“This important collection of critical essays looks at the emergence and spread of authoritarianism across the world in response to the crisis of neoliberal capitalist globalization over the past decade. Providing a detailed and nuanced analysis of the dynamics and contradictions of this process in a series of case studies covering a number of countries and regions of the world, this book makes an important contribution to our knowledge of the inner workings of emergent authoritarian regimes in the early 21st century.”

Christopher Chase-Dunn, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Director, Institute for Research on World-Systems, University of California, Riverside

“This timely book on the global rise of authoritarianism makes an important contribution to our understanding of the current turbulent historical moment. It offers in-depth analyses of today’s global capitalist crisis and emergent forms of authoritarianism and fascism that is global in sweep, with chapters authored by scholars who are highly recognized and experts in their fields. The book should be a required text in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses dealing with globalization, political economy, inequality, and comparative-historical study of the state and society in the early twenty-first century.”

Walda Katz-Fishman, Professor of Sociology, Howard University

“Over the past two decades, while the United States has been entangled in wars in the Middle East, many countries in Latin America and elsewhere in the world moved to the left. Now, a sharp turn to the right stands in its place across the globe. The times indeed are changing, and The Global Rise of Authoritarianism in the 21st Century goes a long way toward telling us why. This timely collection of first-rate critical essays, penned by an outstanding cadre of authors and edited by one of academia’s most prolific scholars of great international reputation, is a must read!”

Larry T. Reynolds, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Central Michigan University
Neoliberal globalization is in deep crisis. This crisis is manifested on a global scale and embodies a number of fundamental contradictions, a central one of which is the global rise of authoritarianism and fascism. This emergent form of authoritarianism is a right-wing reaction to the problems generated by globalization supported and funded by some of the largest and most powerful corporations in their assault against social movements on the left to prevent the emergence of socialism against global capitalism.

As the crisis of neoliberal global capitalism unfolds, and as we move to the brink of another economic crisis and the threat of war, global capitalism is once again resorting to authoritarianism and fascism to maintain its power. This book addresses this vital question in comparative-historical perspective and provides a series of case studies around the world that serve as a warning against the impending rise of fascism in the 21st century.

Berch Berberoglu is Foundation Professor of Sociology and Director of the Ozmen Institute for Global Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno.
Careful sociological analysis of the dynamics and contradictions of neoliberal globalization is sorely needed in order to assess the social consequences of this process on affected populations and develop appropriate responses to overcome the current global economic, political, and social crises.

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In the early 21st century, we are confronted by multiple challenges—terrorism, war, economic crises, ecological disasters, racism, ethno-national conflict, xenophobia, authoritarianism and fascism—that greatly threaten our civilization. All these catastrophic problems are manifestations of the contradictions of contemporary global capitalism emanating from the crisis of neoliberalism and decline of empire in Europe and the United States, but they have been spreading across the world from the Middle East to Asia, Africa, and Latin America where people in countries in these regions are facing enormous battles of survival that threaten life on our planet. Imperialism today, as the highest expression of advanced, global capitalism, under conditions of neoliberal capitalist globalization, is cultivating extreme right-wing politics, authoritarianism, and fascist movements in a last-ditch effort to rescue a declining and collapsing empire. It is attempting to do so through racism, militarism, threats of new wars, and the imposition of a police state to prevent mass uprisings and revolutions across the globe out of desperation to safeguard and sustain the accumulated wealth and power of a few amid growing social and economic inequality, class polarization, and class conflict that are bound to give rise to social movements, class struggles, and revolutions to replace global capitalism. Thus, the laboring masses, under working-class leadership, must succeed to establish an alternative to the barbarism promoted by the reactionary forces of neoliberal global capitalism, intent on crushing popular democratic resistance by installing authoritarian fascist dictatorships around the world to continue their repressive rule over the people.

This book, which presents the contributions of a dedicated team of scholars and activists, exposes the realities of life under this latest and final stage of global capitalist domination across the world and provides a sober view of the crimes being committed by the ruling classes of the leading states of global imperialism, first and foremost of the United States, throughout the world. These critical and concerned scholars go out of their way to provide the warning signs of impending crises that are yet to come in the years ahead if we remain complacent to the machinations of the powers that be who are destined to destroy our planet in the name of power, profits, and personal
glory through high crimes that they are committing in our name. If the vari-
ous chapters in this book play a role in stopping and reversing the suicidal
path that these forces have placed us on in the destruction of our planet for
personal gain, then all the intellectual labor expanded by these concerned
scholars to expose these crimes would be well worth it.

This book, presenting the important contributions of experts in their
respective fields, provides an in-depth analysis of the nature and contradic-
tions of authoritarian regimes across the world that are the product of the
crisis of neoliberal global capitalism and imperialism. It is through a critical
analysis of the nature and contradictions of these repressive regimes exam-
ined by scholars in the following pages that we will be able to develop a clear
understanding of the inner dynamics of the global rise in authoritarianism
against which we must organize and fight to stop it at its tracks.

I thank each of the contributors for their perceptive chapters that have
enriched this project, culminating into this book. I thank Sunil Kukreja,
the editor-in-chief of the journal *International Review of Modern Sociology* for
inviting me to serve as the guest editor of a special issue of this journal—the
“Crisis of Neoliberalism and the Rise of Authoritarianism in the Early 21st
Century”—and for allowing me to reprint a revised and updated version
of four of the chapters that are included in this book. I especially thank my
editor at Routledge, Dean Birkenkamp, for encouraging me to expand the
project into an edited book, which resulted in the publication of the present
volume in a timely manner.

This book is dedicated to all progressive popular movements struggling
against authoritarianism and fascism around the world. The struggle against
the dictatorship of capital and repressive authoritarian regimes across the
globe is part of the struggle for social justice and efforts to bring about social
change and a transformation of global capitalism and imperialism and their
collaborator states throughout the world. The liberation of the working class
from neoliberal capitalist authoritarianism and fascist tyranny propped up
by global capitalist imperialism is part of the overall liberation of humanity
from exploitative and oppressive rule imposed on the people by the forces
of reaction lodged in the contemporary capitalist system that has dominated
and ruled the world for so long. Their demise in the not-too-distant future
promises to bring about a global social order free of exploitation and oppres-
sion that serves humanity in a commonwealth of workers’ states committed
to social justice and egalitarian social relations in the 21st century.
Neoliberalism was first introduced in Chile after the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet, orchestrated by the United States, on September 11, 1973, overthrew the democratically elected Socialist government of President Salvador Allende, who was killed in the presidential palace by the bombs dropped by the Chilean Air Force as he defended Chile’s fragile democracy. Upon taking power, the fascist military dictatorship of General Pinochet dismissed Congress and eliminated all Socialist and progressive forces from the government and installed an authoritarian regime advised by conservative U.S. economist Milton Friedman’s “Chicago Boys,” implementing a neoliberal monetarist policy in line with the interests of U.S. corporate capitalist forces that took over the Chilean economy to secure their own globally-driven profit-based schemes. The following year, in 1974, the neoliberal capitalist model was introduced in Bolivia through a similar military coup. And a year later, in 1975, in Argentina, a military coup led by General Jorge Rafael Videla installed a fascist military dictatorship in that country. Subsequently, throughout the 1980s, U.S. transnational corporate control of Latin America was assured by a series of U.S.-backed military coups that spread across the entire region under the pretext of fighting Cuban- and Nicaraguan-inspired “socialism and communism.” It was accomplished by propping up death squads in El Salvador, the Contra War against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, and right-wing reactionary regimes (mostly military dictatorships) throughout the continent south of the Rio Grande. This was essentially the beginning of what later became a continent-wide neoliberal global capitalist expansion of U.S. transnational corporations under the auspices of U.S. imperialism. Soon, other military coups, such as the one in Turkey in 1980 and elsewhere in the periphery—in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa—came to define the global strategy of U.S. transnational capital in transforming the economies of these and other states around the world in a neoliberal capitalist direction in the 1980s and beyond, from which U.S. transnational corporations benefited immensely. In effect, a series of authoritarian (military/fascist) regimes were installed to advance U.S. global capitalist interests across the world during this period of resurgence of U.S. imperialism.
Whereas neoliberalism, as the ideology of global capitalism, was adopted in Latin America and elsewhere to advance the interests of both U.S. and other advanced capitalist-imperialist powers in alliance with local corrupt, crony-capitalist regimes imposing authoritarian/fascist rule mostly through military dictatorships exerting their power on the masses across the periphery of the advanced capitalist centers that prevailed for nearly two decades during the 1970s and 1980s, progressive forces led by workers, peasants, Indigenous peoples’ movements and others adversely affected by the neoliberal policies of authoritarian regimes came to challenge the prevailing neocolonial order during the closing decade of the 20th century.

