



Lesson : State Socialism: Meaning, Growth and Development
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State Socialism: Meaning, Growth and Development

Introduction

The intellectual spectrum of Political science has produced two main discourses- the Liberal and the Marxist. Ideologically both appear juxtaposed to each other as they differ in terms of conceptualisation of the society, the state and virtually everything that constitute our political and social world. There are variants in both these streams of thoughts, State Socialism being one of the variant of Marxism. In contemporary times Socialism or state Socialism¹ as a concept has provoked many reactions from different scholars, some highlighting its emancipatory potential, while others criticising it for being a closed system and some debunking it all together. But the fact of the matter is that State Socialism still remains one of the desirable goals if laced with more humane and sensitive policies. Communism or Socialism became one of the defining global ideologies of the 20th century, which provided the foundation of politics, economics, and the society in almost two dozen countries.²

State Socialism denotes a particular pattern of political and economic arrangement in a society. It is seen as an economic model, usually linked to some kind of collectivisation and planning.³ Broadly speaking, it stands for state ownership of means of production, nationalisation of industries and public property, prohibition on private ownership and such policies that we will discuss later on in this chapter. Although socialist ideas can be traced back to seventeenth century or Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) or even to Plato's *Republic*, Socialism did not take shape as a political creed until the nineteenth century.⁴

Value addition

Did you Know

The term 'Socialist' derives from the Latin word *sociare*, meaning to combine or to share. It was familiarised in 1830s by the followers of Robert Owen in Europe. However, the intellectual legacy of the term Socialism can be traced back to Plato's Republic (324BC) and Thomas Moore's Utopia (1516) .

Topic 1. Meaning and Development of the Concept

Socialism is a concept that finds place in the thoughts of many political philosophers and theorists ranging from Karl Marx to Robert Owen, many a times denoting slightly different things. Benjamin Tucker, the American individualist anarcho-socialist, in his

¹ The term state socialism has been popularly being used since 1970s to denote different kinds of regimes that followed the tenets of public ownership in the society. Since then the term state socialism has synonymously been used for Socialism. This has been explained in the later section in this chapter.

² McCormick, (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.195.

³ Heywood, Andrew, 2004, *Political Ideologies: an Introduction*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 3rd ed. P. 107.

⁴ Heywood, Andrew, *Politics*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2nd edition, p.51.

essay titled 'State Socialism and Anarchism' defined it as a tendency that advocates for government control over the means of production as a precondition for establishing socialism. Socialism also signifies a transitory state between Capitalism and Communism where the proletariat has expropriated the means of production, but the state and alienation had not yet vanished.⁵ It arose as a reaction against the social and economic condition generated in Europe by the growth of industrial capitalism.⁶

Value addition-Know it more

To know more about the State Socialism and Anarchism, you may go to

<http://www.panarchy.org/tucker/state.socialism.html>

Historical roots of this idea can be traced in the works of **Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong, Saint Simon, Thomas More, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, Eduard Bernstein, Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb** etc. However there are considerable differences among all scholars in terms of the meaning they assign to this concept. Among the early advocates of this field, More provided subtle critique of private property and favoured a fair distribution of goods to create a harmonious society. Saint Simon believed that free economic competition produced poverty and crisis. Charles Fourier showed his conviction in co-operatives and communes. He thought that government's work should be restricted to economic administration only. The extreme view was taken by Joseph Pierre Proudhon who offered scathing criticism of private property and called it a kind of theft.

Value addition-Refine your understanding

To know more about the different variants like Fabian socialism, you may go to :

The basis of socialism- historic by Sidney webb

<http://www.econlib.org/library/YPDBooks/Shaw/shwFS1.html#The%20Basis%20of%20Socialism,%20Historic,%20by%20Sidney%20Webb>

Karl Marx's understanding of communism carries heavy philosophical undertones. Lenin, on the other hand defined it in terms of a set of principles to organise and run a society in a particular way. For Mao, this term offered a platform to be experimented in his country in indigenous ways. He clearly provided a local appeal to the concept making it more practical and suitable for his own society. The role of workers as outlined by Marx was replaced by the farmers as China did not witness industrialisation till that time. At the same time the ideas emanating from the Western Europe projected a very different and sober variant of Socialism. Reformists like Eduard Bernstein virtually challenged all of Marx's central tenets including the idea of revolution, the dictatorship of the

⁵ Roberts, Andrew (2004), *The State of Socialism: A Note on Terminology*, Slavic review, vol. 63, no.2, P.352

⁶ Heywood, Andrew, 2004, *Political Ideologies: an Introduction*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 3rd ed. P. 105.

proletariat and the complete abolition of private property. The content of western variant of socialism emphasise civil rights, democracy, people's participation, evolutionary changes etc. The western variant is widely known as the **liberal democratic socialism**.

