

Marxism

COLLECTED DOCUMENT

STARTING POINT OF ANALYZING SOCIETY:

Marx studied society scientifically— looking at it as if it's a body, having different parts and functions but working together to form a “society”, or even more so, human history (like the sun of all the societies throughout history).

He goes off the basis of what's called “historical materialism”... meaning that the first and foremost concern is the physical existence of an individual human being. So this means the human first worries about what to eat, drink, shelter, and probably community too—since we humans are community-creatures also because it helps us survive. So it's a survival thing that drives us.

Going off of this, he then says that every society that has been formed essentially has some sort of system in place that somehow attains this materialistic need—food, shelter, clothing etc.

With this I want to add that these resources require a way of producing them—so like land is required to produce crops. Land also allows for producing houses via lumber. These things are called “means of production”. (1)* *<-important (see below)*

Land is one of the major central ones.

You also need a division of labour in order to have a society work together to be able to produce the necessary things like food.

In studying history (that's like the empirical “data” we have for social science), we can see that throughout history there were different (economic) systems by which people produced their necessities.

There are three main systems in human history that we can see:

Slavery was the earlier system... so humans naturally created this system in which the labour that nobody wants to do is forced upon a group of people that are considered lower class—slaves. They work the fields in order to produce but they don't own the land or

anything. The “managers” who involve in more “intellectual” work—managing, organizing and running the system are the ones who own all the resources and create the rules and regulations to run the system. These are your early day monarchs. And this was the hierarchy.

Around the medieval ages in Europe, we see a new system develop—feudalism. No longer were there “slaves” in the traditional sense as they were not property to any monarch. But these serfs, they were slaves in the sense that they worked for some owner of the land—the lord— who essentially could do as he pleased as it was his land. If you don’t like it, you can leave... but where are you, a lonely peasant, going to go? Every bit of land is owned by some lord. And you need to eat so you don’t have much of a choice except to abide but the rules of the lord for who you work for.

In the 1750-1800’s we come to the industrial revolution. Now it’s essentially a new kind of slavery— dubbed “wage slavery”. Now the means of production has shifted into companies— where one wealthy man owns the resources that is necessary for a society. He doesn’t own any person, but again, as a worker who needs to eat, you are required to work for some capitalist in order to feed yourself. This capitalist can again dictate the rules of his company... he sets the price that he will pay you, if you don’t like it leave... but you’ll just end up working for another capitalist. (We’re still in the 1800’s so don’t relate it too much to 2022 just yet although hey share similarities ofc).

These capitalist— a small class of people—own the necessities to run a society—material for infrastructure, energy sources (oil, lumber, natural gas etc.), land, etc.

Because they have these necessary resources they essentially run the town, which I’ll explain in a sec.

WHY/ HOW SYSTEMS CHANGE:

These systems evolve based on the idea that overtime, our productive forces evolve—that is our technology. So again, it is the material that guides how a society will be organized. For example, the transition between the feudal system and capitalism is that with the growing interest in exploration that we see around 1400-1600’s (Columbus, Vasco da Gama, that hernando fella in South America...) gave rise to a new class of people—merchants. People who can now acquire wealth based on material they get and sell. By the time we reach the 1750 (start of industrial revolution in England) we see merchants that acquire enough wealth that can now be used as Capital—the ability to purchase resources in order to produce a more of whatever they are producing.

So in other words, Revolution and epoch change (war, social upheaval etc.) is understood as the consequence of an economic structure no longer being able to continue to develop the forces of production... and so it is eventually replaced with an economic structure better suited to preside over the continued development of the forces of production.

Examples:

Also, for example, as dark as this seems, slavery wasn't abolished because people realized "oh this is immoral" but because this system is no longer convenient—it doesn't produce as much as the new capitalist system... this is especially evident in the American Revolution... the defeat of the south is because their slave economy was weaker than the North's industrial economy. This is one example, I'll provide more, of how our conscious thought is based not on some enlightened idea of the immorality of slavery... but because of economics.)—this was 1850's (America was a little late in the game)

(We see this also in the French Revolution in 1790's—the monarchy being replaced for its lack being able to satisfy even the minimum needs of their people;

(Russia is another example, being even later than America—overthrowing the monarchs with the Russian revolution in 1917— but they jumped straight to attempting to forcefully install Marxist ideas, skipping over capitalism—and hence they lived in tyranny and poverty and ultimately failed... now they're really behind).

So like every other system, if there comes a point when capitalism begins to fail to develop the productive forces it would disappear.

(Productive forces = technology)

MODE OF PRODUCTION:

which includes the productive forces (machinery, tools and equipment, resources, labor) and relations of production (meant the sum total of social relationships that people *must* enter into in order to survive, to produce, and to reproduce their means of life).

BIG POINT:

Marxism assumes that the form of economic organisation, or mode of production, influences all other social phenomena, including broader social relations, political

institutions, legal systems, cultural systems, aesthetics and ideologies. These social relations and the economic system form a base and superstructure.

In other words: — materialistic principles (so the economic system) forms the society we experience (political system, laws, ideologies, forms of entertainment, attitudes in culture etc.)

The economic system creates these naturally and they are created in such a way as to support the current system thereby bringing some “stability” to a society.!

ON THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM :

Note 1:

EXPLOITATION:

All the systems presented- slavery, feudalism and capitalism, are forms of “slavery” because they all partake in exploitation.

Regarding capitalism, an example of this is:

Suppose I work eight hours to earn my wages. With this perhaps the best thing I can buy is a coat. But imagine that the coat took only a total of four hours to make. Therefore I have exchanged my eight hours work for only four hours of other people’s work, and thereby, on this view, I am exploited.

(Based on theory of labor)

In fact the essence of Capitalism is that it involves not merely the exchange of commodities, but the advancement of capital, in the form of money, with the purpose of generating profit through the purchase of commodities and their transformation into other commodities which can command a higher price, and thus yield a profit. Marx claims that no previous theorist has been able adequately to explain how capitalism as a whole can make a profit. Marx’s own solution relies on the idea of exploitation of the worker.

(Surplus value theory of profit):

labour power is the only commodity which can produce more value than it is worth, and for this reason it is known as variable capital.

Note 2:

ON CLASS STRUGGLE/CONFLICT:

This is an important point in the theory. It's a description of the fact that there exists a division in class, that there is always tensions between them.

Ways that this conflict is expressed can be through direct or indirect ways.

For example, trade unions and labor protests are an expression of the workers (working class) unhappiness to their conditions—unsafe working conditions, low wages, high working hours, unfair-layoffs etc. (*these are such things that lead to “Alienation” described below this section).

We see a rise in these labor movements and protests in the early 1900's in America and worldwide.

We see many changes as a result. Firstly, a major chunk of the world's poor countries took up Marxist ideas and became revolutionary communists... starting with Russia (as Marx himself predicted!).

But socialist ideas were being pushed in the United States as well.

New ideas began turning into laws that care for the well-being of the worker—things like:

- a minimum age requirement that allows children to work
- the max number of hours a worker is required to work until overtime becomes voluntary
- minimum wage that's required
- healthcare being covered by employers
- if a worker is injured at the job, he can't be fired because he is not useless...there requires some legality
- safety in the workplace

All these things are not in favor to the capitalist. He doesn't want to have to pay any money to cover your healthcare, or if you broke your arm and can't work hence you're not useful to him. But because of protests, and a call for change in laws and conditions... now the law requires it.

These things emerged as “wins” for the lower class.

Furthermore, new associations began forming... for example the FDA, which checks that meat companies don't mix garbage with the meat.

Regarding the base and superstructure that was mentioned earlier, a great example of this is feminism.

