

## Editorial | The Global Turn to Authoritarianism and After

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### Abstract

This editorial introduces the special responsive issue on the global turn to authoritarianism. It points out the lack of any systematic political theory of the way in which authority and surveillance relate within Surveillance Studies and sketches some possible outlines for such a theory, that involves relationships between surveillance, democracy, authoritarianism, colonialism and capitalism. It argues that the contemporary turn to authoritarianism is predominantly a Global North phenomenon, that adds to an already common situation in the post-colonial Global South, and that the fears that drive the turn to authoritarianism in the North are rooted in fears of the breakdown of a post-colonial global order that was so favourable to the Global North. Finally, it proposes three possible trajectories: multiplying and deepening authoritarianism; the return of neoliberalism on a planetary scale; and new forms of platform authoritarianism that emerging from surveillance capitalism. However, it rejects all of these in favour of the rediscovery of collective desires.

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### Understanding Authoritarianism and Surveillance

“Democracy is dying” says Paul Mason (2017) in a recent op-ed for *The Guardian* newspaper, and furthermore he argues, no-one seems to care. For this special responsive issue of *Surveillance & Society* we present, we called for shorter, clear articles that would provide a good platform for understanding the apparent turn to authoritarianism and its relationship to surveillance at a national and global level. We received 45 abstracts, of which we selected 30 to go forward to a full submission. There are absences: while there is a piece on the experience of living in the former Soviet Union, there was nothing on or from contemporary Russia, and nothing too, on the current US regime (although we do have an article that considers US bulk data interception in the context of a shift to authoritarianism) – perhaps it is either ‘too soon’ after the 2016 election for any retrospective analysis, or we are already supersaturated with takes on Trump, hot or otherwise. However, coverage is global: we travel from Angola to Venezuela, via Australia (2 pieces), Austria, China (3 pieces), Ethiopia, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran, Israel/Palestine, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Turkey (4 pieces), the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the USA. There are also far too many to be introduced individually within this introduction, however I will do what I can to weave as many of them into my words.

There are several immediate problems for Surveillance Studies in dealing with authoritarianism. The first, perhaps surprisingly, is that there has not yet developed any systematic political theory of the way in which authority and surveillance relate. More has been written recently about surveillance within democratic nation-states (see e.g. Haggerty and Samatas 2010), on the general basis that Anthony Giddens (1985)

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developed back in the 1980s: that all surveillance tends towards totalitarianism, in other words that state surveillance itself is a marker for a drift to a totalitarian state. The second is the need to move almost immediately beyond such domestic political accounts of authoritarianism and surveillance, to consider transnational and international relationship as integral to the phenomenon, its historical roots and contemporary manifestations. In an editorial like this, one cannot hope for a complete treatment, but I will start with the first problem, sketching out some notes towards a political theory of surveillance and authoritarianism, and then move to the second, the question of the globality of the claim, before considering what happens next.

## **Authoritarianism, Surveillance and Democracy**

Authoritarianism has multiple definitions across and within disciplinary contexts. In psychology, the concept has been long associated with the concept of the “authoritarian personality.” Many attribute this to Theodore Adorno *et al.* (1950), but the term originates with another member of the Frankfurt School, humanist psychologist and socialist, Erich Fromm. In Fromm’s theory, there were two types of authoritarian personality, “the individual who wants to rule, control, or restrain others and the individual who tends to submit, obey, or to be humiliated.” Both, he argued, are immature personality types, who “can neither love nor make use of reason” in contrast to “the loving and reasoning individual.” (Fromm 1957). Adorno *et al.* developed this into a fully-fledged political psychological account of why Germans conformed to Nazi rule, although in the popular imagination this is often reduced to a simplified version which merely emphasises the force of personality of Hitler or other leaders, which then obscures the importance of the second personality.

For Michel Foucault (1977), authority represented as a specific mode of ordering, a governmentality, that was linked to the person and body of a ruler, often channelling the divine, and able to command and punish those who rejected such commands in spectacular ways. He connected this governmentality specifically to the absolute monarchs of the early modern period in Europe and, as scholars of surveillance are all well aware, contrasted this with the approach developed by scientists and utilitarian thinkers of the mid- to late 18<sup>th</sup> century, which emphasised the moulding of docile bodies by a combination of disciplinary training and surveillance. Indeed, Marx had noted the supervisory relationships within the factory system as an important element of the control and exploitation of the working class.

However, in Foucault’s work as it evolved, the different modes of ordering are almost never singular – they rarely operate alone. Hannah Arendt’s (1973) identification of “totalitarianism” incorporated not just arguments about authoritarian personality but also similar understandings to those later found in Foucault. Revisiting Arendt’s work now, without the propagandist Cold War gloss that was put on it by some American scholars of the time, and in the light of work on surveillance, one can see totalitarianism as a mode of ordering which combines pre-modern and modern: authority with surveillance.

In liberal democratic political presentations, authoritarianism is often approached temporally. In this way of thinking, authoritarianism is periodised as a regressive time, usually limited to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, which disrupted the smooth path to a perfect capitalist democracy. This argument reached its nadir in the justifiably much-mocked work by Francis Fukuyama (1992), *The End of History*, which argued that the end of the USSR and the Cold War marked the conclusion of a historical struggle between, on one side, capitalism, social liberalism and democracy and, on the other side, communism, repression and authoritarianism, a struggle in which liberal democracy had finally triumphed, leading to a new period in which the story would be one of the spreading and deepening of liberal democracy worldwide.