In the field of socialism, Lenin's name carries great significance. Lenin (1870-1924), perhaps has been the most ardent follower of Marxism. But he adapted it to suit the predominantly peasant population of Russia. Whereas Marx believed that revolutionary socialism would come to industrialised countries through workers; Lenin believed that it could also come to less industrialised countries such as Russia.⁷ Necessary precondition for this was the mobilisation of peasants, ethnic minorities, and other aggrieved groups. Lenin added several original ideas to socialism such as the '**Vanguard party**', '**Democratic Centralism**', his idea of '**imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism**' and '**Comintern**'.

Similarly Mao Zedong remoulded the tenets of Marxism producing one of the great achievements in the field. It applied this theory to rural societies and used a peasant army and revolutionary guerrilla warfare to take power. His initiatives found reverberations in the movements led by Fidel Castro in Cuba and Guevara in Bolivia and Ho Chi Minh.

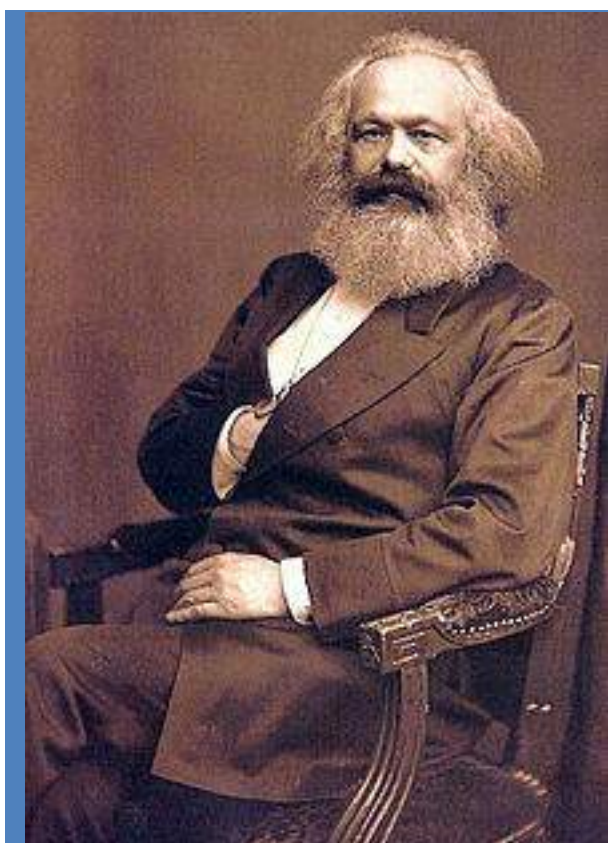
Value addition

Did you know

Robert Owen (1771-1858) was an entrepreneur and a political thinker who attempted to implement the socialist policies by setting up co-operative commune based on the principle of equality of income. He created a communal society at New Lanark in Scotland and New Harmony, Indiana, USA where residents enjoyed similar food, clothing and education. Later on he also became one of the founders of British Socialism.

The philosophy of Marxism or Communism as given by Marx and Engels basically came as a reaction to Industrial Capitalism, a mode of production based on the private ownership and driven by profit maximisation. Capitalism developed along side industrial revolution that overtook Europe, mainly England in 16th century. It replaced the feudal mode of production of the medieval world and witnessed the emergence of a new class: the Working Class. Marxist philosophy takes this antagonism between these two classes; the capitalist class and the working class as its reference point.

⁷ McCormick, (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.205.



Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883)

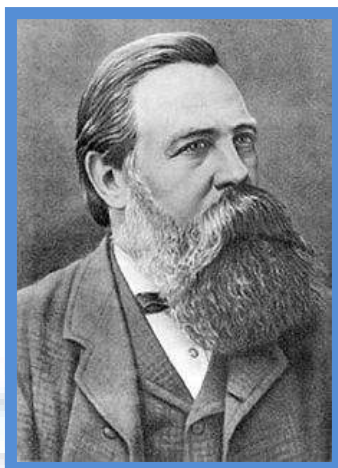
German philosopher, economist and political thinker and father of 20th century Communism. His prominent works include *The philosophy of Poverty*, (1840), *Communist manifesto* (1848), *The Critique of Political Economy*, *Das Kapital* (Three volumes, 1867, 1885, 1894), *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*, (1844), *On Jewish Question*, (1843), *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845).

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx

1.3 Marx and Engels' Concept of Socialism

Karl Marx propounded a set of doctrines that is known by his name as Marxism or Communism which perhaps has become one of the most important political philosophies in the study of politics. Without question the most influential of all socialist and communist theorists was Karl Marx.⁸ In fact, Marxist philosophy resulted in creation of socialist political systems in almost half part of the world in the twentieth century. Marx has been a prolific writer, who has written tremendously on the rise of industrial capitalism in Western Europe, its expected demise and its replacement with the communist form of governments. Frederick Engels has been his lifelong collaborator and co-author of many of works by Marx. They shared similar intellectual convictions and nurtured friendship that help Marx sustain through the financial troubles plaguing his life.

⁸ McCormic (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.203.