Feminism emerged around the 1920's—around the same time the labor movement was heated— it emerged as a result of the capitalist system... because the capitalist in retaliation to the men who no longer wanted to work under poor conditions, figured that

they could exploit women as you can pay them less. Women were in agreement with this as this was a step towards their liberation—a step in being allowed to work and receive pay, thereby being independent on their man. So ideas of a women being equal to the man socially and legally as we all agree today is a good example of how the economic system shapes ideologies of a society in order to reinforce itself.

Even more so however, the idea of globalization also emerged alongside capitalism. When we see how everything is made in China—this is because it's no longer convenient for the capitalist to exploit Americans (because higher minimum wages and better conditions) but the Chinese—being a poor country—are ready to work for pennies, as this will help with their poverty.

The forms of class conflict include direct violence such as wars for resources and cheap labor, assassinations or revolution; indirect violence such as deaths from poverty and starvation, illness and unsafe working conditions; and economic coercion such as the threat of unemployment or the withdrawal of investment capital; or ideologically, by way of political literature. Additionally, political forms of class warfare include: legal and illegal lobbying, and bribery of legislators.

Note: a truly pure capitalist system is that of the illegal drug markets... where the market is truly and fully free. What we see in there is violence, a monopoly, and corruption. This is pure capitalism.

Our society despite standing on capitalist principles of “free markets” have some amount of regulations (which I personally, for simplicity, classify as socialist “wins”). The amount of regulations however fluctuates, and this can be analyzed further* (see Modern day).

PROBLEMS WITH CAPITALISM:

There's no doubt that regarding production, capitalism has been extremely successful in its materialistic accomplishments.

Marx describes the problems with capitalism.
One main problem is called: Alienation.

Alienation:

Aliénation means when two objects that are meant to be together are separated.

In Marxist theory, we are talking about how the worker becomes alienated from his labour and his community.

Four dimensions of alienated labour in contemporary capitalist society:

1. immediate producers are separated from the product of their labour; they create a product that they neither own nor control, indeed, which comes to dominate them.
2. immediate producers are separated from their productive activity; in particular, they are forced to work in ways which are mentally and/or physically debilitating.
3. immediate producers are separated from other individuals; contemporary economic relations socialise individuals to view others as merely means to their own particular ends.
4. immediate producers are separated from their own human nature; for instance, the human capacities for community and for free, conscious, and creative, work, are both frustrated by contemporary capitalist relations.

Marx's condemnation of contemporary economic arrangements and their transformation of workers into deformed and "dehumanised" beings — who's primary purpose of existence is to be a slave — specializing in a detailed task to keep the corporation and the economics going.

Productive activity, on Marx's account, is a central element in what it is to be a human being, and self-realisation through work is a vital component of human flourishing.

So a central criticism of capitalism that aside from material needs, there are also the social needs. And while capitalism has been excellent in producing the former, the latter is still a problem.

Human Flourishing:

To provide for 'human flourishing', a society must satisfy not only basic needs (for sustenance, warmth and shelter, certain climatic conditions, physical exercise, basic hygiene, procreation and sexual activity), but also less basic needs, both those that are not always appreciated to be part of his account (for recreation, culture, intellectual stimulation, artistic expression, emotional satisfaction, and aesthetic pleasure), and those that Marx is more often associated with (for fulfilling work and meaningful community)

MORALITY:

Marx claims that the role of both the superstructure and ideology is to stabilise the economic structure. Consequently, to state that something is just under capitalism is simply a judgement that it will tend to have the effect of advancing capitalism. According to Marx, in any society the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class; the core of the theory of ideology.

The theory of ideology appears to play a role in explaining a feature of class-divided societies which might otherwise appear puzzling, namely what might be called their “stability”; that is, the absence of overt and serious conflict between social classes. This stability is not permanent, but it can last for extended historical periods. This stability appears puzzling to Marx because class-divided societies are flawed in ways which not only frustrate human flourishing, but also work to the material advantage of the ruling minority. Why do the subordinate classes, who form a majority, tolerate these flaws, when resistance and rebellion of various kinds might be in their objective interests?

Very roughly, Marx’s account of ideology claims that the dominant social ideas in such societies are typically false or misleading in a fashion that works to the advantage of the economically dominant class.

Other factors might include: dull economic pressure, including the daily grind of having to earn a living; doubts—justified or otherwise—about the feasibility of alternatives; sensitivity to the possible costs of radical social change; and collective action problems of various kinds which face those who do want to rebel and resist.

For Marx ideological beliefs are social in that they are widely shared, indeed so widely-shared that for long periods they constitute the “ruling” or “dominant” ideas in a given class-divided society (MECW 5: 59). And they are social in that they directly concern, or indirectly impact upon, the action-guiding understandings of self and society that individuals have. These action-guiding understandings include the dominant legal, political, religious, and philosophical views within particular class-divided societies in periods of stability

ideology often portrays institutions, policies, and decisions which are in the interests of the economically dominant class, as being in the interests of the society as a whole (MECW 5: 60); and ideology often portrays social and political arrangements which are contingent, or historical, or artificial, as being necessary, or universal, or natural (MECW

35: 605)

All sorts of ideas might get generated for all sorts of reasons, but the ones that tend to “stick” (become widely accepted) in class-divided societies do so, not because of their truth, but because they conceal or misrepresent or justify flaws in that society in ways which redound to the benefit of the economically dominant class

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MODERN DAY

My own impression is that there's many similarities between the late 1800s-early 1900s with the major trusts, developments of major cities through new available resources (ex: steel), emerging financial markets (stock market which eventually grew too high leading to the crash in '29)

In the last 50 years, emergence of new technology—internet and computers, allowed for new billionaire to emerge with immense wealth — if you analyze corporations, you'll see a trend towards monopolizing world wide; this include transnational banks, media <examples from manufacturing consent, chomsky>

- problem with drugs
- problem with identity
- rising inequality
- longer hours less pay
- higher insurance premiums

These are all sub-problems emerging in our current system.

Moreover problems of over-producing and climate change are a result of excessive capitalist production.

*(2): When I said earlier how “the amount of regulations on big business fluctuates”— I was referring to the fact that if you analyze certain aspects in the past 60 years, you will see some trends towards corporations taking more power.

This is clear when you see modern day when major corporations merge essentially forming monopolies—for example Facebook which owns Instagram, What’sApp, Oculus (and they have a whole slew of other companies). We see these occurring with financial companies —transnational banks, insurance companies, and media corporations too.

(See: <https://youtu.be/34LGPIXvU5M>
<https://youtu.be/tTBWfkE7BXU>
)

So the conflict between classes is still continuing today.

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While there were bad things about capitalism, there is, from a world historical point of view, much good about it too. For without capitalism, communism would not be possible. Capitalism is to be transcended, not abolished.

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HOW COMMUNISM WOULD LOOK LIKE:

Justice:

Marx’s attitude to communism and justice there are really only two viable possibilities: either he thought that communism would be a just society or he thought that the concept of justice would not apply: that communism would transcend justice.

The philosopher Hume argued that if there was enormous material abundance—if everyone could have whatever they wanted without invading another’s share—we would never have devised rules of justice. And, of course, there are suggestions in Marx’s

writings that communism would be a society of such abundance. But Hume also suggested that justice would not be needed in other circumstances; if there were complete fellow-feeling between all human beings, there would be no conflict and no need for justice. In any case, the idea that living well, goes hand-in-hand with ethics, is a reasonable argument to make, and hence is favorable given a society with 1) enough material abundance and 2) concerns itself with the individuals social wellbeing (i.e. human flourishing).

