networks of dissidence are seen to exist. Notably, heroes of the revolutions of 1989 often do not recognise the 're-touched' pictures of the Soviet era, which they experienced not as 'pluralistic' but totalitarian. However, a much more precise understanding of the global history of 1989 might be gained by explicitly tracing a connection between terror and liberty, genocide and national independence, war and peace. Viewed this way, it is a story of resilience: the way in which dark turned to light is what gives the events of 1989 significance well into the 21st century.

The following contribution sets out to show how horrific violence resulted in a legacy that contributed to the peaceful revolutions of 1989 in the following ways:

> Stalinist terror resulted in the persistent illegitimacy of relations of domination, which ultimately resulted in a structural stasis leading to the breakdown of the Soviet empire;
>
> The global Cold War integrated the Soviet project in the world order and provided its raison d'etre but its winding down provided the opportunity to peacefully overcome the Soviet legacy;
>
> Yalta, ethnic cleansing and Soviet 'nationality policies' resulted in diligent determination to build independent states – beyond 1989.

The peaceful revolutions of 1989 are re-assessed for their significance. It is argued that the negotiated revolutions were more than a utopian moment as they provide a model of large-scale and rapid change that is not marred by violence. To be sure, only a select number of countries underwent a negotiated revolution, but this was not limited to Central Europe. The true and lasting global significance of 1989 is that it provides clear-cut alternatives of organising political and social change in the 21st century. Contrary to received historical wisdom, revolutions may in future be the non-violent means of organising large-scale and rapid change, if negotiated.

Stalinist terror, structural stasis and the breakdown of the Soviet empire

To many participants and observers alike, 1989 signified internal breakdown. During 1989, the loss of control over borders and space of the outer and inner Soviet empire, in contrast to China, was first palpable and then fatal. As this loss of control occurred all over the empire, but was not induced externally, it must have had internal origins. Since the collapse occurred simultaneously in the outer and inner empire (Baltic, Caucasus, Central Europe), a joint underlying factor is a more plausible explanation than any domino theory espousing as cause televised revolutions of fallen vassals.

If the underlying factor was present throughout the Soviet realm, it must have gestated. Imperial overstretch and economic recession have been proposed as explanations, but may be ruled out. The Soviet military did not collapse; the state budget was not out of control and economic recession set in only as a

consequence of Soviet breakdown (1989 was not like 1917 or 1929). This narrows down the search to the political. Analysts frequently prefer either top-down or bottom-up explanations, attributing the collapse to either Gorbachev or, else, civil society. Such explanations, however, are highly voluntarist and implausible. The Soviet order was of the 20th century, bringing with it administrative complexity as well as a wide gulf between the coercive powers of the state and the political means of non-governmental organisations.

The Soviet order has been described as organised, hierarchical and totalitarian. It was organised by a political party and its nomenklatura. The organisation was characterised by relations of command and obedience, even in the economic and cultural sphere. Because of this configuration, the Stalinist terror could have such a significant impact in terms of scope, scale, duration and intensity. While the Bolsheviks considered terror against enemies and outsiders legitimate political violence, the meaning and consequence of terror changes when directed against insiders. Some of the mechanisms of terror as well as the number of victims have been disputed among scholars (for the discussion and further details one may usefully consult: Getty/Manning 1993, Nove 1994, Conquest 1997, Courtois 1997). But it is undisputed that Stalinist terror hit insiders for twenty years on an unprecedented scale. Terror hit the Central Committee and its apparatus in Moscow, and also that in Prague and Budapest. Officials of Gosplan were affected, just as all the ministries, the directors of enterprises in Siberia, and collectivised nomads in Kazakhstan. Terror spread throughout the political network, but also engulfed the economic, military and cultural network. The Red Army lost its leading officers in 1937. During and after the winter campaign against Finland in 1939/40, more officers were executed and soldiers sent to forced labour camp. As the German Wehrmacht attacked in 1941 and the Red Army retreated in defeat, more officers were executed. Even after having taken Berlin in May 1945, returning officers and soldiers were screened by the NKVD and sent to forced labour camps, all the more so if they had been interned in German camps.

It is also undisputed that terror was particularly intense at the communist apex. Stalinist repression between 1936 and 1938 hit five members of the politburo, 98 of the 139 members of the central committee, 1108 of the 1966 delegates to the XVII party congress in 1934, and ninety percent of the party cadres in Leningrad. Only 3 of the 200 members of the Ukrainian central committee survived. In the Komsomol, 72 of the 93 members of the central committee were arrested, 319 of the 385 regional secretaries, and 2210 of the 2759 district secretaries. Several hundred cadres of the Comintern were executed. The European communist parties were twice hit by terror at their central apex, first during their exile in Moscow in 1936 and 1937, and then for seven years after 1948. Scripted in Moscow, and organised by the secret police and judiciary organs, prosecution and proceedings were publicised across Europe, keeping communist parties and their members under threat and in fear, for anyone could be implicated in a 'Titoist' plot or some other conspiracy.

Terror was limited only by the reach of territorial control. Many Soviet officials serving abroad were lured to Moscow on a pretext for their arrest. Soviet terror even crept into organisations not subject to Soviet territorial control, such as the Communist Party of the USA (Wright 1950). Members had to comply with orders

from above, or else were branded as traitors, given a show trial, and expelled from the party. The CP USA then sought to prevent expelled members from securing a means of livelihood, but for lack of territorial control and administrative powers could not execute its members or have them sent to forced labour camps.

Much ink has been spilled in analysing Soviet totalitarianism as well as its post-Soviet legacy. By contrast, the consequences of Stalinist terror are not well understood. While terror was brought under control after Stalin's death, its legacy undid the Soviet project. Barrington Moore in 'Terror and Progress USSR' (1954) inquired about the potential for the rationalisation or traditionalisation after Stalinist terror. Moore presented three alternative scenarios: a perpetuation of totalitarian power politics, its rationalisation, and its traditionalisation. While he argued that totalitarian power had acted as a corrosive on tradition, he also asserted that the establishment of a rational-legal order would amount to a genuine transformation, and hence, overall, he stressed signs pointing towards a re-traditionalisation of the Soviet order. More specifically, he expected that there would either be a push towards rationalisation with an emphasis on responsibility and competence in organisations, or more traditional ties would re-assert themselves with an emphasis on kinship ties and personal loyalty. In this latter case, while formally perpetuating totalitarian rule, local centres would seek both to limit the directional powers of the central apex and evade its control, thus finally paralysing it.

If we survey the history from the 1950s to the 1980s, it becomes evident that rationalisation of the Soviet order was never achieved, not even in the most advanced East German economy. Moreover, the repeated de-mobilisation of agents of rationalisation, such as of industrial managers, workers' councils and writers' guilds, reinforced the trend towards re-traditionalisation. However, informal patron-client relationships deepened economic shortage by diverting resources from one place to alleviate shortage somewhere else in return for a private profit. The rise of parallel patronage networks led to the prevalence of negative behavioural control within the party, making personal loyalty more important than function and capability.

It was not that the Soviet empire inexorably drifted towards paralysis, but rather that the sum of military interventions, de-mobilisations and purges pre-empted rationalisation and fostered structural stasis instead. Structural stasis is the inability of an organisation to mobilise, as those internal structures needed for its mobilisation are blocked. Structural stasis is not a state of affairs anybody controls, nor can it be undone at will, but it is rather a historical condition that is a consequence of previous praxis and constrains future agency (Archer 1988, Sztompka 1991). Structural stasis does not inhibit agency per se, but it does make it highly unlikely that an organisation achieves any intended objective.

The Gorbachevian leadership formulated new policies, reorganised party bodies and exchanged personnel (e.g. Gill 1994, Onikov 1996, Brown 1997). In March 1985, Gorbachev expressly called upon the party to follow his new economic policies, and to help implement them, so as to achieve an acceleration of economic development and to establish the self-management of enterprises. In April 1986, Gorbachev spoke of the need for perestroika and warned his party that its leading role was not a right, but a privilege to be earned. Party cadres and

members were actively to implement reforms. Elections by secret ballot were introduced for cadres and secretaries from primary party organisations at the workplace up to the republican level. Gorbachev also took to altering the party's environment, and advocated a socialist pluralism of opinions and a socialist law-based state, both of which would limit the party's function and would redefine its role more clearly as a political vanguard without administrative powers.

Gorbachev renewed the push for the rationalisation at a time when party cells still existed in all organisations of the USSR and in Eastern Europe. In the Central Committee apparatus, by March 1987, Gorbachev had retained less than one out of six secretaries and replaced nine out of ten heads of departments. Already in 1986, the Central Committee had co-opted 125 new members, a renewal rate of forty percent. In 1989 a further 110 members were sent off at a plenary session. At the provincial level, more than 100 of the 159 party secretaries were dismissed. In the autumn of 1988, Gorbachev ordered another reorganisation of the Central Committee apparatus, which nominally freed Soviet ministries and their administration from party directives, separating party from government. However, while the staff of the Central Committee could not prevent the loss of its economic, military, cultural and educational departments, or a large reduction in numbers, most members refused to confine themselves to what were henceforth meant to be their tasks. The Central Committee was to analyse Soviet affairs and devise strategic proposals for further political and economic restructuring, but it was to leave decision-making to the Politburo and all administration to the government. Instead, Central Committee departments continued to issue directives and to interfere in the day-to-day management of Soviet affairs. Moreover, the Soviet ministries counteracted any economic decentralisation by insisting on the highest possible quotas of delivery for centralised collection and distribution, backing this measure by monthly reviews of plan fulfilment for each enterprise individually. The ministerial staff likewise resisted any administrative reorganisation by creating new administrative bodies for the ones they had been ordered to abolish, and by increasing staff while formally reducing the number of administrative sub-units. The Central Committee apparatus preserved negative control by vetoing measures proposed by the government.

Despite all the reorganisations and the exchange of personnel in Moscow and throughout the Soviet republics, Gorbachev could not mobilise for reform either his party or his government. It was the same for the Soviet clients in Eastern Europe. While insubordination in some province of a far-flung empire may not be infrequent, the scope and scale of non-obedience in the late 1980s was remarkable. Ultimately, the Soviet order was organised through relations of command and obedience. Scholars have analysed the Soviet order as totalitarian, mono-organisational and imperial, emphasising how relations of domination encompassed not only the military and political network, but also the economic and cultural sphere, how all networks were directed by a central apex and how this central apex ultimately also controlled affairs in Central Europe. What observers missed was that by 1980s insubordination and obstruction spread not only in the provinces but also hit the central apex, making it highly unlikely that the Gorbachevian leadership could achieve the intended reforms.

Observers have blamed the Soviet breakdown on faulty thinking and strategic blunders. However, given the decision to mobilise, Gorbachev did the right things and most of these in the right order. Soviet leadership observed that their empire had lost ground. To halt or even reverse this trend it was essential to stop war, hot and cold, withdraw from Afghanistan, and sign disarmament treaties with NATO. Only this would free resources for internal reform. Moreover, the international reputation Gorbachev and his foreign minister Shevardnadze gained gave the Soviets the breathing space to concentrate on internal reform. Gorbachev had his hands free to reorganise the Soviet centre. It was noted that the initial emphasis on acceleration was misplaced, and that the Soviet empire had not only suffered from stagnation, but also that a restructuring of social relations was necessary, which would encourage participation and enhance voluntary co-operation.