The “Pink Tide” in Latin America that came to exemplify a series of left-wing progressive regimes in Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, and elsewhere in the continent was the response of the left to the dictates of the imperialist states in alliance with their local cronies to facilitate exploitation, oppression, and political domination over the people. The resistance of the masses throughout Latin America that ushered in the “Pink Tide” across the continent in the 1990 and 2000s under the progressive leftist regimes of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, as well as others, set the stage for the battle against neoliberalism that promoted authoritarianism and fascism to stabilize the political situation in response to the global capitalist crisis, which had been unfolding since the global economic slump of the mid 1970s, which in effect embodied the worldwide crisis of neoliberalism and global capitalism in the age of capitalist imperialism—a period of decline of empire that unleashed the resurgence of fascism across the world in the closing decades of the 20th century.

Today, in the early 21st century, we have been facing a similar crisis that submerged the world capitalist economy into the Great Recession in 2008–2009—the deepest and most severe recession since the Great Depression—and are on the verge of facing another, similar and deeper recession compounded by the COVID–19 crisis that may in fact plunge the global economy into another Great Depression if current trends continue to threaten global capitalism and its future prospects. With the United States and a number of countries in the world moving to the right, we are once again under the threat of the further consolidation of authoritarian regimes and face the erosion of democratic rights in Europe and the United States in line with the interests of big business as it attempts to consolidate its hold on the U.S. economy and polity in times of economic uncertainty, social unrest, and threats to the stability of the global capitalist system. Thus, it is during times of weakening and decline of empire and imperialism on a global scale and the corresponding divisions and stalemate within the ruling class that erode empire’s ability to turn things around to prevent a total collapse of the system, that increasingly prompts the powers that be to look for repressive racist solutions to disarm the people’s
movements to halt their struggle toward a radical, socialist alternative to the crisis of capitalism and imperialism. Increasing racism, police brutality, and repression, especially of racial and ethnic minorities, as in the brutal killing of an African American, George Floyd, by a racist police officer in the United States in May 2020, is another example of the brutality of a system in crisis.

As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, neoliberalism and the neoliberal globalization project promoted by U.S. transnational capital and the state for much of the latter part of the 20th and early 21st century is in deep crisis. The contradictions of this process are seen and felt everywhere, and the disturbing manifestations of neoliberalism—from cronyism and corruption to suppression of civil liberties and human rights in the form of authoritarian states across the globe that violate the rule of law and trample on democratic governance—are on the rise since the emergence of Trump.

The rise of fascism and authoritarian regimes around the world are not new, as we know from the experience of such regimes in Chile under General Pinochet and Argentina under General Videla, and a host of other military and civilian dictatorships in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (e.g., in Iran under the Shah, in Nicaragua under Somoza, in the Philippines earlier under Marcos and now under Duterte, in Egypt earlier under Mubarak and now under Sisi, in Libya under Qaddafi, in Iraq under Saddam Hussain, and elsewhere throughout the world) were the order of the day in the 1970s and 1980s through the early years of the new millennium to the present, with right-wing authoritarian regimes ruling across the globe.

While Latin America went through a “Pink Tide” that mildly challenged neoliberalism and moved many of the societies in the region to the left, some even establishing various forms of “socialism” in a few countries, as in the case of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela under Hugo Chaves, or the Sandinista Revolution led by Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, as well as a series of leftist regimes in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay, and elsewhere, where progressive forces came to power to halt the disastrous policies of neoliberal capitalist regimes propped up by transnational corporations and global financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the pendulum has again swung to the right with the counterrevolutionary forces gaining the upper hand in the havoc that they have created in Venezuela, Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, and now in Brazil. Thus, the class struggle is once again at the forefront of the struggles for state power throughout the region.

In Asia, the march of authoritarianism and military-backed regimes have spread from Myanmar to Thailand to Cambodia to the Philippines, where dictators like Rodrigo Duterte have been running rampant across Southeast Asia. This is also the case in India under Narendra Modi at one end and as some might argue Xi Jinping in China at the other. For good or for ill, whether they are right-wing fascist dictatorships with authoritarian leadership or benevolent nationalist movements that have set the path to nationally
based populist projects, the end result is much the same: top-down authoritarian regimes that have emerged in the context of the worldwide spread of neoliberal global capitalism and its devastating crises and impact on people across the world.

Two trends seem to have emerged as a consequence of the expansion of the neoliberal project of economic plunder and political repression to further the process of capital accumulation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The first has always benefited the transnational corporations (and their capitalist owners in the center states) and the cronies of foreign capital, who, through their corrupt practices, have fulfilled their role as agents of foreign corporations and of the imperial state, thus taking many of these countries down the same disastrous path. The second has emerged in response to the crisis and impact of neoliberalism and capitalist globalization on broad segments of the population across the world in the form of a populist reaction led by pseudo-nationalist forces that have mobilized people under the banner of ultra-nationalism and xenophobia to prevent the rise of a socialist or communist movement against global capitalism. It is against this background and in the context of the contradictions and crisis of neoliberal capitalist globalization that we need to understand the re-emergence of authoritarianism in the early 21st century.

This book is devoted to the study of this urgent phenomenon that has engulfed the world and taken us back to the dark days of authoritarian dictatorships across the globe. The book consists of fourteen chapters on the crisis of neoliberal globalization and the rise of authoritarianism that provide a broader understanding of neoliberalism, imperialism, and authoritarianism through regional analyses of the situation in Latin America, Asia, and Africa and of case studies of Russia, China, the United States, India, the Philippines, Turkey, Hungary, and Poland. These wide-ranging chapters, most of which were commissioned specifically for this book, provide incisive analyses of key cases of neoliberalism and authoritarianism—whether they be Putin and the oligarchs in Russia or Trump and his billionaire right-wing backers engulfed in corruption, nepotism, and profiteering in the United States.

The opening substantive chapter of this book by Alessandro Bonanno provides a broad global perspective for understanding the nature and contradictions of neoliberal globalization that has led to its crisis across the globe. Bonanno argues that the rise of populist reaction to neoliberalism in the early 21st century is a response to high levels of socioeconomic inequality and uncertainty, generated by neoliberal globalization that culminated in the Great Recession of 2008–2009, which created the conditions for a restructuring of the political economy of global capitalism in the form of an emergent neoliberal authoritarian capitalism. Bonanno persuasively argues that the recent wave of authoritarianism across the globe is a product of the crisis of neoliberal globalization, which generates a dual authoritarian
response (one from above—to maintain order under repressive authoritarian rule—and another from below—challenging the neoliberal status quo by providing a far-right populist, ultra-nationalist authoritarian response to the decline of empire). This response is reactionary, Bonanno points out, in that it denounces liberal/bourgeois democracy for being distorted and corrupt; advocates racism, nationalism, and xenophobia; and justifies totalitarian solutions to socioeconomic and political problems. Bonanno concludes his analysis by arguing that the inability of neoliberalism to address the crisis of global capitalism and the imposition of authoritarian rule across the globe to maintain law and order opens the path to fascism and political repression.