Imagine that a democratic communist polity introduces a new law prohibiting smoking in public places, and that a representative smoker (call her Anne) obeys that law despite being among the minority who wanted this practice permitted. Anne's motivation for obedience, we can stipulate, is grounded, not in fear of the likely response of bodies of armed persons enforcing the law, but rather in respect for the democratic majority of the community of which she is a part.

Government:

His preferred future political arrangements involve a high degree of participation, and the radical "de-professionalisation" of certain public offices. First, Marx is enthusiastic about regular elections, universal suffrage, mandat impératif, recall, open executive proceedings, decentralisation, and so on. Second, he objects to public offices (in the legislature, executive, and judiciary) being the spoils of a political caste, and sought to make them working positions, remunerated at the average worker's wage, and regularly circulating (through election). This combination of arrangements has been characterised as "democracy without professionals" (Hunt 1974: 365). Marx saw it as reflecting his view that:

Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it. (MECW 24: 94)

Global Order: (my notes)

The results of more globalized world and eventually countries should disappear—we already see a tiny bit of this with the European Union, where borders matter less than ever before.

Moreover, an international body (like the United Nations) would be important in maintaining an order and peace worldwide .

FINAL NOTE:

Given that the basic structure of the future socialist society develops automatically (without design assistance) within capitalist society; and that the role of human agency in this unfolding historical process is to deliver (not design) that basic structure.

Marx doesn't view capitalism as separate to communism. It is a necessary step in human history. But he predicts, with the reasoning described in his works, that slowly more social ideas will begin to work in a society, eventually leading to socialism and then finally communism—an era that transcends capitalist modes of production. And he views it not as an idealist theory, but based on economic principles.

“Socialism is not an inevitability but an economic necessity”.

END.

PART OF MAIN TEXT (References):

(1)* **mode of production** (German: *Produktionsweise*, "the way of producing") is a specific combination of the:

- [Productive forces](#): these include human labour power and means of production (tools, machinery, factory buildings, infrastructure, technical knowledge, raw materials, plants, animals, exploitable land).
- Social and technical relations of production: these include the property, power and control relations (legal code) governing the means of production of society, cooperative work associations, relations between people and the objects of their work, and the relations among the social classes.

(3) :

In 1907, following a corporate corruption scandal involving prior presidential

campaigns, Congress passed a law banning corporate involvement in federal election campaigns. That wall held firm for 70 years.

The first crack came in a case that involved neither candidate elections nor federal law. In 1978 a sharply divided Supreme Court ruled for the first time that corporations have a First Amendment right to spend money on state ballot initiatives.

Still, for decades, candidate elections remained free of direct corporate influence under federal law. Only money from individuals and groups of individuals — political action committees — were permitted in federal elections.

Then came Citizens United, the Supreme Court's 5-4 First Amendment decision in 2010 that extended to corporations for the first time full rights to spend money as they wish in candidate elections — federal, state and local. The decision reversed a century of legal understanding, unleashed a flood of campaign cash and created a crescendo of controversy that continues to build today.

Note:

Technological growth and human liberation go hand in hand, as Marx views it.

FURTHER NOTES:

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My impression of a possible view you may have:

Many non-Marxian socialists appealed to universal ideas of truth and justice to defend their proposed schemes, and their theory of transition was based on the idea that appealing to moral sensibilities would be the best, perhaps only, way of bringing about the new chosen society. Marx wanted to distance himself from these other socialist traditions, and a key point of distinction was to argue that the route to understanding the possibilities of human emancipation lay in the analysis of historical and social forces, not in morality. Hence, for Marx, any appeal to morality was theoretically a backward step.

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If you agree with the statement (which I think you do): that there is a sort of evolving consciousness in human society overtime (this ought to especially be obvious given the fact that we gain more information and knowledge, especially nowadays with science), then you shouldn't have a problem with the conclusion that:

It's the conscious realization by the members of a society that:

we must acknowledge our communal existence in our institutions—we are all mutually dependent on the vast network of social and economic relations.

As a result, we should eventually come to a point where people have a high conscious understanding that their actions and attitudes will effect the course of society. And the choices people make will be less “selfish” (in the direct sense) because we will understand that such selfishness will give an outcome of an unhealthy, difficult, and unpleasant society to exist in (it is indirectly selfish because we still are concerned with our well being first and foremost)*

*as an example; I have the opportunity to steal your laptop without being caught but I won't, as I understand that next time an opportunity may arise where you will have a chance to steal my laptop, and I don't want to live in such a society

Another case, less idealistic is that there won't be a need to steal a laptop as there will be a sufficient amount of laptops available to satisfy your need of a laptop

(I believe Marx called this like consciousness something...)

PERSONAL NOTE:

Aside from the fact that I can't find another whole-theory that explains the evolution of society in such a pretty detailed way (I admit there are some holes and questions it is still the best formulated explanation of how society/human history evolves and functions), a personal reason why I like this theory is that it is described by economics—which is heavily mathematical... and as a physicist, math is the language that nature speaks in... one can calculate where a projectile will land based on some initial conditions and mathematical relationships... similarly we ought to be able to calculate how human history unfolded based on some formulas (albeit these are much more difficult to create since we live in history, there are many lies in history, there is sooooo much data, and we lose some history as well... not to mention the extreme number of variables)

==== side notes: ====

Marxism Pt 1:

ALIENATION & HUMAN FLOURISHING

ALIÉNATION

—def: alienation consists of dysfunctional separations—separations between entities that properly belong together

2 aspects of alienation

1. Alienated Labour
2. Need for humans to assert their communal existence

i.e.

we must, somehow or other, acknowledge our communal existence in our institutions—we are all mutually dependent on the vast network of social and economic relations

four dimensions of alienated labour in contemporary capitalist society:

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2. immediate producers are separated from their productive activity; in particular, they are forced to work in ways which are mentally and/or physically debilitating.
3. immediate producers are separated from other individuals; contemporary economic relations socialise individuals to view others as merely means to their own particular ends.
4. immediate producers are separated from their own human nature; for instance, the human

capacities for community and for free, conscious, and creative, work, are both frustrated by contemporary capitalist relations.

productive activity, on Marx's account, is a central element in what it is to be a human being, and self-realisation through work is a vital component of human flourishing

Marx's condemnation of contemporary economic arrangements and their transformation of workers into deformed and "dehumanised" beings

Imagine a theorist who held that human beings were solitary, egoistic creatures, by nature. (Marx viewed the opposite). That theorist could accept that work in capitalist society encouraged isolation and selfishness, but deny that such results were alienating, because those results would not frustrate their baseline account of what it is to be a human being (indeed, they would rather facilitate those characteristics).

His disapproval of capitalism is reserved for its social arrangements and not its material accomplishments.

Technological growth and human liberation go hand in hand, as Marx views it.

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Question:

many struggle to see how the kind of large-scale industrial production that would presumably characterise communist society—communism purportedly being more productive than capitalism—would avoid alienation in work

My Thought:

Equal division of labour. I.e. individuals will share scientific (intellectual) and physical labour (although much physical labour will also be aided by technological advances). In any case, some of the more tedious work will be averagely distributed

Political & Human Emancipation

Question:

Marx never tells us what human emancipation is, although it is clear that it is closely related to the ideas of non-alienated labour and meaningful community.

