

Review of: "Neoliberalism, Strong State and Democracy"

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The article gives an excellent review of the development of neoliberal theory as expounded by its chief theoreticians. In particular the false distinction between a minimal state and a strong state. The minimal state can be seen to refer to an absolute minimum of social welfare, with the state machine reduced to its bare minimum of Army, Police and Prisons, this is the essence of the strong state.

The article could be improved by expanding the argument to encompass the reality of the implementation of these theories, in particular, it would be useful to engage with the following:

- In Europe and North America, citizens in general and workers in particular have shown a tendency to struggle to maintain democratic institutions and trade unions. The strong state has to defeat this using repressive, frequently violent, tactics. Von Mises was economic adviser to the Dolfuss regime when the army was used to crush Red Vienna. Benevolent dictatorship and the "well-meaning dictator" quickly becomes a police state.
- The article implies that it is possible to be an independent force above society. Presumably this means independent of social classes. In practice the neoliberal state is firmly under the control of the financial services industry, the arms industry and the extractive industries. The bourgeoisie form a ruling class with their representatives in control of government and the state machine.
- The article says "Privatisation of state services is then no longer necessary". Can the outsourcing of the remaining welfare provisions to the private sector not be seen as privatisation and a means of laundering public money into private hands?
- Governments operating on the basis of neoliberal principles seek popular support by the use of nativism, nationalism and anti-immigrant racism. Free movement of capital is contrasted to the denial of free movement of labour. Even in regional integration groups, such as the European Union, strong external borders prevent free movement of labour.
- There are frequent references to "peace", yet the reality of the modern world is almost continuous war.

Finally, it might be useful to engage with the counter arguments in "Absolute Capitalism"

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<https://monthlyreview.org/2019/05/01/absolute-capitalism/>