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## 1. Preface: an introduction to Socialism

The Welshman, Robert Owen, is recognised as one of the first socialists. In 1800, he established a co-operative community in New Lanark, near Glasgow, and during the ensuing years, published several writings now considered key documents on laying the foundations of socialism. During the same period, important French contributions were made, by those such as Charles Fourier and Saint-Simon, and by and large, the perspectives of this early cohort are considered **Utopian Socialism**.

This was not however a name then coined by the thinkers themselves, but rather one that became popular based on later criticism by **Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels** of the work of figures such as Owen, Fourier and Simon. Both judged their socialist predecessors as innocent 'utopians' – a cohort longing for social change, without the ability to offer any credible outline of how that change could be achieved. This was in contrast to the detailed 'scientific' analysis they developed during the second half of the nineteenth century of the inevitable pathway towards revolution and fall of capitalism. For example, the famous work 'The Communist Manifesto' was published calling upon the workers of the world to unite, but it was Marx's mature works – particularly *Das Kapital* – that introduced the most thorough criticism of the capitalist system. Although Marx's ideas did not successfully attract a vast socialist following during his lifetime, following his death in 1883 **Marxism** became a philosophy of the greatest importance. In Russia, the ideas were professed and developed by **Lenin**, leader of the first communist revolution in 1917, and then first leader of the Soviet Union. All the same, during the same period, other less radical socialist streams were developed, such as **Social Democracy** based on the work of individuals such as **Eduard Bernstein**, essentially rejecting the revolutionary nature of Marxism.

Socialism is therefore an ideology that has encompassed a range of different streams. Some key elements can however be identified with a tendency to typify socialist ideas as a family of comparable ideas. Of great significance in the tradition's history are concepts such as **Community, Co-operation, Social Justice, Class Politics and Common Control**. Nevertheless, some important issues have given rise to disagreement between the members of different socialist streams. First of all, the subject of the types of methods socialists should use to pursue the better community. On the one hand, those socialists professing Marx's interpretations have emphasised the need for **revolution** and accepted the inevitable use of violence involved. On the other hand, more moderate socialists professing forms of social democracy have pleaded the case of **gradualism** and merits of the **parliamentary pathway**. This perspective proposes that socialism is fundamentally a progression of the essence of liberalism, for the multitude, able to extend rights, equality and desirable standards of living for the majority through a wholly democratic system.

Another subject of disagreement is the kind of *objectives* that should be pursued by socialists – in other words, which kind of society the socialist society should be, and particularly the kind of economic arrangements that should characterise that society. In this respect, Marxists have demanded that capitalism must be demolished, establishing an alternative **communist society** with **common control of methods of production – namely the resources, tools and plant used for the creation of goods**. Social democrats tend to argue however that capitalism can

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be suppressed and social equality ensured by professing a **mixed economy and maintaining a welfare state which redistributes wealth.**

Of course, socialism has vastly influenced **politics in Wales**, and particularly so during the last century. This influence is seen not only with regards to the Labour Party's electoral dominance, but also the course of other parties and movements. From a **global politics** perspective, Marxism is seen to have been the most influential: by offering a foundation for the development of great political powers, mainly the Soviet Union and China, and also offering a foundation to develop a critical analytical perspective which interprets the international system as an expression of capitalism.

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## 2. The roots of Socialism

Scholars generally consider socialism as a political ideology developed during the nineteenth century. However, the roots of the ideation can be traced back much further. Some believe, for instance, that quintessentially socialist ideas are present in the New Testament description of early Christian life. Others highlight arguments of a socialist nature in the work of thinkers such as Thomas More (1478-1535) or even Platon (428-347BC). Despite the importance of acknowledging this background, no cohesive and self-aware body of socialist ideas can be claimed in these early works – this came to light during the nineteenth century. In the view of political philosopher Andrew Vincent (Vincent 1995:88), two significant events can be intimated for their contribution to the development of socialist ideas during this time: the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

The French Revolution in 1789 led to the demolition of the old absolute monarchy regime, establishing in its place a new republic based on progressive principles, such as freedom, equality and brotherhood (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*). With Socialism, it is assumed that the significance of the French Revolution is based on the fact that it highlighted people's ability to try to transform society for the better: that this attempt is possible through radical political and social activity to abolish old institutions and arrangements and in their place build a fairer and more equal society. It can also be argued that the Jacobin movement inspired by the work of philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Gabriel Bonnot de Mably began to give voice to arguments that would become key among socialists. For instance, the Jacobins were very critical of the implications of private property ownership and the amassing of wealth in the hands of a small minority and so they argued for measures that would facilitate land redistribution, shared ownership and co-production.

Alongside the events in France during the 1790s, the Industrial Revolution, leading to the creation of the modern capitalist economy, can be considered a further (and perhaps more important) driver for the development of socialist ideas. From its beginnings in Britain during the second half of the eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution led to fundamental social and economic change across Europe. For the first time, large industries were developed and a huge migration of population was seen from country to town. Such changes however gave rise to very difficult working and living conditions for the new working class. Nineteenth century *laissez-faire* economic policies gave employers the freedom to set wages and working conditions as they wished. As a result, wages tended to be low. Furthermore, the working day tended to be very long (up to 12 hours), the use of child labour was commonplace and the dangers of injury and unemployment cast permanent shadows. Over time, the hardship and pressing poverty that characterised the working class life led to an increasing doubt of the qualities of the modern capitalist society. As a result, by the 1820s and 1830s, a number of political thinkers – that is, early socialists – were beginning to think of alternative methods of social and economic organisation.

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## 3. Streams of Socialism

Although the need for social transformation, based on principles such as equality and co-operation, was a common belief in the arguments of almost all socialists, it is important to remember that there is no single official form of socialism. Over the years, rather, a range of different socialist streams developed. Some of the most influential streams are introduced below: Utopian Socialism, Marxism and Social Democracy.

### 3.1. Utopian Socialism

The first attempt at proposing an outline of the essence of the socialist world view can be found in the work of the cohort now recognised as the Utopian Socialists. This cohort was a predecessor to Karl Marx and active during the early 1800s. It was driven to discuss and write by an increasing awareness of the unfortunate circumstances typical of the new working class life due to the nature of the modern capitalist society. It is indeed particularly important that we in Wales spend time considering the contribution of this cohort of early socialists, as a Welshman – Robert Owen from Newtown (1771-1858) – was one of the most prominent figures. Owen did not consider himself a pure scholar, nor a systematic political thinker. He was the owner of large woollen mills in New Lanark in south Scotland. But, it was through his experience in this field, supervising the work of thousands of common workers, that his interest in political and social matters developed.

Owen came to the conclusion that people's character and abilities are generally shaped by social circumstances. This was a new concept at the time. It meant that Owen challenged the conventional belief that a number of unfortunate conditions typical of working life at the time – ignorance, poverty, illness, offending etc – were an inevitable result of the way in which these people chose to live their lives. At the time, it was generally taken for granted that workers themselves were to blame for their unfortunate circumstances. However, rather than accept this usual conclusion, Owen argued that the unfortunate conditions characterising the lives of so many derived from unfortunate social circumstances – i.e. the circumstances typical of modern capitalist society. Like several of his socialist contemporaries – e.g. the Frenchmen Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and Saint-Simon (1760-1825) – Owen argued that the poverty and suffering typical of the era could be erased, by an alternative means of social organisation. This led to publications such as *A New View of Society* (1816), describing the nature of utopian society – a socialist society that would be based on love and collaboration. Indeed, one of the remarkable things about Owen's work was his detailed descriptions of the ideal society. He went as far as discussing people's attire, as well as patterns of conception!