My thoughts:

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Marx explicitly affirms that human nature has both constant and mutable elements; that human beings are characterised by universal qualities, constant across history and culture, and variable qualities, reflecting historical and cultural diversity

To provide for 'human flourishing', a society must satisfy not only basic needs (for sustenance, warmth and shelter, certain climatic conditions, physical exercise, basic hygiene, procreation and sexual activity), but also less basic needs, both those that are not always appreciated to be part of his account (for recreation, culture, intellectual stimulation, artistic expression, emotional satisfaction, and aesthetic pleasure), and those that Marx is more often associated with (for fulfilling work and meaningful community)

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THEORY OF HISTORY

Materialism is complimented for understanding the physical reality of the world, but is criticised for ignoring the active role of the human subject in creating the world we perceive. Idealism, at least as

developed by Hegel, understands the active nature of the human subject, but confines it to thought or contemplation: the world is created through the categories we impose upon it. Marx combines the insights of both traditions to propose a view in which human beings do indeed create—or at least transform—the world they find themselves in, but this transformation happens not in thought but through actual material activity; not through the imposition of sublime concepts but through the sweat of their brow, with picks and shovels. This historical version of materialism, which, according to Marx, transcends and thus rejects all existing philosophical thought, is the foundation of Marx's later theory of history. As Marx puts it in the "1844 Manuscripts", "Industry is the actual historical relationship of nature ... to man"

In *German ideology* (1843), Marx and Engels start, they say, from "real human beings", emphasising that human beings are essentially productive, in that they must produce their means of subsistence in order to satisfy their material needs. The satisfaction of needs engenders new needs of both a material and social kind, and forms of society arise corresponding to the state of development of human productive forces. Material life determines, or at least "conditions" social life, and so the primary direction of social explanation is from material production to social forms, and thence to forms of consciousness. As the material means of production develop, "modes of co-operation" or economic structures rise and fall, and eventually communism will become a real possibility once the plight of the workers and their awareness of an alternative motivates them sufficiently to become revolutionaries.

Developmental Thesis (G.A. Cohen) This is the thesis that the productive forces tend to develop, in the sense of becoming more powerful, over time. The productive forces are the means of production, together with productively applicable knowledge: technology, in other words. The development thesis states not that the productive forces always do develop, but that there is a tendency for them to do so. The next thesis is the primacy thesis, which has two aspects. The first states that the nature of a society's economic structure is explained by the level of development of its productive forces, and the second that the nature of the superstructure—the political and legal institutions of society—is explained by the nature of the economic structure.

[i.e economic base and superstructure]

Revolution and epoch change is understood as the consequence of an economic structure no longer being able to continue to develop the forces of production... and eventually replaced with an economic structure better suited to preside over the continued development of the forces of production.

the economic structure, such as capitalism, does indeed develop the productive forces, but to add that this, according to the theory, is precisely why we have capitalism (when we do). That is, if capitalism

failed to develop the productive forces it would disappear. And, indeed, this fits beautifully with historical materialism. For Marx asserts that when an economic structure fails to develop the productive forces—when it “fetters” the productive forces—it will be revolutionised and the epoch will change

Fettering: shackle/ restrict

When an economic system becomes dysfunctional, fettering occurred

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Question:

The problem is that we can ask what it is that makes it the case that an economic structure will only persist for as long as it develops the productive forces

My thoughts:

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Hegelian origins of Marxist thought. Hegel believed in a hidden mind at work in the universe, and that the history of the world is simply the history of this world mind, which, as in the case of everything spiritual, tends indefinitely towards perfection. Marx claimed to “put back on its feet” the Hegelian dialectic, which he accused of being “upside down”, by substituting matter for mind as the motive power of history

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ECONOMICS

Labour Theory Value :

A commodity is defined as a useful external object, produced for exchange on a market. Thus, two necessary conditions for commodity production are: the existence of a market, in which exchange can take place; and a social division of labour, in which different people produce different products, without which there would be no motivation for exchange.

Commodities have:

Use value

Exchange value (I.e price)

With the latter, Why does a quantity of one commodity exchange for a given quantity of another commodity? His explanation is in terms of the labour input required to produce the commodity, or rather, the socially necessary labour, which is labour exerted at the average level of intensity and productivity for that branch of activity within the economy. Thus the labour theory of value asserts that the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of socially necessary labour time required to produce it.

As commodities can be exchanged against each other, there must, Marx argues, be a third thing that they have in common. This then motivates the second stage, which is a search for the appropriate “third thing”, which is labour in Marx’s view, as the only plausible common element.

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My example:

If there exists commodities apples and oranges, the exchange would be, say, 5 oranges for 1 apple... this is because it’s harder to produce apples than oranges (as an example). I.e value of labour is what determines this ratio.

(I suppose if one argues that it’s economic conditions that determine value, for example bad weather for apples hence fewer apples therefore 5 oranges for 1 apple, but it still relates back to labour value because obtaining the apple due to bad weather conditions still requires more labour (energy) than oranges. I.e it still boils down to labour)

Capitalism can be distinguished from other forms of commodity exchange, Marx argues, in that it involves not merely the exchange of commodities, but the advancement of capital, in the form of money, with the purpose of generating profit through the purchase of commodities and their transformation into other commodities which can command a higher price, and thus yield a profit. Marx claims that no previous theorist has been able adequately to explain how capitalism as a whole can make a profit. Marx’s own solution relies on the idea of exploitation of the worker.

Suppose that such commodities take four hours to produce. Accordingly the first four hours of the working day is spent on producing value equivalent to the value of the wages the worker will be paid (—the amount required to keep worker alive). This is known as necessary labour. Any work the worker does above this is known as surplus labour, producing surplus value for the capitalist. Surplus value, according to Marx, is the source of all profit. In Marx's analysis labour power is the only commodity which can produce more value than it is worth, and for this reason it is known as variable capital. Other commodities simply pass their value on to the finished commodities, but do not create any extra value. They are known as constant capital. Profit, then, is the result of the labour performed by the worker beyond that necessary to create the value of his or her wages. This is the surplus value theory of profit.

Problems and Questions arising:

True or false: that in the capitalist society, worker and capitalist both receive benefits?

“Capitalism's dirty secret is that it is not a realm of harmony and mutual benefit but a system in which one class systematically extracts profit from another. How could this fail to be unjust? Yet it is notable that Marx never explicitly draws such a conclusion, and in Capital he goes as far as to say that such exchange is “by no means an injury to the seller”

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EXPLOITATION

labour theory of value: the theory that the value of any commodity is proportional to the amount of “socially necessary” labour embodied in it.

the question arises of whether the basic idea of exploitation should be so dependent on a particular theory of value. For if it is, the notion of exploitation becomes vulnerable to Robert Nozick's objection: that if the labour theory of value can be shown to be faulty, the Marxist theory of exploitation collapses too

Marxian definition of exploitation (simple example):

Suppose I work eight hours to earn my wages. With this perhaps the best thing I can buy is a coat. But imagine that the coat took only a total of four hours to make. Therefore I have exchanged my eight hours work for only four hours of other people's work, and thereby, on this view, I am exploited.

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MORALITY:

Capitalism's dirty secret is that it is not a realm of harmony and mutual benefit but a system in which one class systematically extracts profit from another. How could this fail to be unjust? Yet it is notable that Marx never explicitly draws such a conclusion, and in *Capital* he goes as far as to say that such exchange is "by no means an injury to the seller"

Even though it is acceptable to criticise particular behaviour from within an economic structure as unjust (and theft under capitalism would be an example) it is not possible to criticise capitalism as a whole. This is a consequence of Marx's analysis of the role of ideas of justice from within historical materialism. Marx claims that juridical institutions are part of the superstructure, and that ideas of justice are ideological. Accordingly, the role of both the superstructure and ideology, in the functionalist reading of historical materialism adopted here, is to stabilise the economic structure. Consequently, to state that something is just under capitalism is simply a judgement that it will tend to have the effect of advancing capitalism. According to Marx, in any society the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class; the core of the theory of ideology.

