

Stefan Zeppenfeld, Julia Mariko Jacoby, Jan-Hendryk de Boer, Manon Westphal, and Karsten Mause

Compromise in Theory and History: Summaries and Future Research Perspectives

Compromise is a chameleon. This metaphor was used in the introduction to describe the specific mutability of the phenomenon. The multifaceted thematic and temporal engagements with compromise in theory and history that feature in this volume illustrate this metaphor. To conclude, we would like to ask how the contributions in this volume have helped us to gain a deeper understanding of compromise. But we do not want to stop there – we would also like to point out prospects for further research.

1 What Has Been Done: Summaries

The chapters in this volume are divided into three sections. This reflects the book's central methodological goals: to examine compromises systematically and theoretically, historically and empirically, and to open up a comparative perspective on compromise. In the first part of this book, under the heading "Theoretical Perspectives," a number of scholars from the fields of political theory and political philosophy analyze the topic and compromise as an object of study from different theoretical perspectives. They perform conceptual, theoretical, and philosophical analyses of the phenomenon of compromise and reflect in depth on its functions and effects.

Ulrich Willems opens the volume with foundational reflections on the concept of compromise. His "Revision" of current theoretical debates aims to establish a normatively parsimonious concept of compromise. Compromise is one of several possible techniques for dealing with conflict. Unlike consensus, it does not aim to resolve those conflicts once and for all, but to regulate them in such a way that each party can live with the result without necessarily feeling enthusiastic about it. It is characteristic of compromise that the parties involved can only have some of their demands met and must also make concessions. However, in principle, they do not give up their demands. Whether a compromise is successful and how it is evaluated depends on the context. The parsimonious definition is not only suitable in interdisciplinary use but also, and above all, takes into account the fact that compromises can take very different shapes depending on the cul-

tural context. According to Georg Simmel, this makes it one of humanity's most important inventions. With this theoretical premise, Willems defends compromise against its critics. Today, compromise is coming under suspicion once more, even though it is in fact an indispensable means of dealing with conflict, especially in divided societies. Compromise can do this because – unlike consensus, for example – it has few preconditions *per se*. It can therefore be used successfully in a wide variety of conflict situations.

In his chapter "The Fragility of Compromise," **Daniel Weinstock** contributes to the theoretical discussion of compromise by portraying deliberations aimed at compromise as desirable yet inherently fragile alternatives to settlements that directly reflect the power relations between the parties involved in a conflict. Weinstock believes that compromise-oriented deliberations are often more advantageous than the search for consensus because they affirm irreducible pluralism, require parties to show respect for each other's conceptions of the good, and open up avenues for addressing disagreements that might otherwise go unrecognized. However, he argues that there is always a possibility that strategic considerations will influence deliberative processes and undermine the kind of respect for the other side that characterizes compromise. Weinstock identifies two general mechanisms that can prevent agents from overusing their power for strategic gain: "sympathetic identification," positive feelings for the other side, and "iterated interaction," being involved in recurring interactions with others. He discusses what kinds of institutions can help steer democratic deliberations in the direction of compromise by enabling these mechanisms. He concludes that both political parties and legislative committees can be conducive to compromise if they are designed in ways that facilitate respectful deliberative interchange and collegiality, and discourage agents from exploiting their power for purely strategic considerations.

With his chapter "There Are Epistemic Reasons to Compromise," **Antoine Vuille** contributes to the ongoing debate on the reasons for compromise in political theory and political philosophy. In this debate, Simon May, for one, argues that the reasons behind compromise are always pragmatic. In his view, parties compromise out of necessity or to realize a goal that is important to them. May thus denies that there are principled reasons to compromise – that is, reasons to compromise that are independent of such pragmatic considerations. Vuille focuses on a specific category of principled reasons to compromise, namely epistemic ones, which he describes as being based on intellectual humility. Klemens Kappel and Daniel Weinstock disagree with May, contending that there are epistemic reasons to compromise. Vuille reconstructs this crucial theoretical debate in detail and makes proposals to overcome what he identifies as a weakness in Kappel's and Weinstock's arguments. According to Vuille, there is a need to clarify

whether intellectual humility is actually a reason to compromise or rather a reason to change one's mind. He makes two conceptual distinctions – between one's belief and one's personal "take," and one between one's belief and one's judgment – defending the idea that there are epistemic reasons to compromise on the basis of these distinctions.

