

Neoliberalism – the undeclared war of market totalitarianism against people, society, democracy, and the economy

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Neoliberalism is a social Darwinist ideology and economic doctrine that focuses on profit maximization. Far too many analyses stop at describing the associated income and wealth disparities. This article takes a look behind the economic façade and attempts to show the destructive consequences of neoliberal economic theory and policy on society, individuals, and politics, particularly with regard to the US as the bastion of neoliberalism par excellence.

The essence of neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is based on three fundamental assumptions: 1. The sole goal of individuals and the economic world is the (short-term) maximization of their own utility/profit. 2. Everything has a price (even human life¹). Prices reflect the true reality of life: those who are guided by market prices do not need to concern themselves with the conditions under which goods and services were produced (the past) or the consequences of their consumption for people, society, and the environment (the future).² 3. The world is one big global economic machine, in whose wheels or grinding mechanism of total competition everyone is rewarded solely on the basis of their own performance – this is objective justice in the neoliberal sense³, and the ultimate meaning of life is fulfilled – exhausted! – according to neoliberal philosophy in the purposeful rationality of purely self-serving utility or profit maximization.

The extraordinary impact of neoliberalism can be explained not least by the fact that its protagonists succeeded in packaging its ideological core in the guise of a – value-free! – natural science: it presents the "laws" it postulates as forces of nature that are just as immutable as those of classical physics: ways of thinking and speaking such as "The laws of the market compel us!" "The market commands!" are pure neoliberal indoctrination. The "man and woman on the street" are completely unaware of this.

A look at the killing fields of neoliberalism

The view of the battlefields of neoliberalism is shocking. Just how bloody the war is can be illustrated by a few examples that can be traced back to neoliberal profit maximization:

- Chemical disaster in Bhopal (India), 1984: Depending on estimates, between 3,800 and 25,000 people died as a result of a gas leak at a chemical plant controlled by the US company Union Carbide. The cause: cost-cutting on safety measures – for the sake of neoliberal profit maximization.⁴ Many victims are still waiting for compensation.

- When the medical costs of smoking rose in the Czech Republic, consideration was given to increasing tobacco taxes. To avert this, Philip Morris presented a cost-benefit analysis showing that the state earns more from smoking than it loses: As long as smokers require medical treatment, they do incur costs for the state, but because smokers die earlier, the state saves more on pensions and elderly care than it spends on medical care for smokers – dying for profit [Sandel, 2013, p. 61f].
- In the 1970s, Ford engineers discovered during test drives before the launch that their Pinto compact car caught fire easily when another car hit its rear end. Nevertheless, it was launched on the market unchanged. More than 500 people were burned to death and many more suffered severe burns. A cost-benefit analysis was found in Ford's executive offices during a court investigation. According to their calculations – Ford estimated 180 fatalities and 180 burn injuries – the damage to people and property was estimated at US\$49.5 million, while the cost of refurbishing the 12.5 million Pintos produced – US\$11 per car – would have amounted to US\$137.5 million. The company concluded that improving the tank was not economically viable – saving money for profit, or in other words, doing business with death. [Sandel, Michael, 2013, p. 63 f.].⁵
- Boeing 737 Max, 2018/2019: In order to save on the costs of a completely new development in competition with Airbus, the company modified the long-running Boeing 737 so extensively that this had a negative impact on flight performance. To normalize this, Boeing developed control software (MCAS). However, for reasons of cost, pilots were not familiarized with this software. This led to the crash of two of these aircraft, killing 346 people. Saving for profit. [ARD news program, 2021].⁶
- These examples represent millions of people who have fallen ill or died as a result of harmful products, ruthless working conditions, a destroyed environment, growing income and wealth disparities, and impoverishment caused by unbridled neoliberal greed.
- Neoliberal profit maximization is also destroying the economic world itself. Rana Foroohar [2017, p. 11]: "Through its lobbying for short-term, share-boosting management, the financial world is also largely responsible for the drastic cuts in research and development spending by American companies – the very investments that are the foundation for the future." Foroohar provides a vivid example of this: In March 2006, Microsoft announced major investments in a new technology. As a result, the share price fell for two months.