Ilya Matveev in his chapter on the development of neoliberalism in Putin’s Russia, examines in great detail the fundamental contradictions of the post-Soviet transformations that the imposition of the neoliberal policy paradigm has led to the emergence of an oligarchy that expanded its wealth on an unprecedented scale through the imposition of an authoritarian regime. This context of the promotion of neoliberal policies to facilitate capital accumulation by a new oligarchic class led to the development of an authoritarian state with Putin at the helm. In explaining these developments, Matveev is cognizant of the class forces at work in implementing the neoliberal policies of the authoritarian state in Russia.

As in other cases of authoritarian states, where cronyism, corruption, and neoliberal state policy are intertwined under the reign of a dominant ruling class, the evolution of neoliberalism in Russia in the post-Soviet period is accommodated by neoliberal authoritarianism. Thus, through an understanding of the relationship between neoliberalism and authoritarianism, we are able to delineate the impact of global capitalism on the rise of authoritarianism in Russia. However, the matter of implementing the neoliberal policy paradigm in Russia may not be as simple as it appears at first sight in that the interests and actions of the state in intervening and mediating the relationship between neoliberal oligarchs and the state may coincide with the state’s broader “nationalist” societal agenda while accommodating neoliberalism in its economy. In this regard, by weaving together the social, political, and economic dynamics of the Russian state, Matveev makes an important contribution to our understanding of the situation in Russia under the Putin regime in the post-Soviet period of neoliberal authoritarianism.

Alvin Y. So in his chapter on China addresses the changes in leadership that have been going on in that country since the ascendance to power of Xi Jinping in 2012. He argues that, since taking power in the Communist Party several years ago, Xi has systematically dismantled the political reforms of his predecessor Deng Xiaoping, who led China for four decades. These reforms, So points out, had included fixed term limits and enforced retirement rules for leaders and cadres, the relative tolerance of intellectuals and limited dissent, and safeguards against the development of a personality cult around the leader. Through recent reversals of these reforms, So argues, Xi
has succeeded in establishing an authoritarian regime in China. In examining the process by which this transformation has taken place, So aims to understand the distinctive features of Xi’s authoritarian regime, the rise of this regime and its relationship to the Communist Party of China over the past several years, and the implications of these features and changes for China and the world in the years ahead.

The critical issue that needs to be addressed, however, is the nature and aims of this regime and its relationship to centers of power in China in relation to not only the leader as such but also (and perhaps more importantly) the chief political institutions of Chinese society—first and foremost the Communist Party of China. It is only through an understanding of the dynamics of this relationship that we would come to know if what has emerged in China is a personalist authoritarianism under the leadership of Xi Jinping or the institutionalization of the rule of the Communist Party through its leader (Xi Jinping) to implement the party’s political line and authority. If So is right in calling Xi’s regime “Maoist authoritarianism” and finding it as resting on the rule of the Communist Party, then perhaps what we may have in China today is a return to Maoist ideology promoting “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” as it is officially proclaimed by the party. Whatever may be the case, it is clear that big changes have taken place in China in recent years, and these changes will have a major impact on the future course of China’s development in the 21st century.

Turning to developments in the United States following the election of Donald Trump to the presidency, Alan Spector in his chapter provides a wide-ranging historical analysis of the rise of authoritarianism and right-wing politics in the United States over the past several decades. Going as far back as the Nixon and Reagan administrations to provide the historical context of the imperial presidency that set the stage for the entry of Trump to the highest office in the land, Spector helps us understand the critical relationship between the deteriorating neoliberal economic situation during the past several decades and its contradictions on a world scale, including its devastating impact on working people in the United States, and the populist reaction to the decline of empire—a recipe for the rise of authoritarianism and fascism in the absence of an organized left-wing working-class response to the unfolding crisis.

To make sense of recent developments surrounding the rise of Trump and its place in recent U.S. history, Spector explores the changes in U.S. and global political-economic developments over the past fifty years and how they are used by xenophobic “populists” to broaden their political base. Examining the effects of global capitalist expansion and the consequences of neoliberal economic policies on working people in the United States, Spector argues that dominant capitalist forces have promoted right-wing authoritarian reaction to the crisis of neoliberalism to deflect and divert attention away from the problems created by the capitalist globalization process. It is
within the context of this broader process of global economic expansion and contraction of neoliberal capitalism and its impact on the United States that we need to understand the rise of right-wing populism that has emboldened Trump to attain presidential power in the United States and even more so in the aftermath of his impeachment by the House and acquittal by the Senate.

James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer in their chapter on the crisis of neoliberalism and the rise of authoritarianism in Latin America highlight the backdrop of the sharp global swing to the right toward populist nationalism driven by a concern over the waves of immigrant refugees seeking to escape crisis conditions of political and environmental violence in their home countries. This right-wing populism, and the associated rise of authoritarian regimes and political parties, Petras and Veltmeyer argue, is predominantly a feature of European and American politics. But there is another apparently related but in fact quite different political dynamic, they point out, that can be associated with the recent economic history of Latin America: the macro-region of the world capitalist system that has experienced the brunt of the neoliberal policy agenda that has shaped and dominated world politics over the past three decades. While this neoliberal policy agenda has continued to be implemented elsewhere to this very day, it was challenged in Latin America in the 1990s by powerful social movements in the countryside. The outcome was the unfolding of a progressive cycle of regimes oriented toward left-wing populism and inclusionary state activism—a development that corresponded to a primary commodities boom on the world market in the first decade of the new millennium. However, by 2012, both this boom and the progressive cycle came to an end with another pendulum swing in Latin American politics—toward the far right and the restoration of a trend toward neoliberal authoritarianism. Exploring the political implications of this development, Petras and Veltmeyer highlight the underlying dynamics of the authoritarian trend across Latin America, especially with its most recent turn to far-right politics in Brazil and other countries in the region.

Walden Bello in his chapter on the rise of authoritarianism in Southeast Asia discusses a number of states in the region that have imposed authoritarian rule that has been spreading across this part of the world in recent years. Focusing on three clear cases of authoritarian dictatorships in this region—Cambodia, Thailand, and the Philippines—Bello deconstructs this phenomenon to show that while global capitalism and the crisis of neoliberal capitalist globalization are certainly the main sources of the rise of authoritarian dictatorships across the region, the varied forms that these regimes have adopted to impose authoritarian rule over the people illustrate the complex nature of the process at work that empowers would-be dictators to assert their authority over the people to contain popular resistance, as in the case of Hun Sen in Cambodia and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. While a common characteristic of these regimes is the imposition of arbitrary despotic rule over the people that violates their rights,
including the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press and the media, Bello argues that notwithstanding their varied forms, such right-wing fascist regimes are a serious threat to both liberal democracy and human rights in general and thus must be struggled against to defeat one of the most potent political forces of our time.

Patrick Bond in his chapter on neoliberalism, authoritarianism, and popular resistance in Africa, points out that neoliberalism’s global scale crisis has been most prevalent in Africa, in terms of economic welfare, human suffering, ecological damage, and policy sovereignty. And these have become more prevalent by the COVID-19 crisis of 2020. Bond points out that, while export-led growth strategies appeared to pay off when, during 2002–2011, commodity prices soared and “Africa Rising” became the watchword, the situation began to change as commodity prices plateaued during 2011–2014 and then crashed, and the consequent crisis of neoliberalism once again revived impending authoritarianism. The social movements and opposition parties mobilizing against the prevailing dictatorships wilted under pressures of class compromise and degenerated into governments that accepted and even endorsed the neoliberal model.

The reimposition of neoliberal policies, a new round of unrepayable foreign debt, and renewed austerity, Bond points out, have exacerbated the social and economic crisis of neoliberalism in Africa and unleashed repression by authoritarian leaders. This in turn has resulted in a new round of protests in some of the most intense sites of struggle across the continent in recent years. Bond examines the dynamics of this process in detail to expose the neoliberal foundations of rising authoritarianism accompanied by repression (and resistance) across the African landscape.

India is commonly referred to as the most populous and durable democracy in the world. Ashok Kumbamu in his chapter on India argues, however, that since Narendra Modi became the prime minister of India in 2014, the politics of hate and revulsion, the culture of violence, and fearmongering have masqueraded as “democracy.” All democratic institutions, including the judiciary, education, and the media, have systematically been targeted and crippled, and Hindutva vigilante groups have placed many prominent rationalists, secularists, and civil rights activists on the hit list, and many have been killed or imprisoned.

In reaction to the crisis of neoliberalism in India, the ultra-nationalist ideology of Hindutva, Kumbamu points out, has been constructed as the nation’s pride, and it has been projected as a yardstick to ascertain individuals’ patriotism. Crude binary oppositions or homogenized polarizations, such as nationalist or anti-nationalist, have become the mundane vocabulary of everyday politics. And the once-celebrated notion of secularism has become a taboo or a fear factor. Although Hindutva politics has blatantly appeared since the 1990s, Kumbamu argues that it has had deep roots in Indian society and politics for many decades in the form of Brahmanical ideology.
Given this background to Indian politics, Kumbamu examines how Hindu-
tva colludes with neoliberalism and produces an authoritarian/fascist politi-
cal environment and how Hindutva politics penetrates into everyday life and
acquires a normality and acceptability among the Hindu majority.

Ligaya Lindio-McGovern in her chapter on neoliberalism and the rise of
authoritarianism in the Philippines explains the development of the fascist
regime of Rodrigo Duterte as well as of past administrations marked with
militarism and dictatorship, resulting in rampant violations of human rights
in the Philippines. She locates the structural sources of such phenomenon in
the logic of global capitalism and its neoliberal ideology maintained by capital-
ist imperialism buttressed by militarism. Articulated in the form of U.S.-
supported counterinsurgency against the Philippine revolutionary forces that
challenge the exploitative structures of global capitalism that coexist with the
semi-feudal/capitalist Philippine economy, she shows how successive fascist
dictatorships in the Philippines have maintained a ruling class whose power
and wealth derive from the perpetuation of an oppressive system tied to transnational capitalism. Lindio-McGovern contends that historically rooted
in its neocolonial status in the world capitalist system, the current political-
economic structure of neoliberal authoritarian capitalism in the Philippines is
at the roots of poverty, wide-scale social-class inequalities, and underdevelop-
ment that has generated resistance from various sectors, including a revolu-
tionary movement that has persisted for over half a century.

Yıldız Atasoy, in her chapter on neoliberalism and the rise of authoritari-
anism in Turkey, provides an incisive analysis of the rise of Recep Tayyip
Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) over the course of
the past eighteen years. In his unprecedented reign over the country for
nearly two decades, first as prime minister and subsequently as president
of Turkey, Erdoğan has presided over the Turkish state since he began his
national political career as prime minister of Turkey in 2002. Atasoy situates
Turkey today in the problematic of neoliberal capitalist development under
successive AKP governments over the course of the past two decades by
placing Turkey’s current experience with authoritarian rule in the context
of a neoliberal development model through the neostatist restructuring of
capital accumulation in Turkey. She argues that AKP authoritarianism also
activates “economization” as a new value system to promote neoliberal capital-
ism. She points out that the presence or absence of a crisis in neoliberal capitalism does not necessarily produce an authoritarian outcome, but also
shows that authoritarianism as built into neoliberal historymaking is a socially
desirable and acceptable project justified as a corrective to policies pursued
during the previous state-led development model. Tangled up with legiti-
mate concerns, such as the headscarf ban and arbitrarily implemented policy
practices such as the state reclamation of common public lands for housing
and mega-infrastructure projects and commercial agriculture, Atasoy con-
tends that neoliberal historymaking broadens an ideational and institutional
context for the acceptability of the ever-increasing subordination of humans
and nonhuman nature to the commodification process. Clearly, the pat-
terns of authoritarian leadership practiced in Turkey, as elsewhere, inevitably
lead to cronyism and corruption involving contracts for huge infrastructural
projects that are awarded to powerful economic interests that support and
defend the regime. And such backing of the current regime reinforces the
continuation of authoritarian rule that is prevalent in Turkey today.

Adam Fabry in his chapter on Hungary analyzes the fusion between neo-
liberalism and authoritarian-ethnicist politics under the current right-wing
Orbán regime. He points out that since gaining a two-thirds majority in
the 2010 general elections, the formerly conservative and now far-right
Fidesz–KDNP government led by Viktor Orbán has carried out a root-
and-branch transformation of Hungarian society. Fabry argues that while
officially proposing a break with neoliberal economic policies at home and
abroad, the Orbán regime has rather rearticulated it, producing a specific
variety of neoliberalism that skillfully combines some of the central tenets of
neoliberalism that benefits the top sectors of the national bourgeoisie loyal
to the ruling far-right Fidesz party politicians and oligarchs connected to it,
with “authoritarian-ethnicist” state practices against internal and external
“enemies” of the Hungarian nation. He goes on to point out that while
Orbán’s “illiberal” politics have been criticized by neoliberal institutions,
such as the IMF and the European Union, they have taken little concrete
action against the Hungarian government. The reason for this is primarily
pragmatic, according to Fabry: not only have the economic policies pursued
by the Orbán regime benefited the interests of both domestic and transna-
tional capital, but also its authoritarian-ethnicist policies are not that differ-
ent from those pursued by the United States or other states in the European
Union. In fact, one could argue that the Orbán regime in Hungary is part
of the authoritarian/fascist trend across the globe that has emerged in the
aftermath of the Great Recession that marked the crisis and collapse of
neoliberalism and the rise of ultra-right fascist regimes across the world
that are backed by big business to prevent a mass uprising and a potential
working-class socialist revolution. Against this background, Fabry explores
the prospects for progressive politics in Hungary in the coming years and
concludes that given the consolidation of authoritarian rule and right-wing
ultra-nationalist politics, a turn to the left in Hungary appears dim in the
immediate future.

Poland is another case where right-wing authoritarian rule has developed
in the aftermath of the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. Nadia Smie-
cinska in her chapter on Poland discusses in great detail the rise of right-
wing authoritarianism in that country over the past several years. She points
out that in Poland this authoritarian ideology is represented by the PiS Party
(Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, or Law and Justice Party), which has been in the
leadership of the national government since 2015. PiS’s nationalist, illiberal,
xenophobic, and authoritarian rhetoric, Smiecińska argues, threatens the
country’s future.

The rise of authoritarianism in Poland has been challenging the post-
socialist political order that has been established in that country over the past
few decades. In post-socialist Poland, she points out, we are left with a rapid
and chaotic economic transition from communism to capitalism over the past
several decades, which provides a political–economic context for the current
crisis where large sections of the population have willingly voted for a party
that styles itself as authoritarian. Smiecińska goes on to point out that the
arrival of neoliberal capitalism after decades of communism provides a context
for an examination of why a country that relatively recently toppled the com-
munist regime votes itself back into an authoritarian mode of governance.

PiS’s pledge to make Poland great for its citizens and turn it into a consid-
erable international force, Smiecińska argues, is a mere façade that does not
challenge the roots of many problems arising out of the established system.
While PiS sometimes attacks neoliberalism, she continues, they mostly con-
flate the flaws of the neoliberal order with a wide-ranging attack on plural-
ist democracy, social liberalism, and cosmopolitan elites. However, without
the backdrop of dissatisfaction with neoliberal state policymaking, she con-
cludes, PiS’s ideology would have remained on the margins of the social and
political order in Poland. But now, with the re-election of the incumbent
President Andrzej Duda in July 2020, the PiS is set to further strengthen its
authoritarian rule in Poland over the next five years.