Frederich Engels (1820-1895). Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Engels

Value addition-surf and know more

To understand the Engel's perspective on Socialism, you may read from:

Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, on Marxist.org:

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/ch01.htm>:

Marx saw capitalist society as unequal and unjust society which flourished at the cost of the working class. The dynamics of industrial capitalism produces two classes: the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class owns the mode of production and expropriates the resources of the society to further its own interests. The goal of the capitalist or bourgeoisie class lies in maximising its profit or surplus generated by exploiting the working or proletariat class. The working class is compelled to slog for long working hours, have no share in the surplus, and lose all control over their creativity and their lives. This leads to alienation in the working class. Since the interests of both these classes are hostile to each other, there is ongoing class war in capitalist societies. This is explicit in the famous lines of Karl Marx, as he says the history of all societies hitherto is the history of class struggle. In other words, Marxism argued that history is narration of class struggle between two diagonally opposite classes. It is the private property which is the malefactor and responsible for all social divisions and exploitation in the society. Individual ownership is despised as it leads to an unequal and oppressive social order. Industrial way of life in Western Europe has been the exemplifier of this reality. In fact, Marx thought that bourgeoisie class' control is so encompassing that the state also acts as the "executive committee of the ruling Bourgeoisie". Therefore once he said that "the theory of communism may be summed up in one sentence: "Abolish all private property."⁹

The way out is the revolution that will overthrow the existing capitalist mode of production by the communist mode of production. Marx believed that the capitalism harboured inherent contradictions due to which it was doomed to collapse. On one hand capitalism has higher development of forces of production; on the other hand, within them exist most efficient forms of class exploitation and highest development of human

⁹ McCormic (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.203.

alienation.¹⁰ Because the workers are paid so poorly, their purchasing power will be limited, causing overproduction and under consumption leading to periodic crises.¹¹ These self-contradictions in capitalism will lead to crumbling of such system under its own pressure, thought Marx. The annihilation of capitalism will give way to socialism. In the Socialist mode of production state/ public ownership would replace private ownership of major means of production, conscious public planning would replace the anarchy of capitalist decision making, and social equality would progressively replace class inequality.¹² Marx believed that when the polemics in the society will reach its extreme, revolution will become inevitable. Following that, the proletariats class will seize power establishing 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Socialism will be a transitory stage leading to establishment to communist society. This society will be a classless, non exploitative society in which the state will wither away. There will be equal opportunities for all, and enough for everyone. The guiding principle will be "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs".¹³

Ironically his predictions did not come true. There could never emerge that assumed surge of working class against the capitalist class as workers and labour unions won concessions on the working conditions and voting rights in the times of Marx itself. On the contrary, later on, capitalism in different countries explored various ways to avert such crisis and survived by co-opting the working class. Examples are Market-led capitalism, Negotiated/consensual capitalism, Developmental state forms of capitalism being practiced in many countries of Europe. For example Social market capitalism followed by Germany's obliges the capitalists to generate strong sense of job security and other incentives for the workers.

Value addition

Did You Know

The Marxist doctrine found its practical manifestation in the Russian Revolution (1917) under the leadership of V. I. Lenin. It resulted in creation of a Soviet Union that came very close to the tenets of Marxism and lasted for almost four decades. It also started an ideological war between the Communist Bloc headed by Soviet Union and the Capitalist Bloc led by America. Therefore the collapse of Communism in USSR in 1991 led to the "End of History" debate, suggesting that this demise also implies the triumph of capitalism world over. This notion was popularised by Francis Fukoyama in his 1989 essay *The End of History?* Of course there are various interpretations of this assumption.

¹⁰ Russel, James W. (1989) *Modes of Production in World History*, Routledge, London and New York, p.110.

¹¹ McCormic (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.203.

¹² Ibid, p.156.

¹³ McCormic (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.203.

1.2 Politics Behind the Nomenclature:

When we pay attention to the history of the use of the term state socialism, there arise some confusion. The term has been used simultaneously for stringent political regimes like erstwhile Soviet Union as well as for welfare oriented social democratic regimes of Western Europe. This ambiguity surrounding the term has been highlighted by Andrew Roberts. He says that the different shades of scholars and political regimes that may not share things in commonality use this term without deeper reflection. It has led to the vagueness attached to the concept leaving readers to guess what exactly it signifies! This term has been equally rendered in use by the Soviet Socialists as well their more liberated and relaxed western counterpart. The term Socialism seems to have fallen prey to what political scientist Giovanni Sartori calls 'conceptual stretching'. It means that the term has been made to cover all sorts of thing that originally would not have been the goal. Also, the use and misuse of the term looks like what one may call 'conceptual emptying of Communism'¹⁴. The practices of many societies that call themselves socialist actually have only a residue of dreams of emancipation of Marx. In his preface to the English edition of the Communist Manifesto of 1888, Engels explained why he and Marx had called their theory 'Communist' rather than 'Socialist'. He believed that the term 'socialist' was associated with adherents of the various Utopian systems: Owenites in England, Fourierist in France or with multifarious quacks who profess it without questioning capital and profit.¹⁵

Value addition-Refine your understanding

To know more about the nature and fate of Socialism in Eastern Europe, you may explore on: Levesque, Jacques (1997). *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe*. University of California Press..

