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# 1

# The Puzzling Resilience of Neoliberalism

As you will understand, it is possible for a dictator to govern in a liberal way. And it is also possible for a democracy to govern with a total lack of liberalism. Personally, I prefer a liberal dictator to a democratic government lacking in liberalism.

> -F.A. HAYEK TO A REPORTER QUOTED IN FARRANT, MCPHAIL, AND BERGER 2012, 521

DURING THE LATE AFTERNOON of September 7, 1986, a militarized cell from the Chilean Communist Party tried to kill General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet was known worldwide for having participated in the bloody putsch against the democratically elected president Salvador Allende in 1973, and as the leader of the repressive military dictatorship that ensued and that backed the first large-scale experiment in neoliberal policymaking in the world. On that September afternoon, the Communist cell attacked Pinochet's convoy with heavy artillery as he was returning from his country house near Santiago. Five agents of Pinochet's guard were killed and another eleven severely wounded. Pinochet escaped almost unscathed.

Although this was without doubt his most remarkable escape, it was far from the only challenge Pinochet survived. Years before the assassination attempt, in the mid-1970s Pinochet explicitly broke the pact of succession in what was then a military *junta*, successfully maneuvering to oust the other members of the junta and instituting a series of regulations that made him the

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dictatorship's strongman. It was a true "coup inside the coup" (Valdivia 2003). Not only this: he devised a constitutional formula for government succession that secured his long-term oversight of Chilean politics even in the event of a return to democracy.

Two years after the assassination attempt, in October 1988, a united political opposition—with the help of international pressure—defeated Pinochet in a referendum, forcing a return to democratic rule after seventeen years of dictatorship. However, even as the new authorities took office, Pinochet managed to remain commander-in-chief of the army for another ten years, controlling the process of democratization through the constant menaces of a military takeover. Ten years later, in September 1998, Pinochet was captured in London and faced extradition to Spain, where he was charged with the murder of Spanish citizens during his dictatorship. After two years of legal procedures, the British authorities released Pinochet, alleging that the former strongman—now 84 and with visible signs of physical and mental deterioration—could not stand a trial. But when Pinochet returned to Santiago, he stood up from his wheelchair, greeted his fanatic followers with his walking stick, and walked out of the airport, to the astonishment of the local and international press. He lived comfortably in his mansion in Santiago until he died seven years later.

The association between a political system based on permanent repression and a public philosophy premised on the idea of individual liberty has puzzled scholars ever since the Chilean experience under Pinochet. Some of the most ardent supporters of neoliberalism have felt compelled to excuse, on theoretical grounds, such an embarrassing historical coincidence. After advising the Chilean military junta in 1975, Milton Friedman argued that economic liberalization was a precondition for political liberalization, and that political freedom was in turn necessary for the long-term maintenance of economic freedom, therefore highlighting the temporary nature of Pinochet's rule (Friedman 1982). Others, however, have felt that the two are much more intertwined than commonly thought. Thus, for Friedrich Hayek a limited dictatorship was a better safeguard for individual liberty than an unlimited democracy (Farrant, Mcphail, and Berger 2012). In this book I argue that the connection between neoliberal economics and less-than-liberal political regimes is not only a philosophical digression but is in fact rooted in history. Pinochet's story conveys, if somewhat cruelly, the idea that neoliberalism's durability is not just about good or bad economic policymaking: the countries

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where neoliberalism has survived the longest are those that designed their democratic institutions in such a way as to constrain the possibility of switching to other policies. In this sense, the Chilean neoliberal trajectory was not a peculiarity, but part of a political project with diverse historical experiences supporting the idea that protecting free markets—and its beneficiaries required encroaching on democracy.

This book joins several recent works that show the connection between constrained democracies and the neoliberal political project (Slobodian 2018; Maclean 2017). We know now that since its beginnings, the neoliberal thought collective found democracy—a political system giving voice to the masses and incentivizing the competition for their vote-to be the main threat to its political project. Not only this: as Slobodian convincingly argues, neoliberalism "developed precisely as a response to the growth of mass democracy" (2018, 34). Unlike these works, this book is not an exercise in the history of neoliberal thinking about democracy; rather, it studies the politics behind neoliberalism's continuity over time—its resilience—as a process intimately connected with the gradual erosion of democracy. It tracks neoliberal resilience and democratic erosion in four Latin American and Eastern European countries with diverse trajectories: Argentina, Chile, Estonia, and Poland. I argue that neoliberalism remained resilient where it was able to reduce the representative component of democracy, maintaining free and competitive elections but bending the policy outcomes of those elections to the maintenance of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism survived in its purest form in those countries where it was protected from democracy.<sup>1</sup>

*Resilience,* a concept commonly associated with engineering science, psychology, and community studies, denotes the capacity of an object, person, or group to withstand external perturbations (Madariaga 2017, n. 1; Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 13–16). The typical response of a resilient body is to alter some of its properties in order to accommodate the external perturbation without changing its core composition and nature. In the case of neoliberalism, the concept of resilience has been used to describe neoliberalism's "continuity... over time, its dominance over competitors, and its survival against powerful

1. A review of *The Calculus of Consent*, one of the key books of James Buchanan, the founder of the Virginia school of neoliberalism, in the journal of the Cato Institute praised it precisely for offering guidance on "protecting capitalism from democracy" (MacLean 2017, 81). We will come back at the key role of Buchanan's thinking in this story of neoliberal resilience in chapter 2.

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challenges and rivals" (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, xvii).<sup>2</sup> Books about the resilience of neoliberalism (particularly those published after the 2007–2008 crisis) tend to focus on overarching trends; I instead establish the limits of neoliberalim's resilience through a clear operationalization of its policy goals and concrete policy alternatives (see Crouch 2011; Duménil and Lévy 2011; Grauwe 2017; Kotz 2015; Mirowski 2013). I identify which countries maintained their neoliberal trajectories over time, when they departed from neoliberalism's core dictates, and whether those departures were enduring or not. In addition, unlike the focus of most works on advanced capitalist economies, I argue that to analyze the resilience of neoliberalism it is important to look outside the capitalist core, particularly at the history of over three decades of neoliberalism in Latin America and Eastern Europe. As will become clear, the specific conditions under which neoliberalism was adopted in these regions facilitated the connection between resilient neoliberalism and constrained democracy.