Is the apparent rise of authoritarianism at root (just) a decline in democracy? In asking this question, the emphasis is shifted from seeking answers in either analogues to psychological theories or from explanations that contrast authoritarian states to liberal democratic ones, to seeking answers within ostensibly democratic

states. Paul Mason (2017) claims that democracy is dying partly because no democratic governments are standing up to defend the principle. Yet, is this not exactly what has prompted multiple interventions by the USA and its allies since WW2? “Defending democracy” has been the rationale for the subversion of multiple governments and the invasion of many countries. Indeed, the legacy of that American hegemonic interventionism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be seen in the division of Korea, resulting in vicious surveillant politics of any considered to be sympathetic to the other Korea, outlined in the case of South Korea by Minkyu Sung in this issue, and in its near neighbour, Japan, which remains the USA’s most loyal lieutenant in Asia, examined by Midori Ogasawara, whose Japanese book based on extensive interviews with NSA whistleblower, Edward Snowden, has been making waves in that country.

A second problem with this argument lies with democracy itself. In his provocative recasting of global political economy, Kojin Karatani (2014) follows Morgens Hermann Hansen in arguing that even in its origins, the Athenian democracy which forms the basis and historical model for all western democracies, was always an inferior form of government to earlier Greek city-states that was known as *isonomia*. Isonomy was a more cooperative, egalitarian mechanism, closer to what Murray Bookchin (1991) called “libertarian municipalism.” The biggest problem with democracy was the nature of the “demos” on which it was based. The public that ruled in Athenian democracy was never “everybody.” In ancient Athens, the demos was composed only of Athenian-born, free, male landowners. Women, foreigners, slaves, and other propertyless people were excluded from membership. This principle characterised many modern western democracies until relatively recently, the rise of mercantile capitalist states being dependent on racial difference, slavery, strong property-rights and male dominance. And these characteristics have not vanished with more formal, legal inclusions like the abolition of slavery and voting rights for all citizens regardless of gender and race. Indeed, one could argue that the current paranoia over refugees and migrants highlights one of the remaining exclusionary features of the contemporary demos – the concept of citizenship itself (see, e.g. Isin 2004).

Surveillance has been deeply implicated in all of this. Traditionally, definitions of the state have revolved around the post-Westphalian consensus that produced modern-nation states and the theory that combined territorial integrity, defined populations and ideas like citizenship and equality before the law, a state monopoly on the legitimate possession and use of the means of violence, and so on. Importantly, surveillance was an integral part of the conception of the early nation-state, particularly for Prussia where, as Ian Hacking (1990) noted, the effort to systematise the counting and definition of populations actually predated and provided evidence for the actual foundation of the nation-state. It was Prussia too that developed the theory of an informed “police state”, whose agents had the power and the duty to know its citizens<sup>1</sup>. If one is to define modern state surveillance at its most simple, it comprises two elements: first, the definition, classification and enforcement of both a population and a territory – what Foucault (2007) called biopolitics – and second, the previously mentioned (self-)creation of malleable citizen-subjects who compose the members of that population and denizens of that territory, a process carried out within institutions, which he called panopticism (Foucault 1977).

As Foucault remarked many times, the modern subjects themselves, that is, the collective “we,” rarely think of ourselves as the products of such processes and likewise we rarely consider democracy as a management system. Instead, even many supposedly radical thinkers seem to imagine that democracy really means rule by everybody as opposed to rule by the demos. It is not just that the demos is being undone, as Wendy Brown (2015) argued, although this is happening, but that there has never been a real mapping of the demos to “everybody” in any democratic state. Indeed, most nominally democratic nation-states are in practice more like what William Robinson (1996), adapting Robert Dahl (1971), called “polyarchy,” situations in which a mixed form of rule occurs, somewhere between democracy and authoritarianism. There are some democratic or quasi-democratic features, but decisions are not in practice taken by the “demos” but by elected representatives, executives, bureaucracies, courts and any number of other agencies and institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> “Police” in this context did not refer to the uniformed police but to all the domestic regulatory functions of the state.

Japanese philosopher Azuma Hiroki (2014) claimed that the idealist argument made by Rousseau, that the “general will” could be divined and attained in modern nation-states, was never materially possible through all these proxies. Undoubtedly, the size and complexity of modern states and their populations has much to do with this, but the “democratic” answer would surely be either to decrease the size and complexity of the entities over which democracy is supposed to rule, or devise better methods that enable the will of the people to be translated more directly to the larger scales at which democracy is current supposed to operate.

The former solution has been the domain of advocates of popular assembly and cooperative models like Karatani, some of the Italian Autonomist Marxists, and the American anarchist and social ecologist, Murray Bookchin, who is starting to achieve more influence post-mortem than he did in his abrasive life. This has occurred in particular through the adoption of his ideas by the Kurdish liberation forces carving out their own autonomous region of Rojava on the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and the rapidly declining ISIS “caliphate” (Leverink 2015). The latter has been the subject of Azuma’s *General Will 2.0*, which argues that the internet, and particularly social media, provides the potential basis for a genuine translation of the general will into politics. I will return to this question in considering the question of what comes beyond the current turn to authoritarianism.

