

I think Will Milberg has framed well what the moment requires of us, and the importance of the topic that we will be discussing in this convening. The idea here is, of course, to revisit some of the evidence, and there is a lot of evidence, on the role different economic policies had on the rise of authoritarianism.

In the Global North, there is vast evidence of the importance of globalization and trade, in particular, for what we are seeing in terms of backlash, both from the ethno-nationalist perspective and the far-right and authoritarian platforms in Europe and in the US. But when you look at the Global South, the situation is not necessarily the same. Of course, globalization plays a role there as well and de-industrialization is happening in many parts of the Global South. But we can see a bit of nuance when we think about the role globalization played in countries like Brazil, which benefited from Chinese growth and commodity prices in the 2000s. Nonetheless, we still saw democratic backlash.

This starts to raise some questions around what exactly are the economic policies that haven't delivered and have created fertile ground for these authoritarians in different parts of the world. Maybe there are different roles that have been played by different policies.

By bringing researchers from different parts of the world to this conference, this is one of the first questions that we will try to answer. Of course, there is also evidence of the role of fiscal austerity and labor deregulation. In those cases, we may be able to see more common ground in different countries.

The second aspect that I would like to call attention to is the issue of neo-illiberalism, especially in economic policy. It is true that in this recent wave of authoritarian regimes, we have not had a comprehensive assessment of the economic policies such regimes have been using. Going back to Brazil, Bolsonaro's regime was a combination of authoritarianism and moral conservatism with market fundamentalism. So many would argue

that economically it was a very neo-illiberal government. Yet the policies implemented by Bolsonaro's government were actually even more radical neoliberal policies than what the country had seen in the past 20 years.

Brazil's combination of authoritarian politics and neoliberal economics is not necessarily what we have seen in other contexts where there has been a combination of illiberalism and an anti-systemic type of economic policies. And so, the question again emerges: as we try to move to another economic paradigm that can simultaneously deliver benefits to citizens and create the conditions for democracies to thrive, how do we assess the capacity of these governments to deliver?

As The Open Society Foundations' Global Director of Equity, I have been part of this conversation since the beginning, and we are proud to co-host and fund this event together with the Hewlett Foundation. I studied at The New School and graduated with a PhD in economics in 2012, so it is a very special occasion for me and it is great to have so many OSF colleagues and some of my former New School professors in the room.

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