However, mobilisation for a rationalisation of the Soviet order required a relaxation of the tight control previously exercised. Commanders had to rely on their subordinates, and trust that they would carry out orders in the interest of the operation. As subordinates evidently obstructed reform, the central apex could have decided on a mobilisation by direct coercion. In principle, this was possible as long as the imperial borders remained sealed and the organs of coercion patrolled both the territories and all organisational space. However, mobilisation by direct coercion would have led not only to the dismantling of reform policies, but also would have robbed the leadership of its credibility, world-wide and at home. It is highly unlikely that Gorbachev could have attained any of his goals by direct coercion, especially as his policies presupposed legality and were to be implemented by persuasion.

In sum, Gorbachev and his staff were effective only in things they could achieve personally. Hence Gorbachev's successful foreign policy, reorganisation of the Central Committee apparatus, and exchange of personnel. But all of this was to no avail, as even the new personnel obstructed reform and effectively invalidated Gorbachev's reforms by carrying on as before. When called upon to rejuvenate, the party found itself rendered immobile. Immobile, it could no longer hold together the empire. Co-operation stopped, organisations disconnected and all the Soviet networks dissolved.

Barrington Moore principally anticipated this scenario, though he did not explain why it would happen. It happened because Stalinist terror was dysfunctional for modernisation, making 'Soviet modernity' unwanted while promoting re-traditionalisation outside the Soviet order, in parallel networks. Moreover, twenty years of terror inside Soviet organisations, including the party, made relations of command and obedience illegitimate. Legitimate domination, so Max Weber (1978), presupposes mutual recognition by superordinates and subordinates. Physical and material security must be provided within the organisation. Domination thereby becomes a legitimate mandate for leadership, and subordinates will actively carry out commands. As superordinates and subordinates respect their reciprocal, if unequal, rights and obligations, the relation of domination is invested with legitimacy, opening the avenue for its lasting integration by traditionalisation and/or rationalisation. Legitimacy invests the commander with authority. A relation of domination is coercive insofar as the

commander selects among alternative courses of action, and subordinates are bound by this decision in executing the order.

Max Weber (1978) elaborated on idealtypes of legitimate domination. But what if those asked to carry out the command, for the first or the umpteenth time, do not recognise the legitimacy of the commander? Lets assume that disobedience, possibly even rebellion, becomes widespread. What can the leadership do to prevent the dissolution of the association? Lets further assume that the leadership is either unwilling or else unable to undertake measures to regain legitimacy. If the association is not to dissolve, the leadership must coerce subordinates into carrying out its orders. Domination becomes illegitimate, but can be perpetuated, if the leadership possesses the will and the means to lock in and tie down the subordinates, and to prevent self-mobilisation from below. Subordinates will be pressured existentially by the threat to withhold the means of livelihood, and by measures designed at least to control their actions.

If the illegitimacy of Soviet relations of command and obedience was a legacy of the Stalinist terror that, as rationalisation failed, gestated into a structural stasis: What did and did not happen to make the Soviet breakdown inevitable? Structural stasis in the 1980s defined the logic of the situation in which the Soviet leadership found itself when it decided to mobilise the party and its nomenklatura for perestroika and glasnost. Structural stasis did not mean that the agency of most people was blocked or that society had become static. It was the Soviet leadership that could not mobilise the party to achieve intended objectives. Structural stasis was neither a predetermined outcome of Soviet history, nor did it make Soviet breakdown inevitable. Structural stasis was the accumulated effect of previous action and non-action. Nevertheless, there was more than one course of action open to the Gorbachevian leadership. If, however, full mobilisation were decided upon, then Soviet breakdown would become highly probable because if one seeks to mobilise an organisation but the subordinates refuse to follow orders time and again, disintegration eventually becomes inevitable. If the Gorbachevian leadership had refrained from permitting glasnost and not aimed for perestroika, then Soviet imperial rule could have lasted for as long as the relative decline did not turn into an absolute decline of resources. Gorbachev (1995) himself came to believe that without glasnost and perestroika, Soviet rule could have been perpetuated beyond the year 2000.

The Global Cold War and the revolutions of 1989

The Bolsheviks transposed their political logic onto society. Party-led collectivisation and mobilisation for industrial development reinforced this fit as central planning and a unified administration was imposed. However, given the highly unstable dynamic outlined above, why did the Soviet order not break down before 1989?

It is suggested that neither politics nor ideology explain the perpetuation of the Soviet order but the integration into global warfare. As long as the Soviets stayed integrated into war, the central apex could continue to impose a fit on the military, political, economic and cultural network. Military poiesis and its logic of perception, to be or not to be, sustained the Soviet project. Military projects were launched,

technology stolen, goods bartered and energy resources traded in return for grain and foodstuffs, so as to project military might. Subjected to calls for greater vigilance, the party engaged in a search not only for hostile 'bourgeois' and 'nationalist' wreckers and saboteurs, but also for the deserter, the traitor and the enemy within.

The global Cold War, its dynamic and the aspects connected to the Third World have been widely analysed. It is also clear that the contest was not symmetrical and the main parties were not of equal strength (e.g. Crockatt 1995, Cox 1998, Saull 2001, Westad 2006). Yet, the consequences of integration into global warfare for Soviet project are not well understood. Neither is the impact of the Gorbachev withdrawal. To situate the Soviet project in world society and analyse its integration into global warfare, it is suggested to distinguish between social integration and system differentiation (cf. Lockwood 1964, Luhmann 1984, Archer 1996, Mouzelis 1997). To clarify this distinction between social integration, by such relations as hierarchies, markets or warfare, and system differentiation through the constitution of specific codes for the economy, politics, science, law and so on, the following may be noted about the Soviet project:
-   Socially, the particular characteristic was the global and local disintegration from market relations and the prevalence of hierarchies. As suggested above, these hierarchies were beset by illegitimacy. Hence, the prevalent mode of social integration of the Soviet empire, into the world order and internally, was warfare and militarization.
-   Systemically, the Soviet project exhibited a high level of differentiation, as can be expected in the 20th century, with systemic political, economic, military, legal, scientific and artistic codes. However, due to global integration and the projection of Soviet military power, the reproduction of these systemic codes could not be insulated from the wider world.

