

In the coming decades, the new social and global orders will have to confront the emergency situation created by global warming. These issues lie beyond the limits of the present study, whose focus is on the crisis. Stronger government intervention and international cooperation will also be required in these respects that add to the necessity of the establishment of renewed configurations beyond the wild dynamics of neoliberal capitalism.

Abstracting from the updating of some of the series, the last changes to the present text were made in October 2009, and there is obviously more to come. It would be unrealistic, however, to expect a final outcome in the near future. The book covers the causes of the crisis, its outbreak, and the first phase of the contraction of output around the globe, as well as the perspectives for the coming decades. The viewpoint is analytical, not normative.

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The Strategy of the U.S. Upper Classes in Neoliberalism: The Success and Failure of a Bold Endeavor

Two very distinct categories of phenomena are involved in the analysis of the contemporary crisis: the historical dynamics of capitalism, on the one hand, and financial and macro mechanisms, on the other hand. The interpretation of the crisis lies at the intersection of these two sets of processes, and the difficulty is to do justice to both and account for their reciprocal relationships.

Neoliberalism should be understood as a new phase in the evolution of capitalism. As such, it can be

described intrinsically—its basic mechanisms and contradictions. The reference to a most recent phase raises, however, the issue of previous phases. The comparison with earlier periods reveals the traits proper to the new period. The analysis of the social, political, and economic trends that led to the establishment of neoliberalism is also telling of the nature and fate of this social order. Symmetrically, the notion of a crisis of neoliberalism implies a possible transition to a new phase, and the nature of the society that will prevail in the wake of the contemporary crisis is a major component of the investigation here.

Thus, some preliminary questions must be answered. What is a phase of capitalism? How are such phases established? How do they disappear? What are the specific features of neoliberalism as such? The goal of the first chapter is to interpret the rise and fall of neoliberalism under U.S. world hegemony in the broader context of the historical dynamics of capitalism. The proper financial crisis and, later, the sharp contraction of output in the United States and around the globe define a second set of issues. There are two important facets of these mechanisms. One relates to