The work of Owen and early socialists was also characterised by their belief – faith, even – in rationalism. They believed that their strength of argument would certainly win the day, persuading powerful capitalists and governments to voluntarily introduce socialism. Of course, this view now appears hopelessly naive. Indeed, this naivety would soon be harshly criticised by Karl Marx and his friend Friedrich Engels. They continued to disregard predecessors such as Owen as 'utopians' – a cohort imploring social change, but failing to propose any credible outline of how that change could be ensured. The utopian view of their predecessors was in

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contrast to their 'scientific' interpretation of the inevitable pathway to revolution and the fall of capitalism (see below). Despite this criticism, it is important to note the great similarity between some of Robert Owen's arguments regarding the nature of the ideal society, and the arguments later introduced by Karl Marx, for instance on community ownership of production methods and the need for needs-based goods distribution. Indeed, Owen's ideal society can almost be described as an early form of Communism.

## 3.2. Marxism

One name sure to appear in the discussion of socialism is Karl Marx. Marx is without doubt a critical figure within the socialist tradition. The ideology cannot be studied without addressing his ideas in some way. Neither can Marx's ideas be discussed without noting the influence and significance of his intelligence friendship with another German, Friedrich Engels, who met Marx in 1844 and influenced him in the first place with his work *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. This was a book written in German and translated to English in 1885 and recognised as a classic – one conveying the suffering of people and the deterioration of their lives in the capitalist society. The relationship between the two was a lifelong one.

### 3.2.1. A criticism of capitalism

The work of Karl Marx is largely a criticism of modern capitalist society. To gain understanding of this criticism, his discussion on the theory of disengagement must first be considered. This discussion was developed by Marx in the Paris Manuscripts, a collection drawn up in 1844 (yet unpublished until 1932). According to Marx, one of the main changes caused by the growth in capitalism was that witnessed in labour customs (i.e. work). Labour was an all-important element to Marx. It is this, in his opinion, that liberates people and differentiates between us and animals. In labour, we develop skills and talents, as well as an understanding of the world. Labour also allows a person to showcase his ability to plan and then act upon those plans. These are not qualities present in animals – who behave instinctively, without any purposeful planning. Marx however noticed that the arrival of capitalism led to a fundamental change in working class labour. It was no longer an activity allowing the worker an expression of humanity. In contrast, capitalism led to the disengagement of the working class.

Workers are initially disengaged from the produce of their labour. They are no longer working to satisfy specific life needs as needed, but to produce impersonal goods to be sold for a profit. Workers are also disengaged from the process of labour. Under capitalism, as opposed to working according to their own arrangements, they must work according to the direction and schedule of managers and supervisors. Furthermore, these work arrangements are not very sociable and therefore disengage workers from their colleagues. And last of all, capitalist work patterns led to the disengagement of workers from themselves. As opposed to an activity allowing an expression of humanity and freedom, labour had become no more than a commodity – something sold to earn a wage.

Although the concept of disengagement appears significantly in Marx's early works, it does not feature as heavily in some of his later works – for instance, *Das Kapital*. Marx is rather seen to

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focus increasingly upon the capitalist tendency to promote class conflict and exploitation. According to Marx, capitalism is a regime dividing society into two main classes –the *bourgeoisie* (owners) and *proletariat* (workers) – insisting that the exploitation of the latter by the former is inevitable. This stems from the fact that the *bourgeoisie* class owns ‘methods of production’ – simply, the works and also all tools used by the *proletariat* to accomplish their work. The *bourgeoisie* will also own all goods deriving from *proletariat* labour and claim all profit from the sale of those goods. Marx believed that this spawned a relationship between the *bourgeoisie* and *proletariat* based on inevitable exploitation. For the *bourgeoisie* to be able to profit from goods produced with their works and resources, members of the *proletariat* will need to spend some time every week working for free. After all, the *bourgeoisie* can only ensure profit for themselves by paying their workers below the true value of labour. If it paid out the full value of labour, there would be no money left over to be banked as profit. Marx insisted that exploitation of this kind was an essential component of the capitalist economy and it would continue no matter how progressive or enlightened the employer.

Some of Marx’s main criticisms of the capitalist regime are therefore witnessed. This is a regime that, on the one hand, is bound to cause the workers’ disengagement from their true nature, whilst on the other hand, encouraging owners in their systematic exploitation of employees.

### **3.2.2. The materialist conception of history**

Marx nevertheless did more than criticise capitalism. He also tried to explain why, in his opinion, it was a regime sure to eventually crash, and how that would happen. Marx based these arguments on his distinct interpretation and explanation of historical and social change. This method is called the *material conception of history*.

This materialistic interpretation divided society in two. First of all, there was the *economic base*. As the name suggests, this term referred to social economic arrangements, and particularly, the methods of production (tools and resources used to produce goods) and production relations (how labour was organised to utilise methods of production). Atop the economic foundation sat the *superstructure*. This term was used to refer to other aspects of life, including areas such as politics, law, religion, culture and art. Of these two parts, Marx believed the first – the economical base – to be most influential. He argued that the economic arrangements of any society are sure to influence every other aspect of life there – politics, law and culture. The economy is therefore the foundation of society.

Thus, if the economy is so fundamental to all, doesn’t it naturally follow that any significant change in economic arrangements leads to far-reaching change in society in general? That was certainly the conclusion reached by Marx. He argued that his careful historical studies – for instance in volumes such as *Deutsche Ideologie* (1846) – had shown that change to the underlying economic structure has, over time, been responsible for moving society onwards from one historical period to the next – for example, the shift from the feudal period to the modern capitalist period characterised by new methods of production and also new working arrangements.

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But, over the course of history, what has caused these economic changes giving rise to wider social change? According to Marx, the concept key to this explanation is the *dilechdid* (dialectic), a permanent process of interaction between opposite forces that, over time, creates conflict and therefore triggers far-reaching social change. In this respect, Marx followed Hegel. Nevertheless, Hegel focussed upon the role of conflict in the world of ideas, for example the conflict between reason and Christian superstition. He believed that conceptual conflict of this kind was the driver of historic and social change. However, as Marx emphasised the influence of the economic base, he tended to underline the materialistic conflict coming to light on this level. Indeed, he argued that every historic period was based upon economic arrangements typified by fundamental conflict or tension. The feudal period, for instance, was characterised by fundamental conflict between the economic interests of master and peasant. The process of dilechdid change eventually results in the climax of this conflict, giving rise to new economic arrangements, and therefore, a new social superstructure.

The capitalist period is no different, according to Marx, to earlier historic periods. As already seen, capitalist economic arrangements are characterised by fundamental conflict between the interests of two main classes – the *bourgeoisie* and *proletariat*. The former's possession of methods of production, and also its need to use these methods to create profit, leads to exploitation of the latter – members of the proletariat. As such tensions existed under capitalism, Marx assumed that the fall of society in this form was as inevitable as the fall of earlier social forms.

The nature of the materialistic conception of history is therefore witnessed as the historical interpretation used by Marx in an attempt to explain the inevitability of the fall of capitalism. A feature of this interpretation was the focus on the economy's influence on the rest of society. As a result, Marx insisted that any historical and social change should mainly be interpreted as a process of economic change driven by conflict between the interests of different social classes or cohorts.

### **3.2.3. Revolution and Communism**

Beyond explaining why the fall of capitalism was inevitable in his opinion, Marx also tried to elaborate on how this would occur. Some of these ideas are found in the *Communist Manifesto* published in 1848.