I demonstrate that connection in three ways. First, I study the actors and coalitions that supported the establishment of neoliberalism and defended its continuity over time, using a mixed quantitative and qualitative strategy (chapters 3 and 4). Second, I investigate the mechanisms that eroded democracy and allowed these actors to maintain their grip on public policy changes (chapters 5, 6, and 7). Here, I contrast cases where neoliberalism remained resilient (Chile and Estonia) with cases where it was contested and even temporarily replaced (Poland and Argentina). Finally, I consider the consequences of the continued resilience of neoliberalism for the future of democracy. By doing this, I engage with the current literature on the crisis of democracy, the rise of populism, and their relationship with neoliberal economics, reflecting on how different experiences of neoliberal resilience pose different threats and paths toward democratic erosion.

Neoliberalism's resilience—and contestation of the neoliberal project radically altered these four countries' patterns of democratic competition and representation, generating specific paths toward democratic hollowing and/ or backsliding.<sup>3</sup> Understanding the specific paths by which neoliberalism eroded democratic institutions, and how domestic political actors reacted to those erosions, is crucial to understanding how populist movements are tak-

2. For a different usage associated with the resilience of societies to neoliberalism, see Hall and Lamont (2013).

3. For the formulation of the hollowing of democracy, see Mair (2013). Greskovits (2015) provides an insightful discussion differentiating democracy's "hollowing" from its "backsliding."

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ing root today, and whether populism threatens democracy or has the potential to cure it (see Mair 2013; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013b; Rovira Kaltwasser 2014).

The rest of this introduction proceeds as follows. First, I define what I understand by neoliberalism and state the problem of neoliberalism's resilience in length, the puzzlement that arose after the events that followed the 2007–2008 financial crisis, and justify my focus on the Latin American and Eastern European experiences. Second, I develop the book's argument about the connection between neoliberalism's resilience and the erosion of democracy. In turn, I show how this argument contributes to the existing literature on neoliberalism. Finally, I describe the book's methodological aspects and structure.

# The "Strange Non-Death" of Neoliberalism<sup>4</sup>

# What Is Neoliberalism?

Neoliberalism is an oft-invoked but ill-defined concept (Boas and Gans-Morse 2009; Cahill and Konings 2017; Crouch 2011; Connell and Dados 2014; Maillet 2015; Steger and Roy 2010). While it is useful and necessary to understand some of the most pressing problems of contemporary societies and economies, the polysemy of the concept makes it necessary to define clearly what we understand by it before undertaking an empirical study. In turn, I analyze three common definitions of neoliberalism, their respective foci when analyzing neoliberalism's continuity or resilience, and justify my own choice.

One first definition of neoliberalism understands it as a *policy paradigm*, that is, as "a framework of ideas and standards that specifies . . . the goals of policy . . . the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, . . . [and the] nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing" (Hall 1993, 279). Following this, Cornel Ban refers to neoliberalism as a "set of historically contingent and intellectually hybrid" (2016, 10) economic ideas, including prescriptions from neoclassical economics, monetarism, and supply-side economics, that aim at increasing the power of markets—and the corporations operating in them—in the allocation of goods and services and the reduction of discretionary government interventions to make them credible with market actors. Neoliberalism does not preclude State intervention, and often even requires it; however, it gives business (epitomized as impersonal "markets") the power to decide which interventions are desirable and which are not.

4. See Crouch (2011).

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For less developed economies, neoliberalism has been associated with promoting policies that "get the prices right." In other words, they open markets, eliminate price distortions and regulations, and bar discretionary government intervention in the economy through tariff protections, industrial policies, and state ownership of companies (see Plehwe 2009; Saad-Filho 2005; Williamson 1990b). Authors working with this definition of neoliberalism tend to look at the factors affecting the survival of neoliberal ideas over time when analyzing neoliberalism's resilience (Ban 2016; Blyth 2013; Mirowski 2013; Schmidt and Thatcher 2013).

An alternative to this approach conceives neoliberalism as a *policy regime*: it is the set of policies in the neoliberal paradigm that are embedded in the interests of specific societal groups or classes in specific national contexts (Cahill 2014; Crouch 2011; Streeck 2014; Wylde 2012). This definition of neoliberalism requires an understanding of the societal actors and coalitions who benefit from it and give it their political support. It seeks to explain neoliberalism's resilience in terms of the political-institutional characteristics and incentives of party systems that make coalitions more or less prone to maintaining neoliberal policies over time (Flores-Macías 2012; Madariaga 2017; Roberts 2015), and business-state relations that increase the influence of neoliberal businesses in policymaking (Bril-Mascarenhas and Madariaga 2019; Bril-Mascarenhas and Maillet 2019; Culpepper 2010; Fairfield 2015a; Hacker and Pierson 2010).

Yet a third treatment of neoliberalism comes from Marxist analyses that understand it as a transnational class project (Duménil and Lévy 2011; Harvey 2007). Authors following this tradition trace the links between the ascendance of neoliberalism to a worldwide hegemonic paradigm, the parallel reconfiguration of class relations beyond national states into supranational business networks following the crisis of advanced capitalism in the 1970s, and the establishment of neoliberalism as state policy (see Carroll and Sapinski 2016; Cox 1987; Robinson and Harris 2000; Sklair 2001). Recent accounts putting emphasis on the history of neoliberal ideas trace the origins of the neoliberal political project to the postwar period—some even as early as the dissolution of the Habsburg empire after World War I (Jones 2012; Slobodian 2018; Mirowski and Plehwe 2009). Here, the issue of the resilience of neoliberalism is studied in two ways: first, in terms of the operation of globalized free markets in which processes of financial liberalization and deregulation since the 1980s have enabled transnational financial capital to restrain domestic political actors from changing neoliberal trajectories (see Appel and Orenstein 2018; Campello 2015; Kaplan 2013; Roos 2019); second, through the "encasement"

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(Slobodian 2018, 13) of the world economy in a world order of institutional governance and international law affecting states' sovereign policy decisions (see Chwieroth 2009; Gill 2002; Pop-Eleches 2009).