The consequences resulting from the particular Soviet mode of social integration and systemic differentiation have been described, but here it is highlighted how they conditioned the revolutions of 1989. Engaged in or threatened by war, the Soviet central apex kept the economic network mobilised, its organisations heteronomous (i.e. no organisation or association was autonomous in its order) and heterocephalous (i.e. leaders were appointed from outside and above). Economic communication centred on the availability or non-availability of goods and labour-power, signalling shortage. While organisations stayed disintegrated from markets they operated with soft-budget constraints. Without integration into markets the imperial centre could not rationalise plan making and its fulfilment. While subordinate organisations withheld information, the central apex refused permission to adapt the plan. By insisting on taut planning, adaptation was only allowed when crisis demanded it (e.g. Sapir 1990, Kornai 1992).

As soon as coercion lessened, and some decentralisation in decision-making was allowed, the monopolistic claim to resources by the centre, in conjunction with the endemic shortage, led to well-known consequences. There was a trend towards the self-sufficiency of economic units, which tended towards vertical integration to become independent from supplies. They bartered goods and labour-power among themselves and illegally privatised resources, which were sold on black markets. Conversely, economic organisations were and could not be expected to

meet any contractual obligations, nor to be reliable in co-operation, but rather to focus on manipulating plan figures and the indicators of their fulfilment. There was no resolution for the conflict between the central apex and the organisations down and out in the networks, which were striving for some autonomy and control over resources.

The Soviets nominally adhered to general and formal rules, institutionalised in law, bureaucracy and the plan, but the actual practice - above, below and throughout the networks - was little oriented towards these rules (the following analysis owes much to Central European and Russian dissident literature – for a summary and guide see Falk 2003, Berlin 2004). Given the disintegration from markets and the fragility of the relations of domination, these institutions became facades while the empire largely governed itself by informal power and exchange relations. This undermined rationalisation within the imperial networks, so that ordered relations of power were only achievable by traditionalisation of social relations. Locally, in well-defined spaces such as an office, a film production site, or on the shop floor, legitimate hierarchies could well emerge - but they could not express themselves in autonomous organisation.

In these circumstances judiciary organs (and medical organisations) to a considerable degree remained political instruments of de-mobilisation. Moreover, the legal code had from the 1930s to the 1950s been manipulated to enforce mobilisation. Although a constitution was proclaimed in 1936, the legal code was immediately instrumentalised by courts passing death sentences on fabricated evidence. Later condemnation of Stalinism as a violation of socialist legality showed that these practices had distorted the code, but not succeeded in extinguishing it. However, the party and the organs of coercion maintained their extra-legal status, and continued to use the law as an instrument for sanctioning prosecution at will. Thus the relative security that, after Stalin, was achieved despite the unstable imperial dynamic, needed to be enforced by juridical sanctions against disturbing this internal peace. This practice, however, proved to be in violation not only of the declaration of human rights or the Helsinki accords, but also of legal codes in the Soviet realm. As juridical organs did not become autonomous and the rule of law was not enforced, the legal code, globally and at home, showed up Soviet practice as illegal.

Overall, although systemic differentiation provided for the functional specialisation of organisations and the development of institutions of brokerage and mediation between these systems, the central apex, for lack of durable integration and a stable imperial dynamic, preferred tight control to self-organisation, smothering initiative from below. The Soviet project was persistently beset by its inability to de-monopolise resources, devolve decision-making, or accept the autocephaly of any lower body within the party. Hence de-centralisation within the Soviet networks was stalled, and organisations formally related to each other only through the hierarchies that connected them with the central apex. However, cultural codes the central apex could not control. Its mode of regulation of organisations and governance of people, which it did control, it did not change. While the Soviet project suffered the increasing confinement and privatisation of resources by subordinate organisations, it resorted to extra-legal measures in its fight against corruption and the hoarding of goods.

As regards the cultural codes, the imperial centre was able to temporarily and partially superimpose its codes by proclaiming and enforcing its version of socialist realism or of the biological laws of inheritance. It did so by destroying churches, torturing scientists, executing writers and banning books. But artistic, scientific, or religious codes continued to self-reproduce, globally and underground. Soviet practices encouraged dogmatism, provoked a double standard in communication, induced institutionalised evasion of rules, and provoked disrespect for the law and the distrust of superordinates. Moreover, they encoded Soviet practice as worse, false, and evil, and its networks as the domain of vice, disdain and shame. Dissociation from the empire and the retreat into a private existence was identified with the good life, virtue, dignity and pride, hence it became ever more difficult for the Soviet project to mobilise people for its values or goals.

Integration into global warfare had ambivalent consequences for the Soviet project. While military integration enabled perpetuation of rule, the global cultural codes only showed up the illegitimacy of Soviet domination. Moreover, in these circumstances, the military effort could not but drain resources without leading to any form of military superiority. The Gorbachev withdrawal is best understood against this backdrop as an effort to address the internal consequences of being dependent on warfare and militarization for too long. The attempted rationalisation was an effort to replenish the resource base while making Soviet practice compatible with global cultural codes. The reintegration of Soviet networks into markets was partly motivated by the technology gap, partly necessary because of the rising debt. However, while economic shortage drove the central apex towards mobilisation for reform, the illegitimacy of its command lead to Soviet breakdown.