<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft4q2nb3h6/>

In fact, the dubiousness of the term is exposed more if one closely looks at the way this term has been used in Eastern Europe. All the leaderships in Soviet politics alone have functioned contrary to the letter and spirit of the meaning of socialist state as it was envisioned by the socialist theorists. In Soviet history, this term as been moulded several times according to the exigencies of political executives. Stalin declared USSR to be to become 'Socialism in principle' in 1936. His follower, Nikita Khrushchev decided that it was actually in 1961 that socialism has been fully and finally attained in Soviet politics. As far as the principles and the policies of this particular political system are concerned, one finds no resonance with the quest of liberation that Socialism ideally portrayed. After all, the secret lies that could not be kept secret behind the iron curtains, got exposed to the world. The violent repressive regime of Stalin that caused gross human rights violations, mass execution of political opponents, complete censorship made headlines in all parts of the world. It appears that Karl Popper's description of such societies as closed society is not a farfetched argument.¹⁶ Hence, such regimes have

¹⁴ Roberts, Andrew (2004), *The State of Socialism: A Note on Terminology*, *Slavic review*, vol. 63, no.2, P.357.

¹⁵ Brown, Archie *The Rise and fall of Communism*, Harper Collins e-books, p.21.

¹⁶ Karl Popper in his book "**The Open Societies and its Enemies**" (Routledge, London, 1945) proclaims Plato, Hegel and Marx as totalitarian. He finds all these theorists as propounding ideas with dangerous consequences. These philosophers have been accused of an attempt to comprise with liberty of individual, giving the way in to the formidable politics systems.

been termed as totalitarian, as they severely deny the fundamental civil and political rights to their people. The state machinery is heavily centralised with the state having the monopoly of violence in its hands. Suppression of social, religious and cultural freedom took place in the name of security of the state from the imagined spectre of capitalism. Many scholars feel that 'socialism' became a grab that has been used to hide the nefarious motives of unfree regimes.¹⁷ Since such regimes needed to divert the attention of the citizens from the impending danger of political crisis, therefore they beseech a re-look in this term. In that sense, this term became a refuge to many shades of politics who offered politically incorrect things on its platter.

However the above discussed is only one variety of state socialism that Andrew Roberts prefers to call as communism. The other variant that appears to be more humane and synchronous with visions of Owen and Bernstein is the one that developed in Europe and considerably changed its political landscape thereafter. In the post Second World War period, many socialist parties emerged in the countries of Western Europe like France, Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Spain. These parties had a mind, philosophy and a strategy of their own. They not only shunned the advocacies of '**orthodox Marxism or vulgar Marxism**' but took off on a different journey. The social democrats of Europe were reformist, gradualist and not revolutionary. Their ideological position clearly separated them from their eastern counterparts. As such they did not believe in the utopian idea of annihilation of capitalism as pronounced by Marx. Instead, they worked within the capitalist system, trying to make it more working class friendly and eking out social security measures. They adopted a more ambitious project of taming the free market and bringing the social welfare measures with market economy. Being reformist in their orientation, they appeared more in proximity to the people's aspirations. In fact their presence in these countries acted as a moral corrective, and a watchdog for their governments. Their role in making the government more responsive and welfarist is commendable in Europe. Their contributions have been significant in the theoretical domains of the Continental Philosophy. Even today, one of the two largest groupings of deputies in the European parliament calls itself the party of European Socialists.¹⁸



V. I. Lenin (1870-1924).

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin

¹⁷ Unfree regimes imply those countries that regulate the political, economic, cultural and also personal lives of the people. For example Soviet Union practiced great degree of censorship in its society and lives of its citizens due to which it has been severely criticized.

¹⁸ Roberts, Andrew (2004), The State of Socialism: A Note on Terminology, Slavic review, vol. 63, no.2, P.357.

<u>Notable Theorists in the field of Socialism</u>	<u>Important Works</u>
Plato (428-348) B.C.	<i>The Republic</i> (380 B.C.)
Robert Owen(1771-1858)	<i>A New View of society and other Writings</i> (reproduced in 1991).
Saint-Simon (1760-1825)	An edition of his work was published by the survivors of the sect (<i>47 Volumes, Paris 1865-1878</i>).
Charles Fourier (1772-1837)	<i>Design For Utopia: Selected Writings. Studies in Libertarian and Utopian Traditions, New York, Schocken, 1971</i>
Joseph Pierre Proudhon (1809-1865)	<i>What is Property? Or, an Inquiry into the Principle of Rights and of Government</i> (1840).
Karl Marx (1818-1883)	<i>Communist Manifesto</i> (1848)
Frederich Engels (1820-1895)	<i>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</i> (1880), <i>The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State</i> (1884).
Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932)	<i>The Precondition of Socialism, (1899), Evolutionary socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation</i> (1961).
Sidney Webb (1859-1947) and Beatrice Webb (1858-1943)	<i>The Fabian essays in Socialism</i> (1889)
Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979)	<i>Reason and revolution: Hegel and Rise of Social Theory</i> (1941), <i>Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis</i> (1958).
Louis Althusser (1918-1990)	<i>For Marx</i> (1965), <i>Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays</i> (1968).
Gerald Cohan (1941-2009)	

	<i>Karl Marx' Theory of History: A Defence (1978), History, Labour and Freedom (1988).</i>
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Source: Self Creation.