These three definitions of neoliberalism and its resilience broadly correspond to three disciplinary fields in comparative and international political economy: discursive institutionalism, historical institutionalism, and critical international political economy. In spite of coming from different epistemological traditions, they are in fact three facets of the same phenomenon, and all are necessary to fully understand it (see Madariaga 2020). At the same time, while neoliberalism's class roots and the history of its transnational diffusion are crucial to understanding its worldwide dominance, this dominance has relied on the experiences of a few countries that have become neoliberalism's standard bearers. Although international pressures have provided an important engine for neoliberalism and have constituted a "container of last resort" against challenges to it, it is domestic actors and institutions that have played the key role in neoliberalism's durability in those countries (more on this on chapter 2). Moreover, it is impossible to understand the resilience of neoliberalism as a set of ideas and policy recommendations without understanding how those ideas are appropriated by domestic political actors in their concrete political struggles. In other words, while acknowledging the importance of neoliberalism's transnational class dimension and its ideational architecture, I focus on how these are translated by and embedded in national institutions through the struggles of specific national business actors, political leaders, and state bureaucracies.

Going beyond existing research, I analyze not only how neoliberals struggle to institutionalize their preferred policy solutions as state policy, but, more fundamentally, how they strive to alter the very rules of the democratic political game to increase their political clout and reduce that of their opponents.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective, a resilient neoliberal policy regime is one that is able to institutionalize neoliberalism's basic premises in the very functioning of its democratic polity, making changes ever more difficult over time. When this is not the case, neoliberalism remains prone to challenge. In the extreme case, neoliberalism is not just contested over and over again, but it is replaced by an alternative policy regime that, with new supporters, can eventually reproduce itself.

5. For power resource theories inspiring this idea, see Korpi (1985), Rueschemeyer, Huber, and Stephens (1992).

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# Neoliberalism in Crisis? the Global View

Ever since the subprime crash in August 2007 and the fall of Lehman Brothers one year later, the future of neoliberalism has been at the forefront of scholarly debates. The depth of the Wall Street crisis (and its many repercussions extending to the European debt crisis and the Greek bailouts) created the illusion that this was the crisis of neoliberalism, compounding expectations of a revival of Keynesianism, a "New" New Deal switching to more progressive policies, or the start of a slow but progressive disintegration of capitalism as we know it (Appel and Orenstein 2018; Duménil and Lévy 2011; Kotz 2015; Steger and Roy 2010, 131–36; Kuttner 2018; Mason 2017; Streeck 2016; Wallerstein et al. 2013). These expectations were encouraged by past episodes of paradigmatic shift following major economic crises and the idea that these dynamics of pendular movement through crises is innate to the development of capitalism (Blyth 2002; Gourevitch 1986; Hall 1993; Duménil and Lévy 2011; Grauwe 2017; Kotz 2015). Nevertheless, despite these early predictions, neoliberalism has survived. As Mirowski has ironically put it, "neoliberalism is alive and well: those on the receiving end need to know why" (2013, 28).

To understand the puzzling resilience of neoliberalism, I take two positions. First, instead of looking at big ruptures and crises, I claim that we can only understand how neoliberalism survives if we analyze the way it overcomes constant challenges and alternative paths. This implies switching from a punctuated equilibrium or critical juncture view of political development, to one focused on gradual changes and reproduction mechanisms (Pierson 2004; Streeck and Thelen 2005). Second, I argue that the resilience of neoliberalism thus understood is better explained by studying the history of over three decades of neoliberal resilience at the capitalist periphery.

Despite the universal character of neoliberalism and its policy recipes, the actual practice of neoliberalism in the core and the periphery of global capitalism has been quite different (Appel and Orenstein 2018; Boas and Gans-Morse 2009; Connell and Dados 2014). In the advanced capitalist countries, neoliberalism has progressed gradually as a more or less successful challenge to postwar political and economic institutions; hence the frequent characterization of "actually existing neoliberalism" as an "always-imperfect realization" of neoliberal theory (Cahill 2014; Connell and Dados 2014, 120). In fact, at least until the 2000s, it was still believed that neoliberalism represented just one of at least two successful *varieties* of advanced capitalist political economy (Amable 2003; Campbell and Pedersen 2001; Hall and Soskice 2001; Iversen and Sos-

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kice 2019). Students of advanced capitalism have thus concentrated on demonstrating the slow transformation of neoliberalism into the dominant policy and political practice it is today (Crouch 2011; Blyth 2013; Streeck 2014). In this sense, more than the resilience of neoliberalism per se, what they study is the gradual erosion of the postwar compromise (see Glyn 2007).<sup>6</sup>

At the periphery of global capitalism, particularly in Latin America and Eastern Europe, the implementation of neoliberalism was a different story: fast and sweeping, amounting to a complete restructuring of state-society relations with profound consequences for institution building and public policy. Moreover, the fact that neoliberal reforms were implemented alongside the reconstruction of liberal democracies facilitated the connection between neoliberal economic policies and the political project behind them.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the rich experience and research on radical neoliberalism outside the capitalist core, as Connell and Dados lament, "the most influential accounts of neoliberalism are grounded in the social experience of the global North" (2014, 118). This book brings Latin America and Eastern Europe back into the core of the debates about the future of neoliberal capitalism and democracy. Interestingly, recent events seem to be bringing neoliberal experiences in the advanced and nonadvanced worlds closer together. In fact, research on the survival of neoliberalism at the core of the capitalist economy and its impact on representative democracy has given place to scholarly debate over the ascendance of right- and left-wing populism; the relationship between neoliberalism, austerity politics, and the rise of populist forces; and the parallel erosion of fundamental democratic values and institutions (Brown 2015; Eichengreen 2018; Dumas 2018; MacLean 2017; Mair 2013; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Kuttner 2018; Przeworski 2019). The Latin American and Eastern European experiences shed light on these global political-economic phenomena.

