

# Review of: "Neoliberalism, Strong State and Democracy"

Rejane Hoeveler<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Federal University of Alagoas

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

The article is successful in demonstrating its hypotheses, especially in proposing that it is the strong state, and not a "minimal state," that characterizes neoliberal thought. The relationship between the thought of Carl Schmitt and F. von Hayek is particularly well demonstrated. The differences of neoliberal thought with neoclassical theory are also well worked out.

The historicization of neoliberal thought is very well grounded. It is understood how and in which historical quarters neoliberal thought came into action.

The explanation about how strong global institutions are a goal of neo-liberal leaders is very well articulated, although other examples could have been cited, in particular the Trilateral Commission, founded in 1973 by businessman David Rockefeller and anti-communist sovietologist Zbigniew Brzezinski, which had as its central proposal the formation of a kind of inter-imperialist coalition between the United States, Japan and Western Europe, especially Germany. This outstanding group of countries would remold the international institutions in order to meet what was considered a "crisis of democracy". Participated in this political initiative intellectuals such as the Samuel Huntington, main author of the famous 1975 Crisis of Democracy report (signed together with Michel Crozier and Joji Watanuki), in which the diagnosis of the crisis is exactly the same as Hayek and neoliberal thinkers (HOEVELER, 2015). In this sense, the institutionalist bias of neoliberalism in its practice is fully demonstrated.

The Trilateral also included the participation of important names in the academic field, such as Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, who proposed the concept of interdependence of nations as a theoretical and political proposal (usually, in the academic field, it is unfortunately seen only as an interpretation and not as a normative proposition).

It would be interesting to note still other aspects of theoretical and ideological differences between classical liberalism and neoliberalism (CARCANHOLO & BARUCO, 2011, p.12-15), one of them being the loss of the characteristic perspective of classical liberal thought of the "harmonic natural order": in the neoliberal ideology, inequality is not only tolerable but desirable. While classical liberalism had a progressive facet, in its confrontation with the aristocracy and feudal rights, neoliberalism is guided by the defense of the existing order, configuring full apology for capitalism.

Maybe should be emphasized that capitalist crises are moments in which neoliberal deepening finds an opportunity, as Alfredo Saad Filho (2005) also argues.

Perry Anderson's maxim that it is functional that the neoliberal ideology as formulated by Mises, Hayek or Friedman is, in

practice, unachievable, seems to remain current, as the cycles of neoliberalization still fall back on justifications such as "the crisis exists because neoliberal reforms have not been fully realized," building an armor to the critique of its practice.

About the privatization processes, we understand that it would not be very accurate to state that the privatization of state services "is no longer necessary" (p.2), because we understand that the privatization processes continue and deepen, through non-classical formats. For example, the outsourcing of management in health and education in countries that still have public health and education systems.

The term "authoritarian liberalism" leaves an interesting doubt, which could be clarified if contrasted with what would be considered a non-authoritarian liberalism, that is, by contrast.

We highlight, finally, the understanding of neoliberalism as a global political program in response to a crisis allegedly caused by social and nationalist movements.

The article brings important interpretative novelties and contributes greatly to the scientific debate on the topic of neoliberalism and contemporary capitalism.

CARCANHOLO, Marcelo & BARUCO, Graziela. "A estratégia neoliberal de desenvolvimento: caráter e contradições". Revista Praia Vermelha, Rio de Janeiro, Vol. 1, n.1, 2011, p.9-23.

HOEVELER, Rejane Carolina. As elites orgânicas transnacionais diante da crise: os primórdios da Comissão Trilateral. Dissertação de mestrado em História. Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2015. Disponível em: <https://www.historia.uff.br/stricto/td/1919.pdf>.

SAAD FILHO, Alfredo; JOHNSTON, Deborah (org.). Neoliberalism. A critical reader. Londres: Pluto Press, 2005.