These are just a few of the most visible signs of the bloody war that is taking place. Ultimately, it is a war between the rich and the poor. Warren Buffett in the New York Times, November 26, 2006: ""There's class warfare, all right. But it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning." [Stein, 2006].

Neoliberalism: according to its origins, an ideology dressed up in pseudo-scientific, supposedly value-free garb

This war between rich and poor has a history. Neoliberalism and its first institutional beginnings can be traced back to the US publicist Walter Lippmann (1889–1974). The Colloque Walter Lippmann, named after him, played an important role. It took place in Paris from August 26 to

30, 1938. In view of the political and economic crises of the interwar period and the rise of totalitarian systems, liberalism was to be redefined and further developed. It was in this context that the term "neoliberalism" was coined. The aim was to distinguish it from both classical laissez-faire liberalism and collectivist ideologies such as socialism, National Socialism, and fascism. Nota bene: Neoliberalism is first and foremost an ideological project that has been given a pseudo-scientific, value-free guise.⁷

After the end of World War II, in 1947, Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek picked up where he left off and founded the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) in the presence of well-known economists such as Wilhelm Röpke, Karl Popper, Lionel Robbins, Michael Polanyi, Walter Eucken, Fritz Machlup, Ludwig von Mises, Maurice Allais, Milton Friedman, and George Stigler. Walter Lippmann was not invited, as he was considered too "unprincipled"⁸. However, influential journalists from Le Monde, the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, the Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, Fortune, and other publications were in attendance.

At least eight winners of the "Nobel Prize for Economics" can be linked to the MPS – it is a highly synergistic network. The iron fist of the Mont Pèlerin Society is its umbrella organization atlasnetwork.org, which currently has 598 think tanks and partner organizations, including such well-known and influential names as the US-based Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the British Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), with which Margaret Thatcher had close ties, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (Potsdam).

With President Nixon, the war between rich and poor becomes government policy in the US

The rapid and resounding rise of the Mont Pèlerin Society has a practical but also an ideological reason. The practical reason: the rise of market radicals or neoliberals began with the stagflation that set in during the late 1960s. In this context, Keynesian deficit spending (defamed as socialist) proved counterproductive; and the heyday of the Chicago School monetarists, led by Milton Friedman and Swiss economist Karl Brunner, began. The ideological reason: Keynesianism, or rather its state intervention in the economy, had always been a red rag to the richest of the rich in the US. Under their pressure, President Richard Nixon used the crisis at the time to build a "rightist counterestablishment" [Gibbs 2024, pp. 3-7], and hired the MPS for this purpose. This made MPS neoliberals such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman policy makers at the highest political levels.⁹ Nota bene: However, many of their highly consequential measures were not implemented under President Reagan, but under the Democratic presidents Carter and Clinton.¹⁰

The neoliberal arsenal includes the following weapons for the war between the rich and the poor:¹¹

- Privatization
- Deregulation
- Reduction of the public sector
- Promotion of the free market
- Minimal government intervention
- Financial globalization
- Limiting government spending
- Reduction of budget deficits
- Tax relief for high and highest incomes

- Fight against trade unions
- Wage pressure
- Control over economically and politically influential media
- Financing of neoliberal/radical market think tanks, university chairs, and NGOs

Neoliberals vehemently deny having a social Darwinist mindset, but a glance at this (economic) policy toolbox reveals them to be blatant social Darwinists: it is a collection of instruments for redistributing wealth from the bottom to the top, i.e., from the (many) weak to the (few) strong and powerful.

In this context, German political scientist Rainer Mausfeld [2018]¹² speaks of a "neoliberal revolution from above" which – nota bene – is "carried out largely by social democratic parties" as was the case in Germany from 1999 onwards through "reductions in corporate tax rates, top tax rates, withholding tax, the abolition of capital gains tax, the abolition of inheritance tax for corporate heirs, Hartz IV, massive expansion of the low-wage sector, and temporary work."¹³ According to Stubbs et al. [2021], the instruments of neoliberalism also include institutions such as the IMF, GATT, WTO, OECD, and World Bank, which obey neoliberal logic.

The damage that can be done to people, society, and democracy with this arsenal of weapons—with this "neoliberal revolution from above"—will be illustrated in more detail below using the example of the United States.