# Neoliberalism in Latin America and Eastern Europe: The Empirical Puzzle

Latin America and Eastern Europe underwent rapid and thorough processes of economic and political liberalization in the final decades of the twentieth

6. Early accounts of this dynamic in individual countries can be found in Crouch and Streeck (1997). For a thorough analysis centered around industrial relations, see Baccaro and Howell (2017). For detailed and compelling studies of the gradual liberalization of Germany and France, see Streeck (2009) and Amable (2017), respectively.

7. More on this below.

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century. The economic crises of the 1980s heralded the collapse of decades-old economic development models that spearheaded these countries' quest for modernization and industrialization in a context of economic and political "underdevelopment" (Berend 1996; Edwards 1995; Przeworski 1991). In this context, neoliberalism was understood as a development project able to put an end to these countries' manifold economic and political ills.

Given the wholehearted commitment to radical market reform, countries like Chile and Poland became poster children of the "new development orthodoxy" (Rodrik 1996, 12–13) and were taken as benchmarks of good practice for other nonadvanced political economies in an era when neoliberalism became the only game in town (Åslund 1994; Edwards 1995; Sachs 1990). According to the eminent Hungarian anthropologist Karl Polanyi, explicit attempts at building a market society tend to generate societal "counter-movements" to shelter that society from the effects of free markets (Polanyi 2001). In Latin America and Eastern Europe, these counter-movements came in waves, some accompanied by massive social protests, and many market-reformed countries shifted over the years towards less orthodox development alternatives (Bohle and Greskovits 2009; Frieden 1991a; Greskovits 1998; Orenstein 2001; Roberts 2008; E. Silva 2009). Steep and repeated economic crises, the disintegration of industrial and social tissues, growing unemployment, and rising inequality forced authorities to slow down the pace of reform or undertake outright policy reversals-alternative development projects that challenged neoliberalism's capacity to survive. However, a handful of countries maintained and even reinforced neoliberalism despite these challenges.

Figure 1.1 depicts this process. It shows the Index of Economic Freedom, a measure constructed from a series of indicators assessing policy goals dear to neoliberalism (such as the free movement of capital and minimal government intervention in the decisions of private actors) for the countries under study, as well as the average for their respective regions.<sup>8</sup> Most countries follow a

8. This indicator is based on policy orientations and outcomes. Other indicators of market reform show the progress of institutional reform, among which, the Economic Freedom of the World Index by the Fraser Institute, the liberalization indexes by Morley, Machado and Pettinato (1999) and Lora (2012) for Latin America, and the EBRD Transition Indicators for Eastern Europe. These indexes make it hard to assess Eastern Europe, where all countries were building capitalist institutions from scratch during the 1990s and 2000s, and therefore show continuous progressions rather than discontinuities over time. The index here presented has several short-comings, including a lack of coverage of the 1980s and early 1990s. It should therefore be taken only as a representation of the research problem, and not as a proof of its existence, nor as a case selection technique.



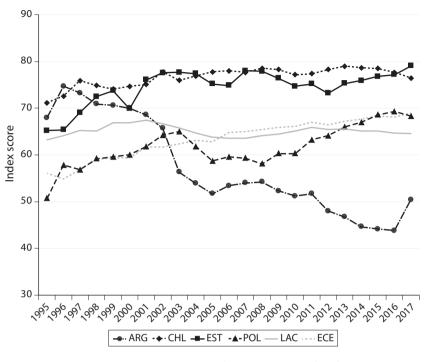


FIGURE 1.1. Latin America and Eastern Europe, Index of Economic Freedom for Selected Countries 1995–2017 Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/index/. Legend: ARG= Argentina, CHL= Chile, EST= Estonia, POL= Poland, LAC= Latin America

(average 10 countries), ECE: East-Central Europe (average 11 countries).

pattern of ups and downs over the years, but regional averages remain relatively stable over time. In Eastern Europe, the upward trend has moderated after a period of strong liberalization in the run-up to the entry to the European Union (2004–2007).

Taking these trends into consideration, the trajectories of Chile and Estonia are polar opposites to that of Argentina. While the first two have remained "mostly free" (70–80 points in the index scale) throughout the period and have the highest scores in their respective regions, Argentina descended dramatically from "mostly free" (70–80 points) to "repressed" (40–50 points) in just a few years. At the same time, Poland remained close to the Eastern-European average, except for a downturn in the 2000s. How have Chile and Estonia remained neoliberal over time? What do they have in common, and in what

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respects have they differed from other countries that show either moderate variations (Poland) or more significant shifts (Argentina)?

# How Neoliberalism Survives

## Policy and Polity: The Two Sides of Neoliberalism's Resilience

In an early assessment of the adoption of neoliberalism in the advanced world, Herman Schwartz suggested that the actors pushing neoliberalism were "engaged in a strategic politics that attempt[ed] to change the rules of the game rather than just seeking their preferred outcomes in the context of extant rules" (Schwartz 1994, 529). Schwartz's observation closely describes conditions at the outset of the dual transitions to democracy and market capitalism in Latin America and Eastern Europe during the 1980s and 1990s. As O'Donnell and Schmitter observed in those years, "actors struggle not just to satisfy their immediate interests and/or the interests of those whom they purport to represent, but also to define rules and procedures whose configuration will determine likely winners and losers in the future" (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 4:6). Theoretically, this resembles what Tsebelis called a "nested game:" a situation in which "the actor is involved not only in a game in the principal arena [that of neoliberal *policies*], but also in a game about the rules of the game [that of the neoliberal *polity*]" (Tsebelis 1991, 8).

The core argument of this book is that to understand the resilience of neoliberalism one needs to distinguish between these two component parts of neoliberalism: *policy* and *polity*. The *policy* part stems from the economic program of neoliberalism, while the *polity* part originates in its political program, which seeks to change the institutions of democratic organization that enable and constrain the kinds of policies that can be pursued.<sup>9</sup> In other words, neoliberalism entails not only political dynamics in which actors try to implement their preferred economic policies, but also those in which actors try to implement their preferred political institutions and other organizational aspects of the underlying democracies.