*A Preliminary Model of State Surveillance*

In conventional political theory, political orientations are generally defined by the nexus between the two sets of relations: between state and the person, and between the state and capital (in liberal democratic parlance, referred to more “neutrally” as “the economy”). This standard model looks something like Table 1, which is presented here as illustrative rather than definitive.

State-person relation / State-capital Relation	Consensual	Mediated	Authoritarian
Regulated	Communism	Socialism	Fascism
Mixed	Minarchy	Social Democracy	Polyarchy
Unregulated	Anarchy	Liberal Democracy	Neoliberalism

**Table 1:** A Conventional Model of State Forms<sup>2</sup>

This produces an implicit increase in surveillance from a minimum in the bottom left corner to the top right, but moving both up and right also produces increases in surveillance, simply for different rationales. Looking at this chart it is easy to see why surveillance would be associated with a move to Fascism (Totalitarianism). But in fact, this does not help us very much in understanding what is going on in surveillance relationships. Another set of relations is needed and the ‘state-person’ relationship needs to be opened up and interrogated. It is only when we add information and surveillance to the state-type that we can do this. In the model I propose here below, state form is combined with surveillance. Surveillance is simply an indication of how much personal information out of the total possible is systematically collected, stored and used whether by state or other bodies.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Naming some “ideal-typical” is always controversial. For example, “Neoliberalism” really occupies a larger space that covers some of ‘Liberal Democracy’ and “Polyarchy.” In addition, there is no simple moral gradient to this table, the spacing is too even and two-dimensional, and the lines between some categories are much stronger than others.

<sup>3</sup> I recognise that although surveillance is generally posited as relating to information, in Foucault’s analysis of the emergence of the modern subject, there is also a strong relationship between surveillance and force. Surveillance

Table 2, below, relies on several neologisms derived from ancient Greek. Some are more familiar than others, and most are being used in very specific ways in regards to the political theoretical points I am making in this paper. Each therefore deserves some basic explanation.

*Panoptic* (lit. ‘all seeing’) is generally used in in Surveillance Studies based on the ‘Panopticon’ prison of Jeremy Bentham, as interpreted by Michel Foucault (1975). Foucault used it in the context of specific institutions, though he was also being clear that this was a dominant idea of power in relation to the modern state. Here, I use it in that latter sense: of a comprehensive collection of information about people by the state. *Oligoptic* (lit. ‘few seeing’) is a term introduced by Bruno Latour (2005) to describe the ‘real-world’ of sociotechnical relations, where some things, people and places are known intensely and others little known or not known at all. I use it here to describe a situation of information flow / surveillance that is limited in particular spatial, temporal or categorical ways. *Synoptic* (all ‘together seeing’) is usually used outside of surveillance studies in the sense of ‘having a general view,’ but Thomas Mathiesen (1997) originally coined the term in the specific sense of ‘the many watching the few’ with reference to people’s relationships to celebrities. However, here I used it to describe the comprehensive monitoring / flow of information of the state by the mass of people. *Perioptic* (lit. ‘all-around seeing’) was introduced by Michalis Lianos (2010) to describe the post-Foucauldian, Deleuzian form of contemporary surveillance, in which ‘flow’ is prioritised. I use it very simply to describe a situation in which all information about anything flows or can flow to people, state or any other entity. Finally, *adiloptic* (lit. ‘hidden [or blind] seeing’) is a neologism of my own to describe a situation in which little or no information flows anywhere or is generally obscured.

State Form \ Level of Surveillance	Anarchy (No state)	Isonomy (Egalitarian State)	Democracy (Accountable State)	Polyarchy (Managed State)	Autocracy (Authoritarian State)
High	Perioptic Anarchy	Perioptic Isonomy	Perioptic Democracy	Panoptic Polyarchy	Panoptic Autocracy
Moderate	Synoptic Anarchy	Synoptic Isonomy	Synoptic Democracy	Oligoptic Polyarchy	Oligoptic Autocracy
Low	Adiloptic Anarchy	Adiloptic Isonomy	Adiloptic Democracy	Adiloptic Polyarchy	Adiloptic Autocracy

**Table 2:** A Surveillance Model of State Forms

Each resulting ideal-typical form has different characteristics, which I will sketch out here.

The *Panoptic Autocracy* represents the dystopic scenario most familiar to Surveillance Studies scholars: totalitarianism. In this state, there are no limits on what the state can know about the citizen, indeed, to be a citizen of totalitarian society is by definition to be known entirely. There is no accountability or openness from the state. Further, what constitutes “knowledge” in the totalitarian state is determined by the state itself. Historically, it has actually been quite rare for such states to exist in the most extreme form – even the former East German Stasi, for all its intensive surveillance effort, only had files of any level of detail on one

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relationships in Foucault’s analysis of the military camp and the prison do not consist primarily of information, but of a relationship of power wherein one party (the state), instils its objectives into another (the subject). Information flow is contingent, even within the archetypical Panopticon: only the appearance of conformity is necessary for the system to “work.” Thus there are two ideal-typical forms of surveillance: intimidatory surveillance and informational surveillance.



third of the population. One of the major concerns about the contemporary turn to authoritarianism is that readily available technologies allow far easier surveillance of greater numbers across space and time.