Topic 2. Structure of State socialism

2.1 Common Ownership and Collectivisation

Many literatures of early communists reflected on the idea of common possession. In early times common possessions were looked upon by many as ideal to be looked at. The early Christians held everything in common. With in major religions like Christianity, there have been strong voices in favour of common ownership. Jan Hus is one such name from early 15th century who held radical views about papacy and questioned its ambit of power. He was executed in 1415 but this led to rise of Hussite kind of communism.¹⁹

Value addition

Did you know

Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) is a very interesting description of an imagined communist society. It advocated for abolishment of private property altogether. More held private property responsible for poverty, scarcity and unprecedented hardship that it brings to people.

• 2.2 One Party State and Centralized Political Control

Generally, most of the political regimes that call themselves socialist or follow state socialism organise themselves as one party state. It means that these states are ruled by a single political party. This feature of monopoly of one party state became trademark of Soviet Union, People's Republic of China, People's Republic of Hungary and such other countries. The only party permitted in such societies are the communist parties of these states. This communist party acts as the apex of political life. The principle of Party as the Vanguard as proposed by Lenin is strictly followed. The government is organised on the basis of the policy of 'Democratic Centralism'. It is difficult to identify party separately from government as party controls the government. All executives and officials of the government are occupied by the Communist party. Communist systems employ huge bureaucracy to carry on their political and economic agenda. Over all, the system lacks transparency, and covert operations are carried out to strictly control the state and society.

¹⁹ Brown, Archie *The Rise and fall of Communism*, Harper Collins e-books, p.13.

Most of the socialist systems developed formidable state structures. Like Soviet Union constructed a police state: in which power is distributed and stability maintained by force and intimidation and in which civil liberties are routinely abused.²⁰ Centralisation of government became an essential political character of all communist societies. Resultantly, the power became highly concentrated in the hands of an elite group who furthered their interest in the name of maintaining socialism. A complex network of 'social organisations' are used by the party to gather information and impose additional social control. The communist parties are cadre based parties with wide membership and hierarchy. They socialise, indoctrinate and mobilise masses to support and serve the system.

• 2.3 Central Planning and Economy

One of the generic features of socialist political systems has been to have a highly regulated economy. It meant state ownership of major means of production, including banks, factories, large farms etc. Central planning was adopted to bring the desired change in economy. The aim was to subsume societal production within one enormous bureaucracy.²¹ This led to state-owned monopolies and centrally planned command economy. This meant that the government completely controlled the economy by controlling the price, rolling out the subsidies and guarding the production process.

The objective of the central planning was to upgrade production to the level that could take care of needs of all in the society. For example, Soviet leadership were aware of the hardship and poverty in Czarist Russia. Therefore, the task was to create abundance. The economy was geared up to generate enough resources for basic amenities of food, shelter and to provide social security in terms of medical care and education, transportation etc. In principle, the production in socialist societies was driven by catering to the society rather than the market calculus of capitalist societies. All socialist and socialist- oriented state place high priority on developing means of public consumption such as health clinics, schools, passenger buses and parks to make it available to the poor.²²

Now all post communist states are reworking on their economic policies trying to liberalise their economy. Their productivity is now being guided by private consumption and market incentives. But in some of the countries like Russia, a wealthy class has emerged that has prospered during this transition to capitalism.

Topic 3. State Socialism in Some Countries

Amongst all, erstwhile **USSR (1917-1991)** is a startling example of the political system which is described as socialist state and came very close to communism. However, as history has it, communism came to be rejected in the Soviet Union causing its collapse in 1991. It is interesting to observe the ascendance of Soviet political system as one of the super power that virtually controlled half of the world for the span of almost seventy years. Carrying on its legacy of Bolshevik Revolution, Russia went ahead to form a federation of some thirteen odd countries belonging to different nationalities. Lenin's

²⁰ McCormic (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.196.

²¹ Russel, James W. (1989) *Modes of Production in World History*, Routledge, London and New York, p.130.

²² Russel, James W. (1989) *Modes of Production in World History*, Routledge, London and New York, p.130.

contribution has been seminal in the inception of this giant project. Especially, his 'New Economic Policies' gave Russian economy a great fillip which was great need of the hour. After Lenin, Stalin took over. First he consolidated his power and after few years became very autocratic. From here started the period of Great Purge by Soviet leaders that created perhaps one of the most repressive societies in modern political history.



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Bloc

Communist societies in most part of the world including Soviet Union, People's Republic of China, Cuba displayed many retrogressive values. Soviet societies were unfree, their polities lacked democratic accountability and censorship severely restricted lives of their citizens. The economic failures were obscured and society was kept under tight vigil. Even when Soviet Union created elaborate paraphernalia with huge bureaucracy, it was unable to cope up with the disapproval and resistance emanating from various corners. They resorted to severe repressions resulting in gross violation of human rights of the citizens. Political opponents were seen as capitalist enemy and therefore, eliminated. The state became more autocratic and totalitarian. Economic and political crisis was compounded by nationalistic and ethnic uprisings.

However, in the longer run, political regimes are unable to continue to rule with iron hand. Slowly the dissents grow and the repressive character of the system itself becomes the precursor of its demise. The combination of new ideas, institutional power having fallen into the hands of radical reformers and political choices led to the end of

Communism in Europe.²³ Even when there were fast progress in the in the Soviet society in the beginning, gradually series of economic, political and social problems accumulated leading to strong desire for change. Technological innovation was occurring faster in the newly industrialised countries of Asia than in USSR. The Military-industrial Complex was placing excessive burden on economy, added on were a host of social problems like declining birth rate, an increase in the infant mortality rate etc.²⁴

So, when Gorbachev tried to slightly relax the system by eking out some concession, the consequence became disastrous. It clearly indicated that the system had become so hollow from inside that a small spark turned it into a forest fire. The reforms were on the top agenda of Gorbachev from the times of 'Prague Spring 'of 1968 in which Czechoslovakia tried to liberalise its political system. The leadership of Alexander Dubcek was crucial in these reforms. Unfortunately it was seized in the middle by the Soviet interference. Gorbachev carried forward the idea of reforms by abandoning democratic centralism in favour of '**Socialist Pluralism**' and '**Political Pluralism**'. This signified a 'third way'-a new model of 'socialism with human face' and was supported by like minded colleagues like Yakovlev, Chernyaev and Shakhnazarov etc.²⁵ The gradual change was conceptualised in terms of two main policies **Perestroika and Glasnost**. Perestroika stood for restructuring the economy and Glasnost stood for more openness and transparency in the governments' policies and institutions. Gorbachev broke with Lenin by recognising that means in politics are no less important than ends. Utopian



goals which are always likely to be illusory will be all the more of a chimera if pursued by violent and undemocratic means.²⁶ The change in the atmosphere brought freedom of speech and unprecedented levels of information that overhauled the system.

Gorbachev and H.W.Bush,1990

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/32/Gorbachev_Bush_19900601.jpg/220px-Gorbachev_Bush_19900601.jpg,accessed on 14 august 2014

Samir Amin sums up the options in front of East European countries undergoing the crisis due to fallout of socialist systems. He says that first way could be evolution towards a bourgeoisie democracy, or progress beyond it, by strengthening the social power of the workers in the management of the economy. Second option is restoration of an in and out market economy or progress through a carefully controlled resort to market forces guided by democratic planning. Third path could be an unguarded door

²³ Brown, Archie *The Rise and fall of Communism*, Harper Collins e-books, p.588.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 590.

²⁵ Brown, Archie *The Rise and fall of Communism*, Harper Collins e-books, p.599.

²⁶ Ibid, p.596.

opens wide to the exterior, or guarded relations with the surrounding world, albeit directed towards increased trade.²⁷

China presents a very specific and interesting study. It became People's Republic of China (PRC) after the victory of Communist party of China under the leadership of their undisputed leader Mao Zedong in the ongoing Chinese civil war. Mao initiated the policy of '**Great Leap Forward**' to rapidly transform the agrarian society to industrial and collectivised one. This resulted in massive famines in the countryside. Afterwards, Mao started Cultural Revolution which was a social-political movement from 1966-76 aimed to entrench socialism and eradicate all traces of capitalism from the society. It resulted in the purges on all government officials who sympathised with any idea of capitalism. After the death of Mao, Deng Xiaoping tried to bring in many structural changes and economic reforms in the system. The successive periods saw better economic growth. Agricultural growth accelerated and it restored the balance in the society. In decade of 1990s the leadership passed to third generation leaders like Jiang Zemin, Hu Zintao who continues with economic liberalisation "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics".



Mao Zedong (1893-1976).

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_Zedong

It is believed that Chinese system has been able to survive as it has been liberalising its economy in successive stages while retaining huge control over the political system. Realising that free market cannot be resisted for long; they found halfway house of participation in information technology, whereby parts of internet are closed off to Chinese citizens, while those parts which are economically useful remain open.²⁸ China still has one political party having huge control over the whole state. The voices of protest have been rising but the incidents of brutal suppression on Tiananmen Square Protests disclose the unwillingness and rigidity of political brass to bring any change. In 1989 several protesters basically students and civilians gathered in Tiananmen Square. Their demand was for democratic reforms, government accountability, transparency, freedom of speech, freedom of press. However, Deng's leadership resorted to violence leading to deaths of several hundreds. This incident brought international denunciation of

²⁷ Amin, Samir (2007) *Empire of CHAOS* (Translated by W. H. Locke Anderson), Aakar Books for South Asia, p.68.