All told, the cultural codes with their bias for legality, merit, and truth, pre-figured the revolutions of 1989 and the ensuing transformation. Moreover, as the central apex had preferred tight control to a more diffuse influence, its shrinking reach enabled parallel, interstitial networks to emerge as the places from which the leaders of spontaneous privatisation and political revolution could emerge.

Yalta, ethnic cleansing and state building beyond the Soviet empire

It is estimated that from 1939 to 1948 more than 40 million died and more than 40 million were deported and displaced in Europe, mainly in Eastern Europe (e.g. Naimark 2001, Ther/Siljak 2001, Judt 2005). As a consequence of Yalta, the Nazi policy of genocide, the deportation and expulsion of people by Soviet forces, extensive boundary shifts, more ethnic cleansing and treks of refugees across Eastern Europe, territories with titular nations emerged as administrative units: either as Soviet republics or as peoples' republics. The Yalta Agreement is understood as symbolising Western compliance in the final Stalinist re-ordering of Eastern Europe. Undoing Yalta and the return to Europe was consequently one of the most powerful motivations of nationalist opposition to Soviet rule and dissidence in the communist system (e.g. Rupnik 1988, reporting also on the views of such important dissident voices as Kolawkowski, Michnik, Feher and Konrad).

It is widely argued that events of 1989 represented a rush for national independence. The dispute whether primordial or instrumental nationalism prevailed may seem unresolved, but there is concurrence that nationality policy, nation building and nationalism are the key issues (e.g. Brubakers 1996, Gellner 1997, Smith 1998). The secessionist wars of the late 1980s and 1990s (Caucasus, Balkan, Black Sea) were taken as confirmation of the overriding importance of nation and ethnicity. For the period after World War II, the prevalence of nation and nationalism is likewise affirmed. Key policies and disputes seemingly revolved around these issues, i.e. Soviet nationality policy and national communism, including notions such as "nationalist deviation." Against Sovietization and Russification, so the narrative goes, local governments were able to limit the reach of the Soviet centre by a defensive stance, promoting national history and culture while seeking to reduce Russian presence in the political and economic administration (e.g. Carrere d'Encausse 1979, Simon 1986).

Collective violence very much defined Europe in the 20th century. Yet, the consequence of collective violence was not just the ethnic and social homogeneity of most of the post-conflict territories, but also the existence of a Soviet imperial cage that fostered state building. This legacy of Yalta proved important in shaping the revolutions of 1989 as state building projects. Soviet imperial rule relied on closed borders and tight control over space. However, this cage also secured the boundaries of the newly consolidated territorial units. Modernisation enforced the build up of state capacity. Socialist states developed the full spectrum of state functions and were activist by engaging in industrial policy and wealth redistribution. Some functional goals were specific to socialism and arguably dysfunctional, i.e. the planned economy produced shortage. In important respects socialist states failed to provide public goods, i.e. the rule of law. Further still, the Central European states were client states, whose ruling elite was dependent on the Soviet central apex. Nevertheless, the Soviet system entailed the building of state capacity and, over four decades, the increasingly native practise and exercise of state power.

With regard to Eastern Europe, the scholarly focus has been on nationalism studies. Modernization theories positively emphasise nation building, the Soviet Union being seen as an incubator of new nations and an affirmative action empire (Suny 1997, Martin 2001). Theories of civilisation, by contrast, emphasise Eastern backwardness, the civilisation gap between the post-national West and the primordial East (Melegh 2006). State building comes into focus only as failure, requiring Western assistance in the post-Soviet space or the Balkans. But these discourses miss an important part of historical reality: how the horrific violence of the 20th century led to the consolidation of states in Eastern Europe. This route to establishing nation-states might have been different from Western Europe and in important respects involuntary, but it effectively ended backwardness and, post-1989, bestowed the competitive advantage of being a latecomer.

To bring the state back in, a simplified concept of state capacity suffices, distinguishing between the scope of state functions and the strength of state power (e.g. Goodwin 2001, Fukuyama 2006). As regards state functions one might distinguish functions usefully as basic (e.g. defence, law), regulatory (e.g. education, environment) and welfare (e.g. development, redistribution). To be

sure, scholarly and public understanding of state functions has changed, but to analyse or value the socialist state from the vantage point of the end of history would be to miss how contemporaries saw these states as having considerable scope and strength. It could be argued that a strong state with limited scope (e.g. United States) is more efficient, but the socialist state was seen as effective for economic development, much like other strong states with a wide scope of functions (e.g. Japan, Sweden, France). With globalisation many states have been seeking to reduce their scope, but not their strength, in an effort to optimally support the national economy. This may well have been not so much an effect of neo-liberal ideology as a result of structural shifts in the world economy.

The Soviet state also responded in the 1980s (and not really much later then the UK, Japan or Sweden), but these efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. 1989 led to the dissolution of the Soviet state (and the Yugoslav state), but not Central European states. The main variation in the post-1989 trajectory is to be observed in whether the state was able to retain strength as it shed functions or whether it lost strength to the point of loosing the capacity to fulfil even its basic functions. A strong correlation may be observed with the process and outcome of the revolutions of 1989. Where revolutions were negotiated internally and led to regime change, state capacity was not harmed. This observation also holds for the Soviet Union, e.g. the Baltic republics, and Yugoslavia, e.g. Slovenia. Where the revolution was abrogated or resembled a nomenklatura coup, state capacity was imperilled.