The US as a neoliberal battlefield – how neoliberalism is eating away at society

According to the British scholar John Stuart Mill [2006, p. 24], one of the most influential classical economists of the 19th century, people only demand things that bring them immediate happiness or are a means to the end of happiness. This statement by Mill can be countered by a finding by the Swiss economist Mathias Binswanger [2010, p. 28 f.]: In Western countries such as the US and Europe, as well as in Japan, which is also considered part of the West, per capita gross domestic product has risen threefold (USA) to sixfold (Japan) since World War II, but since 1956, the percentage of Americans who describe themselves as "very happy" has been steadily declining (as will be explained below). The same is true for Japan and Europe. Conclusion: Greater material prosperity does not always mean greater happiness. A second conclusion is that today's economic growth, at least in the Western world, is no longer driven by the needs of people (who strive for happiness). Under the regime of neoclassical neoliberalism, economic growth has become disconnected from people's real needs. It is driven by other forces—by the debt and credit economy striving for maximum short-term profit, i.e., by financial institutions and hedge funds, investors and speculators on the one hand, and by neoliberal legislation increasingly driven by their interests on the other, which politically and legally cements the redistribution from the bottom to the top (see Mausfeld/"neoliberal revolution from above").

What this means in concrete terms is illustrated by the economic situation of people in the US, the neoliberal model state par excellence:

- "The top 1% of US earners now own more wealth than the entire middle class." [Tanzi, Alexandre, Dorning, Mike, 2021].¹⁴
- "Between 1980 and 2014 (...) the income of the poorest half grew by only 1 percent, while the

income of the top 10 percent grew by 121 percent and the income of the top 1 percent more than tripled" [Henderson, Rebecca, 2020, p. 204].

- The production factor labor is becoming increasingly less important, while the owners of the means of production — capital — are being compensated more and more: "If the average hourly wage had risen at the same rate as productivity between 1979 and 2019, the average worker would earn \$9.00 more per hour." [Mishel, Lawrence, 2022].¹⁵
- According to Rebecca Henderson [2020, p. 204], a CEO earned 30 times the average wage in 1978, while in 2017 a CEO earned 312 times as much.
- Almost 40% of US citizens cannot come up with \$400 in an emergency. The strained financial situation can be explained by debt from home ownership, cars, and education [Buchter, Heike, 2021].
- In the middle class, incomes are stagnating, but spending on basic needs has risen; high debt forces two-thirds of US households to have both partners working, which requires two cars and two loans; in addition, car prices have risen sharply in recent years [Buchter, Heike, 2021].
- 170 million Americans have outstanding bills with doctors and clinics; approximately half of all cancer patients have fallen into such financial difficulties as a result of treatment that they have delayed or even discontinued therapy [Buchter, Heike, 2021].
- Tuition fees have been rising four times faster than average inflation since the 1980s [Buchter, Heike, 2021].
- In the 1950s, 50% of household wealth was in the hands of the middle class; today, that figure is 17%. Forty-four percent of Americans work in the low-wage sector [Saslow, Eli, 2022].

Noam Chomsky [2022] sums up the situation as follows: "At the moment (...) we have 40 years of relentless class warfare behind us, which is called neoliberalism. (...) There is indeed a certain class that understands very well that there are classes: the class of the economic elite. It uses all means at its disposal to assert its interests."

Scientific analysis acknowledges this and generally stops there. This essay, however, seeks to look beyond the purely economic facts and highlight their consequences: what Chomsky calls class warfare goes far beyond material disparities, worries, and hardships—it touches on people's identity and health. A study by The Harwood Group [1995], Bethesda (Maryland), provides an impression of how reality is experienced. In 1995, it conducted a telephone survey of 800 randomly selected US Americans aged 18 and older on behalf of the Merck Family Fund. The most important findings are presented below. We are experiencing "live," so to speak, the breakdown of US society under the pressure of neoliberalism – a development that has become even more pronounced since 1995:

- Americans feel that materialism, greed, and self-interest increasingly dominate life at the expense of values centered on family, responsibility, and community.
- There is a feeling that the material side of the American Dream has gotten out of control, that people are measuring themselves against each other and competing more and more on a material level.
- " Huge majorities of Americans cite responsibility, family life, and friendship as key guiding

principles for themselves, with over 85 % of survey respondents rating those values at eight or higher on a ten-point scale. Yet respondents believe that their fellow Americans do not share these priorities: fewer than half believe that responsibility, family life, or friendship rate eight or higher for 'most people in our society'. People also describe large gaps between themselves and others on the importance of generosity and religious faith in their lives. Conversely, people feel that most Americans are more strongly guided by prosperity and wealth than they are themselves. These gaps reveal a dissonance in American life – a divergence between how people view their own priorities and those of the rest of society."