²⁸ Brown, Archie *The Rise and fall of Communism*, Harper Collins e-books, p.592.

china and put it under very bad light. This struggle for democratic concessions haunts China and the dilemma before it is how to resolve it.

Value addition-Surf and Know

To know more about Chinese way of development ,you may go to :

[Staff writer](#) (3 February 2012). "[Market fundamentalism' is unpractical](#)". [People's Daily](#). [Central Committee](#) of the [Communist Party of China](#). Retrieved 13 January 2013. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90780/7719657.html>

Hungary was declared as People's Republic of Hungary in 1949. It initiated a prolonged encroachment of the country by the Soviet Union through 'Comecon Treaty' concluded between the former and its agents in the Hungarian Socialist party. Nationalisation of all public property was carried on the Soviet model. This started an era of repression and economic decline under the leadership of Matyas Rakosi. The purge under him ended with loss of more than seven thousands of leaders, officials and opponents. Little relief came from the death of Stalin in 1953 and Rakosi' regime was replaced by Imre Nagy and Erno Gero subsequently. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 against the autocratic communist regime was brutally suppressed by the Soviet troops. This led to scathing criticism of this unfortunate event worldwide. But the communist dictatorship continued for four decades (1947-1989). Hungary became a democratic parliamentary republic in 1989 as a by-product of the disintegration of Soviet regime.

Topic 4. Critical Evaluation

Despite of the tremendous influence of communism as a political philosophy, an ideology and a political system, it could not survive in the same vigour for long. The reality is that Communism is dead in most countries and unwell in a few others, although more optimistic Marxists insist that it has simply reached the end of its first epoch.²⁹ With the collapse of Soviet Union in 1989-1990, communism also seeded to collapse. Only five countries now still officially claim **adherence China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam**. Communism could not sustain for long in many countries as it engaged in some very undemocratic practices. It has included severe abuses of human rights, systematic repression, the elimination of opposition, controls on freedom of speech and movement.³⁰ Many such countries have moved away from the oppressive, authoritarian ways. But North Korea, still engages in systematic human rights abuses.

The collapse of Soviet Union had tremendous impact on the global scenario. It made the communist movement even more senile. China remoulded its economy to the point that hardly any of its features could be categorised as communist or socialist. Hungry rescued its doomed politics and economy from communist clutches and has moved on with capitalist economy. Repercussions of fall of Eastern Bloc have been far and wide. Bipolarity of the world is gone. Some say, now world has become unipolar, USA being the unchallenged leader. Others say that it is multipolar in the sense 20th century has witnessed the rise of many economic superpowers.

²⁹ McCormic (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.207.

³⁰ McCormic (2007), *Comparative Politics in Transition*, Wadsworth, p.196.

Most of the post communist states have moved away from their undemocratic governance of the past. Now they associate themselves with liberal democracy. However, in most of post colonial societies, political institutions are still weak and volatile. Also there is greater danger of their relapse into some kind of dictatorship if the society is not able to balance itself. Their economy needs to be bolstered. Enormous amount of challenges lay ahead of such societies. Many of them are already showing the sign of recovery. **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan**, witnessed the multiparty election, though not a very successful one. One of the positive developments is that, the observance of human rights has improved greatly in these societies. China and Cuba are still the exception with lesser respect for human rights. Civil societies are very feeble as the societies have been restricted for so long. Gradually, democracy, private enterprise, free market economy is growing these societies. These societies having been hooked on ideologically to one system, are facing identity crisis

Most of post communist societies today are witnessing intensified ethnic strife along with other problems. The society has to adopt the values of pluralism and tolerance to wade through difficult times. Since these societies have been subjected to socialist economy and politics for many decades, they will take time to adjust their systems with new changes. A study by **Joseph Stiglitz** highlights the problem created in such societies by the sudden replacement of one system with other. The problems were compounded by the interferences of international institutions like IMF and other.³¹



Post-Soviet states (alphabetical order)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Armenia | 5. Georgia | 9. Lithuania | 13. Turkmenistan |
| 2. Azerbaijan | 6. Kazakhstan | 10. Moldova | 14. Ukraine |
| 3. Belarus | 7. Kyrgyzstan | 11. Russia | 15. Uzbekistan |
| 4. Estonia | 8. Latvia | 12. Tajikistan | |

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Bloc

³¹ For details, please refer to Joseph Stiglitz,(2003), *Globalization and its Discontents*, W W Norton & Company, Newyork, London.