I identify three concrete mechanisms that constrained democratic representation in Latin America and Eastern Europe, making changes to established neoliberal policies more difficult (see chapter 2). One is the reduction and blockade of the power resources of those actors that could challenge neolib-

<sup>9.</sup> For a discussion of these concepts under similar considerations, see Hajer (2003) and Palonen (2003).

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eralism with alternatives; the second is the increase of the power resources of businesses interested in the continuity of neoliberalism; and the third is the institutionalization of neoliberal policies in a way that made them more difficult to reverse.

Liberal democracies offer channels for the representation of diverse actors in the policy process. The most important one is elections, where parties vow to gain the votes of their constituencies and enact the policies they favor. In the political arena, neoliberals attempt to reduce the power resources, opposition, and representation of groups losing from neoliberal policies. I call this *opposition blockade*. Neoliberals use two features of democratic polities to reduce the political clout of actors opposing them and to block their representation. First, neoliberals use electoral systems to decrease the opposition's direct representation in politics. Second, neoliberals employ executive power and non-elected veto players to prevent changes when the opposition does gain representation.<sup>10</sup>

Conversely, business plays a key role in democratic capitalist societies: it is responsible for employment opportunities and wages that define the overall levels of welfare. Business can form part of the support base of democratically elected governments, particularly when parties have corporations as their core constituencies. Although most of the time business is associated with more conservative political projects and supported by right-wing parties (Gibson 1996; Luna and Rovira Kaltwasser 2014), fractions of the business class have also been linked to support for more progressive development models (see Swenson 1991; Schneider 2004b). Businesses can also make themselves heard in policy discussions without needing to join government coalitions. As the literature on business power has consistently shown, corporations can influence policy toward their own preferred outcomes—even under governments with completely different policy preferences (Culpepper 2010; Fairfield 2015a; Hacker and Pierson 2010). In this sense, building a business base that will support neoliberal policies, constrain alternative policy agendas, and/or actively participate in policy design is crucial for neoliberalism's survival. As I will demonstrate, reformers have used privatization as a way of allocating economic

10. A third source of opposition blockade deals with labor market institutions and organized labor. Although I include this in analytical terms in chapter 2, for reasons of space I do not analyze this mechanism in detail in this book. This dynamic of labor acquiescence and protest to market reforms and the outcome in terms of neoliberalism's resilience has received considerable attention in the literature. See, e.g., Crowley (2004), Drake (1996), Etchemendy (2012), Murillo (2001), Ost (2005).

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resources to individual firms, business groups, and whole economic sectors that are expected to support the continuation of neoliberalism. I call this mechanism *support creation*.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, there are ways to constrain authorities' room to maneuver, independent of their partisan affiliations and of the power of business. Even politicians with the right partisan orientations can succumb to popular or business demands and reduce the scope of neoliberalism. If this happens, relevant policies can be delegated to state bodies whose staff is insulated from the pressures of partisan politics, shielding neoliberalism both from "'acting minorities' and 'lunatic majorities'" (Rugier cited in Amable 2011, 17). As neoliberals realized early on, in liberal democracies where political constitutions define what the polity can and cannot do, the best way to insulate neoliberalism is to enshrine its basic principles—and even concrete policies—in the Constitution itself (Amable 2011, 17; Bruff 2014; Gill 2002; Slobodian 2018). I analyze two ways of accomplishing what I call *constitutionalized lock-in*: independent central banks and fiscal spending rules. The complex interplay between these three mechanisms—opposition blockade, support creation, and constitutionalized lock-in-explains both the resilience of neoliberalism in Chile and Estonia, and its moderation and/or outright reversal in Argentina and Poland.

Regarding the operation of these mechanisms, I wish to make three caveats. First, it is important to note that these are not the only mechanisms that can account for neoliberalism's resilience. Taken together, they point to ways of twisting or undermining the functioning of democracy, altering the polity with the aim of reducing resistance to neoliberalism from alternative political projects. These mechanisms coerce; they blockade. A different set of mechanisms that increase the resilience of neoliberalism relate to what Michael Burawoy (1982) called the "manufacturing of consent." These include mechanisms that increase the legitimacy of neoliberalism among the broad public, acting not at the level of specific interests but at the level of cultural understandings and ideas (see Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). For example, certain authors study the "governmentality" of neoliberalism, explaining its policies as a device that shapes individuals' dispositions and thus their compliance with neoliberalism's tenets (Amable 2011; Brown 2015). Alternatively, Baker (2009) has studied how the importation of new goods, cultural patterns, and lifestylesthanks to trade liberalization and increasing globalization—has transformed

<sup>11.</sup> In chapter 2. I discuss in detail the relation between support creation and the mechanisms of business structural and instrumental power prevalent in the literature.

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reluctant working and middle classes into avid consumers and supporters of neoliberalism in certain Latin American countries.

These consensual or legitimation mechanisms also affect the functioning of liberal democracy, and the two types of mechanisms—coercive and legitimating—may well connect in diverse ways (see Brown 2015). One might even argue, following Max Weber, that acting on interests and coercion alone is not enough to sustain neoliberalism in the long run. In fact, over time even the most coercive institutions tend to be used, adapted, and incorporated by new actors who, distanced from their origins, may regard them as unavoidable even legitimate. It is, however, beyond the scope of this book to study these interactions, and therefore I concentrate on the first set of interest-based coercive mechanisms.

A second caveat is that although I make the case that the resilience of neoliberalism has rested conspicuously on the above-mentioned mechanisms, these may not be exclusively "neoliberal." In other words, since these mechanisms imply the reduction of democratic representation of alternative political projects, they may well be used for increasing the probability of survival of other development projects in other contexts. Whether or not they are characteristically neoliberal only history will tell.

Finally, the argument of this book should not be understood as implying that those regimes where neoliberalism did not take root are more democratic today than those where it did. This would be the wrong conclusion. The causes of democratic decline extend well beyond democracy's economic underpinnings. In fact, all the Latin American and Eastern European countries that experienced dual economic and political transitions in the 1980s and 1990s continue to face substantial economic and political challenges today. Instead, I argue that in those cases where neoliberalism survived, the reduction of democracy and its representative dimension can be directly linked to neoliberalism's resilience.