One may well ask whether the secessionist, civic and ethnic wars of the 1990s do not invalidate the above hypothesis? Did the wars not confirm that the peoples of Europe are incapable of living together in multinational (-ethnic, -cultural) formations? Is there not a dark continuity from the early to the late 20th century, and possibly beyond? The argument made here does not deny the history of collective violence but emphasises the unintended consequences. Hence, the wars of the 1990s were also prefigured, firstly, by the results of World War II, and, secondly, by the subsequent nationality policy. This holds for the USSR and Yugoslavia. It is the existence or non-existence of a national republic, as well as the ethnic composition of these designated homelands, which makes war likely or unlikely as the federations break up. The Russian and Serbian position is also prefigured insofar as the Soviet and Yugoslav federation were dominated by these nations, which provided key personnel in the centre as well as imperial migrants.

Historically, it has been analysed how, after World War II, the early European Community was the rescue of the nation-state in the West (Milward 1994). However, the Cold War also enabled nation-state consolidation in the East. This argument may be elaborated in several steps. Firstly, nation-state building was ongoing not just in the outer empire but also in the Soviet Union, including titular Slav republics such as the Ukraine. Secondly, the conceptual juxtaposition for the socialist period of the state against society needs re-examination by highlighting that state building was a widely shared objective that united rulers and ruled. Thirdly, revolution and secession in 1989 was in important respects shaped by the prior nation-state building, which, even though it was neither uniform nor equally successful, was the main element of continuity, allowing for the negotiated hand-over of power through elections.

States in Central Europe exhibited the full spectrum of functions to varying degrees of strength. The Soviet Socialist Republics nominally had very few state functions, which were centralised in a unitary state. Yet, insofar as possible, the road to independence was not only travelled in Central Europe, but inside the USSR, for example by the Ukraine (Simon 1986, Kuzio 1999). On the one hand, the Ukrainian elite had been decimated by Stalinist terror, World War II and a campaign against 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism' after 1945. On the other hand, the Ukrainian SSR united the Ukrainians. After World War II, Ukrainians were very much interested in a gradual nativization of the administrative elite. During the 1960s, ethnic Ukrainians gradually wrested the leading political posts in the Ukrainian SSR from ethnic Russians, which had been posted there during Stalin's reign, and within the Ukrainian Politburo they managed to marginalize the Russians to a quota under ten per cent. The Ukrainian communist party raised the standard of educational qualifications among ethnic Ukrainians while seeking to prevent their participation in programmes of exchange, so as to gradually acquire control over the economy by rendering Russian specialists superfluous. Simultaneously, the Russian language was increasingly being dropped in favour of Ukrainian as the main language of instruction in higher education. Ukrainian was also introduced as first administrative language.

Moves towards 'stateness' did not go unnoticed at the Soviet central apex. Towards the Ukraine, all-union bodies responded in 1973 with a purge, in which about a thousand leading Ukrainian party functionaries, scientists, and publishers lost their position and influence under charges of 'nationalist deviation'. At the same time, however, throughout the USSR, a newly educated and little stratified elite emerged, with a shared republican consciousness and homogenous culture. In Central Asian republics Slav pre-dominance among republican leadership, of which it had represented three-quarters, gave way to a more proportional representation, in which Russian representation sunk to just one-quarter. Likewise, in the Baltic republics, Russian representation in political leadership positions sunk from roughly half to below one-fifth. In contrast, in the CPSU around seventy per cent of the members and candidates of the Central Committee and eighty per cent of the Politburo members were Russian. By 1980, a conjuncture emerged of increased participation in higher education, rising national consciousness and local administrative control. Firstly, the absolute number of non-Russian students in higher education had risen to 2.2 million by 1980. Secondly, national elites had gained administrative control over most resources needed for mobilisation, such as local party organisations, the local press, or even the local security apparatus. Thirdly, with protection from party leaders, a nationally conscious rewriting of history had begun. Historical revisionism made public that the USSR did not exist as a voluntary union among free and equal nations, but had resulted from military conquest, annexation, and violent subjugation of the people.

The socialist state has been analysed as a dictatorship over the needs of the populace. The rise of Solidarnosc exposed a gulf between rulers and ruled. The rise of popular fronts in the USSR and civic movements in Central Europe in the late 1980s gave credence to scholarly analysis that juxtaposed the (socialist) state against (civil) society (e.g. Feher/Heller 1979, Ekiert 1996, Wolle 1998). Looking back, from a vantage point after the revolutions of 1989, it seemed as if the state

had only subdued society, but that rebellious society had reasserted itself against the state. What this narrative misses is the shared allegiance to the nation-state, to each nation-state. It has been said that communist party rule fundamentally altered the state, transforming it into a Party-State run by the nomenklatura. This made for a widespread sense of us versus them (which has variously been invoked to account for the civilisational gap to the West), but neither dissident intellectuals nor opposition movements ever had any intention of abolishing the state. The purpose of the revolutions was to free the state from communist party rule, to constitutionalize it and establish democratic government. The state and the reaffirmation and consolidation of 'stateness' facilitated a negotiated revolution and provided the container for the large-scale change implied by the revolutionary outcome.

The negotiated revolutions of 1989 as a model of holistic change

The above analysis yields three insights on the global 1989. Firstly, within the global order that emerged after WWII, the Cold War enabled the perpetuation of the Soviet project, while cultural codes showed up Soviet practices as illegal and illegitimate and projects of state-building prefigured the way in which the Soviet empire would eventually break up. Secondly, global and national relations were intertwined, with the Soviet project unduly dependent on warfare, militarization and the boundaries established in 1945 to secure the continuity of the internal order. Thirdly, the revolutions of 1989 were of such a scope and scale that they ended one global order and ushered in a new one. Some observers assumed that, after 1989, at least the USSR was 'salvageable'. This overlooks how the structural stasis inhibited a strategic and effective response to the events of 1989 as no coordinated action between party, military and security organs was likely. It also negates that the lessons of 1989 were not lost on the Soviet republics: Lithuania proclaimed independence on 11 March 1990, with Estonia and Latvia following suit. While the Soviet central apex responded with an economic blockade and propaganda about a 'totalitarian bourgeois dictatorship', it was impossible, even under the cover of the Gulf war, to move towards any meaningful restoration of the Soviet order. The lessons of 1989 were also not lost on the Yugoslav republics. Slovenian and Croat secession began in January 1990. Moreover, the end of the Cold War and the Soviet breakdown had a discernible impact in most world regions, including, for example, South Africa, where the African National Congress lost its principal sponsor and the Apartheid regime could no longer count on tacit support from the Soviet adversary, the US government.