Marx was willing to acknowledge that capitalism, especially related developments in technology and production methods, had given rise to significant progress in the ability of man. It meant that we now possessed the material ability to eradicate the poverty and need suffered by so many. However, the nature of the capitalist regime was to soldier against this. It must be remembered that production under capitalism was essentially the utilisation of resources and labour for the creation of profit rather than the satisfaction of social needs – profit that flowed into the pockets of one specific cohort, the bourgeoisie. As a result, over time, the significant conflict existing between working class and bourgeoisie interests would only further intensify. Marx supposed that the working class – gathering on factory floors – would eventually become increasingly aware of their downtrodden position under capitalism – class awareness – and, at the hiatus of this awareness, rebel against the regime.



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Marx also underlined the other capitalist features that would further promote the awakening of the working class. He initially highlighted the completely unstable nature of capitalism. Under capitalism, the economy tended to grow and grow before a sudden crash causing great recessions that would eventually slow down production and increase unemployment. During such times, of course, the working class would suffer most. He also emphasised that capitalism is a regime tending to accumulate power and wealth in the hands of less and less people. For instance, we still hear constantly of the tendency of some large companies to buy several small ones, bringing vast portions of the economy under the control of a handful of people. Marx believed that this would result in an increase in the number of working class, further emphasising the unfairness of the capitalist lack of accountability. All factors above would eventually come together, leading to a working class revolution to bring about the demolition of capitalism. This would be more than an ordinary political revolution leading only to the displacement of government and those in power. This would rather be a full revolution, leading to the establishment of a whole new political, social and economic regime: communism.

On the whole, the details given by Marx are quite broad regarding the exact nature of this revolution and also the nature of the ensuing communist society. He does however make some definite points. He states that the establishment of proletariat dictatorship is initially fundamental during early revolution, for the working class to take power into their own hands. According to Marx, such dictatorship is necessary in the early days to prevent bourgeoisie reorganisation which undermines the revolution, and also to ensure that communism is successfully established.

In establishing communism, one of the all-important initial steps will be to eradicate private ownership of methods of production – that is, economic resources previously owned by the bourgeoisie and foundation of their power. As opposed to continuing as private assets of individual capitalists, these resources will be transferred to the people in general. It can then be ensured that the production and distribution of goods can be transformed from a profit-making process into one based on satisfying real social needs. As this process progresses, class differences typical of the capitalist society will gradually disappear and eventually also the need for state.

### 3.2.4. Post-Marx Marxism

Marx died in 1883. However, the development of Marxist ideas did not die with Marx himself. They continued to be discussed, adapted and augmented by his successors. Here are some important contributions.

- **Vladimir Lenin(1870-1924):** Lenin argued that Marxists should not take for granted that the fall of capitalism was wholly inevitable and that members of the working class would rise to lead the revolution. He argued that the working class alone did not possess the necessary political awareness to drive and lead such a revolution. As a result, a progressive cohort of revolutionists was needed to act as a *vanguard* for the working class. The role of this cohort was to establish themselves as a political party – not a party with a vast mass membership but rather a select cohort of professional and

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committed revolutionists with the ability to offer political and ideological leadership to others. As a result, when Lenin's Bolshevik party came to power in Russia in 1917, it was claimed that it did so in the interests of the working class across the country.

- **Mao Zedong (1893-1976) and Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969):** Mao and Ho Chi Minh were both inspired by Marxism and the Lenin-Marxism ideology that developed through Lenin's interpretation of the tradition. As with Lenin, both implemented the ideology in their own countries in a revolutionary, aggressive form. In the case of Mao – who came to power in China with the Communist Party in 1949 after twenty years of battle – he developed aspects of the Marxist ideation deriving from the country's experience and circumstances. Although inspired by Lenin, especially in the anti-Imperialist battle, there are interesting differences in his perspective, especially in his focus on countryside and the peasant community. He saw significant tension between urban and rural, on a national and international level, with the capitalist western world oppressing underdeveloped countries. To him, therefore, commonfolk played an essential role in the communist battle due to their lack of investment in the capitalist system, and practically through guerrilla warfare. In that respect, he denied Lenin's idea of the *Vanguard* and rather emphasised the need for unity and a 'collective line' among the multitude. Similarities featured in the ideas of Ho Chi Minh, leader of the independent movement of Viet Minh and Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam when established in 1945. The peasant community was the cornerstone of the communist revolution, as part of the national movement battling for freedom against Imperialist forces.
- **Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937):** An elected member of parliament and then General Secretary for the new Communist Party of Italy, Gramsci was imprisoned in 1926 by Mussolini, and remained incarcerated until his death. In a collection of famous manuscripts written in prison, Gramsci argued for reconsidering the traditional emphasis amongst Marxists upon the influence of economic and materialistic factors. In introducing the concept of hegemony, he outlined how the power and status of the bourgeois class was dependent upon conceptual and ideological dominance, as much as economic dominance. It was this ideological dominance that allowed capitalism to be introduced as the only possible way for society – the only 'common sense'. As a result, Gramsci argued that Marxists needed to undertake a conceptual battle in order to create an alternative hegemony not based on bourgeois materialistic and avaricious assumptions.
- **Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979):** By the second half of the twentieth century, Marxists in the west considered it necessary to reconsider the ideas of their predecessors, in an attempt to explain why capitalism, despite Marx's predictions, remained relatively stable and the working class lacked any revolutionary edge. One active in this consideration was Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse's solution was the conclusion that it should not be taken for granted that the working class were the revolutionary cohort. The years following the Second World War were of relative prosperity and as a result Marcuse supposed that

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working class members had been compromised as they adopted the middle class mindset and values. As a result, he argued that Marxists should consider the situation of other 'peripheral' and 'oppressed' groups, for instance girls, ethnic groups, students or third world residents.

### 3.3. Social Democracy

The term Social Democracy has altered significantly in meaning over the years. Originally, during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was considered synonymous with Marxism – that is, describing yourself as a social democrat suggested support for the arguments of Karl Marx. For instance, when political parties were established to spread Marxism – as achieved in Germany in 1875 and Russia in 1898 – they tended to be called Social Democrat parties.

Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, and certainly the beginning of the twentieth century, the term's significance was beginning to change. Those holding onto Marx's interpretations began to profess the term communism. This change of key was emphasised in 1918, when the Bolsheviks in Russia decided that the Social Democrat Labour Party of Russia should be renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Following this, a number of those parties and movements in support of the Bolsheviks, and holding on to Marxist interpretations, decided also to call themselves communists. The term social democracy herewith became linked to a much more moderate stream of socialism. In general terms, it now referred to a cohort sceptical of Marx' arguments and seeing the need to revise them.

A key figure in the development of Social Democracy as an alternative socialist stream was the German, Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932). His vast contribution to this movement is significant. He was an ex-pupil of Marx, and was indeed appointed to look after Marx's papers following his death in 1883. Despite this, Bernstein became increasingly sceptical of the credibility of Marx's arguments and, in volumes such as *Evolutionary Socialism* (1898), set about outlining his alternative world view.

Bernstein initially expressed doubt regarding the Marxist tendency to emphasise the need for revolution. These doubts originated from some of the social and political changes seen during the last decades of the nineteenth century. To begin with, it was during this period that the working class set about establishing a range of important institutions – workers clubs, trade unions and political parties – that would contribute to the protection and elevation of their interests. Such institutions also contributed to a stronger sense of belonging and unity amongst members of the working class. Additionally, and perhaps more significantly, it was during this time that the elective franchise was vastly extended, with an increasing number of working class gaining the right to vote.

For instance, in Britain, the right was extended to a limited number of workers in 1867 and this was expanded in 1884. Then by 1918 the right was extended to men in general and also a limited number of women. All in all, these changes led to giving the working class a political voice quite a bit stronger than before, and therefore it was likely that their interests would be

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given more attention. In Bernstein's opinion, such changes meant that the Marxist argument for violent revolution was no longer sustainable.

The expansion of the elective franchise, in particular, offered a new pathway to the working class – socialism could now be a cause gradually promoted through the medium of democracy.

Second of all, Bernstein argued that the experience of life during the last decades of the nineteenth century had also undermined the credibility of some of Marx's arguments regarding the nature of the capitalist economy, as well as the inevitable fall of that regime. Bernstein insisted that capitalism had developed to be a much more stable and flexible regime than originally supposed. Marx claimed that capitalism was a regime that would lead to increasing and permanent poverty among the working class. However, from around 1870 onwards, a gradual increase was seen in wages and standards of living across a number of western countries. Significantly, and in complete contrast to Marx's predictions, this increase extended to every social class and not only some wealthy members of the bourgeois class. Also, during these years, capitalism developed into a much more complex and multifaceted regime. Marx had insisted that the growth of capitalism would lead to the accumulation of wealth and capital in the hands of less and less. However, in complete contrast, during the last decades of the nineteenth century, great expansion was seen in the possession of wealth. One of the factors leading to this was the growth experienced in companies where ownership was divided between a number of shareholders, as opposed to one powerful industrialist. In addition, the kind of social polarisation between proletariat and bourgeois predicted by Marx was never witnessed. Due to changes within the labour market, more and more people were instead employed in professional areas (civil servants, teachers, solicitors and the like), giving rise to a new social cohort – the middle class – belonging neither to the proletariat nor bourgeoisie.

As a result of these findings, Bernstein argued that the Marxist description of capitalism – a regime characterised by crude economic exploitation as well as relentless conflict between the classes – no longer held water. The regime that was had adapted and therefore questions could be raised regarding the need for its complete demolition. With this in mind, it is no surprise that the social democrats of the twentieth century, for instance members of the German Social Democrat Party, the United Kingdom's Labour Party or Italy's Socialist Party, have adopted somewhat tighter social and political objectives. Rather than the complete demolition of capitalism, the focus tended to be upon the need to suppress and reform it by adopting policies such as the following:

- **The Mixed Economy:** This is an economic regime standing halfway between completely free market capitalism and public ownership of every economic aspect. Social democrats have tended to recognise that the free market has its place. As a result, it was argued that measures establishing public ownership should be limited to specific areas – economic highlights such as electricity, coal, steel and railways – with the rest of the economy remaining in private ownership.
- **Economic Control:** While social democrats accept that capitalism has its merits, they also see a need for regulation to ensure steady economic growth and protection from periods of sudden inflation or unemployment. Social democrats such as modern liberals

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have thus argued for Keynesian macro-economic policies that utilise public spending and taxation to regulate capitalism.

- **Welfare State:** This is the preferred method of social democrats to attempt to tame the inequality that can arise under capitalism. Through the welfare state – institutions such as the education system, the health service, the benefits system – the state may redistribute wealth and opportunity, in an attempt to ensure more equality across society and reduce poverty.

In the period between around 1945 and the early 1970s, several assumed that the kind of ideas being professed by social democrats – ideas extensively overlapping elements of modern liberalism – had come to represent the political ‘common sense’ across the majority of western states. Nevertheless, this was a period of steady economic growth, low unemployment and low inflation and, as a result, states were able to fund increasingly generous welfare provisions. However, the great depression of the 1970s led to a crisis for those professing social democracy. On the one hand, it led to a great increase in the demand for state welfare provisions as unemployment increased, but, on the other hand, it put pressure on the ability of the state to fund such programmes (as less people were working and therefore unable to pay taxes). Facing such challenges, severe debate developed between different social democrats – with some insisting that priority be given to the task of ensuring economic efficiency reducing inflation and cutting taxes, and others claiming there should be a commitment to protecting the poor and needy by maintaining and expanding key welfare provisions – and this created a political void that enabled the very different debates of the New Right to begin to gain ground.

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## 4. The key elements of Socialism

Despite the important differences between different streams of Socialism, some common elements or themes can be noted that tend to characterise the Socialist world view; elements that allow us to differentiate somewhat between Socialism and other political ideologies, particularly Liberalism or Conservatism.

### 4.1. Community

One core element to every kind of socialist is the assumption that human beings are social creatures. They believe therefore that we have the ability to effectively collaborate with others, in the pursuance of common objectives. We are not creatures who will prioritise our personal interests by all means, according to socialists. This is based on the fact that none of us live in a void and completely self-sufficiently. We are rather all rooted within larger units – that is, as members of communities – and very often totally dependent on the connections and support that derive from this.

Furthermore, the significance of community context is seen in the fact that socialists, unlike a number of liberals or conservatives, renounce the suggestion that people have an innate nature that cannot be changed – that is, we are all, in nature, either good or bad. Socialists rather believe that human nature is flexible, and shaped by circumstances and experiences faced during people's lifetimes. As a result, our characters and abilities are not predetermined pre-birth, yet fostered and learnt within a specific social context.

### 4.2. Co-operation

As they interpret human beings as social creatures, socialists have also tended to emphasise the merits of co-operation. To them, the facilitation of collaboration between individuals is much more beneficial than competition. The creation of competition will encourage individuals to challenge each other and thereby induce selfish and aggressive behaviour and undermine social qualities. However, by encouraging the members of society to work together, they can be motivated to develop the ability to sympathise, trust and care for each other. Furthermore, collaboration will allow the abilities and energy of the entire community to be channelled in the same direction, rather than different individuals all crossing each other.

### 4.3. Social equality

The strong commitment to equality is one of the main features of socialism – to socialists, this is undoubtedly the most important political principle. Furthermore, the tendency among socialists is to profess the concept of social equality or outcome equality, rather than the more limited concept of equal opportunities professed by liberals. Socialists believe that this more far-reaching form of equality is essential to ensure equality. Unlike liberals, socialists are not willing to accept that inequality can be justified with regards to wealth within society on the basis that all individuals are different, and have different abilities and also interests. Socialists do not deny that important differences exist between members of society and they do not insist that it should be organised that everyone has exactly the same talents and skills. For instance, the socialist society would not need to ensure that each student earned the same grades in their A Level examinations. However, socialists do believe that the most extreme and obvious cases of inequality (e.g. significant differences in income, health and standard of living) derive from

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unfavourable social treatment, and they cannot be disregarded by referring to some of the differences in skills present between individuals.

Socialists also put great emphasis upon the importance of equality, as it is necessary, in their opinion, to maintain stable communities, where effective collaboration occurs between members. If people live together in an equal society, they will be more likely to relate to each other and work together in the promotion of common welfare. As a result, socialists believe that equality fosters a sense of social solidarity.

## 4.4. Class politics

Socialists have tended to treat social class as the most significant political division within society. Class is a theme that comes to light in socialist work in two different ways. First of all, class is treated as an analytical concept. Socialists have tended to interpret society as a collection of different classes, with each class bringing together those of the same economic status. Members of each class will then tend to relate to each other and share the same kind of world view.

As a result, in the socialist opinion, classes, rather than individuals, are the key players within society, and understanding the path of these classes is the key to understanding any social or political change. This belief is seen at its most prominent in the historical theories of Karl Marx, where it is claimed that the evolution of history is a result of a series of conflicts between different social classes. Secondly, socialism is often treated as an ideology offering protection from the interests of one social class in particular, the working class. This is a class that suffers constant exploitation and oppression due to the nature of the modern capitalist regime, but, at the same time, this is a class with the potential to lead the way towards an improved socialist society.

Despite the constant emphasis on class politics, it is important to note that socialists do not assume that class is a permanent and unchangeable social feature. After all, for a number of socialists, especially those that have professed forms of Marxism, the hope, eventually, is to reach a period where economic inequality has disappeared and class boundaries have ceased to exist.

## 4.5. Common control

For many socialists, the root of inequality and damaging competition within society is the ownership of private property. In this respect, socialists refer to property that can be treated as 'capital' or 'assets' and used to produce further wealth. It should be noted that the socialist criticism of private property does not extend to renouncing the idea that individuals can own personal items, such as a homes, clothing, leisure items or toys. The social damage resulting from the existence of private property encompasses several aspects. First of all, it is insisted that private property ownership creates inequality: as wealth production always depends on a collaborative effort by a wide range of people, that wealth should be owned by the whole community as opposed to some select individuals. Second of all, private property is claimed to damage our sense of morality by motivating people to think in materialistic terms and to suppose that happiness depends on harvesting as much wealth as possible. Thirdly, it is argued

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that private property leads to social division and encourages conflict, for instance between workers and employers or rich and poor.

As a result, socialists have argued for the abolishment of the private property concept by establishing common control of any capital that can be used for wealth production. For some, for instance revolutionary Marxists, an attempt should be made to completely abolish private capital as part of establishing communism. Social democrats have also argued for the establishment of common control. However, there has been a tendency to favour doing so in only a limited range of areas, for instance in the case of some key industries such as coal, steel, electricity and gas – those described as economic 'highlights'.



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## 5. Comparing Socialist methods: how to pursue the better society?

While a range of key elements can be listed that characterise all kinds of socialist work, a range of important differences can also be noted. Two matters in particular have given rise to great differences of opinion between members of different socialist streams. Initially, there is the matter of the methods that socialists should utilise to access the better society. Secondly, the matter of the objectives that socialists should pursue – in other words, what kind of society the socialist society should be. The former is discussed in this section, and the latter is addressed in the next section.

### 5.1. Revolutionary socialism

The general opinion among a number of early socialists, including Karl Marx of course, was that revolution that completely demolished the capitalist regime was the only hope of introducing socialism. It was also generally accepted that violence would be a likely outcome of such revolution. As seen, Marx believed that the arrival of this revolution was inevitable, and that the exploitation so central to the capitalist operation would lead the working class to rise to demand change. However, the first successful socialist revolution in Russia in 1917 was quite a different process. At the time, power was seized by a disciplined cohort of revolutionists under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, in an act resembling more of a *coup d'état* than mass social rebellion.

There were two reasons why nineteenth century socialists were so willing to profess the concept of revolution. First of all, early industrialisation had led to extremely difficult living conditions for the working class and truly unbearable poverty. Bearing in mind such circumstances, it is understandable that so many concluded that capitalism was no more than a regime based on crude oppression, and it being only a matter of time until the working class members were ready to challenge the regime. Secondly, at the time, the other options available to the working class were few if they were to ensure political influence. Whilst steps had been taken across several parts of Europe during the nineteenth century to establish representative and constitutional governance arrangements, in the majority of cases the right to vote was limited to those already owning property.

However, the belief of some socialists in the need for revolution to ensure political change was more than a matter of tactics. The belief also originated from their interpretation of the power of state. Whilst liberals have tended to interpret the state as an impartial entity with the aim of giving fair consideration to the interests of all, revolutionary socialists have interpreted it as an oppressive entity with the task of protecting the interests and property of the bourgeoisie at the expense of the proletariat. With this in mind, it was assumed that the pursuance of socialism through a process of slow and gradual reform would be completely pointless. Instead, only the complete eradication of the bourgeoisie state by revolution could ensure equality for the working class.

### 5.2. Gradualism and the parliamentary pathway

In contrast, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, the socialist tradition developed more gradually and moderately, doubting the need for violent revolution to ensure meaningful

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social changes. As seen above in the ideas of Eduard Bernstein (section 3), the original trigger for this development was the growth of trade unions, socialist political parties, and also, the gradual expansion of the right to vote. With this, it became possible to imagine a more peaceful parliamentary pathway towards the socialist society. Indeed, some socialists gradually came to believe that the development of democracy would inevitably lead to implementing socialist ideas. This faith was based on a series of assumptions.

- First of all, it was assumed that extending the right to vote to every adult in society would transfer great political power to the working class, the most numerous class in any industrial society.
- Secondly, it was assumed that the working class would be sure to support the cause of socialism. As capitalism was a regime oppressing members of the working class, there was no doubt that those people would therefore vote for socialist parties.
- Thirdly, it was assumed that social parties, when elected, would be able to introduce a programme of far-reaching social change.

In brief, it was assumed that democracy not only offered a way in which to realise socialism through peaceful means, but that the process was inevitable.

However, it has now become clear that none of the above assumptions had solid foundations. Indeed, although parties of a socialist nature had ensured significant support, and seized political power in every democratic state except those of North America, their parliamentary supremacy has not been permanent. This raises important questions regarding to which degree socialists can take for granted that working class members will always support the cause of socialism. Also, during recent years, due to deindustrialization and labour market changes due to the rise of professional occupations, it cannot be assumed that most members of society now belong to the working class. .

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## 6. Socialism and capitalism: demolish or reform?

The second matter of importance that gives rise to significant disagreement between different socialist traditions is the very objective that should be pursued – that is, which kind of society the socialist society should be. The disagreement here arising is essentially based on the different ideas on how to deal with capitalism: should it be demolished or reformed?

### 6.1. Communism

On the one hand, those socialists upholding the interpretations of Marx and Lenin have insisted that only through the complete demolition of capitalism and the establishment of an alternative communist society can there be hope of ensuring social justice and equality.

On the whole, the details given by Marx himself are quite broad regarding the exact nature of communist society. He does however make some definite points. First of all, he believes that the establishment of proletariat dictatorship is initially fundamental during early revolution, for the working class to take power into their own hands. According to Marx, such dictatorship is necessary in the early days to prevent bourgeoisie reorganisation which undermines the revolution, and also to ensure that communism is successfully established.

When later establishing communism, one of the all-important key actions would be to eradicate private ownership of methods of production – that is, those economic resources previously owned by the bourgeoisie and foundation of their power. As opposed to remaining as private assets of individual capitalists, these resources will be transferred as common property of the whole society. It can then be ensured that the production and distribution of goods can be transformed from a profit-making process into one based on satisfying real social needs. As this process progresses, according to Marx, class differences typical of the capitalist society will gradually disappear and eventually so the need for state.

However, practical communism, as developed in places such as the Soviet Union, eastern Europe, China and Cuba during the twentieth century, proved to be vastly different to the forecasts of Marx and Engels decades earlier. To a great degree, this derived from the fact that communist parties were not seen to seize power in the thoroughly capitalist developed states of western Europe, as assumed by Marx. It occurred instead in much less developed countries, with vast sections of the population still living in very rural areas – such as Russia (that nevertheless had a number of large industrial centres where socialism took hold) and especially China. There was not a strong mass working class present here that was politically aware and ready to challenge the regime in the way in which Marx had anticipated. Therefore, the revolutionary movements did not develop along the exact lines imagined.

In the case of Russia, the communist revolution witnessed was a campaign led by a relatively small cohort of dedicated radicalists. This then impacted the nature of governing regimes established. When the Bolcheviks came to power in Russia in 1917, led by Lenin, it was achieved claiming that they operated in the interests of the working class. It was therefore concluded that any political cohort in opposition represented the perspectives and interests of other classes – particularly the bourgeoisie – and so to protect the proceeds of the revolution,

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every party except the Communist Party had to be prohibited and prevented. By 1920, therefore, the Soviet Union had become a single-party, totalitarian regime with only one specific body – the central committee of the Communist Party – having the right to voice working class interests and how communism should then be progressed. The practical experience of communism during the twentieth century was thus characterised by much narrower and stricter circumstances than the free expectations expressed by Marx.