The *Oligoptic Autocracy* represents a mid-point between the informational extremes of authoritarian states, the totalitarian and the arbitrary. Such an unregulated state may do what it wishes, but only needs to know what is necessary or potentially useful to ensure the persistence of the state and its control. There may be a formal constitutional-legal framework and even token elections that, amongst other things, underpin the regular collection of information. It may even have some tolerance for resistance insofar as it does not threaten this continuity. However it also has no interest in providing information, being open or accountable, nor are such things provided for within the constitutional-legal framework. Traditional monarchies can often be found in this area and in practice most regimes that aim at totalitarianism end up here because of financial, technological and organisational limitations on information gathering and sorting.

Whereas knowledge is at the core of the rationale of the Totalitarian State, in the *Adiloptic Autocracy*, government is largely arbitrary and capricious: information is irrelevant except in the most contingent way. Rule is by terror and violence. Guilt or innocence are determined randomly or by pre-decision, not by evidence, and will generally serve *pour encourager les autres* and to induce individual and collective submission. Resistance may actually be encouraged insofar as it gives a rationale for widespread terror by the state, and if it does not exist, it may be fabricated. States after military coups often tend in this direction.

A *Panoptic Polyarchy* has some democratic features, but these are controlled forms of representation. The state is dependent on information for governing, yet at the same time makes only limited information available and mostly in a propagandist form. Such states tend to be based in formal and often constitutional law, but the law is skewed strongly in favour of the state's priorities (which may come from beyond any individual nation-state, as is the case in neoliberal capitalism). Norris and Armstrong's *The Maximum Surveillance Society* (1999) argued that the UK was moving in such a direction.

*Oligoptic Polyarchy* has similar features but does not rely so much on information. In this "regulated surveillance society," the state collects, processes, uses and disseminates information about its citizens in ways that are determined by constitutional-legal frameworks, but has flexibility and room for manoeuvre. Whether surveillance can be considered ethically good or bad in this kind of state depends on the regulations, the competence of any particular government, and the ability of citizens to organise and direct, moderate, challenge or resist it. Many supposedly "democratic" nation-states will tend to be found in this category or in that of Synoptic Democracy. Their position in the centre of the matrix means they are always subject to multiple pressures to move one way or another.

The *Adiloptic Polyarchy* is a limited democratic state that is not primarily dependent on information. As with the *Oligoptic Polyarchy*, this may be because of limited adoption of technologies of control or because of legal or constitutional restraints. Such states will be prone to arbitrary actions and corruption.

A *Perioptic Democracy* is a state that has a strong commitment to popular control and functions through reciprocal surveillance and information flow. The state maximises the information it can obtain, yet citizens are equally able to have access to this information, to inspect it and hold the state to account. Like the *Panoptic Democracy*, such states tend to be based in constitutional law, but it is more balanced in favour of the citizen. They tend to be more socialist, with a strong sense of the 'common interest' or the 'common good' and therefore coercion is less often necessary, although all of such states have police and most have armies. Contemporary nation-states which tend in this direction include the Scandinavian countries.

The *Synoptic Democracy* also has a commitment to popular control but an even stronger tendency towards citizens being able to access to information and accountability. In such states, surveillance by the state is strongly limited by constitutional / legal frameworks which are taken seriously. There tend also to be

monitors or watchdogs specifically devoted to questions of information and privacy across government and the private sector. Contemporary examples in this direction include Germany.

In the *Adiloptic Democracy*, the state is limited almost entirely or absolutely in its ability to surveil citizens, but citizens have absolute rights to know what information the government does collect and how it is used. This is a strongly individualistic and private society, in which systems of redress and accountability for the state are otherwise not really necessary as the state collects so little information in the first place.

The *Perioptic Isonomy* is one where information is assumed to be “free” and its flow is essential to both state and citizen. The default position is that citizens are known to the government and government is open to the citizen. Thus it is “perioptic” rather than “panoptic” as there is no real central control from which surveillance takes place, however the surveillance is still comprehensive and thus it is neither oligoptic nor purely synoptic. David Brin’s *Transparent Society* (1999) is most like this, although it also has elements of the contractualist version of the *Synoptic Isonomy*.

In the *Synoptic Isonomy*, more reciprocal relationships define the relationship between state, information and citizen. In the more economic, “contractual society” models, what information is collected by the government is given in return for some equivalent information. As both what is public and what is private are almost entirely contractual rather than democratic, systems of accountability and redress work on the same basis. In this system, one gets the privacy one can negotiate. However, in more socially-oriented egalitarian versions, like Bookchin’s “libertarian municipalism” (above), the minimal state collects only what information is considered necessary to ensure equitable social outcomes by the general population.

The *Adiloptic Isonomy* or “Private Society” is one where the default assumption is of minimal government, in what some on the American libertarian right, after Robert Nozick (1974) call a “minarchy” (see e.g., Long and Machan 2012). This minimal state has no right to personal information and the citizen is almost invisible to the state, such that the state is essentially a residual or irrelevant entity whose only function is really to guarantee the privacy and other highly individualised rights of the citizen. In more capitalist versions of this form, a vicious free market in personal information results, and one gets the privacy one can afford. In others, we might see isolated solipsistic dreamworlds.