Whereas the crisis of neoliberal globalization lies at the roots of the ris-
ing tide of authoritarianism that various states have imposed to stabilize and
rationalize the adverse effects of the global capitalist crisis through the impos-
ton of autocratic rule, those in power in authoritarian states have not always
succeeded in enforcing state-sanctioned repression, as has been the case in
fascist regimes throughout the world, historically and today. However, given
the gravity of the crisis that the global economy faces today, the powers that
be have found it convenient to install authoritarian leaders to do the dirty
political work of wealthy oligarchs and capitalists, to protect and advance
their class interests while repressing any resistance to their class rule, especially
during periods of crises under conditions of neoliberal global capitalism.

Those being adversely affected by such authoritarian rule, however, have
mobilized their ranks and have engaged in protracted political struggles to
guard and defend their rights by taking effective steps in their fight against
neoliberal authoritarian capitalism and the oppressive class forces that prop
up such regimes. Social movements organized to take on these repressive
states as part of their struggle for democratic rights are destined to lead
the masses to their eventual victory through revolutionary class action to
transform their societies. The emergence of a mass movement arising from
the protests of millions of people in the United States and across the world
in response to the rising fascism and police state that exercises arbitrary
repressive power against the people, black and white, is a development that goes beyond the mass protests that erupted in response to the gruesome murder of George Floyd by the police in the United States in 2020. It is a response that calls into question the legitimacy of the repressive apparatuses of the state and, indeed, the system itself, leading to its eventual transformation. It is gratifying to know that this has become quite clear when one looks back throughout the course of human history. Thus, it is not unrealistic to expect that—like everything else in history—neoliberalism, authoritarianism, and global capitalism might in fact one day be abolished and be relegated to the dustbin of history. Hence, in the end, however difficult the task of liberation may be, the people will eventually win and be free.
References

1. To be sure, the expansion of markets past national borders and any politically created boundary are conditions of the existence of capitalism. Accordingly, the globalization of markets is a process that finds its roots in the very establishment of capitalism as the world-dominant mode of production. Capitalism requires the continuous colonization of new spaces and spheres of society. Accordingly, the current neoliberal form of globalization represents the historical form through which the expansion of capitalism has evolved. However, it cannot be considered its only form of development. Therefore, there is a theoretically important difference between the growth of a global economy and society and the current neoliberal globalization. Additionally, a return to protectionism as advocated by populist views should not be considered the only alternative to globalization. The problem with globalization rests not on the internationalization of the economy but on its neoliberal and pro-corporate character (Stiglitz 2017).

2. The thesis that the United States is still the regulator of global capitalism is proposed by a wealth of publications that support the theory of the “empire” (e.g., Hardt and Negri 2001; Harvey 2003; Panitch and Gindin 2013).

3. In the United States, there was the virtual nationalization of financial institutions and manufacturing corporations that for a few months were administered by officials of the Obama administration.

4. This scholarship further stresses the connection between the growth of inequality and the implementation of neoliberal measures. In this respect, arguably the most complete analysis to date is that proposed by the French economist Tomas Piketty (2014). Piketty’s research question probes the relationship between capital accumulation and the distribution of wealth and, specifically, whether the growth of capitalism concentrates wealth in the hands of the few, as contended by the Marxist and radical traditions, or whether through competition and technological progress it reduces inequality and produces greater harmony among classes, as argued by neoliberals. He answers this question through an examination of data that cover three centuries of wealth distribution and more than twenty countries, and he unequivocally concludes that capitalism increases the concentration of wealth. More importantly, however, he contends that this tendency can and has been altered. In particular, he documents the reduction of inequality promoted by the wealth redistribution policies generated by the two world wars and Fordism and the subsequent growth of inequality worldwide that has followed the implementation of neoliberalism. Additionally, he documents that the expansion of capitalism structurally privileges the growth of wealth over wages and salary, contradicting the neoliberal idea about the enhancement of meritocracy that the functioning of the capitalist system supposedly promotes.

5. For example, the electoral successes of Sebastian Kurz (Austria), Andrzej Duda (Poland), and Victor Orbán (Hungary) and the rise to prominence of Marine Le Pen (France), Geert Wilders (Netherlands), Matteo Salvini (Italy), and Nigel Farage (United Kingdom) demonstrate the rise of right-wing populists and their parties. Popular authoritarian nationalist leaders such as Vladimir Putin (Russia), Xi Jinping (China), Narendra Modi (India), Rodrigo Duterte (the Philippines), and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey) also are indicative of the powerful authoritarian current across the world.

6. Free-market ideology does not preclude in practice widespread “crony capitalist” or “venture capitalist” policies that employ state power on behalf of corporations, finance capital, and the wealthy and against the poor, workers, middle classes, and the overall social and biophysical commons. The Trump administration is an unparalleled example of this corrupted version of the free-market ideal.

7. Milanovic (2016: 214–217) holds that rich nations will continue to move toward a two-class society of the superrich and the various strata that serve them. The increasing
use of robotics and the growing oversupply of highly educated people will reduce the
demand for labor and make family background and luck central drivers in shaping
socioeconomic location. His argument converges with Piketty’s argument about the
rise of a rentier society.
1. Dirigisme refers to various directly interventionist practices of the state, as opposed to
arm’s-length regulation characteristic of the neoliberal policy paradigm.
2. For the best critical analysis, see Kotz and Weir (2007).
3. ‘Red directors’, i.e. managers of Soviet enterprises, were the prime beneficiaries
of the ‘spontaneous privatization’ in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The official
privatization that began in 1992 essentially legalized their property grab.
1. In the case of Bolivia, Alvaro García Linera, the country’s vice-president, has
characterized the activists in the struggle over the rights of nature and associated
nongovernmental organizations as stooges of U.S. imperialism, provocateurs,
or environmental terrorists (FIDH, 2015).
2. Kleptocracy is a government with corrupt leaders (kleptocrats) who use
their power to exploit the people and natural resources of their own territory
to expand their personal wealth and political power. Typically, this system
involves the embezzlement of public funds at the expense of the wider population.
3. Macri was backed by the mass media, led by the Clarin conglomerate, as well
as by the international financial press (the Financial Times, the Wall Street
Journal, etc.). Wall Street speculators and Washington’s overseas political apparatus also financed his electoral campaign. (Upon Macri’s election, the regime transferred $5 billion to the notorious Wall Street speculator Paul Singer.) As the Presidential election results rolled in and Macri was pronounced the victor, Wall Street and the City of London, and their financial mouthpieces (the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times), announced the coming of a new era the end of ‘anti-investor, populism and nationalism, wasteful social spending’, referring to increases in pensions, family allowances, and wages that had been approved by the previous center-left government.
4. Since the first round of election in Brazil, newspapers have reported on a growing trend of acts of violence committed by pro-Bolsonaro forces. A mapping done by researcher and journalist Haroldo Ceravolo shows more than fifty cases of violence committed since the beginning of October by Bolsonaro’s supporters and defenders. And the number seems to be growing by the day.
1. According to the National Statistical Coordination Board, people from the high-income class, which account for between 15.1 and 15.9 percent of the country’s population, enjoyed a 10.4-percent annual growth in income in 2011. In contrast, incomes of people in the middle-income segment grew by only 4.3 percent, and incomes of those in the low-income group by 8.2 percent. Overall inequality thus increased as the incomes of the top bracket increased faster than other brackets (Remo, 2013).
2. Some of the points made below were originally laid out in Bello (2017).
4. Speech before a conference of local government officials carried over DZRH
(March 14, 2017).
5. Interview with Dr. Yo Ying Ma, Binghamton (March 5, 2017).
6. Here, I find Arno Mayer’s distinction among “reactionaries,” “conservatives,”
and “counterrevolutionaries” still very useful. Fascism, in Mayer’s typology,
falls into the counterrevolutionary category. See Mayer (1971).
7. This is not to say that liberal democracy was not also a subject of derision on
the part of Hitler and Mussolini. However, the principal target of both leaders
was the socialist project and the workers’ movement, and they played on the threat of a working-class revolution to unite the right on their way to power.