In "The Shame of Compromise? The Politics of Education and the Education of Politics," **Alin Fumurescu** explores the relationship between compromise, shame, and civic education from the perspective of political theory. Fumurescu shows that the meanings of compromise and shame have changed considerably over time. According to his analysis, the current situation is characterized by widespread feelings of shame about compromise, which often lead to the rejection of compromise and an increase in the incidence of others being shamed as a public practice. Fumurescu investigates the connections between these two phenomena and conceptions of the self, arguing that a strong sense of identity fosters feelings of shame when it comes to compromise and that feelings of being (a) shamed are closely related to a historical distinction between an "inner" and "outer" self. Against this backdrop, Fumurescu reflects on the challenges that individuals and society as a whole are facing in contemporary circumstances shaped by the digital revolution. He argues that we need democratic forms of education today, the aim of which should be to educate individuals in a way that both avoids relativism and helps them to understand that their moral convictions do not equate to the truth.

In her chapter "A Comparative Conceptual Exploration of Inter- and Intra-Personal Compromise," **Friderike Spang** focuses on a topic that has so far received little attention in the literature on compromise: intra-personal compromise. Previous research on compromise has examined various aspects of *inter-personal* compromise or compromise between different actors (citizens, political parties, interest groups, nation-states, etc.), but there has been little explicit examination of *intra-personal* compromise. In her contribution, Spang provides an overview of existing research on this underrepresented topic and challenges the view that only inter-personal compromise is real compromise. She develops a new conceptualization of compromise based on the notion of choice, which could be used to investigate intra-personal compromise and its relationship with inter-personal compromise in more depth and more systematically in future research. Spang argues that intra-personal compromise takes shape when a person faces a conflict between two principles and chooses to partially sacrifice one of them in order to partially realize the other. Spang also turns the discussion on its head: in her view, the study of inter-personal compromise is actually essential to understanding intra-personal compromise as the former often forms the basis for the latter.

In the second part of the book, “Compromises in Japan,” three case studies from Japan are presented from different disciplinary perspectives. They show that compromise has played an important role in conflict resolution since pre-modern times in a variety of social areas, such as law, art, and education. This has been supported by traditional ethics, rooted in Buddhism, which have come to value concessions and showing consideration toward the parties to a conflict.

In his chapter “Settling Disputes to Avoid Troubles: Compromise and Law in Early Medieval Japan,” medieval historian of East Asia **Csaba Oláh** shows how compromise became a valued form of conflict resolution for land disputes in medieval Japan. In the Kamakura period (1185–1333), the rise of a military government, the shogunate, led to countless conflicts between the newly appointed estate stewards who were vassals of the shogunate and the absentee estate proprietors of traditional noble descent who held claims to older rights to the property. In spite of established legal principles of right and wrong that favored the old rights of landlords, the real power of the stewards, supported by the shogunate and a massive number of lawsuits, often led to the practice of mutual settlement, which required concessions to be made by landlords. These *wayo* were then swiftly approved by the shogunate. This practice was backed up by Buddhist ethics, which saw moral value in relinquishing attachment to property and repenting by admitting wrongs. As a result, reconciliation between the conflicting parties based on mutual concessions was held in high esteem. Thus, Kamakura law, as seen in legal treatises such as the *Sata mirensho*, began to favor compromise solutions in *wayo* over legal judgments.