## 6.2. Reforming and suppressing capitalism

Whilst a number of Marx followers continued to insist that capitalism was a regime of fundamental weakness, and therefore beyond saving, those more gradual socialists who have inclined towards the social democrat tradition have adopted a more moderate perspective. This perspective is essentially based on an attempt to tame and suppress capitalism, rather than demolish it completely. Some of the actions that social democrats believe can be taken to accomplish this have already been highlighted (see section 3). To summarise once more, they include the following:

- **The Mixed Economy:** This is an economic arrangement halfway between a completely free market capitalism and public ownership of every economic aspect. Social democrats have tended to recognise that the free market has its place. As a result, it was argued that measures establishing public ownership should be limited to specific areas – the highlights of the economy such as electricity, coal, steel and railways – whilst the rest of the economy remains in private ownership.
- **Economic Control:** While social democrats accept that capitalism has its merits, they also see that it needs regulation in order to ensure steady economic growth and protection from periods of sudden inflation or unemployment. Social democrats like modern liberals have thus argued for Keynesian macro-economic policies utilising public spending and taxation to regulate capitalism.
- **Welfare State:** This is the preferred method of social democrats to attempt to tame the inequality that can arise from capitalism. Through the welfare state – institutions such as the education system, the health service, the benefits system – the state can redistribute wealth and opportunity, attempting to ensure more equality across society and decrease poverty.

It is, by and large, a more moderate political and economic system that has characterised the social democrat tradition, as one more willing to acknowledge that capitalism is a regime with some merits, and that emphasis should therefore be placed on suppressing its more damaging aspects rather than demolishing it completely. This means therefore striking a balance between measures that establish common control of some economic aspects, and provisions also warranting a secure role for private trade and ownership.

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## 7. Socialism in Welsh politics

“At heart, the Celtic people are all Communists ... with the love of the Welsh for Socialism one of their most well-known qualities.”

This quote from 1907 by Keir Hardie –leader of the Labour Party and Merthyr Member of Parliament – alludes to the reputed connection between Wales and socialism, and the suggestion that a natural relationship exists between them. In one aspect, the claim is completely anachronistic, in the sense that the concept of a socialist legacy dating back centuries is contrary to the fact that socialism is a modern ideology. The finding is likely to be based somewhat on the interpretation of Welsh society dating back to the Middle Ages, highlighted in the old native Laws of Hywel (named after Hywel Dda (880-950 AD) which were responsible for retifying laws across the majority of Welsh territory. Indeed, in their discussions concerning the Welsh, Marx and Engels discussed their native laws and traditions.

Those laws are notable for some aspects that would now be considered as reflecting the importance of equality and fair distribution of property. For instance, it is known – and contrary to the tendency of the times – that it particularly addresses the law of women and cases such as divorce. Joint ownership of resources, such as water mills, is also mentioned. Another typical theme is land distribution; where the laws of other people such as the Normans would usually be *primogeniture* – where all land would be inherited by the oldest son – the Laws of Hywel required the youngest son to divide the land into chunks so that each of the sons received some of the inheritance. Central to the process was the fact that he was given the last choice, in order to ensure a fair division – because the son with the last choice would therefore wish to ensure chunks of a similar size. Of course, the fact that the land was being divided between sons, and not daughters as well, raised fundamental questions about how fair and ‘socialist’ in form these Welsh societies were. Care must be taken therefore not to claim thoughtlessly that there was a ‘socialist’ tradition in Wales before socialism existed. However, it is important to recognise that ideas and stories and myths that have arisen in its wake have strongly influenced, and continue to strongly influence, the Welsh consideration of themselves as more ‘socialist’ people than their English neighbours especially.

These findings were corroborated by the Welsh social reality of the modern age, specifically owing to the remarkable changes following the industrial revolution. As the works and coal mines developed, hundreds of thousands of Welsh and people from other areas migrated to the areas in the south especially. It can therefore be claimed that Wales became very quickly a country of ‘working class’ due to the relatively high percentage of people living in these industrial communities – not only in the south but also the north-east, whilst the development of the slate industry in the north-west had also given rise to the growth of working class communities in those areas. In these industrial areas, particularly by the turn of the twentieth century, the ideas and practices of socialism – especially the co-operative institutions and unions –were taking firm root and would characterise those societies for close to a century.

### 7.1. Robert Owen

The integral contribution of Robert Owen to the international socialist tradition has already been

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discussed, along with the importance of some of his fundamental principles that laid the foundations for its development. It is implied that Owen's vision of relatively small co-operative communities (exemplified by New Lanark, which is now an UNESCO heritage site) had been inspired by his childhood experiences in Newtown – especially so his emphasis upon the relationship between man and nature and the need to respect the environment. It is also possible to interpret his optimistic, 'utopian' ideas, as Marx called them, as the yield of the Methodist religious tradition that had taken hold in the Wales of his childhood. 'Millenarianism' had heavily influenced this movement, being the idea that human society is preparing for the second coming of Jesus and realising, to all intents and purposes, heaven on earth. The optimism of early socialists, and philosophers such as Hegel and Marx, regarding the development of society towards perfectionism was considered a secular interpretation of that millenarianism, and there certainly has not been any other socialist thinker with more belief in the possibility of perfection than Robert Owen.

There is no way however of claiming that socialism took an early hold in Wales based on the activity of Owen, who had left Wales as a young boy (although wise and remarkable at ten years old). He developed a number of his more mature ideas during his period as a young adult in Manchester. Indeed, during the nineteenth century, despite the sudden growth of industrial communities, Owen's ideas were opposed in his homeland as they refused institutional religion, and indeed that reflects a wider unwillingness to embrace an ideology that was essentially a secular interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. It was only with the growth of these communities, the development of unionism, the expansion of the elective franchise and also the invasion of people and ideas from urban areas of England and beyond, that socialism gradually began to take hold in Wales at the close of the century. During that period, some Welsh turned towards their compatriots for inspiration.

## 7.2. The Labour Party and streams of Socialism in Wales

One of the most colourful and engaging figures amongst Welsh socialists by the turn of the twentieth century was R.J.Derfel, a poet and preacher living in Manchester for much of his life, who turned to socialism taking Owen as his main inspiration. He ran a Welsh bookshop there, and a related press, publishing extensively in Welsh and English. He was also one of those ensuring the early influence of the Fabian Society in Wales. A feature of his efforts was the attempt to reconcile his faith and socialism – an attempt that was increasingly easier in an age where Christian socialists were inspired by figures such as John Ruskin and William Morris.

Derfel ei hun would soon become an inspiration to twentieth century socialists such as T.E. Nicholas – 'Niclas y Glais' – one of several Welsh speakers active in the Labour Party with Keir Hardie. Among his peers were David Thomas, an educator and author central to the effort to establish the Labour Party in north Wales. By and large, these figures represented a stream of Welsh Socialism partly influenced by 'intrinsic' aspects such as Nonconformity, and actively trying to establish a Welsh Labour Party that would emphasise the Welsh language and culture, and also support autonomy, if not independence, for Wales. In the figure of Keir Hardie, the Scotsman and Methodist, they had a soulmate, but after his death and the tumultuous period of the First World War, the activity of this wing of the party faded as it was increasingly influenced by those wishing to see unity with the Labour Party across Britain.