# Beyond the Rise of Neoliberalism: Alternative Explanations

Much of the vast literature on neoliberalism has been devoted to understanding its rise and varied economic success from diverse perspectives, including broad theoretical syntheses (see, among others, Blyth 2002; Bönker 2001; Haggard and Kaufman 1992; Hall 1993; Campbell and Pedersen 2001). Recent debates have shown the diversity of political-economic regimes that "neoliberalizing" forces generated. For example, Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb

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(2002) revisit the old debate about the pace of reform and how this affected the depth of neoliberalism, Etchemendy (2012) analyzes this diversity as a function of how different "liberalizing coalitions" coalesced, while Bohle and Greskovits (2012) and Pop-Eleches (2009) emphasize the strategic and divergent responses of domestic political elites to challenges such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) stabilization programs, the ethnic composition of new democracies, and EU accession. Similarly, Ban (2016) shows how domestic characteristics such as ideological legacies and institutions, and the timing of integration with the global flow of neoliberal ideas, affected the way neoliberalism was translated into local political practice. There are, therefore, varieties of neoliberalization depending on a series of political, institutional, and ideological factors located both inside and outside national economies (see also Thelen 2014; Baccaro and Howell 2017).

These works are extremely valuable in that they spell out the forces putting neoliberalism in motion and, therefore, make room for hypotheses about the mechanisms through which neoliberalism reproduced itself in specific national contexts. However, in their concentration on emergence and path creation, scholars have overlooked the dynamics of resilience and path reproduction, which are the focus of this book (see Bril-Mascarenhas and Madariaga 2019; Madariaga 2019). A historical process may be set in motion and reproduced by entirely different forces (see chapter 2). To understand the resilience of neoliberalism, we need to focus specifically on mechanisms of reproduction.

Another set of approaches has concentrated on reactions against neoliberalism. In Latin America, scholars like Roberts (2008) and Silva (2009) have shown the importance of social movements and popular protest in challenging neoliberalism, opening the way to an era of paradigmatic "left-turns" in the region (see Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Weyland, Madrid, and Hunter 2010). The absence of popular revolt in the more "patient" Eastern European societies has prompted Greskovits (2007), Bohle and Greskovits (2009), Appel and Orenstein (2018), and Hanley and Sikk (2016), to explain the emergence of new populist forces and their illiberal rhetoric as an attempt to represent masses disaffected with neoliberalism. Although few would claim that an entirely new and well-defined development project has emerged from these contentious experiences (but see Appel and Orenstein 2018, 160–69; Bresser-Pereira 2011; Wylde 2012), many authors see in these reactions the emergence of a "postneoliberal" order (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2012; Rovira Kaltwasser 2011).

Exploring these challenges allows us to build helpful counterfactuals that illuminate not only the context of threats to neoliberalism, but also the cir-

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cumstances in which neoliberal policies have been able to survive and thrive. Now, where these works focus only on the challenges, we miss an opportunity to study cases of neoliberal resilience. In fact, while they imply a generalized break with neoliberalism, recent events, particularly in Latin America, have shown instead that the "left turns" were much more contingent than previously thought (see Luna and Rovira Kaltwasser 2014).

Unlike the many works studying neoliberalism's manifold implementation in concrete national experiences, a few scholars have focused on the sources of neoliberalism's continuity. I review these in more detail because they present arguments about neoliberalism's resilience that compete with the one here presented. One set of works follows the different strands of "discursive institutionalism" by understanding neoliberal resilience in terms of ideology. The most thorough presentation of this argument is that by Schmidt and Thatcher (2013), who summarize existing research on ideational continuity and point to three characteristics making neoliberal ideas resilient: first, their generality, malleability and plasticity; second, the gap they allow between theory and reality; and third, their persuasiveness in public discourse. As to the first, it is unclear how these characteristics make neoliberalism more resilient. One could have ascribed the same characteristics to Keynesianism, given the many ways in which it was translated and adopted in actual practice (Hall 1989). If anything, the notion of neoliberalism's generality as a capacity for resilience argues the opposite. But when does neoliberalism stop mutating into yet another specific form of that general form? In other words, when does neoliberalism stop being neoliberalism and become something else? What is the limit demarcating neoliberal resilience from its opposite? Claiming that neoliberalism is resilient because of its adaptive capacity and plasticity has led some to make general claims about the survival of neoliberalism without establishing the boundaries that distinguish it from its opposite. Recognizing this, I focus on two specific policy domains, exchange rate and industrial policies, and operationalize them thoroughly in order to make this distinction clear (see chapter 3).<sup>12</sup>

The second argument is that the constant failure of neoliberalism in practice (rather than producing paradigm change as in the passage from Keynesianism to neoliberalism) reinforces itself because proponents can claim it has not been properly implemented. Like the last point, it is not entirely clear what

<sup>12.</sup> Chapter 3 also gives an extensive economic and political justification for the choice of these two policy domains as the foci of analysis.

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it is about neoliberalism that gives it this special characteristic vis-à-vis other sets of ideas. For Mirowski, the answer lies in psychological theories of "cognitive dissonance" which demonstrate that the "confrontation with contrary evidence may actually augment and sharpen the conviction and enthusiasm of a true believer" (2013, 35). In other words, by rejecting real-world evidence true neoliberals have doubled down on their beliefs and worked even harder to silence alternative ideas (Mirowski 2013, 356–58). But cognitive dissonance does not by itself warrant the survival of neoliberalism, and, more to the point, we know, thanks to the work of discursive institutionalists, that many of those adopting neoliberalism were not true believers but supported neoliberalism only contingently (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 24–25). More fundamentally, this mechanism seems to belie the previous one: on the one hand, neoliberalism is resilient because it is general and malleable, and therefore, can accommodate and incorporate critique; on the other, neoliberalism is resilient because it can preserve its purity by contrasting its principles to its actual implementation. If we believe in politics, we are forced to ask what compels policymakers that are not true believers to maintain neoliberalism despite being proved wrong in practice, and here is when ideational approaches fail to provide a compelling answer.

