Destroying Democracy

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Across the world, democracy is under threat from the wealth and power that is ever more concentrated in the hands of the few. But the rule of the few over the many rests on very shaky ground. When we have both the ideas and the power, and when we unite, we can overcome these crises and build a world of peace and justice.

This volume provides a space for campaigners from different places and different traditions to discuss, refine and share ideas, which is essential to building movements that can provide hope and real change.

Jeremy Corbyn, former leader of the UK Labour Party, Member of Parliament and founder of the Peace and Justice Project

The democratic rights won under capitalism have always been limited yet crucial to gaining some control over our lives and allowing vital space for challenging capitalism itself. The volume poses neoliberalism’s polarisation of this dichotomy. On the one hand, the various authors agree, neoliberalism represents an authoritarian turn; on the other, they argue, that threat poses the necessity and promise of deepening substantive democracy.

Sam Gindin, former Research Director of the Canadian Auto Workers

Contributors draw on Marxist theoretical tools to expose deep tensions between neoliberal capitalism and democracy while determinedly refusing repressive alternatives inspired by orthodox Marxism. Their project is one of democratic and ecological socialism. This book will constitute a stimulating and valuable resource to the many who are committed to that project.

Daryl Glaser, Professor of Political Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

This volume makes a compelling case for why fascist populist movements are manifestations of broad crises at the heart of modern globalising capitalism. Williams and Satgar have assembled an impressive range of scholars who have spent years reflecting on these issues. The book is timely and deserves to be read widely.

Gilbert M. Khadiagala, Professor of International Relations, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

A significant volume of wide-ranging scholarship that unpacks the two key phenomena that democracy faces today – fascism and neoliberal capitalism. With experiences from South Africa, India, the USA and Latin America, the authors address the paradox posed by the fact that institutionalised democracy now produces outcomes that run counter to the interests of the people.

Nivedita Menon, Professor in the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
The crisis of Marxism in the late twentieth century was the crisis of orthodox and vanguardist Marxism associated mainly with hierarchical communist parties, and imposed, even as state ideology, as the ‘correct’ Marxism. The Stalinisation of the Soviet Union and its eventual collapse exposed the inherent weaknesses and authoritarian mould of vanguardist Marxism. More fundamentally vanguardist Marxism was rendered obsolete but for its residual existence in a few parts of the world, including within authoritarian national liberation movements in Africa and in China.

With the deepening crises of capitalism, a new democratic Marxism (or democratic historical materialism) is coming to the fore. Such a democratic Marxism is characterised by the following:

- Its sources span non-vanguardist grassroots movements, unions, political fronts, mass parties, radical intellectuals, transnational activist networks and parts of the progressive academy;
- It seeks to ensure that the inherent categories of Marxism are theorised within constantly changing historical conditions to find meaning;
- Marxism is understood as a body of social thought that is unfinished and hence challenged by the need to explain the dynamics of a globalising capitalism and the futures of social change;
- It is open to other forms of anti-capitalist thought and practice, including currents within radical ecology, feminism, emancipatory utopianism and indigenous thought;
- It does not seek to be a monolithic and singular school of thought but engenders contending perspectives;
- Democracy, as part of the history of people’s struggles, is understood as the basis for articulating alternatives to capitalism and as the primary means for constituting a transformative subject of historical change.

This series seeks to elaborate the social theorising and politics of democratic Marxism.
Published in the series and available:


