
Dependent development and authoritarian state capitalism: The collapse of democracy and the rise of the accumulative state in Hungary

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Abstract

The world is facing a new wave of de-democratisation. Hungary is one of the most puzzling cases, representing a striking U-turn in democratisation. Starting from the premise that political regimes are the results of class compromises, in this paper I argue that Hungary's authoritarian turn is a reconfiguration of the dominant power bloc and the concomitant change in the state's strategy in the context of dependent development. The aim of this article is thus twofold. First, I analyse the socio-economic roots of Hungary's authoritarian turn and propose a new, theoretically driven causal narrative. To trace the theoretically relevant causal processes, I offer an empirically grounded case study focusing on how the collapse of the class compromise sustaining the post-socialist competition state paved the way for the revolt of the national bourgeoisie and a new regime of accumulation. Second, I offer a new conceptualisation regarding the political economic nature of the emerging new state in Hungary. I call this the accumulative state. To substantiate this conceptualisation, I empirically identify the political instruments through which the state props up capital accumulation and the ensuing social conflicts. Instead of portraying Hungary as a divergence from liberal capitalist norms based on a textbook view of markets, I situate authoritarian politics in the logics of capital accumulation. However, I stress that the post-2010 accumulative state serves only short-term capital accumulation and fails to enact long-term structural transformation.

Keywords: authoritarianism, state capitalism, political economy, democratic backsliding, dependent development, accumulative state

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