Schmidt and Thatcher's third mechanism of neoliberal continuity is as surprisingly simple as it is hard to sustain: some ideas are just more resilient than others because they lend themselves better to convincing rivals in public discourse. In practice, this has led to reducing the importance of discourse *tout court*, as public deliberation and the battle of ideas have been less studied than internal characteristics of neoliberalism like its "seeming coherence" (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 26) and "completeness" (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 31) at the moment of succeeding over other ideas. Take for example Blyth's argument that austerity prevailed because it is an "intuitive" and "appealing" idea (Blyth 2013, 7). Thus, despite the intention, one is left with the feeling that the triumph of neoliberalism is a purely rhetorical artifact.

What lies behind this is a critique of the lack of clear conceptualization and empirical testing of the ideational mechanisms of neoliberal resilience.<sup>13</sup> In this book I do not question the fact that ideas are important components of politics, and that they provide basic meanings and instruments for political

<sup>13.</sup> For a thorough critique of "ideational" accounts of neoliberal resilience, see Cahill (2014). For an exercise in testing ideational versus other explanations of neoliberalism's continuity, see Madariaga (2020).

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actors to pursue their preferences and intentions. I agree, moreover, that political entrepreneurs provide discourses, frameworks, and interpretations of situations that make sense for coalition formation purposes. However, this is not the same as stating that "ideas and discourse [are] the explanatory variable for their own resilience" (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 31). In fact, Schmidt and Thatcher concede that the weaknesses of ideational approaches warrant a closer look at "the interests of key actors and the institutional framework within which neo-liberal ideas are formed, developed, disseminated, debated, and adopted" (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 414). After all, as Slobodian reminds us, "[f]rom the beginning, the doctrine of neoliberalism reflected an intermingling with the needs of its patrons in the business community" (2018, 21). This book examines who these "patrons" were, and how they retained their power to control the trajectory of neoliberal resilience.

A second set of works that provides an alternative explanation to this book's puzzle points to international influences and pressures. Decades ago, Barbara Stallings (1992) lamented that the analysis of policy adoption and continuity had turned to domestic factors just when the globalization of the economy meant international forces increasingly influenced domestic policy choices. Following her lead, a number of authors have highlighted how financial liberalization has led to policy diffusion-cum-imposition and placed significant constraints on the ability of domestic political coalitions to pursue policies conflicting with neoliberalism (Appel and Orenstein 2018; Maxfield 1998; Polillo and Guillén 2005; Simmons and Elkins 2004; Roos 2019). Other authors, particularly for the case of Eastern Europe, have focused on the power of international institutions and what Bruszt and McDermott call "transnational integration regimes" (2009). Along these lines, a number of works analyze the influence that the prospects of accession to the European Union had on Eastern European states in terms of liberalizing both their economies and polities and adopting specific institutions and policies (R. A. Epstein 2008; J. Johnson 2016; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Vachudova 2005).

There is a prolific research tradition that, while taking international pressures seriously, grants significant freedom to domestic actors at the moment of deciding on whether, how, and when to give in to these pressures and implement international policy blueprints (Bruszt and Greskovits 2009; Campello 2015; Kaplan 2013; Pop-Eleches 2009; for a classic, see Cardoso and Faletto 1979). As Anna Kowalczyk convincingly argues, "instead of simply imposing their projects on societies worldwide the transnational capitalist classes must build alliances, overcome fractional conflicts and provide material concessions

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to some members of societies in order to build and reproduce their hegemony" (2019, 2). Hence, while international norms and pressures are exerted evenly across cases, their actual implementation in local contexts varies greatly, generating a diversity of arrangements and patterns of policymaking (Ban 2016; Bohle and Greskovits 2012).

Several works concentrating on the international level in isolation fail to acknowledge this. For example, Appel and Orenstein (2018) claim that after the 2007–2008 crisis, alternative development models emerged in Eastern Europe that reflected the breaking up of the "competitive signaling" mechanism driving neoliberalism in the region since 1990. But their argument about the discrediting of neoliberalism in the region runs contrary to overwhelming evidence that neoliberalism came under question only for a short time after the crisis, and that the most striking feature of the crisis from the policy point of view is not neoliberalism's dissolution but its resilience. More importantly, their focus on the international dimension leads them to present the breakup with neoliberalism as a unified "exit" response, overlooking the widely different experiences among Eastern European countries and the potential conflict among domestic elites that the emerging "alternative" projects generated (see Becker and Jäger 2010; Bohle and Greskovits 2012; Myant and Drahokoupil 2012; Myant, Drahokoupil, and Lesay 2013). In the case of this book, the very fact that countries like Argentina, Chile, Estonia, and Poland, once poster children of global neoliberalism (with the analogous international pressures), have shown a diversity of experiences of neoliberal resilience and contestation makes the case for concentrating on the domestic level, where these pressures are received, translated, and used as a political weapon.

Without making the international context the main focus of this book, I do account for the constraints that the international economy and its institutions have placed on domestic policymaking in two ways. First, I consider international financial institutions and economic dynamics as a *constraint of last resort* defending neoliberalism against attempts by national democratic governments attempting to escape from it (see chapter 2). Following Slobodian (2018), I treat this "encasement" as directly related to neoliberalism's secular quest to bind democratic governments. Second, I view international pressures as a context that affects domestic decisions especially coalition-building strategies and possibilities (Jacoby 2006; Stallings 1992). Since regions like Latin America and Eastern Europe were submitted to different types of international pressures at different times; comparing them controls for these contextual effects

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and argues for the existence of global rather than idiosyncratic or regional mechanisms in explaining neoliberal resilience.

The key innovation of this book is to put a special emphasis on the relation between neoliberalism and democracy, and the mechanisms that link them. My results uncover a direct connection between the successful development of neoliberal capitalism and the limitation of democracy through institutional design. This link shines new light on the relationships between capitalism, democracy, and development, a timely topic in the comparative analysis of developing political economies (Collier and Collier 1991; Haggard and Kaufman 2008; Rueschemeyer, Huber, and Stephens 1992).

