

Review of: "Neoliberalism, Strong State and Democracy"

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The paper provides a strong and accurate contribution to understanding the phenomenon of neoliberalism. One important contribution is the construction of the notion of neoliberalism as depoliticization, although not particularly innovative. In this regard, the article contributes by drawing parallels between classical authors of neoliberal thought (Hayek, Mises) and a conservative authoritarian theorist, Carl Schmitt. The article convincingly demonstrates the association between the rejection of politics (the active principle of democracy as "government of the people") in neoliberal thought and the adoption of a radical version of liberalism reduced to its mercantile aspect.

In this sense, the contribution helps to understand the non-contradiction between neoliberalism and authoritarianism, for example, in the case of the Pinochet government in Chile. Another example cited in the article is the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong, where neoliberalism can be employed without democratization. The article contributes to the understanding of another form of depoliticization: the insulation of state actors against social and political pressures. It argues that situations such as the autonomy of the central bank and the transfer of power to international organizations would be examples of this. These would be the two forms of depoliticization in neoliberalism: "a political economy approach can be identified as neoliberal, which aims at transferring formerly sovereign functions at the national level to independent expert bodies either globally ('Plan A') or, if not possible, with only several nation-states ('Plan B')."

Thus, the article makes a compelling contribution by highlighting a contradictory aspect of neoliberalism in relation to democracy and political representation. From the perspective of academic and political understanding in Latin America, this is very relevant. In addition to experiences of neoliberalism and authoritarianism, one can also refer to the neoliberalism adopted in contradiction to electoral promises (Susan Stokes (2001), *Mandates and Democracies: Neoliberalism by Surprise in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press). The connection between neoliberal thought and authoritarian depoliticization in Carl Schmitt appears to be a relevant contribution to advancing the theoretical interpretation of these issues.

However, from a "southern" perspective, one proposition of the article does not seem convincing. It is the idea that neoliberalism proposes a "strong state." On the one hand, there is evidence that neoliberal governments have produced strong state intervention in society and the economy (Clark, T. D. (2018). *The paradox of the neoliberal developmentalist State: reconstructing the capitalist elite*. In *Dominant elites in Latin America: from neo-liberalism to the 'Pink Tide'*. London: Palgrave Macmillan).

However, there seems to be ample evidence that during neoliberal reforms, states adopted policies of deregulation,

reduction of public social service structures, tax reforms, etc. In Latin America, the existence of universal public services and "market" solutions such as vouchers, transfers, and non-governmental organizations make a significant difference. Privatizations are still a relevant issue and have a decisive impact on the autonomy of the state and the possibility for political decisions to be effective. It is possible that there is a bias in interpretation due to the international order. From a macroeconomic perspective, the so-called "macroeconomic tripod policy" also represented a significant decrease in the capacity of states, even during the "pink tide" era (Oliveira, Augusto Neftali Corte de. Neoliberalismo durável: o Consenso de Washington na Onda Rosa Latino-Americana. *Opinião Pública*. 2020, v. 26, n. 1). In "developing" countries marked by economic dependence, the notion that neoliberal reforms have produced "strong states" is not very strong. In this regard, in my assessment, the proposition of the article may require a more comprehensive reflection.