Next, in her chapter “Compromise in the Noh Theater Performance: The Relationship between Actor and Audience in the Fifteenth Century,” Japanese studies scholar **Francesca Romana Lerz** illuminates how compromise also played a crucial role in the field of art, analyzing the example of the writings of Zeami Moto-kiyo (1363–1443), one of the key writers and theoreticians of Japanese Noh theater. For Zeami, compromise was a crucial element of Noh performance, as performers had to accommodate the audience’s taste. The main performance principle was *mimesis*, but imitation had to be reconciled with *yugen*, elegance, to aesthetically please the audience. Moreover, the performance had to be arranged to take into account the time of the day and audience’s corresponding mood. The resulting performance was an enactment of compromise. However, compromise was also negotiated within the performer themselves, who anticipated the demands of the audience and thus represented both sides. This is reflected in the concept of *riken no ken*, which requires performers to see themselves through the eyes of the audience. As both the audience and the performers – the latter enjoying the audience’s favor – benefitted from the performed compromise, the case

represents a “mixed form of compromise” that lies somewhere between compromise and deal.

The chapter by education theorist **Yusuke Hirai**, entitled “Compromise for Deliberative Democracy and Civic Education,” demonstrates the ongoing importance of compromise in contemporary Japan while he discusses the connection between compromise and civic education in democracies. Drawing on deliberative democracy theory, specifically Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson’s *The Spirit of Compromise*, Hirai states that compromise is not opposed to deliberative democracy. His aim is to offer an alternative way to keep deliberations going, even when rational deliberations break down, a problem observed in many modern pluralistic societies. Exploring the possibilities of expanding the space of deliberation and ensuring the equality of the parties by means of social media, Hirai argues that emotional foundations must be laid in order to foster a *spirit of compromise*. Here, Hirai points to the necessities and potentials of civic education, showing that education in Japan encourages values such as mutual respect and cooperation through a holistic approach to education that includes extracurricular activities.

The third part of this book, “Compromise in Europe,” focused on three topics: compromise as a strategy for regulating conflicts in medieval Germany, the special case of compromise in Switzerland, and early twentieth-century budget debates in Germany. These case studies examine cultures that are widely presumed to be highly consensus-oriented, as well as fields where it is generally assumed that compromise is particularly important for the regulation of conflicts.

In his contribution “Behind the Facade? Some Remarks on Consensus and the Possibility of other Forms of Decision-making in Medieval Narrative Sources,” medievalist **David Passig** raises the question of how historians can differentiate between the ruling techniques of compromise and consensus both substantively and methodologically. Passig asks how to deal with the terminology used in the sources, according to which medieval actors based their actions on the values of *consensus* and *unanimitas*. This finding has led historians like Bernd Schneidmüller to speak of “consensual rule” in the Middle Ages. However, Passig’s interpretation of one unusual source pertaining to the election of Lothar of Süpplingenburg as Roman-German king, the *Narratio de electione Lotharii*, demonstrates that although medieval actors sought consensus, they also had other forms of action at their disposal to regulate conflicts when consensus could not be achieved. Compromise was therefore part of the repertoire of measures used to stabilize medieval rule. However, it was not the first option and was only used when there was otherwise a threat of harmful escalation. The sources often conceal this use of compromise, pretending there was consensus, but careful reading reveals a flexibility in the use of conflict resolution techniques. In Passig’s example, the election

of Lothar III, consensus only becomes possible once compromise has defused the conflict.

Medievalist **Claudia Garnier**'s study of compromise in late medieval feuds in Germany ("Between Conflict and Cooperation – Compromise in the Late Medieval Feud") shows that compromise and violent conflict coexisted and intertwined. Late medieval feuds were not conducted to defeat the opponent but to harm their economic basis in order to gain leverage during negotiations. This therefore created the preconditions for compromise. Negotiations could be conducted at any point during a conflict and often resulted in pragmatic compromises that regulated conflicts peacefully. Practices of reaching compromise were already sophisticated in the late medieval period. In frequent use was the procedure of *compromissum*, a form of arbitration based on Roman law (and the linguistic origin of our word "compromise"), where the conflicting parties delegated decisions to chosen arbitrators. In the Middle Ages, arbitrators were not neutral in the modern sense (each party chose their own arbitrators), but some of them showed considerable professionalization. Medieval mediators understood the importance of excluding particularly contentious issues and irreconcilable differences from the actual settlement. In addition, a wide repertoire of symbolic actions was available to balance the interests of the conflicting parties. Monetary compensation was the most common way to split the difference, but in the example of the Dortmund Feud (1388/1389), as Garnier points out, such compensation was paid as a "gift" to establish reciprocal relations.

