

pass through to reach classic status. However, because the book does not fully articulate such a theory, by the end, a wealth of compelling subarguments doesn't necessarily merge into a cohesive theoretical framework. This impression is partially reinforced by the book's rhetorical setup, where several concepts are additively introduced in the appendix rather than in the first chapter where they could more readily anchor the study's argumentative narrative. Nevertheless, a performative reading might see Santana-Acuña's jungle of ideas as a suitable mirror to the subject's thorny complexity.

Additionally, although much of the core terminology Santana-Acuña introduces is appealing, it is not always clear how it builds on and extends existing understandings. Take, for example, the concept of "networked creativity." Because it is now a truism to view "creativity" as a network effect, one might wonder how this new coinage advances previous conceptions. While a footnote nods to the art worlds approach and "bricolage" in "convention-work" (p. 314), such sociological dialogue could have been more woven into the chapter, as well as Michael Farrell's classic account of "collaborative circles." Likewise, the book could have more fully related its approach to global circulation to existing arguments concerning how a cultural object's features facilitate diffusion across borders—for example, Wendy Griswold's seminal work on ambiguity or recent studies about the role of plot structure or the diversity of protagonists. Notwithstanding, *Ascent to Glory's* superb historical account of the making of a global classic lays a critical foundation for further expansions of the study's sociological underpinnings, which will be a particularly important task as the sociology of culture continues spreading its wings for new global horizons.

The Retreat of Liberal Democracy: Authoritarian Capitalism and the Accumulative State in Hungary. By Gábor Scheiring. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. Pp. xxvii + 367. \$119.99 (cloth); \$79.99 (paper).

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Hungary is the epitome of the new breed of hybrid autocratic systems making their way through the world. The country, which once was heralded as the champion of democratic reforms among the ex-communist bloc nations, is now regarded as the first nondemocracy in the European Union (EU). What went wrong in Hungary? Gábor Scheiring's *The Retreat of Liberal Democracy: Authoritarian Capitalism and the Accumulative State in Hungary* offers a novel answer. Scheiring argues that the accumulation strategy of the *competition state* trying to please foreign capitalist interests by promoting marketization in postsocialist Hungary led to social and economic disintegration. This opened the door for an illiberal political turn and a new type of state, the *accumulative state*, constituted by an unforeseen alliance of three actors: nationalist politicians, the domestic bourgeoisie, and the disillusioned

working class. According to Scheiring, this was a Polanyian counter-movement of domestic forces against the transnational capitalist hegemony. Using mixed-method empirical research, the book provides a fresh and thought-provoking political-economic theory of the newly emerged autocracy in Hungary.

Since 2010, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his party, Fidesz, have transformed the country into one of a new type of hybrid autocracies, coalescing grand corruption and one-party rule. The book starts with a review of the existing explanations of democratic backsliding in Hungary. Top-down approaches emphasize the role of bad politicians who destroy good democratic institutions. Cultural, bottom-up explanations blame the historically antiliberal political culture rooted in centuries of nationalism, anti-Semitism, and, later, the antidemocratic attitude that intensified during years of communism. Another line of scholarship claims that the new liberal democracy in Hungary failed to deliver universally higher living standards and brought too much elitism into governance, so the politically marginalized and disillusioned working class eventually turned toward neonationalist populism. The “dependent capitalism” approach highlights the reliant nature of capitalism in the ex-communist periphery of the continent, which ensures the permanent capital accumulation of the European core. The harsh austerity policy enforced by the EU and the demand of Hungarian national business owners for state protection against powerful transnational capital made Orbán’s illiberal ideology exceptionally popular among national capitalists and the nativist working class. Picking up elements of these explanations, Scheiring has developed a new, class-based model of democratic backsliding in Hungary.

The first empirical pillar of the book is based on career path data of the pre-2010 economic policy elite, prime ministers, ministers, secretaries, and under-secretaries. In chapter 3, Scheiring analyzes the direct connections of this elite with transnational corporations, for example, those in the banking sector. He finds that through a revolving-door mechanism, transnational capital successfully influenced incumbent governments to maintain tax and tariff reliefs and other financial subsidies. This contributed to the establishment of the hegemony of transnational capital during the competition state period. Chapter 4 analyzes a second data set, which includes statistics from domestic and international databases. Here Scheiring shows that between 1990 and 2010 transnational companies dominated Hungary’s rapidly liberalized economy while undercapitalized and less competitive domestic businesses became marginalized; together with the working class, they proved to be extremely vulnerable to the forces of the rapidly opened market. Based on 82 in-depth interviews conducted with workers in four industrial towns, chapter 5 provides insights into ordinary Hungarians’ disillusionment with the postsocialist marketization and the political left. As a result, the majority of the traditionally left-wing working class shifted toward neonationalist ideologies.

Analyzing individual profiles, chapter 6 shows the wealth and political connections of the national bourgeois class. Scheiring claims that except for

political capitalists, the capital accumulation by powerful domestic businesspeople was not reliant on the state. He also depicts these billionaires as if they were fully autonomous actors in Orbán's regime. I think Scheiring is wrong here. Most people examined in this chapter, such as Sándor Demján, Sándor Csányi, Gordon Bajnai, or Gábor Széles, are classic Hungarian oligarchs who accumulated their wealth by milking the state, typically during the era of privatization, and remained rent seekers.

Furthermore, the cases of Lajos Simicska and Zoltán Spéder, two exceptionally wealthy and powerful oligarchs, show how strictly Orbán and his close-knit political cabal control the national bourgeoisie in Hungary, just like in Putin's Russia. The way the fortunes of Simicska and Spéder were stripped down almost overnight by use of law enforcement raids on their homes and business offices as well as character assassinations by the government media shows how limited the oligarchs' independence is in this system. In contemporary Hungary, Viktor Orbán decides who can be an oligarch.

Using multiple sources such as macrostatistics, press releases, and event reports, chapter 7 presents the policy instruments—for example, corrupt public procurement, property rights manipulation, and direct financial subsidies—used by the accumulative state to facilitate capital accumulation by the national bourgeoisie.

Scheiring's theory is especially persuasive where it explains why and how liberal democracy has been pushed back in Hungary. This part is innovative, data rich, and interesting. Yet I found his accumulative state concept incomplete. The book has little focus on the third but most powerful actors of the domestic alliance triad, Orbán and his nationalist political circle. Without this key dimension it is hard to understand the substance of the system. Bálint Magyar's book offers an elaborated analysis of the Orbán regime (*Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary* [Central European University Press, 2016]). I wish Scheiring had reflected more on this work and provided his own answers to some important questions Magyar endeavored to answer: Why did the EU fail to prevent the emergence of an illiberal state inside its own territory? How is Orbán's clique able to manipulate a widespread informal network behind the formal institutional structure and directly influence political and economic decisions? How do they maintain a society-wide patron-client system, and how is this system connected to social and economic actors? How is the situation in Hungary different from that of other hybrid regimes or recent illiberal trends in Western democracies?

Regardless of these limitations, I highly recommend reading this book, because *The Retreat of Liberal Democracy* offers a compelling theory of authoritarian capitalism in Hungary. This work will be an important reference for future debates on the recent trend of democratic backsliding in the world.