1. In 2016 alone, there were eleven politically motivated Internet shutdowns: Ethiopia (four times), Gambia and Uganda (twice), and Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Mali, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Mukeredzi 2017). Surveillance of the Internet is also a growing problem, as witnessed in the ways South African intelligence intervened repeatedly during Zuma’s reign (Duncan 2016).

2. The measure in each country is the category of cooperation in labor-employer relations, on a scale from generally confrontational (1) to generally cooperative (7) (World Economic Forum 2017).

3. ACLED defines a riot as “a public demonstration by a spontaneously organized group that uses violence” and a protest as “a public demonstration where the demonstrators are peaceful.” For a much-more-nuanced analysis of how protests might be considered “disruptive”—between violent and nonviolent—see Paret (2017).

1. This is based on my own observation of the situation: I was still living in the Philippines when martial law was declared.


3. Based on my interviews with Indigenous people who were affected by corporate mining during my Fulbright research fellowship in the Philippines in the fall of 2017.

4. Interviews I conducted with Indigenous people during my Fulbright research in the Philippines in the fall of 2017 reveal the occurrence of forced evacuations, the extrajudicial killings of resisters to corporate mining, and violations of Indigenous peoples’ right to free informed consent.


6. Estimate based on an email I received on April 1, 2019 from Bayan-USA about this incident.


9. Among those who spoke during the launching was a speaker from victims of Duterte’s drug war, but she had to wear a mask, to protect her identity. There
was also a speaker from Indigenous people who spoke about the militarization of their communities that resulted in forced evacuations and the extrajudicial killings of Lumads (Indigenous people of Mindanao, in the southern region of the Philippines) who have been defending their ancestral lands that they are rapidly losing to corporate mining.

10. My knowledge of the Malaya Movement is from my participation in it.


1. Kemalism, named after the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, is an ideological referent for Turkey’s national development project. Its specific principles include republicanism, nationalism, secularism, populism, statism (devletçilik) and revolutionism/reformism.

2. The Gülenist movement is one of the main mass-based civil society religious movements that emerged in the 1970s under the leadership of state imam Fethullah Gülen, who was trained in state-run schools for higher Islamic learning. The Gülenists believe that an Islamic brand of modernity can emerge from an imaginative blending of Islamic values and scientific knowledge. Gülenism is a transnational religious-social movement involved in demonstrations of piety and educational endeavours. Its activities have also expanded into media and financial markets.

3. The Gezi Park Protests that began on May 28, 2013, and were suppressed shortly after by the government have not played a significant role in later developments in Turkish politics.

4. Ergenekon refers to an ultra-nationalist ‘gang’ alleged to be an extension of a clandestine network operating in Turkey, whose members had links to the Turkish Armed Forces. It was alleged that Ergenekon was laying the groundwork for a new period of military rule in Turkey. Ergenekon was also believed to have been active during the Cold War in fighting against the expansion of communist ideology in the 1970s and against the Kurdish separatist movement in the 1980s. It re-emerged in the 1990s to challenge political Islam. Its existence was revealed on July 25, 2008, during an investigation of a political-crime gang suspected of staging a coup against the AKP government. The pro-AKP media alleged that Ergenekon was an incarnation of the deep state—‘invisible’ members of the military and political elite who have long controlled the country from behind the scenes (Globe and Mail, July 15, 2008; Gunter 2008: 107–126). Largely immune from prosecution, its operations were believed to have included intimidation, assassinations and bombings, often directed against those deemed to be in opposition to official state ideology (Radikal, August 10, 2008). Turkish courts began to hear the Ergenekon indictment on October 20, 2008, but the hearings did not produce sufficient evidence to support these allegations.

5. Among other military operations is the Hendek Operation of August 7, 2015. These operations have intensified with the rise of ISIS in Northern Iraq and Syria, which has further complicated Kurdish politics in Turkey. The Turkish state’s relations with the Kurdish people have been problematic for many years, but these relations have become increasingly violent since the military coup in 1980. There is enormous resistance to the PKK-led Kurdish movement rooted
in the idea of the indivisible territorial unity of the state and the unitary conception of the Turkish nation. Although it is not the focus of this chapter, it has a highly contentious and violent history, going back to the Ottoman Empire and early years of the Turkish Republic. The 1960s and 1970s were a time for the political reconstruction of Kurdish activism in alliance with revolutionary leftist organizations (Bozarslan 2003: 34–38). In contrast to the religious and tribal-based uprisings of the 1930s, leftist Kurdish activists have recast Kurdish issues around the themes of economic exploitation, political oppression and cultural-linguistic rights. The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) was founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan, a former member of a revolutionary youth organization, Dev Genç. Öcalan carried the leftist Kurdish rights agenda into the present with relatively little ideological modification (Özcan 2006).

6. The EEA classifies artificial areas as consisting of the general urban fabric, including industrial and commercial lands, road and rail networks and associated lands, port areas, airports, mineral extraction sites, dump sites, construction areas, green urban areas and sport and leisure facilities. The non-artificial ‘natural’ areas include agricultural lands, pastures, forests, woodlands, scrubs, grasslands, wetlands, open space with little or no vegetation and water bodies.

7. Dönüm refers to a land area approximately one thousand square meters in size.

8. Through Law No 1164, the General Directory of National Property donated 550 parcels of public land to TOKİ in 2010 alone, approximately 14 km² of public land (Maliye Bakanlığı 2010: 96).

1. Annual economic growth surpassed 4 percent between 1997 and 2006, and unemployment reached an all-time low of 5.7 percent in 2001 (significantly lower than the average unemployment rate in CEE and the Baltics of 13.3 percent). Data are based on figures from the World Bank.

2. According to the 2005 UNCTAD Transnationalization Index, Hungary ranked as the sixth ‘most-open’ developed economy in the world, after Belgium, Luxemburg, Estonia, Bulgaria and Slovakia, well ahead of most advanced capitalist states, including Britain, Germany, Japan and the United States (UNCTAD, 2005).

3. Also known as the ‘Tavares Report’, the report provided a systematic critique of the Orbán regime, calling on the European Commission to ‘focus not only on specific infringements of EU law . . . but to respond appropriately to a systematic change in the constitutional and legal system of a Member State where multiple and recurrent infringements unfortunately result in a state of legal uncertainty’ (Tavares, 2013). Following a heated debate in the European Parliament, the Orbán government escaped sanctions from the European Union.

4. The Hungarian-born sociologist Iván Szelényi has recently provided an account of the Orbán regime that in many ways resembles Magyar’s, although Szelényi argues that property relations in contemporary Hungary are ‘neo-patrimonial’ or ‘neo-prebendal’ (i.e., property is allocated by political bosses, not by personal masters) and that the Orbán regime does follow a coherent ideology, which is similar to U.S.-style neoconservatism/traditionalism (Szelényi, 2015; Szelényi and Csillag, 2015).

5. The evolution of capitalism into an era dominated by mafia-like networks of organized ‘rackets’ was already proposed in the early 1940s by the likes of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Friedrich Pollock (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016; Pollock, 1941; see also Granter, 2017; Schulte-Bockholt, 2006; Wilson, 2009).
6. The relative weakness of trade unions is not a Hungarian phenomenon but a characteristic of the distinct variety of neoliberalism existing in CEE. Consider the following two statistics. First, union density in new EU-member states (24.6 percent on average) is significantly lower than that of the old member states (38.6 percent on average). Second, from 1990 to the present, a number of strikes in the region have been significantly lower than in Western Europe (Crowley, 2008: 7, 10; see also Vanhuysse, 2006).

7. Between 2003 and 2007 the unweighted average of capital inflows (107 percent of GDP) to the EU-10 was three times as high as in pre-crisis Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand (38 percent of GDP in 1992). In Hungary, cumulative capital inflows during 2003–2007 was 66 percent of GDP, below the 192 percent of GDP registered in Bulgaria but higher than other economies in the region, including the Czech Republic (33 percent of GDP) and Poland (40 percent of GDP) (Bakker et al., 2010: 5–7).


9. Similar patterns of heavy dependence on foreign currency denominated loans were also visible elsewhere in the region, including in Croatia, Romania and the Baltic States, although the mix between francs, euros, dollars and the yen varied from country to country.

10. Between 1999 and 2006, household debt rose more than ten times in nominal terms, such that by January 2007, the average outstanding loan amounted to 94 percent of the annual household income in Hungary. As a result, by 2009, 75 percent of Hungarians were unable to face unexpected expenses—the highest in the European Union (Scheiring, 2018: 5).

11. As social tensions worsened, the approval of ‘free’-market capitalism and liberal democracy dropped dramatically among the Hungarian electorate between 1991 and 2009. According to a comparative survey in 2009, a stunning 94 percent of Hungarians regarded the economic situation in the country as ‘bad’, while 72 percent said they were ‘worse off now than under Communism’. Moreover, Hungarians were disillusioned not only with the economy but with politics as well: 77 percent of those interviewed were ‘dissatisfied’ with the way democracy was working in their country, compared to 49 percent of the respondents in the Czech Republic, 46 percent in Slovakia and only 39 percent in Poland (Pew Research Center, 2009).

12. In a 1994 interview with Orbán’s former personal advisor and subsequent biographer József Debreczeni, made after the most dramatic electoral defeat in Fidesz’ history, he (cited in Debreczeni, 2002: 273, my translation) outlined his vision of how this was to be achieved:

You ought to identify eight to ten businessmen, who would go on to become Hungary’s big capitalists. And then you should have supported them—not directly through the government, but simply, through banking relationships. A personal relationship ought to have been developed with them, which they then would be able to use on the market in order to gain a competitive advantage. That relationship would then connect them to the prime minister of Hungary, or his personal circle.

[...]

This is what ought to have been done. Make it clear to the bankers that these eight to ten people are our people. And then leave it to the logic of the market to handle the rest. These people could perhaps have been provided further assistance in the development of investment funds and calls for tenders, but it should be done modestly, without exceeding the boundaries of ‘good taste’.
13. Of course, corruption existed in Hungary before 2010. However, under the Orbán regime, the scale of the phenomenon seems to have changed. The most emblematic example of the growing collusion between the state and local business interests is that of Lőrinc Mészáros, originally a gas-fitter and small-scale businessperson from Orbán’s native village of Felcsút, whose wealth increased from approximately 20 million to 350 million euros in 2017. His vast network of companies (including eighty-two created in 2017) won public tenders worth almost 1 billion euros in total, and gained significant (or even dominant) positions in the national and regional media industry, as well as buying up the biggest tourism company around lake Balaton. The similarly rapid enrichment of Orbán’s son-in-law (István Tiborcz) and a host of other new oligarchs have made headlines in international media (Buckley and Byrne, 2017; Fletcher, 2017; Verseck, 2014). As Mihály Koltai (2018) explains,

We are seeing the birth of a new state-dependent bourgeoisie that cannot afford a change of government, as they owe their wealth to the current leadership through myriads of shady deals. There is a noticeable change from Lajos Simicska [an old personal friend and former economic associate of Orbán, recently turned deadly enemy] to new oligarchs such as Lőrincz Mészáros.

14. According to official statistics, there are around 200,000 Roma living in Hungary (representing around 2 percent of the population). However, this figure is disputed by international organizations; the European Commission (EC) puts the figure at 700,000 (‘Hungary: Situation of Roma’, 2012).

15. Hungary’s distinct variety of neoliberalism has been characterized by chronically low wage levels. During the transition, the share of wages in total national income decreased from 57.2 percent to 46.3 percent. Indeed, Hungarian wages lagged behind average wages in CEE throughout the 2000s and have long been among the lowest in the OECD (Scheiring, 2018: 4).

16. According to the government, the reductions were necessary because household energy prices in Hungary were significantly higher than the EU average, and besides, it was right to ‘give back the profit to the people’ (‘Hungary: Energy Prices Cut Again’, 2014). The move was highly popular among poorer voters and probably contributed to Fidesz’ election victory in 2014.

17. According to Tamás Sárközy (2014), nowhere in the world (except for the dictatorships in Africa and Latin America) is there a democratic country in which a small group of ten to twenty people, who have known each other since university or their time in the military, control to such an extent the key positions of power. The highest positions in the country (president, prime minister and speaker of the National Assembly) are held by three old friends: János Áder, Viktor Orbán and László Kövér. The core of the Hungarian state is thus composed of close-knit group of friends, who are united by their unreserved personal loyalty to Orbán.

18. In response to the criticisms, the Hungarian parliament has approved a number of modifications to the law, but according to Freedom House, the amendments were ‘relatively minor’ and did not do enough to stop the decline in press freedom since 2010 (“Hungary: Country Report,” 2015).

19. Admiral Miklós Horthy became regent of Hungary in 1920, after having defeated the brief Hungarian Soviet Republic. During the interwar period, Horthy led an openly antisemitic, national conservative government that sought to reclaim Hungarian territories lost after the Treaty of Trianon. After the outbreak of World War II, Horthy’s government sided with Nazi Germany
and was responsible for serious war crimes in the USSR and Yugoslavia and for the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews to Nazi concentration camps. Since coming back to power in 2010, the Orbán regime has gradually sought to restore the Horthy regime. For example, at a speech in June 2017, Orbán described Horthy as ‘an exceptional statesman’, along with István Bethlen and Kuno Klebelsberg. Thanks to them, Orbán argued, history did not bury us under the weight of the lost war, the 133 days of Red Terror, and the Diktat of Trianon. Without the governor there is no prime minister, and without the prime minister there is no minister. Even Hungary’s dismal role in World War II cannot call into question this fact (‘In Orbán’s Opinion Miklós Horthy Was an Exceptional Statesman’, 2017; see also Berend and Clark, 2014; Verseck, 2012).

20. The ‘constitutionalization of austerity’ is, of course, not a phenomenon limited to Hungary. As Ian Bruff notes, Spain passed a constitutional amendment in 2011 that strongly limited the scope of budget deficits and a similar law was passed by Italy and Austria in 2012 (Bruff, 2014: 124). However, the real shift has come with initiatives such as the Euro Plus Pact (adopted in March 2011) and the Fiscal Compact (signed into law on March 1, 2012). These moves have effectively ‘locked in’ EU members into a path of permanent austerity by introducing mechanisms that automatically impose sanctions on states that do not comply with highly restrictive fiscal benchmarks (Schneider and Sandbeck, 2019).

21. Out of the 360,000 euros required up front, 300,000 euros are refunded after five years. According to data from the Hungarian Debt Management Authority (Államadósság Kezelő Központ, ÁKK), 3,515 residency bonds were sold between 2013 and 2016 (‘Hungarian Residency Bond Program’, n.d.).

22. A recent report by German business weekly Handelsblatt showed that German investors held a similarly positive view of the Orbán regime, with 95 percent of German businesses expressing their happiness with the economic situation in Hungary (Book, 2018).


24. Orbán has described Erdogan as a long-time ‘personal friend’ and expressed his admiration for ‘the fantastic Turkish economic accomplishments’ (Lendvai, 2018: 220; “Viktor Orbán and Recep Tayip Erdogan are the Best of Friends,” 2013).