In Capitalism, The worker finds work a torment, suffers poverty, overwork and lack of fulfilment and freedom. People do not relate to each other as humans should.

while there were bad things about capitalism, there is, from a world historical point of view, much good about it too. For without capitalism, communism would not be possible. Capitalism is to be transcended, not abolished, and this may be difficult to convey in the terms of moral philosophy.

Marxian and other forms of socialism:

Many non-Marxian socialists appealed to universal ideas of truth and justice to defend their proposed schemes, and their theory of transition was based on the idea that appealing to moral sensibilities would be the best, perhaps only, way of bringing about the new chosen society. Marx wanted to distance himself from these other socialist traditions, and a key point of distinction was to argue that the route to understanding the possibilities of human emancipation lay in the analysis of historical and social forces, not in morality. Hence, for Marx, any appeal to morality was theoretically a backward step.

Communism & “Justice”:

Marx’s attitude to communism and justice there are really only two viable possibilities: either he thought that communism would be a just society or he thought that the concept of justice would not apply: that communism would transcend justice.

Communism is described by Marx, in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, as a society in which each person should contribute according to their ability and receive according to their need.

Hume argued that if there was enormous material abundance—if everyone could have whatever they wanted without invading another’s share—we would never have devised rules of justice. And, of course, there are suggestions in Marx’s writings that communism would be a society of such abundance. But Hume also suggested that justice would not be needed in other circumstances; if there were complete fellow-feeling between all human beings, there would be no conflict and no need for justice.

One can argue: material abundance or human fellow-feeling can only go so far... to some degree a form of justice will still be required.

On a broad understanding, in which morality, or perhaps better to say ethics, is concerned with the idea of living well, it seems that communism can be assessed favourably in this light.

Communism clearly advances human flourishing, in Marx's view. The only reason for denying that, in Marx's vision, it would amount to a good society is a theoretical antipathy to the word "good".

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Marxism Pt 2

IDEOLOGY

Marx does not view ideology as a feature of all societies, and, in particular, suggests that it will not be a feature of a future communist society. However, ideology is portrayed as a feature of all class-divided societies, and not only of capitalist society — although many of Marx's comments on ideology are concerned with the latter. The theory of ideology appears to play a role in explaining a feature of class-divided societies which might otherwise appear puzzling, namely what might be called their "stability"; that is, the absence of overt and serious conflict between social classes. This stability is not permanent, but it can last for extended historical periods. This stability appears puzzling to Marx because class-divided societies are flawed in ways which not only frustrate human flourishing, but also work to the material advantage of the ruling minority. Why do the subordinate classes, who form a majority, tolerate these flaws, when resistance and rebellion of various kinds might be in their objective interests?

Marx's account of the sources of social stability in class-divided societies appeals to both repressive and non-repressive mechanisms. Such societies might often involve the direct repression (or the threat of it) of one group by another, but Marx does not think that this is the whole story. There are also non-repressive sources of social stability, and ideology is usually, and plausibly, considered one of these. Very roughly, Marx's account of ideology claims that the dominant social ideas in such societies are typically false or misleading in a fashion that works to the advantage of the economically dominant class.

We should note that ideology would seem to be a part and not the whole of Marx's account of the non-repressive sources of stability in class divided societies. Other factors might include: dull

economic pressure, including the daily grind of having to earn a living; doubts—justified or otherwise—about the feasibility of alternatives; sensitivity to the possible costs of radical social change; and collective action problems of various kinds which face those who do want to rebel and resist. Marx does not think individuals are permanently trapped within ideological modes of thinking. Ideology may have an initial hold, but it is not portrayed as impervious to reason and evidence, especially in circumstances in which the objective conditions for social change obtain.

For Marx ideological beliefs are social in that they are widely shared, indeed so widely-shared that for long periods they constitute the “ruling” or “dominant” ideas in a given class-divided society (MECW 5: 59). And they are social in that they directly concern, or indirectly impact upon, the action-guiding understandings of self and society that individuals have. These action-guiding understandings include the dominant legal, political, religious, and philosophical views within particular class-divided societies in periods of stability

ideology often portrays institutions, policies, and decisions which are in the interests of the economically dominant class, as being in the interests of the society as a whole (MECW 5: 60); and ideology often portrays social and political arrangements which are contingent, or historical, or artificial, as being necessary, or universal, or natural (MECW 35: 605)

In addition to false or misleading content, ideological beliefs typically have at least two additional characteristics, relating to their social origin and their class function. By the “social origin” of ideology is meant that Marx thinks of these ideas as often originating with, and being reinforced by, the complex structure of class-divided societies—a complex structure in which a deceptive surface appearance is governed by underlying essential relations

By the “class function” of ideology is meant that Marx holds that the pervasiveness of ideology is explained by the fact it helps stabilise the economic structure of societies. All sorts of ideas might get generated for all sorts of reasons, but the ones that tend to “stick” (become widely accepted) in class-divided societies do so, not because of their truth, but because they conceal or misrepresent or justify flaws in that society in ways which redound to the benefit of the economically dominant class (Rosen & Wolff 1996: 235–236).

In response critics often see this as just another example of sloppy functional reasoning—purportedly widespread in the Marxist tradition—whereby a general pattern is asserted without the identification of any of the mechanisms which might generate that pattern. In the present case, it is said that Marx never properly explains why the ruling ideas should be those of the ruling class (Elster 1985: 473).

Yet there are obvious possible mechanisms here. To give two examples. First, there is the control of the ruling class over the means of mental production, and in particular the print and broadcast media which in capitalist societies are typically owned and controlled by the very wealthy (MECW 5, 59). A second possible mechanism appeals to the psychological need of individuals for invented narratives that legitimise or justify their social position; for instance, Marx identifies a widespread need, in flawed societies, for the consolatory effects of religion (MECW 3, 175).

STATE & POLITICS

Jon Elster helpfully identifies three different models in Marx's writings of the relationship, in capitalist society, between the political state, on the one hand, and the economically dominant class, on the other. :

First, the “instrumental” model portrays the state as simply a tool, directly controlled by the economically dominant class, in its own interests, at the expense of the interests both of other classes and of the community as a whole. Marx is usually said to endorse the instrumental account in the Communist Manifesto, where he and Engels insist that “the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”

The picture here is of the state as an instrument directed—presumably by a subset of capitalists or their representatives—in ways which promote the long term interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole.

Second, the “class balance” model portrays the state as having interests of its own, with capitalist interests as merely one of the strategic limits on its pursuit of these.

In situations where the social power of the two warring classes of contemporary society—capitalists and workers—are very nearly balanced, the political state (and especially the executive) can gain independence from both, exploiting that conflict in order to promote its own interests (the interests of the political caste).

The state now competes with capitalists and proletarians (and is not merely the tool of the former), and by “promising each of the major classes to protect it against the other, the government can rule autonomously” (Elster 1985: 425).

Third, the “abdication” model presents the bourgeoisie as staying away from the direct exercise of

political power, but doing this because it is in their economic interests to do so.

situation where “in order to save its purse, [the bourgeoisie] must forfeit the crown”.

Circumstances obtain where “the political rule of the bourgeoisie” turns out to be “incompatible” with its continued economic flourishing, and the bourgeoisie seeks “to get rid of its own political rule in order to get rid of the troubles and dangers of ruling” (MECW 11: 173).

There are several possible explanations of why the bourgeoisie might remain outside of politics in order to promote their own interests. To give three examples: the bourgeoisie might recognise that their own characteristic short-termism could be fatal to their own interests if they exercised direct political as well as economic power; the bourgeoisie might find political rule sufficiently time and effort consuming to withdraw from it, discovering that the economic benefits kept on coming regardless; or the bourgeoisie might appreciate that abdication weakened their class opponents, forcing the proletariat to fight on two fronts (against capital and government) and thereby making it less able to win those struggles.