- "People describe a society at odds with itself and its own most important values. They see their fellow Americans growing increasingly atomized, selfish, and irresponsible; they worry that our society is losing its moral center. They believe our priorities are mixed up."

The neoliberal-social Darwinist ideology of the right of the strongest and the politics and legislation determined by the oligarchic plutocracy are destroying the traditional value system of US society and its social glue—citizens are losing their social values and their social anchor. The resulting erosion of solidarity is causing citizens to increasingly lose their identity and self-esteem—and their hope for a dignified, meaningful life, all the more so as they live under constant economic stress, which pits everyone against each other and makes everyone enemies of everyone else: Those who have to fight constantly for their bare economic survival will barely show consideration for others in the long run – this only accelerates the process of socio-cultural and social decay. This is the perfect breeding ground for right-wing populist demagoguery.

Fear eats away at the soul: How neoliberalism burns individuals out

Secondary analyses of numerous studies by Wilkinson/Pickett [2010] provide evidence of the psychological distress and suffering caused by the social and sociocultural decline induced by neoliberalism in individuals: They conclude that feelings of anxiety ("anxiety level") steadily increased in the US between 1952 and 1993.¹⁶ A paradox: parallel to growing feelings of anxiety, indicators of self-esteem such as "I am proud of myself" and "I am a person of value" are also showing a clear upward trend. This coincides with the increasing redistribution of wealth from the bottom to the top.

The parallel upward trends in feelings of fear on the one hand and self-esteem on the other are fed from the same source: people are gearing up for an increasingly ruthless battle for social status, presenting themselves as self-confident and building a façade of strength and toughness around themselves. Behind this, however, lurks the fear of economic decline and loss of social status, even among the elites; behind this, in turn, is the tormenting fear of losing face — the epitome of annihilation, i.e., the social death of the individual.¹⁷ The loss of social status refers to the loss of human esteem, which people fear more than anything else – this esteem assures us of our *raison d'être*, in particular of a right to exist that does not need to be further legitimized, especially not with economic performance or any kind of "usefulness" for whom or whatever...

Under the neoliberal regime, the economic and social struggle for survival is becoming more and more brutal, increasingly exhausting and demoralizing. Wilkinson/Pickett [2010, p. 5]: "High levels of inequality not only lead to all the problems associated with social differences and the

divisive class prejudices that accompany them, but (...) they also undermine community life, reduce trust, and increase violence." And not only that: low social status, lack of friendships, and stress in early life have been shown to be "serious impairments to health and life expectancy." Wilson/Pickett [2010, p. 39] thus impressively illustrate what happens to people and society when the course is increasingly set in a neoliberal direction, i.e., toward the social Darwinist right of the strongest.

According to Wilkinson/Pickett [2010, p. 54 ff.], the percentage of people in the US who say that "most people can be trusted" fell from 60% in 1960 to less than 40% in 2004. As work and life become increasingly stressful, people's capacity for empathy declines and they lose relationships or are unable to form new ones due to lack of time. Where there is no familiar "you", a stable sense of self, the ability to form relationships, and the ability to accept criticism are gradually lost¹⁸, as are tolerance for ambiguity and the will to understand and compromise that is anchored in the human spirit: It is important to save face at all costs and not show any weakness in the social Darwinist shark tank, i.e., admit mistakes—even though this ability is an crucial driver of personal growth and social progress...

Loss of face and experiences of humiliation, especially in societies with high economic and social disparity, can be causes of violence. Compared to democracies in Europe, the US, for example, has a significantly higher homicide rate¹⁹, and the number of school shootings and mass shootings has risen considerably in recent years [Statista Research Dept., 2022].²⁰ Aggressive outward discharge is one symptom of a deep social and (inter)human crisis, the rise in depression and suicide rates another [Signer, David, 2022].²¹ Fear and hopelessness are increasingly rampant among young Americans across all socio-demographic groups (neoliberalism is also eating its children): This is an indication that the neoliberal market society does not provide young people with a meaningful anchorage in the intellectual and cultural sphere, nor a vision, i.e., hope for the future, nor that minimum of social security that human beings, as creatures with an insatiable thirst for meaning, need to thrive, just as the body needs vitamins.²²

A loss of orientation and identity goes hand in hand with increasing susceptibility to propaganda, manipulation, and conformity. The self-serving pursuit of profit and social Darwinism of neoliberalism are increasingly proving to be a powerful, dehumanizing self-fulfilling prophecy. The cynical game: Neoliberalism interprets the economic and social disintegration it has initiated and promoted as proof that its image of humans as purely self-serving beings is correct. A true vicious circle.

Neoliberalism is duplicated in right-wing populism

From an economic, psychological, sociological, and sociocultural perspective, it is understandable that right-wing populist demagogues who verbally side with the victims of neoliberalism and promise them dignity, self-worth, national greatness and autonomy – as a counter-concept to neoliberal globalisation – as well as the prospect of economic recovery, have enjoyed increasing popularity in recent decades. This is not least because social democracy (Blair, Schröder) and the US Democrats (Carter, Clinton) have switched to the neoliberal track.²³

Neoliberalism is duplicated in right-wing populism: the exploitation, alienation, humiliation, even objectification that the victims of neoliberalism experience firsthand shape their worldview: they experience the world as a haven of social Darwinist struggle of everyone against everyone else. Right-wing populism does not help its supporters by offering an alternative, integrative worldview of justice and brotherhood, but rather by cementing the violent worldview. It does this in three ways:

1. Right-wing populism declares its supporters to be victims of neoliberal elites. To improve their own situation, these neoliberal elites must be fought and defeated — war is seen as the solution to social and economic problems.
2. In an attempt to enhance the psychological and social status of their clientele, right-wing populist elites also make use of social Darwinism: they try to enhance the status of their supporters by stigmatizing and devaluing certain societal groups (minorities)—in this way, the victims of the neoliberal social Darwinist elites themselves become social Darwinist perpetrators. Neoliberal social Darwinism perpetuates itself in a right-wing populist variant.
3. Those who see themselves in a constant social Darwinist struggle for survival and at war with the neoliberal elites tend to submit to strong leadership.

Against this backdrop, it is understandable that Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill, which uncompromisingly continues the social Darwinist-neoliberal war of the rich against the poor, met with no resistance from his clientele—the victims of neoliberalism are also those of right-wing populism. Neoliberalism is thus powerfully continuing its war of conquest: the struggle between the existing neoliberal elites and the equally social Darwinist right-wing populists is not about ideological content or competing views of humanity, society, and the world, but merely a power struggle between the existing neoliberal elites and the right-wing populists' claims to power. In the case of Trump, the Rassemblement National (father and daughter Le Pen), the Italian right-wing populists (Berlusconi), and the Swiss SVP (Blocher), the leaders of the right-wing populists are economic actors who have not been accepted as equals by the neoliberal ruling class and not co-opted into its ranks. In this sense, they too have had social Darwinist experiences and interpret the world accordingly. Social Darwinism is a self-perpetuating phenomenon.

From undeclared to open hot war

In the war against Russia and Iran, with the aim of destroying them, neoliberalism is attempting to secure cheap natural and human resources in order to keep alive the dream of unlimited growth, i.e., unlimited profits in a world that is, *nota bene*, limited: The US consumes five times more resources than it can sustainably generate itself, Europe three and a half times more. These resources must therefore come from other regions of the world - where the neoliberal West encounters China. That is why, under US leadership, it has been preparing for some time for a war against China in terms of propaganda, military technology, and economics. The ideological core of neoliberalism, social Darwinism, leaves the neoliberal West no choice but war: Only the strongest can—and are allowed to!—survive in this ideology; social Darwinism does not provide for peaceful cooperation in the sense of live and let live or peaceful competition—for it, life is an eternal struggle, an eternal war in which ultimately only one must emerge victorious so that it ends and eternal peace breaks out.

However, the peoples of the West cannot be forced to sacrifice their lives on the killing fields of the neoliberal elites through the democratic process of free information and free opinion-forming, or even through democratic votes. Propaganda is needed for this. This too can be found in the arsenal of neoliberalism – thanks to its founder, Walter Lippmann. He became famous for his work *Public Opinion* (1922). With this, he established himself as a pioneer of state propaganda. Even before its publication, he helped President Woodrow Wilson lead the isolationist US into World War I through war propaganda. Lippmann coined phrases that were later adopted by Wilson, such as the famous slogan that the world should be made “safe for democracy.”

Let us not overlook the signs of the times: today, political and military voices are once again becoming acceptable in the West, openly calling for state propaganda to ensure the right mindset – neoliberalism is on its way from undeclared to hot war... One of its victims is liberal democracy. Neoliberalism as social Darwinist market totalitarianism is incompatible with the democratic and liberal values of the Enlightenment. The concept of freedom in neoliberalism means – take a look at the aforementioned toolbox of the neoliberals – the unrestricted freedom of the few at the expense of the freedom of the many, the freedom of the rich at the expense of the freedom of the poor, the freedom of the strong at the expense of the weak. For this freedom, the neoliberal elites are not only willing to wage wars—in which they send the poor to the killing fields to bleed to death while they hide in their nuclear-proof bunkers—they also turn it into a profitable business. They hold the power...

Where their social Darwinism, the right and freedom of the strongest, reign supreme, human rights and international law are in retreat and war crimes are accepted without hesitation. In its 50 years of existence, neoliberalism has led the Western world to a breakdown of civilization: violence before justice. And liberal democracy weeps bitterly...

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¹ Kant summarized the philosophical and ethical content of Western Judeo-Christian culture in the categorical imperative, one variant of which reads: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." The neoliberal commodification of human beings is incompatible with this.

² The fact that everything has a price is an indispensable prerequisite for the functioning of the neoliberal world machine. And the representatives of neoliberalism act as if this were already a reality today, which it is not. However, it cannot be overlooked that in pursuing this vision, neoliberalism is increasingly economizing and reifying more and more areas of human life: the economy of economics, love, family, crime, legislation, war...

³ Neoliberalism describes this state as a dynamic equilibrium in which no market subject can improve its situation... This tacitly assumes that complete competition always strives for equilibrium. This assumption is linked to the claim of neoliberal economics to be a value-free, objective natural science like classical physics.

⁴ "In fact, it turned out that the tank containing the dangerous substance MIC was a time bomb. The safety systems had either been dismantled or were never operational. The MIC tank was also overfilled.

Apparently, Union Carbide employees had not received proper safety training either. When the gas cloud escaped from the pressure relief valve, not even the alarm siren was activated to warn the population. 'The cause of the disaster was total neglect. Neglect everywhere. And we worked in such a dangerous plant.'" Source: Deutschlandfunk [2014].

⁵ This case is also representative of the pharmaceutical and agrochemical industries—sectors that knew about the harmful effects of their products but deliberately refused to withdraw them from the market for profit: OxyContin, Thalidomide, Vioxx, Contergan, Glyphosate/Roundup, and dioxin are just a few examples.

⁶ "The US judicial authorities accused the Airbus rival, among other things, of obstructing the government in its efforts to ensure public aviation safety by providing misleading information. The company was suspected of rushing its best-selling 737 Max model series onto the market and neglecting safety in favor of lower costs. A US congressional investigation committee had already concluded in March 2020 that a 'culture of concealment' prevailed at Boeing." Source: Tagesschau ARD (2021): "Billion-dollar fine for Boeing over 737 Max disaster," as of January 7, 2021, 11:31 p.m., source: <https://www.tagesschau.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/boeing-milliarden-strafe-737-max-101.html>, downloaded on January 7, 2022.

⁷ For more details, see Anker, H. 2025, "'Doomed to happiness' - neoliberalism as the Leviathan of our time cloaked in the mantle of freedom", as well as Anker, H., From the American Dream to the American Nightmare. How neoclassical economic liberalism is destroying people, society, and democracy. The example of the USA, novum, 2024.