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It must be remembered that socialism had taken root in south Wales and the north-east partly through connections with England and industry and railways and, in that respect, the increasing influence of the English language. Institutions such as the Central Labour College were very influential in developing a socialist ideology and awareness that professed the unity of the British socialist cause and opposed the concept of difference among the working class. This was circumstantiated especially by the 'FED', the South Wales Miners Federation, which emphasised international solidarity rooted in class identity, at the expense of the expression of an awareness of nation. After the revolution in Russia at the end of the First World War, the spread of Marxist ideas, and the increasing influence of the Communist Party in Wales, international aspects strengthened here in particular. On the whole, there was no room within this world view for specifically Welsh needs or injustices – although Communists, more than anyone else, were willing to consider the importance of Welsh identity as part of the fight against capitalism. This, of course, corresponded to the tendency amongst Liberation movements across the world to merge the nationalist and Communist, and individuals such as Niclas y Glais were very comfortable in following the pattern in the Welsh cause.

Another stream of the ideation with shortlived influence in Wales was syndicalism, influenced by figures such as Noah Ablett, chief author of '*The Miners Next Step*' pamphlet published in 1912. Syndicalism was essentially a tradition opposing more conventional socialist tendencies that leant towards the idea of centralization of power in state. As opposed to parties, unions were considered to be the most important institutions, professing local ownership rather than industries in state hands, and a federal regime organised according to society's economic units rather than a powerful, central state. In that respect, there are some consistencies with Robert Owen's original vision of a series of co-operative communities, but the socialist movement in Wales, like in Britain, eventually came to depend on the Labour Party as the institution to take forward the cause.

### 7.3. Aneurin Bevan

To many, the Labour Party in Wales is embodied by the totemic figure of Aneurin Bevan. He became a Member of Parliament in 1929, by which time the party had won the electoral supremacy that has continued to this day. In the general election of 1922, it won over half the seats and since then has dominated party politics, winning over 50% of the popular vote on several occasions. Bevan is most well-known for his role as the Minister who established the National Health Service, during the Labour government of Clement Attlee, that came to power in 1945 following the Second World War, establishing the modern Welfare State that tried to ensure education, healthcare and a benefits system that would provide a much more equal society.

He was a controversial figure who split public opinion, and a feature of his career was the tendency to toe the line between being an idealist acting on principle and a pragmatic politician determined to get things done. As a result, he experienced times at party edges, and other times upon a pragmatic pathway, and he remained an influential and progressive figure until his death in 1960. Indeed, one wing of the Party – a cohort clinging to more radical left wing ideas – were by then identified as 'Bevanites', in the face of the party's more moderate leadership of Hugh Gaitskell.

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Bevan's ideas were typical of a number of values and principles already discussed, bridging the more revolutionary Marxist tradition with the tradition of Socialist Democracy. Certainly, in his emphasis upon power, his understanding of the all-important influence of society's economic structures, and his belief in the principle of nationalising the large industries, the influence of Marx, and his education at the Central Labour College, was obvious. During the 1930s when the more moderate tradition of the Labour Party was severely criticised, due to its failures and the crisis of the great recession, Bevan was one of several more open to more radical influences. On the other hand, he was loyal to the principles of democracy, the importance of freedom and the individual responsibility it allows, and these values were highlighted in his criticism of the Soviet Union's totalitarian tendencies.

Bevan's perspectives on Wales revealed some tension in his political and personal attitudes. As son of a Welsh speaking poet, he valued the importance of the Welsh language and culture, especially in the face of what he considered the greyness of the American capitalist culture. On the other hand, he was a harsh critic of Welsh nationalism, considering the problems of the Welsh working class as suitable for response and policy on a British level only. In that respect, he was sometimes guilty of indulging less than friendly opinions against Welsh nationalists. Yet, his influence is acknowledged by more than one of his peers in the eventual establishment of the Welsh Office opened in 1964, which was significant in the long journey towards devolution and establishing the Senedd.

## 7.4. Raymond Williams and Plaid Cymru socialism

Unlike Aneurin Bevan, one of the other most notable figures of the socialist tradition in Wales was an academic – coming from Pandy, a small village in Monmouthshire on the English border. Raymond Williams studied in Cambridge and returned there as a scholar, and became known internationally for his work in cultural studies and his connection with the *New Left* movement. This was fundamentally a group of thinkers that tried to adapt the ideas of the Marxist tradition by reducing the emphasis on economic foundation, choosing rather to analyse the way in which aspects of culture operate and sustain the capitalist system. Williams and his like were influenced by philosophers such as Gramsci, who highlighted the heavy influence of the superstructure (aspects rather than the economy such as politics and law) upon people's understanding and eventual acceptance of the ideas and values of that system. Through his emphasis on the influence of popular culture and mass media, Williams changed what was understood as cultural studies in more traditional forms such as literature.

The practical implications of such ideas were the expansion of the battle against the regime beyond 'the factory floor', emphasising the importance of renouncing the oppressive structures of the capitalist state on other grounds. Specifically, the *New Left* tended to emphasise the importance of battles based on identity, extolling feminism and the battle for women's equality, and the activity of minorities and people of colour in an attempt to ensure recognition and rights. Following on from this initial perspective, Raymond Williams had interesting views on the Welsh situation, and considered the implementation of the Welsh Language Society as part of the wider opposition to the regime. He was himself a member of Plaid Cymru for a time. Contrary to the mainstream tradition of the Labour Party, he considered the British state as part of the problem for socialists, because that state is linked, in his opinion, to capitalism. Furthermore, in



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his writings, Williams also suggests that the working class culture and Welsh language culture are both lifestyles that challenge the regime, and that the nature of Welsh society is therefore perverse to capitalism in a way that is untrue for aspects of English society – which inclines more towards serving the capitalist regime.

Williams' work was influential among some nationalists in Wales, especially those such as Dafydd Elis Thomas, who attempted to set Plaid Cymru upon a socialist pathway in the 1970s and 1980s. Other figures such as Robert Griffiths and Gareth Miles, who would establish the Welsh Socialist Republican Movement during the 1980s, were also responsible for popularising Marxist orthodox ideas among nationalists. These essentially argued that Wales would not be able to prosper as a country and protect the interests of its people without becoming a thoroughly socialist independent state. Although they did not succeed in complete radicalisation of the party, it is true that Plaid Cymru since the 1980s has shifted to describe itself as a socialist party and placed itself clearly on the left wing of the political spectrum, partly in an attempt to challenge the dominance of the Labour Party in the industrial areas of the south.

## 7.5. Socialism since Devolution

From a party perspective, the Senedd in Wales has been a semi-socialist governing body since the beginning, based on the Labour Party winning around half the vote in every election, and Plaid Cymru returning around 10 or more members. But although two thirds of members therefore represent social democrat parties in name, it is uncertain to what extent Welsh policies over that period can be considered traditionally left wing – although the Labour Party has governed in coalition with Plaid Cymru between 2007 and 2011, and since then given incidental support.

During the time of Rhodri Morgan as First Minister, there is no doubt that the Labour Party used rhetoric and the occasional policy to place Labour in Wales to the left of the New Labour of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown in Westminster, coining the phrase 'clear red water' between Wales and England, or the United Kingdom as a whole. This was an attempt to express the idea that Welsh tradition contains values which are a little more socialist, and that policy needs to reflect that, such as the decision to ensure free prescriptions for Health Service patients. An attempt was also made to renounce the New Labour tendency to try to reform parts of the public sector, such as education and health, by using private companies to offer some services, or promote competition between providers.