Marx’s considered view looks closer to the abdication account, reflecting his conviction that the central features of political life are explained by the existing economic structure.

In his preferred abdication account, Marx allows that the state in capitalist society is independent of direct capitalist control, but goes on to claim that its main structures (including that very independence) and policies are ultimately explained by the interests of the capitalist class.

FUTURE FATE COMMUNIST SOCIETY

in the case of the fate of the state, that reluctance is partially mitigated by his view that the institutional arrangements of the Paris Commune prefigured the political dimensions of communist society.

“the dictatorship of the proletariat”. (On the infrequency, context, and content, of these uses see Draper 1986 and Hunt 1974.) The idea of “dictatorship” in this historical context has the (ancient) connotation of emergency rule rather than the (modern) connotation of totalitarianism. Marx’s use makes it clear that any such temporary government should be democratic; for instance, in having majority support, and in preserving democratic rights (of speech, association, and so on). However, it is by definition “extra-legal” in that it seeks to establish a new regime and not to preserve an old one. So understood, the dictatorship of the proletariat forms part of the political transition to communist society (a topic not covered here), rather than part of the institutional structure of communist society itself. The “dictatorial”—that is, the temporary and extra-legal—character of this regime ends with establishment of a new and stable polity,

The character of the state in communist society consists, in part, of its form (its institutional arrangements) and its function (the tasks that it undertakes).

Form:

His preferred future political arrangements involve a high degree of participation, and the radical “de-professionalisation” of certain public offices. First, Marx is enthusiastic about regular elections, universal suffrage, mandat impératif, recall, open executive proceedings, decentralisation, and so on. Second, he objects to public offices (in the legislature, executive, and judiciary) being the spoils of a political caste, and sought to make them working positions, remunerated at the average worker’s wage, and regularly circulating (through election). This combination of arrangements has been characterised as “democracy without professionals” (Hunt 1974: 365). Marx saw it as reflecting his view that:

Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it. (MECW 24: 94)

Function:

Marx’s distinction between “necessary” tasks that a state would need to undertake in all societies (at least, economically developed societies), and “unnecessary” tasks that a state would only need to undertake in class-divided societies. The difficulty here is less in allowing this distinction, than in deciding what might fall into each category. On the necessary side, Marx appears to require that the state in communist society provide both: democratic solutions to coordination problems (deciding which side of the road traffic should drive on, for instance); and the supply of public goods (health, welfare, education, and so on). On the unnecessary side, Marx seems to think that a communist society might hugely reduce, or even eliminate, the element of organised coercion found in most states (in the form of standing armies, police forces, and so on). At least, this reduction might be feasible once communist society had reached its higher stage (where distribution is based on “the needs principle”), and there is no longer a threat from non-communist societies.

Criticism:

First, Skepticism: many will be sceptical about its feasibility, and perhaps especially of the purported reduction, still less elimination, of state coercion.

Imagine that a democratic communist polity introduces a new law prohibiting smoking in public places, and that a representative smoker (call her Anne) obeys that law despite being among the minority who wanted this practice permitted. Anne’s motivation for obedience, we can stipulate, is grounded, not in fear of the likely response of bodies of armed persons enforcing the law, but rather

in respect for the democratic majority of the community of which she is a part.

Second, some might object to the reference, throughout this section, to the “state” in communist society.

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UTOPIANISM

utopian socialism”, and whose founding triumvirate were Charles Fourier (1772–1837), Henri Saint-Simon (1760–1825), and Robert Owen (1771–1858)

What distinguishes utopian from other socialists is, in large part, their view that providing persuasive constructive plans and blueprints of future socialist arrangements is a legitimate and necessary activity. (The expression “plans and blueprints” is used here to capture the necessary detail of these descriptions, and not to suggest that these designs have to be thought of as “stipulative”, as having to be followed to the letter.

three main foundational arguments against utopianism that can be located in Marx’s writings; namely, that utopian plans and blueprints are necessarily undemocratic, impossible, and redundant

given that the basic structure of the future socialist society develops automatically (without design assistance) within capitalist society; and that the role of human agency in this unfolding historical process is to deliver (not design) that basic structure,

+ Marx on Wiki

+ Einstein socialist essay

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tendency_of_the_rate_of_profit_to_fall

Lassallism is the strategy of the pursuit of socialism through the use of the state. This school of thought developed from German jurist and socialist activist Ferdinand Lassalle.

This school of thought diverged from the route to socialism propounded by Karl Marx. Marx advocated a revolutionary strategy and focused on organizing through workers' organizations.

ANARCHO SYNDICALISM

How will the revolution look like?

Will it be a peaceful evolutionary process (I think it ought not be a violent direct revolution)

Leading ideas to the solution:

Libertarian Marxism includes currents such as autonomism, council communism, De Leonism, Lettrism, parts of the New Left, Situationism, Freudo-Marxism (a form of psychoanalysis),[47] Socialisme ou Barbarie[48] and workerism.

Structural vs Instrumental Marxism

Marxism Economics:

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism>

Marxian economics concerns itself with the analysis of crisis in capitalism, the role and distribution of the surplus product and surplus value in various types of economic systems, the nature and origin of economic value, the impact of class and class struggle on economic and political processes, and the process of economic evolution. Although the Marxian school is considered heterodox, ideas that have come out of Marxian economics have contributed to mainstream understanding of the global

economy. Certain concepts of Marxian economics, especially those related to capital accumulation and the business cycle such as creative destruction have been fitted for use in capitalist systems.

According to The Oxford Handbook of Karl Marx, "Marx used many terms to refer to a post-capitalist society—positive humanism, socialism, Communism, realm of free individuality, free association of producers, etc. He used these terms completely interchangeably. The notion that 'socialism' and 'Communism' are distinct historical stages is alien to his work and only entered the lexicon of Marxism after his death.

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theories_of_imperialism

Libertarian Marxist currents often draw from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' later works, specifically the Grundrisse and The Civil War in France;[44] emphasizing the Marxist belief in the ability of the working class to forge its own destiny without the need for a vanguard party to mediate or aid its liberation.[45] Along with anarchism, libertarian Marxism is one of the main currents of libertarian socialism

Marxism 21st

Two decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, the mood of capitalist triumphalism that existed then, has vanished. With the first prolonged capitalist crisis of the 21st century, the focus is now on the future of capitalism and the uncertain times faced by it. There is recognition, as a banker wrote in the Financial Times, that capitalism is having a “very Marxist crisis”.

Marxism, which was scorned as a 19th century philosophy and which was declared as an anachronism by the end of the 20th century, has once again proved that it is the only scientific theory to analyse the crisis facing contemporary capitalism. Marxism remains the guide to action on how to transcend capitalism and build a new society free from class exploitation and social oppression.

Marxism, as theory and practice, has to constantly evolve. The experience of the theory put into practice has to be evaluated. Based on that assessment, the theory needs to be updated and

modified. Marxism has to be seen as a developing theory. It is not a given corpus of knowledge which needs only to draw upon and to be interpreted. This needs to be stressed because of the legacy of Soviet style Marxism in the 20th century. Marxism was seen to be a corpus of classical texts by Marx, Engels, Lenin and so on. Based on these classics, developments in the various fields of knowledge were analysed and sought to be incorporated into an a priori framework. This ossified theory and resulted in dogmatic practices or inertia.

Marxism in the 21st century has to make a break from this theoretical straitjacket as it is an essential part of making Marxism a living theory and an accurate guide to practice.

II

Marxist theoretical analysis of the contemporary world would affirm the existence of imperialism as an integral part of the global capitalist system. It has been argued that nation states have increasingly become irrelevant in the era of globalisation and thus we need to move beyond the concept of imperialism, which is based on rich nations colonizing and exploiting the poorer nations. The problem with this argument is that it fails to identify the principal class forces which drive world capitalism today and instead confuses the changes in the form and character of imperialism with the disappearance of its essence and content.