The final question then is: What was the nature and significance of the revolutions of 1989? The claim advanced is that we witnessed a genuine and new type of revolution, the self-limited or negotiated revolution. By the new type of revolution, process and outcome were organised peacefully, enabling reflexive democratisation and large-scale socio-economic change. The global significance lies in the model they provided for organising large-scale and rapid change in the world society of the 21st century.

The events of 1989 have been contrasted favourably with those of 1917 and even those of 1848 for their lack of violence. Yet, informed observers did not accord them the status of a revolution, but argue the events of 1989 constitute something

between a reform and revolution, enabling Eastern Europe to rectify its deviation from the normal path of development and to catch up with the West (Garton Ash 1990, Habermas 1991, Gellner 1993). This is a misjudgement, revealing more about the paternalistic attitudes of the commentators than about the nature of the events in 1989. While reticence in claiming to be a revolutionary is understandable on part of the Eastern European actors, given the communist ideology and propaganda on revolution, the international observers were not really accommodating local aspirations not to use communist newspeak than passing judgement. In this sense, the events of 1989 were contrasted unfavourably with those of 1789 and 1917 for it was said, that the actors lacked new, revolutionary ideas. Subsequently, this understanding of the events has prevailed, with the widespread use of such notions as breakdown and collapse. This seemingly corresponds to local notions of 1989 as a "turnabout", the peaceful character of most events and some form of negotiated outcome. Above all, this interpretation fits into the prevailing narrative of the 20th century and its revolutions as characterised by war, genocide and terror. However, while 1989 signified the collapse of an exhausted totalitarian regime, premised on internal terror and external integration into warfare, the significance of the events lies in how the revolutionary actors responded to that history, forging a new model of revolutionary change.

The theory and practice of the self-limiting revolution was developed locally, over time, in a series of encounters with the totalitarian regime. The rise of Solidarnosc in 1980 was the most consequential of these encounters, which led to a fully-fledged articulation of this new type of revolution. The original theorist of the self-limiting revolution is Jadwiga Staniszkis, the Polish sociologist and Solidarity advisor who became known for her book on 'Poland's self-limiting revolution' (1984). Her analysis of the rise of Solidarity shows the theory and practice of negotiated revolutions in the making. This strategy was not successful in 1981 and Staniszkis dissects the drawbacks. Yet, in many ways 1981 was the trial run for successful negotiated revolutions just a few years later. In spreading the lessons of the trial run lies the significance of the social movements in Central Europe in the late 1980s (Kenney 2002).

The self-limiting revolution, when focussing on the events of 1989, has also been called a negotiated revolution, with particular reference to the Round Tables. While it has to be acknowledged that only in Poland (February to April 1989) and Hungary (June to September 1989) they were decisive in fostering revolution, they did accompany the revolution in many more states, leading to power sharing and free elections also in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and the German Democratic Republic (Bozoki 2002). Moreover, while the Round Table is a symbol of negotiated revolutions, it is not the only means to achieve this outcome, which was also in evidence in the Baltic States. Popular fronts were founded by members of the Communist nomenklatura. One most not confuse the later confrontation between Baltic nationalists and Russian minorities with the revolution of 1989 that led to the declarations of independence in 1990. In the Baltic republics, the Communist nomenklatura of the titular nation was co-opted into the new order (Lieven 1994). Characteristic of 1989 was that the protagonists of a de-legitimised regime were unable to continue but the revolutionary forces were also unable to secure a victory. The solution brokered in this situation of mutual dependence kept

violence at bay - there was structural violence and a latent possibility of a crackdown, but the manifestations of armed power were indecisive - enabling a negotiated transition.

On a case-by-case basis, for the states that emerged from the Soviet imperial breakdown, there is evidence of a correlation of negotiated revolutions, strong states and democratic consolidation (Central Europe, Slovenia, Baltic states). Romania and Croatia are two states that did not experience negotiated revolutions but nevertheless have achieved some form of democratic consolidation twenty years on. External opportunities and regional constraints may induce an otherwise authoritarian elite to give way. Romania and Croatia (and the rest of the former Yugoslavia and Albania) have a clear incentive: reform or be left behind, cut off from the realm of prosperity. It may indeed by the case that these 'late' democracies need external constraints and inducements to stabilise (as could be said of the earlier examples of West Germany and Italy after World War II), but this does not negate the strong hypothesis that the negotiated revolutions established the legitimacy of the new order, securing consolidation.

The revolutions of 1989 are new in substance (self-limiting, civil society building) and procedure (negotiated, peaceful), in pursuit of large-scale change. New ideas and ideals spread across Eastern Europe. Theorists of modern revolution have hitherto assumed that revolutions are necessarily violent and will include in later stages some form of reversal. However, negotiated revolutions move away from earlier patterns in some distinctive ways (Lawson 2005). The revolutionaries espouse an ideology of liberation rather than dreaming of utopia, accepting mutual dependency domestically and internationally. Civil conflict and war are viewed as undesirable. The result is that the 'fight to the finish' is replaced by a negotiated outcome.

After 1989, the most knowledgeable international observers, in East and West, anticipated that transition would be painful and contradictory and was likely to fail: on logical and historical grounds (e.g. Dahrendorf 1990, Elster 1990, Przeworski 1991, Sztompka 1994). It was noted that a synchronized transition of politics, economics and culture was needed. While the political revolution was completed in a few years in much of Eastern Europe, observers anticipated that the economic and cultural transition would take many years, possibly decades. Particularly the cultural legacy, variously analysed as "civilisational gap", "unwanted modernity" and "homo sovieticus" or as the return of the repressed, i.e. ethnic nationalism and internecine warfare, was seen as undermining economic and political transition.

Soon after 1989, the political transition, as such, was also questioned. Positing a dilemma of simultaneity, political scientists pointed to unresolved issues of territory, constitution and democracy (e.g. Offe 1991, Merkel 2008). Western Europe had needed centuries to consolidate nation-state democracies, so Eastern Europe could impossibly achieve this in a few years. Indeed, the consolidation and possible backsliding of democracies in Eastern Europe has been the focus of scholarly attention ever since 1989. Despite entry into the European Union of eight Eastern European states, these are analysed as somehow defective democracies that are in perpetual danger of backsliding. However, the indicators are superficial,

consisting of no more than election results and recurrent incidents of populism, radicalism and small-scale political violence.

Yet another variant of the same argument on the impossibility of the Eastern transition was the notion that Eastern Europe was undergoing a path-dependent transformation (e.g. Stark/Bruszt 1998; Elster/Offe/Preuss 1998). While this argument recognises a historical dynamic and does not a priori assume impossibility or failure, it does accord the past overwhelming influence, in effect denying that some form of co-ordinated and simultaneous change is possible. Yet, holistic reform is exactly what was attempted and happened in Eastern Europe. Twenty years after 1989 there can be no doubt that those Eastern European countries that underwent a negotiated revolution have largely achieved the intended outcome: consolidating constitutional democracy, achieving high growth rates and integrating into the trans-national flows of capital, labour, goods and services.

With hindsight it is now clear that the social and cultural sciences fared no better in anticipating the consequences than the causes of 1989. There is an irony to this insofar as many of those who, after 1989, anticipated West-East divergence, had in earlier times posited East-West convergence. These successive theoretical and conceptual failures in understanding contemporary change will preoccupy the scholars of the next generation. It will be interesting to explore in how far the discursive Zeitgeist lets scholars adopt conceptual frameworks a priori to which empirical evidence is simply assimilated. While the earlier faulty anticipation of convergence was based on the notion of modernization, the later and equally faulty anticipation of divergence was based on the notion of civilisation (Melegh 2006).

How do we account for the unexpected result, i.e. the intended simultaneous and synchronized change? Transitologists have presumed that decisions are key; hence their preference for action plans. Transformationists presume that legacies matter most, hence the emphasis on path dependence. In between are those scholars that focus on institutions as the middle range, though institutionalists may also emphasise decisions (institutional design) or legacies (institutional path dependence). Transitologists may recommend decisive action to break with the past. Transformationists will insist that the constraints of any path will defeat action plans.

The above analyses of the Soviet empire, Cold War, state building and the revolutions of 1989 overturn much conventional wisdom. While Sovietologists and historians of the 20th century have been much transfixed by the Leninist revolution and the actions of the politburo, and in this sense "decisionist," it is here suggested that the institutional legacy of the terror inside the Soviet and communist networks and organisations ultimately shaped the destiny of the Soviet empire. Moreover, while Cold Warriors and Cold War historians tend to emphasise conflict, arms and war, especially in the so called Third World, it is here suggested that internally the Soviet project was critically dependent on integration into the Cold War. Moreover, despite the lack of imperial legitimacy, the integration into war was conducive to state building, strengthening particular institutions.

For the period after 1989, this analysis suggests that both the transitologists and the transformationists are mistaken. Neither action plans nor legacies were nearly as important as the revolutionary process and outcome. The Soviet legacy enabled the revolution, but revolutionary agency devised its self-limiting and negotiated character. This new type of revolution facilitated the simultaneous, synchronous and rapid pursuit of political, economic and cultural change. Nation-state purposefully, effectively and peacefully achieved a comprehensive self-transformation – in stark contrast to the revolutionaries of 1917.

In 1989, revolutionary agency built on the Soviet legacy by rejecting it. Revolutionary agency enabled the comprehensive re-designing of institutions, facilitating certain outcomes such as constitutional democracy or the market economy. In this scenario, neither ex ante institutional designs nor action plans made any difference. For example, privatisation bolstered the market economy in those countries that had undergone a negotiated revolution but undermined the market economy elsewhere. Likewise, constitutional review bolstered democracy in those same countries but not in others. The new constitutionalism of Eastern Europe is also an example of swift cultural change premised on revolutionary agency. Constitutions were (re-)written and amended in a reflexive fashion, democratizing the making of the constitution – in contradistinction to, for example, the US constitution of 1776, the West German constitution of 1949 or the proposed European Constitution of 2004.

Revolutions have hitherto been associated with and accompanied by violence. In the history of modernity, revolution has been identified as a form of violent change, enforced by the bayonet. While the revolutionary imaginary has been fervent, it has also been argued that in the Western core of modernity the spectre of revolution has abated since 1848 (which incidentally discounts the rapid and large changes associated with the world wars, depression, fascism and communism in the West). There is an understanding that revolutions are now typical of the periphery. The Cold War favoured violent revolutions, whereas its demise ushered in peaceful revolutions. However, global interdependence and the rise of the world society, particularly since 1989, may yet bring a return of revolution to the West. In the first instance, the negotiated revolution may be the best model humanity has for tackling large global issues that carry with them the real threat of war and violence, such as climate change, declining fossil fuel reserves or food and water crises. Additionally, Western welfare states may discover that their structural and financial problems also require a negotiated revolution. The true global significance of 1989 is to have provided humanity with a model for tackling some of the very large issues and conflicts ahead.

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