In the final column, there are few states that would be recognised today. In the *Perioptic Anarchy*, everything is assumed to be known by everyone else and there is no reason to withhold information, keep secrets or maintain privacy. This could be described as an edenic state of innocence.

A *Synoptic Anarchy* or *Mutual Society* again has no state, but information, privacy and so on are negotiated mutually to the satisfaction of all parties. However, there are no imposed safeguards or formal ways of checking for deception or cheating. This comes closest to the Prudhon-Kropotkin traditions of anarchism.

In an *Adiloptic Anarchy* or *Chaos*, there is no state, no information, and a general preference for extreme privacy / secrecy, which will be defended. Deception, arbitrary violence and personal insecurity are the norms. This is the materialisation of Hobbes’s ‘war of all against all,’ described in *Leviathan* as the basic rationale for the existence of the state, and entirely failed states would fit into this category.

Why is this preliminary move towards a more systematic description of the relationship of surveillance to political forms useful? For one thing, it may provide a more accurate account of what is or what is not a ‘surveillance society,’ and to tease out varieties of surveillance society. It also embeds within political analysis of surveillance the idea that ‘surveillance’ is not in itself necessarily malign in intent or bad in outcome. It also allows us to see that the ‘-veillance’ in ‘surveillance’ is not something that is unrelated to the ability of the citizen to see the state (what might be called ‘sousveillance’ if that term had not already

been coined for a more specific form of activity): in other words surveillance, freedom of information, and data protection are all connected.

Finally, it can help us see that there are several kinds of political paths out of the contemporary problematics of both increasing surveillance and rising authoritarianism. For example, an increase in surveillance does not necessarily mean a drift or deliberate shift to totalitarianism. “Totalitarianism” is not a direct synonym for “authoritarianism,” indeed the difference might be clearer if we think of totalitarianism as authoritarianism *plus* surveillance. One can have surveillance without authoritarianism and one can have authoritarianism without surveillance. This does not make any claim about the desirability or legitimacy of either. An increase in surveillance could produce a more democratic or consensual society, were it accompanied by measures that restricted the storage and use of information and/or opened up data or its analytical products.

Likewise, as Felix Stalder argued back in 2002, privacy may not be *the* antidote to surveillance. Privacy is generally incompatible with state-person relations that are tilted towards the state, but as David Brin showed in *The Transparent Society*, more privacy or more private societies are not the only way of shifting the balance. It is perfectly possible to have a highly informed state that is also entirely open to the view of citizens, where a citizenry with little or no privacy is balanced by a state with few or no secrets, or at least one which is entirely accountable for all the information that it collects and what is done with it. In addition, an extremely private society could also be an extremely anti-social and individualistic one.

The model of course represents particular relatively easy-to-define points in a matrix; it comes with all the problems of any ideal-typical categorisation. The reality is messier and states in practice may well have features that would appear to be contradictory, but I would argue that it nevertheless provides a useful model, which can be used to help define and categorise contemporary states in relation to surveillance and authority.

However, it has two main inadequacies, both of which are significant for the subject of this issue. The first is the distance from economic conceptions of state forms, hence it is not designed to replace standard models but to supplement them. Secondly, it shares with most models of the nation-state, a foundation in the relative immutability of the nation-state and a world of nation-states, and the very categories of western liberal democratic politics that it simultaneously seeks to criticise. However, how one understands these concepts must also be the unequal power relations between and across different states and peoples, in other words: the historical and contemporary constructions of race, class and gender in particular.

### **Who Are You Calling Authoritarian? Surveillance, Authoritarianism and the Post-Colonial**

Some papers in this issue will be particularly controversial and for different reasons. Venezuela is one such example, considered here by José Ragas, not least because there was widespread hope from the political left around the world for the country’s progress under charismatic former President Chavez. It is undeniable that Chavez’s style borrowed much from the old *caudillo* model of South American leaders, but it would be hard to argue, except from the most hostile political stance, that the country under Chavez was particularly authoritarian in comparison to many other similar countries. For all his contradictions, as Alma Guillermoprieto (2013) argued, Chavez “cared about people.” And what was more, at some level, his brand of paternal leadership was felt by many to be necessary in the face of that hostile external pressure against this Bolivarian socialist government. The political allegiance of his regime meant it was characterised as an enemy by the dominant regional power, the USA, still cleaving to the Monroe Doctrine of hemispheric hegemony. However, under Chavez’s successor, Nicolas Maduro, Chavez’s defiant populist style and relatively successful range of genuinely popular social and economic programs appears to have been replaced by a combination of economic decline, popular protest and increasingly authoritarian and violent practice. Even loyal *chavistas* have been removed from prominent offices. And while it is undoubtedly the case that there is likely to be covert American interference in Venezuela in a manner that has many historical



precedents that Noam Chomsky and others have long documented, it seems very hard to attribute the current situation in the country in Venezuela purely to the USA. The question is now whether Maduro's government is losing support because of what it is doing or because of what is being done to it, or some combination of the two.