25. For example, the Orbán regime has expressed its disapproval of political sanctions against Russia over the Ukrainian conflict. Moreover, the government has also signed a strategic agreement with the Russian state company Rosatom for the construction of a new nuclear plant in Paks (Paks II Nuclear Plant). According to the agreement, the expansion will commence in 2018, and 80 percent of the its costs will be financed with a credit line of 10 billion euros from Russia. On March 6, 2017, the EC gave its green light to the project (Posaner and Ariès, 2016).

26. According to Orbán, the electoral victory of Trump heralded the end of ‘liberal non-democracy’, enabling ‘Western civilization . . . to . . . break free from the confines of an ideology’ (Pasha-Robinson, 2016).
27. However, the results of the 2019 local elections demonstrated that there are limitations to Fidesz’s power, as the political opposition gained control of the capital, Budapest, as well as a number of important cities with county rights, like Dunaujváros, Eger, Miskolc, Pécs and Tatabánya. Yet this minor political backlash has not stopped the Orbán regime from deepening its authoritarian-ethnicist politics.

28. Recently, Prime Minister Orbán recognized the mounting difficulties facing the Hungarian economy. At the 30th Summer University and Youth Camp in Tusnádfürdő (Baile Tușnad), Romania (an annual jamboree held for Fidesz supporters), he admitted that ‘According to our forecasts our key Western European partners will not grow as they have previously. Therefore a new plan needs to be developed for 2020–2021 . . . which enhances the competitiveness [of the economy]’ (Orbán, 2019, my translation).

29. Income earned and sent home by Hungarians abroad reached 3.4 percent of the country’s total output in 2014, according to the World Bank—one of the highest remittance levels in the European Union.

30. Due to the government’s continuous cuts to the healthcare system, Hungary was left in a vulnerable position when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. In early April, the Ministry of Human Resources ordered the country’s public hospitals to ‘vacate’ 60 percent of Hungary’s 60,000 hospital beds by April 15 to make room for new COVID-19 patients. Through this measure, the government places the burden of caring for patients, some with chronic illness or injury, on their families (most of whom have no medical training whatsoever). In other words, under the pretext of a public emergency created by COVID-19, the government is restructuring the healthcare system, without creating appropriate institutions to alleviate the suffering of those who are seriously ill.

1. Pronounced SEYM, the lower house of the Polish legislature which is composed of the Sejm and the upper house, the Senat.

2. The election had a higher turnout than is expected for Polish parliamentary elections, 61 percent. PiS received the majority of votes cast (https://sejm-senat2019.pkw.gov.pl/sejmsenat2019/pl/frekwencja/pl).

3. Lech and Jaroslaw Kaczyński are identical twin brothers who were both involved in the anti-communist opposition. After communism fell, they both remained in politics and went on to found PiS. In 2005, Lech went on to serve as president of Poland until his premature death in the Smolensk plane crash in 2010. Jaroslaw is the current leader of PiS.


5. Thirty-five percent of the 460 seats in the Sejm could be contested by the opposition.


7. The contract-Sejm is the name of the transitional legislative body in Poland at the time of the transition from the communist regime to liberal democracy in 1989–1991. It ended in the fall of 1991, when the first completely free election to the Sejm took place.

8. Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej—Union of Democratic Left—largely consisted of a liberalized, postcommunist grouping that went on to set up a social-democratic party when communism fell. Significantly, in the free parliamentary elections of 1993, this party won the majority of votes because numerous Polish voters grew disenchanted with the economic policies of
the initial transition years. Although SLD fashioned itself as the party of all people, especially the working class, their economic policies did not differ markedly from those of parties to their right.


10. Akcja Wyborcza Solidarnosc was a center-right/Christian democratic grouping of right-leaning anti-communist politicians who stood in opposition to the left-leaning postcommunist social democratic party, SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej).


12. Tadeusz Rydzyk is a Polish Roman Catholic cleric known for his founding of Radio Maryja, a religious radio station that emphasizes Polish religious nationalism. His founding of the station was the beginning of a larger religious media empire in Poland (https://zyciorysy.info/tadeusz-rydzyk/).

13. LPR (League of Polish Families-Liga Polskich Rodzin) was an ultra-conservative Catholic party associated with fascist groupings that formally formed out of other far-right groups in 2001. It traced its ideology to the pre–World War II politics of Roman Dmowski, who believed in an ethno-nationalist pure Poland (Pankowski 2010: 111–115).

14. Samoobrona had its roots among farmers who were affected by debt due to rising interest rates in the immediate aftermath of the transition from communism to capitalism (Pankowski 2010: 132). It originally had no official right or left affiliation as it switched back and forth when it competed in elections and formed coalitions (Pankowski 2010: 133).

15. Andrzej Lepper the deputy prime minister and minister of agriculture was accused of a corruption scandal having to do with the sale of agricultural land (Kaien 2016) (www.tvp.info/24659472/czym-byla-afera-gruntowa-przypominamy).


17. PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe—People’s Party [Agrarian People’s Party]) is one of the oldest parties in Poland with 19th-century roots.


19. The communist regime in Poland consisted of the official PZPR (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza—United Polish Workers’ Party) and also other faction/satellite parties who were given the choice of ideological alignment if they wanted to exist and lead with the head party, the PZPR. Animosities toward Mieczyslaw Kiszczak, who was tasked with forming a government in the summer of 1989 and the volatile government situation where the Solidarity opposition won all seats allotted to them in the partially free election caused instability among old joint forces: the PZPR and its satellite parties. The Kaczyński’s led talks with those parties that ultimately led to Lech Walesa’s proposing a coalition between the latter and Solidarity for a majority government against the regime (Gedek 2002: 269–270; Bikont and Łuczywo 2018).

20. UP (Unia Pracy or Work Union) is a party established in 1992. It represented leftists from the greater Solidarity movement whose representation was not within the social democratic postcommunist establishment of the SdRP (later SLD). In subsequent years, the party went on to unite with the SLD and other leftist parties to garner greater support (https://uniapraczy.org.pl/partia/historia).
21. Unemployment in Poland began to climb right after shock therapy took effect in January 1990. It fluctuated in the 1990s, reaching its highest level in 2003 with 20 percent of the population unemployed (Kostrzewski 2016).

22. Survey conducted by CBOS (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej-Center for the Study of Public Opinion).

23. The first Black Protest, with women dressed in all black, took place in 2016, when the government had proposed a law banning all abortions. In major cities across Poland and around the world, women stood up against an attack on their autonomy (www.krakowpost.com/13508/2016/09/black-protest-against-abortion-ban-poland).

24. Emergency contraception is widely available to women in twenty-six EU countries, with the exception of Poland (http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114871,21879198,ellaone-na-recepte-w-internecie-dostaniesz-jazadarmo.html).

25. In its tenure, PiS has made a few changes to the country’s economy: the 500+ program, re-Polonization of capital in Polish banks, limits on Sunday retail, and an increase in the minimum wage for those who are fortunate enough to work in permanent positions (not those on contracts or in the gig economy).


27. 500+ Program began in 2016 and provides a credit of 500ZL per month, per child (eighteen years and under) to each family with more than one child and to every family with a first child if the family meets income criteria. As of mid 2019, all families, regardless of how many children they have, receive the 500ZL credit for each child. The program was partially designed with pro-natalism in mind, because Poland's birthrate has fallen over the last decades (www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/rodzina-500-plus).

28. As part of the prime minister’s economic plan, more than 50 percent of capital in all Polish banks is held by domestic capital.

29. The two polls carried out asked voters to name their favorite candidate from the current list of presidential candidates. While the current president, Duda, is more popular than the other candidates, his share of votes is unlikely to ensure victory in the first round. Thus, a runoff between Duda and the center-right liberal party (Citizen Coalition) candidate, Małgorzata Kidawa-Blonska, is likely (Rudzinski 2020; Czerminski 2020).


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