However, it would be very difficult to argue that some of these policies have taken Wales on a very different pathway, whilst Welsh Labour under Carwyn Jones have highlighted these alleged differences to a much lesser degree. This is somewhat attributed to the fact that the Conservatives have been in power in Westminster, and a resulting emphasis on protecting core services in Wales, but the less thoroughly socialist tendencies of Labour have been highlighted by the leadership of Leanne Wood over Plaid Cymru, and the recent arrival of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party in Westminster. The perspectives and manifestos of Plaid Cymru have recently tended to be of a more socialist tone, whilst Carwyn Jones has placed himself and Welsh Labour in opposition to Corbyn's socialist more traditional perspectives. It seems that clear red water is now flowing in the opposite direction, in the case of the Labour Party at least.

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## 8. Socialism in global politics

Socialism in its various forms is an universal ideology, in the sense that it is a collection of values and ideas able to be spread across the world, theoretically at least, according to those professing them. Such was the belief of Robert Owen on his co-operative communities – communities that he believed could characterise every society no matter where in the world. In their *Communist Manifesto* Engels and Marx appealed to workers of the world to unite in their fight against the bourgeoisie. This tradition is reflected in the constant claim that socialism is an internationalist ideology, its sights stretching beyond the individual nation to the international direction, professing causes such as workers' rights, peace and equality on that level also. This international spirit was incorporated into two institutions of great importance, namely the *First International*, or *International Workingman's Association* (1864-1876), and *Second International* (1889-1916). Both movements were intended to merge left wing groups – socialists, communists, anarchists, unions – in an international network to come together in a class war. The former came to an end due to breaches with the anarchists, that were not part of the following institutions, although the movement remained influential until the First World War. The cause was demolished as a result of the support of a number of socialist parties for war, in the face of principled opposition to the working class being made prey to the big guns. The *Third International* was another matter, namely the *Comintern*: the institution formed in 1919 to conduct a mission for Communism for the Soviet Union. It would play a leading role in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) when socialists, anarchists and Communists fought with the Peasantry, against nationalist forces. This is an articulate expression of the internationality of the international socialist movement, with *International Brigades* organised by the Comintern attracting tens of thousands of soliders from various countries – including Wales. The notable book of Hywel Francis, *Miners Against Facism*, traces the contribution of these individuals to war.

### 8.1. Marxism

It is fair to say that the Marxist tradition is of greatest interest on an international level, partly due to its success as an ideology under the leadership of the Soviet Union's Communists, and partly due to the notable views and analysis offered by the perspective. In particular, the Marxism developed by Lenin (leader of the Soviet Union following the Russian Revolution in 1917) showed how the empires of the time could be interpreted as an expression of capitalism in its most developed form, as the wealthy western states attempted to find more profit by exploiting labour and resources from other parts of the world. From the Marxist perspective therefore, international politics can be understood not so much as a society or system characterised by individual states co-operating or fighting against each other, but rather a single global economic system controlled and used by some countries to exploit others.

The long term ambition from the perspective of Communism, therefore, is the destruction of this capitalist system on an international level, to rid the world of systems considered immoral and unnecessary. Implicit in the foreign policy of states such as the Soviet Union was the intention to undermine those countries loyal to capitalism – but in practice, this was neither a priority nor realistic, particularly during the early years of that state. Indeed, due to the internal requirements of establishing and developing a communist system, side-effects of the great recession, and the

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rise of fascism in Europe, for a long time there was no true effort to widely spread the system. However, due to the Second World War, Joseph Stalin was given an opportunity to reconstruct the situation, and that was achieved through expanding the circle of influence over a number of countries in eastern Europe. This Soviet 'block' would develop a communist system over the next years in complete opposition to the capitalist system in western Europe and north America. This was indeed the beginning of the 'Cold War' – so-called due to the lack of bloody conflict between the Soviet Union and United States. This was partly due to the development of nuclear weapons and the planned disastrous outcomes of any military conflict. However, in reality, two states **were** at battle, but that battleground was in other countries in Africa, South America and Asia, with both sides trying to support, finance and arm those groups loyal to their ideologies.

International politics during the decades following the Second World War was therefore essentially an ideological war between Communism and Capitalism. That war was 'won' by the end of the '80s when the Soviet Block began to disintegrate, and, one country at a time, the communist system was shunned, with Russia ending the process in 1991. There are at least two obvious outcomes to this process – first of all, capitalism is now considered the only valid system, and socialism would have to battle on that basis, able to demand only policies suppressing the market. A mixed economy was the best that socialists could now hope for – except for the example of Cuba. Secondly, with capitalist supremacy a new age began in the world of international politics where the Americans dominated, and some suggest, like Francis Fukuyama in his book *The End of History*, that world politics is shifting towards a situation where countries would turn one by one to democratic liberalism.

Despite the failure of Communism, the interest in Marxism continues, partly due to the understanding that a number of aspects of Social Union development were disloyal to the original vision. In that respect, and particularly in an age where the global economy has faced further crises, a Marxist interpretation of some contemporary problems remains appropriate. One of those perspectives is the theory developed in the 1970s by thinkers such as Immanuel Wallerstein, the theory of dependency. Beginning with the concept of the international system as one huge economy, these thinkers claimed that the global capitalist system is one requiring some parts of the world to be kept in a state of dependency to enable the capitalist system to work, and produce profit for people in other parts of the world. According to this perspective, we have a global economy with a core and a periphery, with the metropolitan core extracting human and natural resources from the periphery for utilisation and exploitation in production processes. On the other hand, those peripheral states do not have the experience or ability to make much of their core resources, and most importantly of all, there is no way for them to establish what is necessary to create profit and compete with others, namely resilient production industries.

## 8.2. Social democracy

Whilst Marxism and, in that respect, liberalism, have been very influential in international politics, and particularly regarding field study, social democracy has not received the same focus nor been a basis for comparable recognised tradition. One suggestion for this lack is the tradition of thinking that, in truth, fosters social democrat values but is introduced in the name of

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another tradition, egalitarian liberalism. To all intents and purposes, this is the American label for one family of ideas – one used partly due to the link of ‘socialism’ to the old rival, the Communism of the Soviet Union, and due to the strength of the liberal tradition and the importance of individual rights in its history.

One example of a philosopher introducing such ideas is Thomas Pogge (from Germany originally), and indeed, it is quite easy to recognise the socialist influence in his work due to his debt to the dependency theorists like Wallerstein. In that respect, Pogge places great emphasis upon the barriers of the global economic system upon the development of countries in the majority world (a contemporary term for the concept of the third world) – arguing that people in the west have a duty to work towards dissolving those structures that, to all purposes, continue to exploit vast parts of the world. There are other thinkers in this tradition, for instance the Indian Amartya Sen, who have written extensively on the need to reform the world’s countries according to democratic principles. For him, the economic and political development of countries is dependent upon ensuring wider freedom for individuals, especially women. Those arguing for ‘global justice’ (see also the section on liberalism) are arguing to all purposes for the extension of social democratic principles to the international level, professing the redistribution of resources, fairer economic structures, extension of rights and ensuring further equality between individuals and people of the world.

From a practical point of view, several examples can be identified to try to promote this agenda, particularly since the Second World War. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in response to atrocities such as that war, is a starting point in the attempt to promote world-wide justice. Another notable contribution was the Brandt Report in 1980, an investigation (under the leadership of ex-Chancellor of West Germany, Willy Brandt) of the inequality characteristic of the international community – and the resulting recommendations of wealth redistribution between countries. In 2000, the Millennium Summit was held, and subsequently, eight development aims were drawn up for the international society, again reflecting socialist democratic values such as eliminating poverty, promoting education, ensuring equality, improving health, as well as protecting the environment. The Millennium Development Goals in 2016 were followed by a list of 17 Sustainable Development Aims, showing progression with the original goals but reflecting also the immediate need to respond to the environmental crisis.