Two contributions are dedicated to Switzerland, which, at least according to common clichés, is considered a prototypical compromise society. The articles come to different conclusions. In "Switzerland as Compromise? The Federal State since 1848 between Reconciliation and Exclusion," historian **Moisés Prieto** raises the question of whether, despite all their positive connotations, the compromises that have been agreed upon and implemented in Switzerland since 1848 have also been responsible for social exclusion. Using a series of case studies from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Prieto demonstrates that Swiss social policy-making was not in fact characterized primarily or even entirely by compromise but also by consensus and concordance. Prieto believes that it is specific to the Swiss practice of conflict regulation that political opponents are kept on the outside of agreements until their influence becomes so great that their delayed inclusion is inevitable. He concludes his reflection with the open, albeit thoroughly pessimistic, question of whether the Swiss practice of conflict avoidance could ultimately be understood as either a purpose or even the end of politics.

In her article "Compromise in Politics and the Politics of Compromise: The Example of Switzerland," political philosopher **Véronique Zanetti** analyzes the role of compromise in Switzerland from a more systematic perspective. Swiss pol-

itics and the Swiss political system are used as a case study because the Swiss institutional structure requires various actors to compromise on contentious issues in order to keep the democratic process going. Hence, Switzerland is often typologized as a “consociational democracy” or “consensus democracy” in the legal and political science literature. At central government level, for example, it has for decades been custom for the four largest political parties to form a coalition government and to generally compromise on policy decisions. However, Zanetti questions this conventional textbook characterization and typologization of Switzerland. Among other things, she shows that governmental decisions that are communicated by the national government to the public as consensuses are in fact often compromises between the political parties and other actors involved. Consequently, in Zanetti’s view, “compromise democracy” is a more accurate term to classify the Swiss model of democracy than the terms “consensus democracy” or “consociational democracy,” which are usually used in scholarly contributions and media reports on the subject of Switzerland.

The last two contributions in the volume address financial policy debates and thus cases in which the ability to divide the negotiation mass numerically seems to enable favorable conditions for compromise resolutions. In her contribution “The Search for a “Golden Mean”: The State Arrangement with the House of Wittelsbach in the Weimar Republic,” historian **Nina Kreibig** chooses the Wittelsbach Equalization Fund, a peculiar fiscal policy issue during the Weimar era, as a case to illustrate the conditions under which compromises between different political camps have been possible in history. After the Revolution of 1918 brought an end to the reign of the Bavarian Wittelsbach monarchy, the Free State of Bavaria and the royal family had to decide what to do with Wittelsbach property and rights. After a long period of negotiations, the Wittelsbach Equalization Fund was established. However, the historical material makes it difficult to determine exactly what type of equalization this was. As Kreibig demonstrates, the Wittelsbach Equalization Fund reflected the complex interplay between a consensus on the inviolability of fundamental rights and a compromise between the protection of the young republic and the claims and needs of the Wittelsbach family. Her contribution can therefore be understood as a plea for nuance.

In the final contribution to this volume, “The Power of the Purse: Budget Laws and Cultures of Compromise in the Second Empire, Weimar, and Bonn,” historian **Philipp Nielsen** outlines the debates, conflicts, and final compromises surrounding budget laws in twentieth-century German parliamentarianism. To this end, he carries out a diachronic comparison to examine budget negotiations from 1906–1909, 1923/1924, and 1954. He thus juxtaposes the parliamentary debates held in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and the young Federal Republic across different epochs and suggests a link between possible specific features

of compromise-making and the political framework. On this basis, Nielsen argues that direct government accountability and the debate between clear, partisan positions enabled the development of a parliamentary culture of compromise. This allowed conclusions to be drawn about democratic cultures in political history. At the same time, he warns against the teleological essentialization of democratic learning processes in view of the shifts currently taking place in the political party landscape and the fronts currently hardening in federal politics.

