

Review of: "Neoliberalism, Strong State and Democracy"

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I want to thank you for the opportunity to review this article which is well-written and approached.

The article provides a timely and cogent review of both the origins and the development of neoliberalism. The discussion leading to the different approaches espoused by Hayek and Schmitt, towards the state and its interaction with the “private” was very interesting and rather useful.

In terms of the core of the analysis, I would like to succinctly point to two main dimensions which are intertwined from the perspective of Critical IPE. Namely, the link between neoliberalism and policy. These comments are aimed as potentially complementary to the argument presented.

On this, I especially enjoyed the portion of the argument aimed at dissecting the commonly - yet often erroneously - held belief that neoliberalism is much closer to the minimal standards articulated by proponents of the night watchmen state. In that sense, neoliberalism perhaps should be rightly regarded more about re-demarcating the boundaries of the state's limits in a way that favors a sub-set of actors over others, whilst “packaging” said demarcation under the guise of “the rational” or “the objectively correct” way of doing things. Thus, and as argued by the author “privatisation of state services is then no longer necessary” since perhaps the state has already internalised the logic of the market, thus already behaving as a private business. A very specific form of this could be austerity-focused policies presented as the objectively correct thing to be implemented and prescribed, despite the fact that the it is inherently skewed to favor capital. Here Clara Mattei's “*The Capital Order*” which locates austerity in interwar Europe and hence temporally germane to section 2 of the paper. At the same time, and in terms of policy insulated from special interests or as the author states “independent of societal interests”, a fellow traveller may be Peter Burnham's 2014 work “*Depoliticisation: economic crisis and political management*” who focuses on the severing of the economic from the political. This seems to have some common links to Hayek's “dethronement of politics” and the inherent tension between neoliberal capitalism and democracy discussed by theoreticians like Peter Wagner and Wolfgang Streeck arguing for the potential incompatibility of the two.

Bringing everything together therefore, neoliberalism and the way it manifests on the ground may be conceptualised as a class-based politics of reconstruction that is presented as an expert/technocrat-driven policy agenda, ostensibly grounded on apolitical and objectives standards, but which disproportionately disadvantages the lower strata of society, as it is these groups that dependent more on the functions of the state being stripped away in the process of “correct policy”.

I hope at least some of these remarks will be of use and thanks again for a very enjoyable and well-written piece.