⁸ For Lippmann, a humanist, it was not only socialism and National Socialism that were a problem, but also laissez-faire liberalism. Lippmann unreservedly stood for justice, freedom, equality, and brotherhood, while the neoliberals (ostensibly) placed freedom above everything else. Furthermore, contrary to neoliberal doctrine, he did not radically reject state intervention in the economic sphere.

⁹ One of Friedman's first major "achievements" under Nixon was probably the abolition of the US dollar's peg to the gold standard, which he pursued together with Paul Volcker and Arthur Burns. This so-called Nixon shock had an irreversible impact on the global economy. It remains one of the pillars of the US's hegemonic global economic power to this day.

¹⁰ Although paved by Nixon, Gibbs believes that the decisive political change took place under Democrat Jimmy Carter: liberalization of the financial sector, deregulation of industry, austerity programs at the expense of workers' living standards, reduction of union influence, and increased military spending. President Ronald Reagan accentuated the shift to the right that Nixon had initiated, but which the Democrats began to implement rigorously under Jimmy Carter (president from 1977 to 1981). In the US, economic productivity gains and wages rose in parallel from 1948 to 1980, after which the positive correlation between productivity gains and wages decoupled: According to Gibbs [2024, p. 2], the former rose significantly more (+64.6%) than the latter (+17.3%) between 1979 and 2021. With the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act in 1999, President Bill Clinton, another Democrat, opened the floodgates to financialization and thus to the deindustrialization of the US economy and, subsequently, of other prominent Western economies, including even the highly industrialized German economy. Clinton also contributed to the deindustrialization of the US by concluding the NAFTA agreement between the US, Mexico, and Canada. The outsourcing of many industries to Mexico put pressure on wages in the US – not to mention the appalling working and living conditions of workers in the sweat shops (maquiladoras) in Tijuana, which are mainly run by US companies – and traditional Mexican agriculture was ruined by US companies. The result: rural exodus of impoverished farmers, either to the maquiladoras – which provide cheap labor – or to increasingly uncontrollable cities where the drug mafia calls the shots, not the government.

¹¹ These instruments and measures are not a priori "good" or "bad" – there are circumstances in which their use may be appropriate. What distinguishes neoliberals, however, is that they understand and use these instruments ideologically: for them, there are no upper limits to privatization and deregulation, for them, every level of government spending is too high, every government intervention is one too many, i.e., a "sin"...

¹² Mausfeld is a psychologist by training.

¹³ The revolution from above is clearly continuing in Germany and even intensifying [Koch, 2025]: "The Federal Republic sees itself as a social market economy, a constitutional state, and a democracy. Its constitution obliges it to ensure equal living conditions and taxation according to ability to pay. But these promises are a mockery of our citizens' judgment—and not by accident. Behind the façade of regulatory rhetoric, a system has established itself that protects wealth, organizes redistribution to the top, and systematically undermines democratic influence."

¹⁴ Tanzi, Alexandre, Dorning, Mike [2021]: "After years of declines, America's middle class now holds a smaller share of U.S. wealth than the top 1%." The middle 60% of US households by income – a measure economists often use as a definition of the middle class – saw their combined assets drop to 26.6% of national wealth as of June, the lowest in Federal Reserve data going back three decades. For the first time, the super rich had a bigger share, at 27%. The data offer a window into the slow-motion erosion in the financial security of mid-tier earners that has fueled voters' discontent in recent years. That continued through the Covid-19 pandemic, despite trillions of dollars in government relief."

¹⁵ Mishel, Lawrence [2022]:

Productivity and pay once climbed together. But in recent decades, productivity and pay have diverged: Net productivity grew 59.7% from 1979–2019 while a typical worker's compensation grew by 15.8%, according to EPI data released ahead of Labor Day.

- If median hourly compensation had grown at the same rate as productivity over the 1979–2019 period, the median worker would be making \$9.00 more per hour.
- This divergence has been primarily driven by intentional policy choices creating rising inequality: both the top 10% and especially the top 1% and top 0.1% gained a much larger share of all compensation, and labor's share of income eroded.
- Public policies that restore worker power and balance in the labor market can provide robust, widely shared wage growth.