Lenin's analysis of imperialism in the early decades of the 20th century was based on the development of monopolies as a result of concentration of capital and the coalescence between banking and industrial capital in advanced capitalist countries giving rise to finance capital. These national blocs of finance capital backed by their nation states resorted to imperialism – controlling the resources and markets of the poor countries. This also led to inter-imperialist rivalries between nation states over the division and re-division of their 'spheres of influence' causing wars like the world wars.

The way things have changed since Lenin's time can be seen in the development of international finance capital, which while originating in the advanced capitalist nations is no longer national in its form. The transnational banks and financial corporations today have global operations and move around large volumes of capital across national markets on a daily basis in search of quick speculative gains. International finance capital is globally mobile and fluid, it is not tied to specific industries and it does not serve its interest to divide the world market into rival blocks. What it wants is a globally integrated market where it has unfettered freedom of movement. This is the force that drives the process of neoliberal globalisation.

Rivalries between imperialist nation states have subdued under the hegemony of international finance capital. However, this does not imply a disappearance of imperialism. Rather imperialism has acquired a particularly vicious form under the imperatives of international finance capital. The major imperialist powers have formed a bloc under the leadership of the US, which ensures that any challenge to neoliberal globalisation and the hegemony of international finance capital is eliminated. In this, the role of the US state and its economy remains crucial.

This can be seen in the unfolding events under contemporary capitalism. The present crisis which

started in 2007-08 was brought about by the depredations of finance – asset price bubbles created through reckless lending and speculation. In the immediate aftermath of the crisis, the imperialist nations took the initiative to form the G20 and proposed a coordinated expansion of state expenditure as the way towards recovery. But once the big banks and financial companies were bailed out using taxpayers' money, the imperialist powers – especially the US, Germany, France, UK – started advocating austerity measures and cutbacks in public spending. The burden of adjustment has been shifted on to the working people across the world through the austerity measures even as international finance has recovered from its losses at the expense of the state exchequer. This could not have happened had it not been for the imperialist nation states acting in unison in the interests of international finance. The possibility of a shift away from neoliberal globalisation and curbing the power of big finance in the backdrop of the crisis is being stymied by imperialism.

The hegemony of the dollar is a significant aspect of the international finance driven imperialist system. Bulk of the financial wealth and resources across the world continues to be held in dollars owing to the imperialist strength of the US state. This allows the US economy to suck in finance from across the world and sustain the globalisation process.

The role being played by the NATO in the post-cold war era is yet another signifier of imperialist militarism. The operations of the NATO have been extended to West Asia, in the name of the 'war on terror' or 'humanitarian interventions'. The purpose is to destroy any regime that asserts national sovereignty and protects the oil and mineral resources of the region from the predatory oil companies based in the West. The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and most recently Libya were all fought to meet these objectives. US militarism is an outcome of the systemic needs of imperialism to maintain its hegemony over the globe.

Therefore, from a Marxist point of view, imperialism continues to be the foremost barrier before all those who seek to create a just, democratic and peaceful world order. Struggle and resistance against international finance driven imperialism comprises the core of revolutionary movements in the 21st century.

III

In the throes of a crisis, finance capital assaults and seeks to dismantle the welfare state built in the earlier phase of capitalism. The fight back against the neoliberal orthodoxy requires the defence of the rights of the working people and the gains made over the decades of struggle in the 20th century in getting social benefits.

The neoliberal policies have resulted in heightened inequalities, growing unemployment and homelessness for the people in the developed capitalist countries. The ongoing crisis and the state-sponsored bailout of the corporates and the bankers have vividly brought out for the people the iniquitous and unjust order that exists. Protests against corporate greed and the austerity measures have erupted and intensified in Europe and the United States. This, however, is yet to transform into a powerful political alternative, which can usher in substantive changes.

The resistance to imperialist globalization requires the building of an alternative Left platform centred on rolling back the neoliberal offensive and unshackling the grip of international finance capital to restore economic and popular sovereignty. Such a Left platform should advocate robust state intervention to develop the productive forces in a manner which generates employment and reduces income inequality. No progressive change in economic policies can be brought about without curbing the power of international finance. It is necessary as a first step, to introduce a financial transaction tax and regulation of the financial sector. The Left has to bring to the fore, the agenda of state takeover of big financial assets and the breaking up of giant multinational banks, which are ostensibly 'too big to fail'.

Imperialism seeks to emerge from its current crisis by shifting the burden of the crisis on to the people of the developing countries. International agencies like IMF, World Bank and the WTO are the handmaidens of this effort. The struggles against financial and trade liberalisation in the developing countries, especially against conditional austerity measures and unequal free trade agreements have to be taken forward.

The Left alternative platform and the political movement for it have to be developed in each country according to its specific conditions. While international finance capital operates globally, it utilizes the state in each country to enforce its neoliberal dictates. The fight to wrest economic and popular sovereignty for the people is therefore a class struggle within the nation state. Imperialist globalization has not rendered this nation state based struggle redundant. Even as the global forms of class struggle and anti-imperialist movements develop over time, the primacy of the nation based class struggle cannot be underplayed.

IV

The working class remains central to any revolutionary challenge to capitalism. Despite assertions of the 'post-Marxists' to the contrary, the working class has grown in its size and strength globally. Deindustrialization and off shoring of industrial activities into the developing world has led to the shrinking size of the industrial workforce in the advanced capitalist world. However, the size of the proletariat has grown in the developing world and the world as a whole. Moreover, those employed in the services sector are also exploited workers. The changes that have come about are in the forms of employment and labour exploitation, under the rubric of 'labour market flexibility'. Across the world, organised formal sector employment has been increasingly replaced by casual and contract based work. Alongside the institutionalization of a hire and fire regime, economic growth under the neoliberal regime has also led to a ballooning informal economy characterised by intense exploitation and self-exploitation of labour. A key challenge before the Marxists in the 21st century is to devise new forms of organising the casualized and informal workforce, who bear the brunt of intensified exploitation.

Perhaps the greatest churning process occurring in the world today is in the countryside, particularly in the rural areas of the less developed countries – in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Over the last three decades, policies of so-called stabilization and structural adjustment have systematically been imposed on the working people of the third world by international capital, domestic bourgeoisie and landed rural elites. These policies accentuate agrarian crisis,

impoverish and worsen the incomes and livelihoods of the peasantry. Rural unrest on issues of land, livelihood and access to resources is a widespread phenomenon across the developing world today. Organising the peasantry and rural labourers and building an alliance with the urban working class poses the main challenge in these societies.

The theory and practice of Marxism in the 21st century also requires the integration of gender issues into the mainstream analysis of class exploitation and social oppression. Even the most advanced capitalist countries have been unable to address in any substantive way, the unequal division of labour that is detrimental to women. On the contrary, the severe cutbacks in the social sector under the neoliberal regime have meant that the burden of the care economy is borne disproportionately by women. At the same time, the exploitation of cheap female labour continues to be an important source of extraction of surplus value.

Discrimination against women, reflected in unequal wages, discriminatory labour practices and the political economy of the reproduction of labour power shows that it is systemic and embedded in the capitalist production system. The invisibilisation of women's work, the devaluation of their labour and the predominance of patriarchal modes of life reinforce the exploitation of women under neoliberal capitalism. The Left alternative to imperialist globalisation must recognise and give prominence to the liberation of women from patriarchal and class based exploitation.