2 What to Do: Future Research Perspectives

The articles in this volume open up new perspectives on the topic of compromise and expand the debate in original ways. However, interdisciplinary research on compromise is just beginning. One aim behind this volume was to bring theoretical and historical perspectives on compromise into dialogue with each other. To this end, we started with a normatively lean understanding of compromise, which was then deepened, problematized, and restructured in some of the theoretical contributions. The historical and empirical contributions then used this understanding to answer their own questions. In our view, this approach has proven successful. Not only has it provided new historical and theoretical insights into compromise but, above all, our approach has resulted in a strong convergence between the contributions. The fact that they are based on a similar understanding of compromise means that the results can be related to each other. This allows for comparisons and interdisciplinary connections. Our argument in favor of a normatively modest view of compromise does not mean that compromise should be examined without normative considerations. Especially in the theoretical discussion, this would lead to analytical impoverishment and an overly narrow focus that would exclude relevant questions. But we do contend that research should start with a lean, normatively undemanding definition, which can then be enriched according to the issue at hand.

If we take the chameleon metaphor seriously, interdisciplinary compromise research must pursue two simultaneous goals: it must determine what kind of animal compromise is, and it must also recognize that the phenomenon adapts to the contexts in which it finds itself. A lean definition makes it possible to reach consensus on what we are talking about in the first place. This is a prerequisite for interdisciplinary cooperation. Otherwise, there would be a Babylonian confusion of languages. Our volume focuses on research from the fields of history, political theory, and philosophy. This was a pragmatic choice as compromise has been the subject of intense debate in the latter two disciplines for a number of

years, and historians, sometimes without realizing it, regularly engage with compromise. Future work would benefit from an even more courageous embrace of interdisciplinary perspectives: sociology, law, psychology, educational science, ethnology, evolutionary biology, and theology all have much to say about how people address their conflicts. However, it is important to first come to an understanding of what the enterprise is all about. Not everything that is called a compromise by the actors is a compromise from an analytical point of view. And not all phenomena that are referred to as compromise in different disciplines – often without a clear definition – can be meaningfully studied as such.

At the same time, a lean definition delineates what falls outside the focus of the investigation. Only in this way is it possible to see that there are different techniques for regulating or resolving conflicts that have different functions. Compromise does not achieve the same thing as consensus, namely, getting the participants to really agree on key issues. Unlike a deal, it does not ensure that everyone emerges from the situation as an equal beneficiary. And it does not lead to the unambiguous victory of one party. Instead, compromise confirms differences, creates new ambiguities, and often fails to resolve conflicts in the long term. An abstract examination of compromises will therefore always overlook part of their mode of operation. For being situational is part of their *ratio essendi*.

As diverse as compromise is, however, certain regularities can be discerned. These are nonetheless context-dependent, i.e., they vary depending on epochal and cultural conditions. Different social fields and discursive orders shape different forms of compromise. While in some contexts it is relatively easy to reach compromises because they are part of the rules of the game (for example, in collective bargaining disputes), there are certain areas where this becomes problematic (for example, in conflicts over royal succession or efforts to end wars). There is so much historical and cultural variation when it comes to what counts as a suitable object of compromise, who has the ability to reach or mediate a compromise, how it must be structured, and how it should be distributed that one sometimes has the impression of dealing not with a single animal but with a whole zoo.

