Preface

Political authoritarianism is back. Perhaps it never went away, but was merely hiding backstage. Its proliferation – like a pandemic, one is tempted to say – is puzzling. Why do people succumb to the authoritarian temptation? What are the social and economic conditions, and the psychological preconditions or other drivers of its apparent success? Is democracy in crisis – or even dying, as some authors would have it – and playing into the hands of despots? In this book, I will not be able to answer all of these – very troubling – questions in adequate detail, let alone analyse in depth the authoritarianism that has accompanied the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, I will touch on some crucial aspects and concentrate on developing a critical analytics of authoritarianism (what are the main characteristics of autocracies?) and examining why authoritarian regimes invariably have constitutions (what do constitutions ‘do’ for autocracies?).

Authoritarian constitutionalism was previously discussed, in a collective effort, in a comparative study.¹ I am greatly indebted to the authors who helped me to develop my ideas, especially to co-editor Helena Alviar García, Roberto Gargarella, Duncan Kennedy, Maximilian Pichl, Norman Spaulding, Nimer Sultany and Mike Wilkinson. I must thank Klaus Günther for urging me to turn my article into a book: *Autoritarismus – Verfassungstheoretische Perspektiven*, published by Suhrkamp in 2020.² The translated, revised and updated version is presented here. Its production again was not a solitary undertaking, but was supported by another collective effort: thanks are due to Michele Graziadei, David Kennedy, Hans Lindahl, Giuseppe Mastruzzo, Horatia Muir Watt and Fernanda Nicola, who read and commented on some of the chapters. Fernanda Nicola, Alvaro Santos, Mahendra P. Singh, Hans Vorländer and Peer Zumbansen generously invited me to their seminars and workshops, and gave me the invaluable opportunity to ‘test run’ some of my ideas – and were generous in their helpful comments and criticisms. The

¹ Alviar García, H. and Frankenberg, G. (eds) (2019), *Authoritarian Constitutionalism. Comparative Analysis and Critique* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing).

² Frankenberg, G. (2020), *Autoritarismus. Verfassungstheoretische Perspektiven* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).

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