The world is faced with a degradation of the environment and ecology, which threatens life and nature on the planet. An important factor in the struggle against neoliberal capitalism and the building of an alternative has to be, in terms of Marxist theory and practice, a proper understanding of the environmental issues and the struggle to protect the environment and human life. The predatory nature of capitalism is the primary cause for the threat to the world environment and ecological sustainability. Imperialist globalization has heightened the despoliation of nature and the loot of natural resources by big corporations. Global warming and climate change is a common threat to humanity as a whole but the responsibility for this lies more with the rich industrialized countries. The struggle to protect the environment and ensure that there is equity in addressing the problems of environmental degradation should be on the agenda of Left alternatives.

V

In the years immediately after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism in Russia, the debates centred around what happened to the experiment of building socialism in the Soviet Union and what had gone wrong. These debates prevailed amongst Marxists and activists of the communist and working class movements during the 1990s. But by the turn of the century attention was drawn towards what should be the shape and nature of socialism in the 21st century.

It is by a critical examination of the experiences of socialism in the 20th century that we can arrive at a new and more meaningful concept of socialism in the 21st century. This requires carrying forward some of the original impulses of the October revolution and some of the

valuable achievements. At the same time, we have to discard some of the negative aspects and distortions which manifested in the existing socialism of the 20th century.

The debate on 21st century socialism is ongoing and has not reached a finality. This is so, because the socialism in the 21st century will arise not just from theory but also from practice. But we have now some broad contours of what a renovated socialism of the 21st century will look like. Here we can only set out some of them in an outline form.

(i) Socialisation of the means of production is a cardinal principle of socialism. This requires that the capitalist forms of ownership of the means of production be replaced by social ownership. In the socialism of the 20th century, basing on the Soviet model, public ownership of the means of production was, by and large, equated with state ownership. State owned and run enterprises being the main form led to the heavy hand of the bureaucracy controlling and running the economy. The workers had no say in the running of the enterprises. The growth of bureaucratic centralism can also be attributed to this. Public ownership under socialism in the 21st century should be of diverse forms, state ownership being just one of those forms. There can be state owned enterprises or a public sector where there is wider shareholding, or collective enterprises which are owned by the workers and employees, or cooperatives. Unlike the highly centralized system which existed in the Soviet Union, there can be different forms of public ownership and competition amongst them.

(ii) The existence of commodity production and the market is not the negation of socialism. Unlike in the Soviet Union where small commodity production and retail trade were nationalized, in the period of socialism, markets should play a role. They should be regulated by the State to ensure that big capital does not develop.

(iii) A planned economy is another basic principle of socialism but the nature of planning should not be such as to centralize all economic decision-making. Further, in order to ensure popular participation in economic decision-making and the running of economic enterprises, planning has to be decentralized.

(iv) Democracy is the life blood of socialism. In the capitalist system, democracy becomes 'formal' as the control of the bourgeoisie over the means of production and the institutions of the state leads to restricting democracy and the democratic rights of citizens. In the case of socialism, it cannot develop without the active and popular participation of the people at all levels. It is necessary to have a political system under socialism which ensures popular participation. This requires the creation of popular assemblies at different levels which have powers not only with regard to the administrative sphere but also the economic. A multi-party system under socialism will prevent the distortions that a permanent one party rule can bring about.

(v) The demarcation between the State and the ruling party has to be institutionalized. The socialist state represents the entire people and the party cannot be a substitute as it represents only a fraction of the working class and the working people. Socialism in the 21st century will also have to be built in conditions of capitalist and imperialist hostility. This is an inescapable

reality. Socialist democracy cannot be attenuated on account of this; rather it should be an instrument for developing socialist consciousness and mobilizing the people to defend the new society.

VI

Indian Experience

It is now two decades since the policies of liberalisation were initiated in India in 1991. The Indian ruling classes, in which the dominant strata is the big bourgeoisie, embraced the neoliberal framework after having gradually moved away in the 1980s from the earlier dirigiste policies. A higher rate of GDP growth has been accompanied by heightened inequalities and the intensified exploitation of the working people. There has been a squeeze on the peasantry and large scale agrarian distress. The Indian State is aiding and facilitating the loot of natural resources and public assets by the big corporates and foreign capital.

These neoliberal policies have, however, met with stiff resistance. Due to the resistance put up by the trade unions and the popular movements, the government has so far not succeeded in fully liberalizing the financial sector. This is what spared India from the worst excesses of the financial crisis. The fight to defend the public sector is ongoing. The government is attempting to disinvest shares gradually in the major public sector enterprises rather than going in for outright privatization.

The shift in the domestic economic policies have been reflected in the foreign policy with India forging a strategic alliance with the United States and departing from the pursuit of an independent foreign policy. The Left has been in the forefront in opposing the neoliberal policies and the pro-US foreign policy. It is the position of the Left and other democratic forces which has so far prevented the full-fledged implementation of the whole range of neoliberal policies and a total submission to the US strategic designs. Our experience is that the struggle against the neoliberal policies cannot be carried forward without countering the growing collaboration of the ruling classes with US imperialism.

The role played by the Left in opposition to these policies has resulted in a concerted attack on the Left forces, particularly in West Bengal. The Left Front government in West Bengal was defeated in the elections held in May 2011, after a continuous stint in office for 34 years. This is a setback for the Left movement in the country as West Bengal is its strongest base. But the struggles against the neoliberal policies and the movements of the working people in the state will enable the Left to recover ground, even though there is repression and violence directed against the movement. In Kerala, the Left-led alliance lost the elections very narrowly and nearly succeeded in breaking the cycle of alternative governments every five years. The record of the Left-led government in implementing social welfare measures and reviving the public sector enterprises found wide support among the people.

The Left-led governments that existed in the states of West Bengal and Kerala and which continues in Tripura have inspite of the severe limitations of the powers and resources available

to a state government, sought to consolidate the gains made through land reforms, effect decentralisation of powers and protect the rights of the working people. The existence of these governments cannot bring about any basic change but they definitely help the working class, the peasantry and other popular movements to organize, fight for their rights and to take forward the Left and democratic alternative at the national level.

In India, there is social oppression through the caste system. Given the socio-economic formation in India, class exploitation both capitalist and semi-feudal exists along with various forms of social oppression based on caste, gender and religion. The ruling classes extract surplus through class exploitation and for maintenance of their hegemony they utilise various forms of social oppression. Hence the struggle against both class exploitation and social oppression is being conducted simultaneously.

In order to oppose the offensive of liberalisation, all the central trade unions came together for the first time last year. Their joint platform and united actions have galvanized the working class movement and a one-day general strike with the participation of all the central trade unions is being planned for early next year.

The CPI (M) is working for a transitional programme towards socialism in India. To achieve this stage of people's democracy, we have to build an alliance of class forces led by the working class. This requires the building of a powerful worker-peasant alliance and the rallying of all the forces that suffer from class exploitation and social oppression. Till we are able to achieve this, our efforts are directed towards forging a Left and democratic alternative to the present bourgeois-landlord policies of the Indian state.

VII

The current global capitalist crisis has two features which have a bearing on the alternatives that the Left has to fashion. Firstly, the ongoing recession is likely to be of a long duration. The governments of the developed capitalist countries are no longer talking of fiscal stimulus; instead there is a naked assault on the people through austerity measures. Secondly, after a long time the crisis is centred in the metropolitan centres and not the periphery. Its effects are hitting the people of the developed capitalist countries as badly as those in the developing capitalist countries. This opens the way for resistance and struggles in the metropolitan centres along with the movements and struggles in the developing world. These two streams of struggle can strengthen each other.

To sum up, the fight for a Left alternative requires a struggle against both the finance-driven neoliberal capitalism as also the imperialist order, which perpetuates it with political power and military force.

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