Where it gets difficult for those who continue to support the beleaguered Venezuelan premier is that the arguments used by Maduro are very similar in content and circumstances to those deployed by the likes of President Recep Erdoğan of Turkey, considered in this issue by three different sets of contributors, Özgün Topak, Bilge Yesil and Efe Kerem Sozeri, and one scholar who wished to remain anonymous, their anonymity itself a mark of how fraught an activity is criticism of paranoid and violent regimes like Erdoğan's. In justifying his constitutional reforms and crackdown on critics, Erdoğan claims that his is a legitimate and popular regime, trying to reform Turkey in a more moral Islamic direction that better reflects the feelings of Turkish people. However, this effort is supposedly being undermined by sinister external forces linked to the USA, in his case the Gülenist movement, led by a Muslim cleric who lives openly in America. In his political discourse, those he arrests are not legitimate protestors and dissidents but externally-supported terrorists and infiltrators. The major difference between Maduro and Erdoğan is that Erdoğan is a conservative Islamist and few in the West on any part of the political spectrum have any great sympathy for his politics.

In both cases, Turkey and Venezuela, the perspectives of both governments and critics are based in claims about what is allowed by constitutions – which are themselves the subject of revisions that enable reform of the state to give more direct control to their rulers – what constitutes “democracy,” and challenges to normative ideas about human rights and state-citizen relations. The latter have been promoted by hegemonic powers led by the USA since the end of WW2 and the creation of the United Nations, and more importantly in the longer term, the end of colonialism. Recently, I listened to a conversation between African acquaintances on Paul Kagame of Rwanda. Most were highly critical of white and Global North-based critics who characterised Kagame as an authoritarian or incipient dictator, or those who they claimed prioritised hegemonic and universalist conceptions of human rights like freedom of speech over peace, safety and economic security in a post-genocide environment. Ironically, unlike Maduro (and increasingly Erdoğan), Kagame is far from an international outcaste, teaching courses at Harvard, and keynoting summits on international development; he is perhaps the ‘golden boy’ of capitalist-friendly development in Africa and little attention is spared by the governments of major aid donors to his alleged violations of human rights.

There is no article on Rwanda in this issue, however the complexities of what Kalemba Kizito, writing about Uganda's crackdown on homosexuality, calls the “bequeathed legacies” of colonialism and relations between African nation-states and dominant global powers, are considered in articles on Uganda, Angola and Ethiopia. They are also explicitly considered by Karen Dean in an article on the continued authoritarianism of a supposedly post-authoritarian Myanmar, Alfred McCoy on the rise of Duterte in the Philippines, and also in a powerful piece by Mahvish Ahmad and Rabia Mehmood on Pakistan which argues that Surveillance Studies still has a long way to go in dealing with what they call “imperial effects.” In that they are entirely correct, but hopefully theirs and the other pieces mentioned so far in this issue go some way towards developing that conversation.

Continuities and legacies of dominance are everywhere. With the end of the colonialism, there was a fear in liberal democracies that the capitalist world could effectively shrink now that resources could not be plundered, slavery and exploitation enforced and new export markets guaranteed. Post-colonial territorial arrangements were rapidly put into place that tried to map as cleanly as possible to colonial-era boundaries where a relatively pliant local managerial-bureaucratic class (who had also composed the consumer class in new imperial markets) existed, and where one did not, new artificial borders and territories were created which deliberately disrupted indigenous attempts at self-definition. Movements towards genuine collective

self-determination on larger scales that did not match political ideals of the nation-state were particularly repressed, thus popular transnational movements like Pan-Arabism and Pan-Africanism were killed before they could grow, and transnational movements that could not be splintered because their basis was not so clearly territorial, like Communism, were contained.

That containment was the basis of what is still the most extensive global system of surveillance: that of the United States' military and intelligence agencies, which also figures strongly in articles by Robbins and Henscke on US telecommunications interception, and Midori Ogasawara on Japan, still treated by the USA as its beachhead into Asia. These surveillance systems, as Ahmad and Mehmood highlight, are the foundation for the ongoing drone wars targeting alleged militants and terrorists from a network that spans secret airfields in Africa and the Middle-east to air-conditioned control rooms in Florida and Nevada. Not only have the "bequeathed legacies" of colonialism continued to hamper efforts to move to genuine indigenous control over supposedly independent post-colonial nation-states, but ongoing "imperial effects" also give the lie to claims that what is being promoted in these acts of hegemonic power-projection and naked self-interest, is "democracy." In the Global South then, it makes little sense to talk of a "turn" to authoritarianism, rather the situation is one in which authoritarianism is both constantly likely and often seems necessary or more attractive than the alternatives.

### **Globalisation, Neoliberalism and Authoritarianism**

For all that Fukuyama's liberal democratic "end of history" was just a recasting of British "Whig history" for an era of American triumphalism, it can still be seen as a belated and misrecognised acknowledgement of the ascendancy of two interrelated phenomena: globalisation and neoliberalism. Globalisation was accurately characterised by David Harvey (2001) as a "spatial fix" for crisis of accumulation within capitalism, one which also aligned with American political objectives, in that the US acted as the military enforcer, making the world "safe for business," in a scaled-up version of what the British navy had done for "free trade" in earlier centuries. The kind of capitalism that we have seen over the last 50 years has been clearly different from what has gone before. This fundamentalist emphasis on deregulation and markets over social goals has become known as "neoliberalism." Ironically in many ways, this movement began as an intellectual economic response to the rise of authoritarianism in Europe in the 1920s and 30s (Foucault 2008). The resulting global war did not lead to neoliberal priorities being adopted in its birthplace, however, rather to a more social democratic and welfarist turn. It was only when global economic crises hit in the 1970s that neoliberalism was able to reappear, translated through US political Cold War political agendas, now not as a response to authoritarianism but to the supposed failure of both post-WW2 social democracy in the "First World" and post-colonial independent governments in the "Third World" as unresponsive to economic transformations and vulnerable to falling under the influence of the "Second World" of the Soviet Union (Murakami Wood 2012).