# Research Design and Plan of the Book

# Empirical Approach and Methods

This book is based on a small-N study drawing on the tradition of comparativehistorical analysis (Skocpol and Somers 1980; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). I use a combination of comparative methods and within-case process tracing. While the comparative method helps identify relationships and controls for omitted causal factors in small-N research, within-case methods help to strengthen the validity of the comparative exercise by examining causal links in the individual cases (Mahoney 2003, 363–65; Collier 2011, 824). This research design has become standard in academic practice when analyzing institutional development and change (Hall 2003; George and Bennett 2005; Blatter and Haverland 2012; see, e.g., Bohle and Greskovits 2012; Etchemendy 2012; Haggard and Kaufman 2008). The cross-regional span of the comparison in this study is less common even among comparative studies and constitutes a true innovation, revealing the global scope of mechanisms of neoliberal resilience.

The more or less contemporary political and economic liberalization of Latin America and Eastern Europe during the 1980s and 1990s marks a common point of departure for comparing national as well as regional trajectories of neoliberal resilience. Despite the different structural specialization of the two regions and different forms of integration into global commodity chains, they share an equivalent position in the international political economy in terms of their dependence on capital flows and their peripheral incorporation into transnational integration regimes, presenting a similar set of enabling and

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constraining factors for development projects led by domestic political agents (Bruszt and Greskovits 2009; Bruszt and McDermott 2009).

In terms of case selection, I use a combination of most similar and most different cases (Seawright and Gerring 2008). The universe of cases is composed of middle- to high-income countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe that enacted radical economic reforms in concert with major political transformations in the last decades of the twentieth century. Argentina, Chile, Estonia, and Poland present underlying similarities and differences in the outcome of neoliberal resilience, and furthermore form paired comparisons. All of them share the fact that the adoption of neoliberalism followed inflationary crises and combined exchange rate stabilization and structural reforms that dismantled previously interventionist states and industrial policy. In the case of Latin America, Chile is the quintessential case of neoliberal continuity despite the many nuances introduced over the years (Madariaga 2020). For the opposite outcome, I select Argentina, a country with a number of economic, social, and political similarities with Chile, but where neoliberalism failed to take root after three successive attempts. In other Latin American countries, like Colombia or Mexico, neoliberalism was adopted more gradually, while in countries like Brazil and Uruguay it was adopted only half-heartedly and quickly abandoned (see Madariaga 2020).

In Eastern Europe, the Baltic States represent the most advanced neoliberal reformers (Bohle and Greskovits 2012). Among them, Estonia is the prime example of neoliberal continuity, especially after its deflationary approach to the 2007-2008 crisis. For the opposite outcome, Poland and the Czech Republic were orthodox neoliberal states at the beginning of their transition, but gradually moderated their initial orthodoxy (Bohle and Greskovits 2012). I select Poland in place of the Czech Republic because the latter was not in a situation of economic crisis at the time of the transition nor did it suffer from hyperinflation, and because in Poland and Estonia-but not the Czech Republic—the fall of communism followed a pattern of negotiation between old communist and new democratic elites. Moreover, many authors have recognized that the Czech Republic, as well as other countries initially considered "gradual reformers" (such as Hungary), had by the mid-1990s already surpassed Poland's progress in economic reforms, even though Poland was a more prominent example of shock therapy transition (see Bohle and Greskovits 2012; Schoenman 2014; Stark and Bruszt 1998).

Data collection for this book came from a variety of sources including official economic data, specialized secondary literature, a selective analysis of

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official documents and newspapers, and interviews with local analysts and policymakers. Interviews were conducted when access was possible and when the questions that arose during the research process merited them. I conducted a total of fifty interviews in the four countries. A handful of interviews from Argentina were facilitated by the Archivo de Historia Oral (AHO), at the Gino Germani Institute. In order to protect the integrity of interviewees, quotes from interviews are reported anonymously.

# Plan of the Book

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework, focusing on the policy and polity parts of neoliberalism: that is, the connection between neoliberalism and democracy. It also conceptualizes how the mechanisms of opposition blockade, support creation, and constitutionalization help produce neoliberal resilience. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the policy part of neoliberalism in Latin America and Eastern Europe. They demonstrate the resilience of exchange rates and industrial policy in Chile and Estonia in contrast to resistance to similar policies in Poland and Argentina, as well as the coalitions that have come together to support or oppose them in different periods (chapter 3 analyzes this resilience, or lack thereof, quantitatively, while chapter 4 follows a qualitative perspective). Chapter 3 further provides a justification for the selection of these policy domains and an operationalization of concrete policy alternatives, as they are associated with neoliberal or alternative development projects.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are devoted to the polity part of neoliberalism, and to tracing how exactly the resilience of neoliberalism rested on the erosion of democracy. Chapter 5 focuses on support creation: the increase of power resources through privatization for those business actors expected to defend the survival of neoliberal policies. In Chapter 6 I analyze opposition blockade with respect to the political expression and representation of parties opposed to neoliberalism. I study a number of sources used to block these parties, including electoral rules, executive powers, veto players, and lustration (in the case of Eastern European countries). Chapter 7 focuses on the locking-in of exchange rates and industrial policies in institutional frameworks, up to and including the constitution, that reduced partisan influences on them and made future changes and reforms more difficult. I concentrate on two such experiences: the establishment of central bank independence and fiscal spending rules.

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In the concluding chapter I consider the outcomes of this study in terms of understanding the politics of neoliberal resilience and its implications for the future of democratic capitalism. In this context, I reflect on the apparent paradox that the cases of neoliberal resilience are those that show a more stable democracy and less thoroughgoing penetration of populist political dynamics than in the cases of neoliberal contestation and discontinuity. Could neoliberalism, and the limited democracy it promotes, be the savior of democracy? Or has it instead opened the path to the ultimate demise of democracy as we know it? Is the current wave of populist forces a threat or a corrective to neoliberalism's democratic deficits?

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