Comparing cases of compromises across time and space has proved fruitful for identifying commonalities and focal points to open up further investigation. This volume, which has a temporal emphasis on cases from the Middle Ages and modern history, as well as regional focuses on Europe, in particular Switzerland and Germany, and Japan, provides a first analytical investigation and a lens through which to highlight potential research pathways. Future studies should, on the one hand, cover more time periods, such as antiquity (which, as previously mentioned, birthed the form of settlement that became the namesake of *compromise*) and the Early Modern period (which saw the rise of diplomacy, a field

where compromise plays a crucial role). On the other hand, more regions should be included in such research to reveal more perspectives and allow for more generalized conclusions than this initial foray can provide, which can then feed back into theories of compromise. In the following, we would like to highlight some potential topics and areas for further investigation that have emerged through our comparative approach.

Across cultures and time periods, there seem to be typical conflicts and situations that are prone to being settled by compromises. These can be helpful to identify more case studies for productive comparison. For example, the need to compromise seems to emerge in historic periods of transition, when political power is shifting, new elites are trying to establish themselves, and old elites need to be compensated. With a lack of proven settlement practices and a need to establish political stability, compromise can be a viable option for conflict regulation. It could therefore be fruitful to comparatively investigate political transitions that have had a global impact, such as decolonization and the conflicts following the collapse of the Soviet Union. There have also been initial explorations of compromise in the context of acknowledging the victims of unjust systems once they have come to an end (e.g., Mueller-Hirth 2018, Brewer 2020).

At the other end of the spectrum, institutions, both political and legal, enable or facilitate compromise. Some forms of conflict seem more amenable to settlement by compromise, especially those involving money and assets that can be negotiated and divided up to provide compensation, such as budgets or land distribution. However, comparability is sometimes limited in such cases, as what is perceived as negotiable and what can be used as a bargaining chip depends on the respective culture – as we have seen, for example, symbolic gestures were once a viable option in medieval Europe. Nonetheless, this could be an interesting area to investigate. Such conflicts fought over possessions, potentially regulated through compromise or mixed forms of compromise, can probably be found in all societies across all time periods. They are often regulated by way of arbitration, conciliation, or settlement, which are themselves forms that seem inclined to accommodate compromise as a practice. Interdisciplinary collaboration with law could be productive to investigate the relationship between the use of compromise and legal frameworks as one of its preconditions (e.g., Sinar and Alberstein 2015).

Several contributions have shown that compromise is fostered and valued in environments that share certain values and moral obligations to show consideration toward others. The cases from medieval and modern Japan in particular reveal the remarkable consistency of an ethic that concedes self-interest in favor of cooperating with others. Democratic societies also share values of individual respect and an appreciation for compromise. Although those values seem to be em-

bedded within those cultures, they are not necessarily taken for granted. These systems therefore develop institutions and norms that make their citizens capable of compromise. Education systems, which lend themselves to comparative study, play a special role here. This is because they teach moral principles that govern how to act in the event of conflicts. In contrast, societies with a strong political or moral obligation to reach consensus, such as Switzerland and medieval Europe, have a more complex relationship with compromise, although the practice does exist. Another fruitful pathway for investigation could be further study on value systems and moral education concerning conflict and how to treat others, as well as the resulting attitudes toward compromise. One interesting case of comparison could be the Islamic world, with its long history of conflicts and conciliation (Nachi et al. 2011). Indigenous cultures with ethics of respect that reach beyond the human world could provide an interesting perspective that extends outside of interpersonal compromises.

Compromises reveal a precarity that derives from the manifold ways in which they can be negotiated. Although democratic theories of compromise ideally envision equal (or at least somewhat respected) conflicting parties, the historical cases in particular have shown that it has been common to have compromises between unequal partners. Some contributions also point to strategies and practices for negotiating and making concessions with more powerful conflict opponents. The study of intrapersonal compromise might be a promising area of study in this respect, because compromising with oneself often involves anticipating the position of another (stronger) conflict party. Knowledge of the strategies that unequal parties use to shape compromises could improve our understanding of how compromises are negotiated and concessions are made, as well as, potentially, how stable they end up being. For this endeavor, it would be important to widen the analysis to include contexts of conflict with considerable power imbalances, in particular, colonialism (e.g., De La Torre 2020). Another interesting case could be the tension between democratization in the Global South and simultaneously existing colonial and neo-colonial inequalities, for example, in South America and other regions.