The contrast between social democratic and neoliberal models is instructive in terms of surveillance. Welfarist states relied heavily on the strongly panoptic institutions of government identified by Foucault as exemplary of the modern state. Neoliberalism rolled back the supportive and caring functions of these institutions as it moved the economic management of the economy to a global level, but instead intensified the security-oriented functions of the nation-state: borders, police (or increasingly private security), prisons and so on. In other words, where surveillance in the social democratic model was designed in part to shield citizens from the negative effects of capitalism, in neoliberalism, it was intended to protect capitalism itself from the negative reactions of citizens. These are both strategies for management of citizens by states in a capitalist world but their differences are material and significant.

The Cold War period also ushered in a growing concern with human rights from the "First World." Some of this came from genuine if paternalistic concern for the future of post-colonial peoples, perhaps best characterised by Amnesty International. However, some had more dubious American political-economic

priorities, like Human Rights Watch. The longer-term impact of these has been to establish a language for categorising “authoritarian” regimes and the relationship to supposedly free global trade. This is brought out in the final piece that we’ve listed as being about Turkey, by Claire Lauterbach of Privacy International. This is in fact a very useful reflection on where is the line that separates “acceptable” from “unacceptable” regimes when it comes to international trade in surveillance and espionage technologies, based on a case which turns on trade with Turkey.

### *The Authoritarian Turn as Reaction to Neoliberal Globalisation*

Industrial activity, driven by state and capital, has accelerated to the point of significantly transforming the earth’s climate systems, which in turn is creating feedback loops that are damaging human and non-human, impoverishing ecosystems and already marginalised communities, generating conflict and insecurity. It is undoubtedly the case that everyday life for many (although certainly not all) people is better that it has ever been, however inequality has never been so extreme along with generalised economic insecurity and the end of certainties in jobs and economic futures and the transformation towards permanent precarity.

The “authoritarian turn” has taken place within and as a result of this transformation to the rescaling of the economy towards a “global” remote from popular and even nation-state control, and a “neoliberal” governmentality that mystifies this global capitalism as necessary and inevitable. This has resulted in huge material and psychic insecurity. This insecurity has taken many forms. These have included the rise of political Islam and its extreme manifestation in terrorist movements like Al-Qaeda or Islamic State. Another is the “neurotic citizenship” (Isin 2004) of the Global North, that imagines an existential threat from outsiders, immigrants and refugees, many of whom, ironically, are fleeing from the successive effects of colonialism, globalisation, war and terrorism, and who are seeking security in the nation-states that have most benefitted from these processes. Many citizens of wealthier nation-states have welcomed these migrants, but an increasing number seek to keep them out. Border control is one of the few areas over which nation-states still have significant control (Brown 2010), so nationalist politicians are all too pleased to respond to such demands. In this issue, we have examples from Poland (Klaus), Greece (Loukinas) and Hungary (Nagy).

This neurosis is very strongly connected to the end of global white supremacy. This can also be seen in the panic over the rise of China (emerging as the leader of the so-called BRICs: Brazil, Russia, India, China) as the most likely successor to the USA as global hegemon. In this context, it is particularly worth considering how China’s surveillance state operates, and this is considered in this issue by Cassiano on ID systems, Hou on political opinion surveillance, and Hargreaves on the China’s recovered territory of Hong Kong.

### **After Authoritarianism**

The most recent turn to authoritarianism is a retreat. Instead of confronting new realities with new categories, many people are seeking the certainty of the familiar and the familial. They seek patriarchs and father-figures, leaders who will promise them greatness in language they understand. They seek scapegoats; conspirators, terrorists and enemies within and without from whom these populist leaders will protect them. They seek the glowing half-remembered past; the authoritarian turn is profoundly nostalgic. The nostalgia is not even necessarily for anything that was once real. Authoritarian nostalgias are constructed and mediated.

The key question is what comes next. Having argued that the contemporary ‘turn’ to authoritarianism is not a singular thing, but a convergence of several different historical trajectories, one can also see there is unlikely to be a singular immediate answer or likely outcome. Here I identify four broad emerging trajectories forward for consideration: the continuation of this messy, particularist world of divergent authoritarianisms; a reassertion of neoliberalism at a more genuinely global (or planetary scale); various

kinds of technological ‘solutions’; and finally, the emergence of a more obvious horizon of possibility in opposition to authoritarianism, surveillance and capitalism.

### *Multiplying Authoritarianisms*

There are several ways in which we are now ‘after globalisation.’ If the authoritarian turn is a nostalgic and populist reaction to globalisation then there is every reason to suppose that it could continue even, or especially, as the planetary scale of contemporary problems, particularly climate change and mass migration, becomes clearer. Neither is going to end soon, and we have every reason to believe that we have not even begun to experience more than the beginning. Pessimist versions of environmental thinking could even combine with these authoritarianisms to produce deadening but environmentally sustainable movements, although it seems more likely at the moment that denial of environmental realities is characteristic of most contemporary authoritarianisms.