Summary

- Socialism stands for state ownership of means of production, nationalisation of industries and public property, prohibition on private ownership and such policies.
- Historical roots of this idea can be traced in the works of **Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong, Saint Simon, Thomas More, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, Eduard Bernstein, Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb** etc.
- The most influential of all socialist and communist theorists was Karl Marx. In fact, Marxist philosophy resulted in creation of socialist political systems in almost half part of the world in the twentieth century.
- West Europe developed its own breed of Socialists or the social democrats who were reformist, gradualist and not revolutionary like Marx.
- The crucial components of state Socialism is common ownership and collectivisation, one party state, centralised political structure controlled by the communist party, regulated economy with no private enterprise.
- Some countries with socialist structures are erstwhile Soviet Union, PRC, North Korea, Hungary (till 1989), Cambodia, etc
- The Year 1991 witnessed the disintegration of the mighty Soviet socialism and put to rest the cold war that engulfed the world for more than four decades.
- The post Soviet states have great challenges in front of them from the task of rejuvenation the sagging economy to democratising and strengthening the political institutions to creatively engaging with the ethnic strife, scarcity of resources in their societies.

Conclusion

The greatest contribution of the idea and concept of socialism has been that it has offered a reasoned critique of industrial capitalism and free market society. It has not only exposed the hollowness of claims of equality and freedom of capitalist society, it has also shown the way ahead. It constitutes a principle alternative to the liberal rationalism or western capitalism. No doubt, there have been lots of problems with the socialist systems. The post socialist states are still struggling with their politics and economy. The challenge is to creatively engage with the transformed time new realities and develop sustainable democracy.

Glossary:

Continental Philosophy: 19th-20th century philosophy of main land Europe

Alienation: signifies separation or isolation of the worker from the product of his labour, his fellow beings, community and himself in the capitalist society. It also results in complete loss of creativity of the worker who is reduced to become a 'cog in the wheel'.

Bourgeoisie: The Property owning class.

Class Struggle: denotes the antagonism and irreconcilable differences between the capitalist class and the working class present in capitalism.

Juxtaposed- opposed to each other.

Liberal Democratic Socialism: The brand of Socialism that developed in Western Europe and advocated peaceful methods of transition to just and welfarist society.

Mode of Production: is the sum total of means of production (tools, equipments, Knowledge, Technology, materials), labour power and the relations of production.

Orthodox Marxism or Vulgar Marxism: It signifies the economic determinism and materialist interpretation of the world.

Instrumental Marxism: believes that the structure of the government exist to serve the interest of the ruling or bourgeoisie class.

Paraphernalia: Parts of something

Prague Spring: Refers to the reforms started by the leader Alexander Dubcek in Czechoslovakia to liberalise the political institutions and practices in 1968, but was stopped by Soviet leadership in its middle.

Proletariat: The Working Class.

Relations of production: is a set of all social relationships that human beings enter into in order to survive, produce and reproduce their means of life.

Revisionist Marxism: This term denotes those theorists who did not believed in revolutionarily and violent methods to change the mode of production but to bring the change gradually within it. Ex. Eduard Bernstein.

Questions for Consideration:

1. After the demise of Socialism in most of the countries in recent decades, is communism still a useful analytical tool for comparative politics?
2. Trace the development of Socialism in and out of Europe.
3. Do you believe that Marxist analysis is still pivotal in the understanding of our society and the world.

(to be incorporated in the chapter of socialism)

Match the followings:

SET A

Classical Marxism

Democratic Socialism

Vulgar Marxism

SET B

Reforms by Gorbachev

Lenin

Soviet Union

Socialist States	Karl Marx
New Economic Policies (NEP)	Eduard Bernstein
Stalin	Economic Determinism
Glasnost and Perestroika	One party state

Fill in the blanks:

- 1. The statement “workers of the world unite as you have nothing to lose but chains...” is from.....
- 2. The policy of Great Leap was adopted by the leadership of..... in People’s Republic of China.
- 3. Socialist states are generally.....
- 4. The primary economic characteristic of a socialist regime is.....
- 5. The idea of communism can be traced to the philosophy ofin his book Republic.

True and false

- 1. The Soviet Union under leadership of Stalin became very autocratic.

True/False

- 2. Presence of only one party that is the communist party in the socialist states leads to the heavy centralisation and hegemony of the later in such societies.

True/false

- 3. The state controlled economy proved to be very beneficial for Soviet states.

True/False

- 4. The Soviet federation failed to respond to the growing assertions of religious nature, cultural and ethnic assertions.

True/False

- 5. The greatest contribution of the Marxist philosophy lies in exposing the evils of capitalist societies and provide an alternate vision.

True/False

Answer key to the fill in the blank exercise

Ans:1. Communist Manifesto

Ans: 2. Mao Zedong

Ans:3. One party state.

Ans:4. State controlled economy and nationalisation

Ans:5 .Plato.

Answer key to the True and False exercise

Ans- 1.True

Ans- 2.true

Ans- 3.False

Ans- 4.True

Ans- 5.True

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