For good reason, theoretical concepts pertaining to cultures of compromise often focus on conflict resolution in liberal democracies and democratically constituted societies. But we should question the things that we take for granted. In the composition of this volume, the tendency to focus on conflict resolution in liberal democracies is countered by a number of significant premodern examples. In general, compromise seems to have been less valued as a political virtue in premodern Europe than in modern parliamentary democracies. But this does not mean that it was not practiced. In any case, compromise has been an integral part of the European legal system since ancient times. The same is true in every-

day life, but it has also been established politically as a central technique for resolving conflicts since the late Middle Age at the latest. For example, monarchies were not fundamentally incapable of compromising, either externally or internally, when it came to succession disputes or ending wars. However, compared to modern democracies, it took much more effort for them to justify the fact that compromises had been made. The situation with regard to religion is largely unclear. At first sight, religious issues do not seem to lend themselves to compromise, but Christian Europeans have learned since the High Middle Ages that they sometimes have to make concessions. This is true of encounters between Christians and Muslims, intra-Christian conflicts between Latins and Greeks, and the relationship between Protestants and Catholics since the Reformation.

If, on closer inspection, it can be shown that non-democratic epochs such as the Middle Ages had their own specific forms of compromise, research should accordingly focus on non-democratic, authoritarian and dictatorial states and societies, both contemporary and historical, as has already been done in some cases (e.g., McCormick 2016). In the broader context of European contemporary history, it would be interesting to examine the dynamics of compromise in the state socialism of the Soviet Union and its satellite states – especially in comparison with some of the more established research on Western democratic states. In this sense, the established framework of German-German comparison seems to offer an appropriate approach. For instance, an older work by Peter Hübner already indicates in its title that compromise might have been an essential characteristic of social life in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – even though compromise itself remains relatively underdeveloped in Hübner's book and is ultimately only mentioned about a dozen times (Hübner 1995). However, in the everyday life of the *Fürsorgediktatur* (“welfare dictatorship”; Konrad Jarausch) and (GDR citizens subversively using) *Eigen-Sinn* (“stubbornness”; Alf Lüdtke), it can be assumed that the GDR state and its citizens allowed themselves individual freedom of choice and demanded concessions from each other. For example, recent research has emphasized that there was a system of mutual goodwill and room for maneuver regarding purchasing habits and consumer decisions that emerged due to the widespread economy of scarcity and the extensive bartering trade in the GDR (see Kreis 2020: 364–368).

Compromise research in general appears to be biased toward focusing on conflict resolution at an abstract theoretical or high-level political scale, or at the macro level of the nation-state or society. While this approach has certainly proven worthwhile in more comprehensive syntheses, it would be desirable for further research projects to shift their focus to direct interpersonal compromise-finding processes at a micro level, such as compromises in everyday life encounters. Specific case studies should go further than outlining the findings already

flagged up in this volume, especially those situated within the discipline of historiography. In this context, cross-references between theoretical considerations and actual practice are likely to provide mutually beneficial impulses. This will provide an opportunity to examine the actual scope of action available to the specific parties to the conflict and to investigate the extent to which their behavioral options challenge and thus sharpen the theoretical premises of compromise research. In turn, the innovative potential of an expanded interdisciplinary approach should prove beneficial in this regard, as research from the perspective of disciplines such as (behavioral) psychology and microsociology seem to promise tremendous added value.

We cannot say what the future of compromise research will look like. In addition to the topics covered and the perspectives mentioned in this volume, there are of course many other ways to pursue the issues raised here. Precisely because compromise and the possible erosion of circumstances favorable to it are currently very present in public debate – and not only in Europe and the United States – it is worthwhile complementing these discussions with academic research. This requires a better understanding of the preconditions, possibilities, and limits of compromise. Our volume cannot and was never intended to provide definitive answers in this regard, but it has tried to give an idea of which animal we are looking for in the great zoo of human social techniques: the chameleon.

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