

Review of: "Neoliberalism, Strong State and Democracy"

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This article attempts to present an understanding of neoliberalism, with a focus on the state. This is fine. The stated need - that definitions/understandings of neoliberalism - are lacking, is somewhat incorrect, as the author draws on much of the literature on neoliberalism. Really, the piece focuses on Hayek's understanding of neoliberalism, with a focus on how the economist either under-theorized or failed to conceive of implementing/transitioning to neoliberal policies. I hesitate to say transition, because I don't know if 'transition' is what really is the focus on Hayek's project; it appears that he constructs a vision of the market that exists, and that state intervention interferes with.

On this point of implementation, the author finds useful parallels with Schmitt. This is done mainly through a study of a Schmitt essay from 1932. While interesting, it would be nice to bring more of Schmitt's work into this - particularly his book on dictatorship. I mean, he explicitly theorized transitions there. There is also Schmitt's thought on the political, which flies in the face of liberalism. That that is the case should at least be acknowledged.

Also in the piece, there is the attempt to link Hayek's thought to Schmitt, that the former borrowed from the latter. Evidence for this claim is made based on comments from Hayek on the Pinochet government in Chile. The problem is that this is made almost in passing. From what I can tell, this is a central point in the piece, and if so, this deserves considerable more attention and evidence. It is also unclear if the discussions of the WTO and other policy changes could be read in light of moves made by domestic dictators such as Pinochet. That they both tried to take politics/debate out of economics is fine, but many others have also made this point (see the literature, discussions of the 'Rule of Experts' (Mitchell etc).

Furthermore, if the piece is based on what is neoliberalism, then other authors need to be foregrounded, like Friedman, and what he did. There is also the work of Peck and Tickell, on roll back and roll out neoliberalism. But to include these thinkers seems not the author's real point; the main argument seems to revolve around uncovering Hayek's thought on transitions/policy implementation as central to neoliberal policy reform. If that is the case, then that point should appear early, both in the abstract, then the intro. The hook is really something like we all know that Hayek was key in theorizing neoliberalism, but we have not adequately recognized his role in policy reform/transitions. And there are things that he said/wrote that allow us to see authoritarian, depoliticizing policy techniques as critical parts of the neoliberal project. Yet, if this is true, then there needs to be more evidence provided.