According to this EPI blog, these shifts are primarily attributable to economic policy. A 2018 OECD paper, on the other hand, sees technological development and economic globalization as the driving forces: Schwellnus, Cyrille et al. "Labour share developments over the past two decades: The role of technological progress, globalization, and winner-takes-most," in: Economics Department Working Papers No. 1503, ECO/WKP(2018)5, September 13, 2018, source: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/3eb9f9ed-en>, downloaded on March 18, 2022.

¹⁶ Studies on depression in developed countries show a similar trend, with adults experiencing behavioral problems such as crime, alcohol, and drug abuse.

¹⁷ Accordingly, status consumption, i.e., the demand for goods and services that serve to display and enhance one's status, is constantly increasing. While men continue to upgrade to ever larger cars with more horsepower, women are resorting to dieting to the point of anorexia in order to conform to media-propagated ideals of masculinity and femininity. And for those who are unsuccessful and fall victim to this war for status and attention, the pharmaceutical industry provides a wide range of psychotropic drugs and cosmetic surgery offers increasingly complex and sophisticated beauty treatments... Contrary to what it constantly suggests, the neoliberal economy does not make us happy: if people were satisfied with themselves and their lives, its markets and profits would collapse. Its business model is based on dissatisfaction, frustration, unhappiness, fear of losing face, dignity and self-worth. From this perspective, too, the neoliberal economic world is waging a war against people – it grabs them by their most existential fears.

¹⁸ In the simple sentence "The I only becomes I through the You!", Martin Buber summed it up in a formula whose conciseness cannot be surpassed, not only philosophically but also in terms of developmental psychology. It has the same significance on the individual level as Kant's categorical imperative on the social level.

¹⁹ Source:

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%B6tungsrate_nach_L%C3%A4ndern#Liste_der_T%C3%B6tungsrate_nach_L%C3%A4ndern, downloaded on March 27, 2022.

²⁰ Statista Research Dept. (2022): "Mass shootings in the U.S. 1982–2022," published by Statista Research Department, July 14, 2022. "As of July 4, there were seven mass shootings in the United States in 2022. This is compared to one mass shooting in 1982, one in 2000, and 12 mass shootings in 2018. School shootings issues: The United States sees the most school shootings in the world. Some motivations for school shootings included depression, seeking revenge, and bullying. As a result of the large amount of school shootings, gun control has become a central topic in U.S. politics. This widespread problem happens across the United States; however, California saw the highest number of K-12 school shootings in the United States since 1970. However, the deadliest school shooting (as of May 2022) was the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007. This tragedy left 33 dead and 17 injured. Mass shooting issues: Mass shootings happen when there are several injuries or deaths from firearm-related violence. Throughout the last century, mass shootings have become an epidemic in the United States. However, despite the increase in mass shootings and number of casualties, the U.S. government

has done little to prevent future shootings from happening. As a result of the lack of cooperation in politics, mass shootings have become the most common political issue that Generation Z is stressed about as of 2018. Furthermore, the right to bear arms is a popular belief in the U.S., although the percentage of households in the United States owning at least one firearm has remained somewhat steady since 1972. Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/811487/number-of-mass-shootings-in-the-us/>, downloaded on August 4, 2022.

²¹ "The increase in mental health issues and suicides among teenagers in the US is puzzling experts. The pandemic and social media are amplifying the problem, but they are not enough to explain it," Signer, David (2022): "Anxiety and hopelessness are rampant among young Americans," in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 08.08.2022, Source: <https://www.nzz.ch/international/usa-jugendliche-leiden-vermehrt-unter-psychischen-problemen-ld.1688304?mktcid=sms&mktcval=E-mailhttps%3A%2F%2Fwww.nzz.ch>, downloaded on August 10, 2022.

²² Keyword: "social security." A new WHO study points out that loneliness makes people ill: "One in six people worldwide is affected by loneliness. (...) Loneliness and social isolation make people physically ill, contributing to 871,000 deaths worldwide every year. Loneliness increases the risk of stroke, heart attack, diabetes, depression, anxiety, and suicide, among other things." Deutsches Ärzteblatt [2025].

²³ Without going into further detail here, German social democracy since Chancellor Schröder has argued using the image of the purely self-serving, lazy person, which found expression not least in Hartz IV. This view of human nature also underlies various social policy measures of the current CDU/CSU and SPD coalition government. See note 12.