### *Global Authoritarianism: Neoliberalism Strikes Back*

On the other hand, it seems hard to imagine that capital will tolerate more than a period of ‘resetting’ of a global economy that has generated unparalleled profits. If, as I have argued previously (Murakami Wood 2013), neoliberalism has successfully recast the global scale as its ‘natural’ scale of operations, partly through global surveillance, then it would be a significant and costly step backwards to abandon this already mostly completed project of globalisation. It may well be that those planetary concerns, climate change, migration and security, are further co-opted to serve a new set of justification for revitalisation of projects for global government, whereby neoliberalism reappears institutionally at a planetary level. If the USA has failed in achieving this itself, it is more likely that a “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics” will take its place, based not on the combination of “free trade” and military power projection and surveillance in a world of nation-states, but on free trade within a more effectively authoritarian global state.<sup>4</sup> Many less powerful nation-states, particularly in Africa, and large transnational corporations are already betting on this option.

### *Deus ex Machina: Will Technology Save Us?*

McKenzie Wark (2016) has been arguing for some time that the era we are entering may not actually be a capitalist one at all, and he does not mean that the revolution is finally upon us, rather he means that information has already changed the rules, creating new emerging classes. “Something else” is definitely happening. From out of neoliberal capitalism has emerged a technologically-enabled, Big Data-driven “surveillance capitalism” (Zuboff 2015) of corporations like Google, Apple, Facebook and Tesla, which is now also in the process of transforming the practices of corporations from older economic sectors. If surveillance is now the basis of both government *and* economy, how are we to think about the now globally foundational markets in surveillance technologies and services? Perhaps the most insightful articulation of this transformation has been produced by Benjamin Bratton (2014, 2016), who argues that we are seeing not simply a new economic system but a combination of factors that signal the emergence of a new form of social, economic, political and ecological life based on planetary computing. Corporations in this revisioning are neither the joint-stock companies that capitalism at the dawn of the 20th century, nor the fluid, financialised transnational entities of the dawn of the 21’s neoliberal capitalism. Instead they are primarily vehicles for the emergence of *platforms*, that are “[n]ext to states and markets [...] a third form, coordinating through fixed protocols while scattering free-range Users watched over in loving, if also disconcertingly omniscient, grace” (Bratton 2014).

We can already see how these corporations have begun to take the place of centrist liberal party political formations. One example is the emergence of Apple as the darling of pro-net neutrality, pro-privacy, pro-

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<sup>4</sup> David Harvey (2005) identifies several forms of neoliberalism and argues that China was characteristic of an overtly authoritarian form that was first publicly articulated in 1980 when Deng Xiaoping stated that “to be rich is glorious” and which has since then successfully combined economic liberalisation with political repression.

encryption online libertarian progressives. Another is Facebook. In early 2017, founder, Mark Zuckerberg, released an open letter to the 2 billion Facebook users worldwide, laying out a vision of Facebook replacing both states and societies with a networked communitarianism that seemed to be placed in overt opposition to Trump's populist authoritarianism. At the same time he began touring the USA almost continuously to establish his populist credentials. Whether those credentials are tested first in conventional electoral politics or in driving forward his version of Azuma's "General Will 2.0" remains to be seen.

Another emerging possibility is the spectre of a machine take-over, the almost literal *deus ex machina*, of Artificial Intelligence becoming a reality and instituting some kind of rule on human beings. It's notable that most of those warning of such things, most notably recently Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla, seem to understand the 'motivations' of AI as remarkably human and Machiavellian, in other words their vision of AI seems to emerge from a fear of the dominant personality type in Silicon Valley, perhaps even his own personality, without limits. It's notable that the newly "woke" tech bro, Mark Zuckerberg, has dismissed Musk's fears, clearly also seeing in AI, himself and his brand (Bogost 2017).

Neither possibility provokes great joy, and both, of course are fundamentally based on massively intensified surveillance, "for our own good." It may be that Zuckerberg's world is one that is less nominally authoritarian than current trends, but it will not be less surveillant, but as Bratton identifies, quite the contrary. The particular danger is that this vision starts to seem comparatively attractive when posited as the only viable alternative to either violent authoritarian nationalism or resurgent global neoliberalism.<sup>5</sup>

### *Against Authority, Against Surveillance: The Horizon of Possibility*

We need not be taken in by any of these visions. Whether one's horizon is communist (cf. Dean 2012), anarchist, socialist, social democratic or some combination or novel variation, ultimately the only way to avoid falling into traps of either nostalgic nationalism, global authoritarianism, or techno-communitarianism, is to raise our eyes and realise that there is such a horizon and that our politics must be defined by a rediscovery of collective desires, the bringing together of multiple fractured movements to recast a planetary future for humanity based on equality and ecology. But this rediscovery first of all needs to be based in the recognition of both shared and differing contemporary material conditions. This, then, is the ultimate purpose of this issue.

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<sup>5</sup> Karina Rider and I explore Zuckerberg's vision more fully elsewhere (Rider and Murakami Wood, forthcoming).



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