

CHANTAL MOUFFE'S AGONISM- A THEORY FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM?

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the agonist theory of radical democracy of Chantal Mouffe. Through a critical reading of her works, the thesis assesses Mouffe's critique of liberalism and her understanding of the political. It goes on to understand her theory of agonism as a theory of a radical democracy and its relevance to contemporary democratic socialists. The thesis affirms that through its understanding of the political, recognition of the role of hegemony in political order, and the critique of post-political illusions, Mouffe's theory is of great pertinence to democratic socialists. It agrees with Mouffe and recommends that democratic socialists recognize the centrality of conflict in society and create an alternative democratic socialist hegemony to challenge that of the neoliberal order. Following Mouffe, it recognizes the possibility of creating a radically different polity within the ambit of democratic pluralism through a counter-hegemonic project. While being appreciative of many aspects of her theory, the thesis finds it lacking on the exact nature of political order in her radical democracy. However, it understands that her theory is largely compatible with a broad framework of liberalism (which she doesn't negate completely).

Dedicated to:

All those who resolutely maintain (despite the jeers from right-wingers and other conformists on one hand and orthodoxy of Leninists, Stalinists, Maoists, and other left-wing monists on the other) that both pluralist democracy and socialism are essential for a free and just society.

Like my friend, John Hess who wrote on Facebook: “This seems like as good a time as any to affirm publicly that the ‘democratic’ in my democratic socialism is 100% non-negotiable.”

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List of Abbreviations

Some abbreviations

CPI (M)/ CPIM/CPM- Communist Party of India (Marxist)

DYFI- Democratic Youth Federation of India

PCF- Parti communiste francais (French Communist Party)

PS – Partie Socialiste (Socialist Party)

PSOE- Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol (Spanish Socialist Workers Party)

SFI- Students Federation of India

Introduction

This thesis seeks to critically analyze the radical democratic theory of agonist pluralism as espoused by Chantal Mouffe. It argues that it is an appropriate theory for democratic socialism in the twenty-first century. Mouffe is a contemporary post Marxist political philosopher who has provided a theory of what she calls a radical democracy. It is a theory which seeks to establish a radically different democratic society without seeking to achieve such transformation through violent revolution or a one party authoritarian state. Mouffe is a pluralist (agonism is also called agonistic pluralism) and rejects communism or Marxism-Leninism as it is an authoritarian and monist ideology. Her theory seeks to provide support to establish socialism within a broad democratic framework. However, she is highly critical of social democrats who have, according to her, moved to the center rejecting socialist principles (Mouffe, 2005).

The purpose of the thesis is to make a case for her theory of agonist radical democracy as a suitable theory for democratic socialists in the twenty-first century. It must be noted that there are many different theories of agonism. This thesis only focuses on the one espoused by Mouffe. This is because the purpose of the thesis is not to discuss different models of agonism. The thesis seeks to understand how it is possible to establish a radical democracy - another model of democracy in place of the liberal one.

The end of the Cold War dealt a severe blow to left-wing politics worldwide. It appeared as if the collapse of the communist systems of the erstwhile USSR and its East European Satellites meant the defeat of the entire socialist project. This is because it was not just communist (Marxist-Leninist) parties which felt the pinch after the Soviet collapse but even Social Democrats. Along with the tenets of orthodox Marxism-Leninism, such as the one-party state, authoritarian rule, and democratic centralism, many of the other socialist

principles such as the public ownership of industries, businesses, government control over markets, and public spending on social security were also seen as the remnants of a defeated ideology. The Social Democratic parties across Europe steadily moved to the political center. The left-wing principles and ideals of socialism seemed to have been relegated to the past.

The optimism of Fukuyama (1992) and others who predicted an end of history has been short-lived. The neoliberal centrist consensus has been unable to solve the major problems of the world. Their world order has not benefitted all sections of society. Inequalities have not been reduced. The discontent with the current world order is being manifested in several ways - from the rise of far-right populism to anti-globalization movements, to the re-emergence of what can be called 'far-left' political parties.

However, the conditions of income inequalities and other related problems of distribution, which do not benefit most people in today's world order makes socialism a relevant theory. Mouffe's theory provides a scope for a radical transformation of society while staying within the ambit of pluralist democracy.

The central question of the thesis is whether Mouffe's agonist political thought is helpful for democratic socialists. This prompts further questions on her reading of pluralism, democracy, and liberalism. What is the nature of pluralism in Mouffe's agonism? Since Mouffe advocates a theory of democracy, how is it similar/dissimilar to liberal democracy? Since Mouffe does not discard all the institutions of liberal democracy, is it possible to reconcile liberal democracy with agonist radical democracy? Finally, in what way does Mouffe's theory relate to some of the democratic socialist parties and their politics? In other words, in what way do current democratic socialist parties and their policies correspond to Mouffe's theory?

The thesis hypothesizes that there is a significant contribution that Mouffe's theory can make towards the theory and praxis of democratic socialism. It demonstrates that Mouffe through her model of agonism, provides a radical vision of democracy- something which would be of significant help to democratic socialists.

This thesis is a work of political theory. It seeks to analyze Mouffe's radical democratic theory of agonism and critically evaluate its claims and implications. As critical reading goes beyond the understanding of a text, the thesis offers an interpretative reading of Mouffe's works within the contemporary socio-political context. The thesis evaluates her works and critically examines her premises and the outcomes of her theory. It also assesses how her works are useful in advancing the theory of democratic socialism, but it also discusses the limitations of her theory and points to places that require further development.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the issue of liberalism and its conceptions of pluralism. The second chapter critically explores Mouffe's theory while also engaging the influence of Carl Schmitt on her works. The chapter explicates the centrality of the concept of the political in her theory and the role played by power relations and hegemony. It finds Mouffe's theory to provide ideas about a radical democracy but lacking in concrete ideas about the structure of a radical democratic regime. Finally, the chapter puts her theory in contrast with liberalism and demonstrates that agonism is compatible within a broad framework of liberal democratic principles.

The third chapter seeks discusses Mouffe's agonist critique of the left-wing theories of the past three decades. It agrees with her proposition that both the Third Way theorists like Anthony Giddens (1998 and 2000) and the ultra-left theory of Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) suffer from the problem of being post-political. The chapter reifies the need for leftists to come out of the post-political way of thinking.

The fourth chapter shows how Mouffe's theory can be used to understand some contemporary democratic socialist projects. The chapter focuses on the possibilities of establishing a democratic socialist hegemony. Three parties/political platforms are discussed- Podemos in Spain, the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and La France Insoumise in France. The chapter also proposes, following Mouffe, the coordination between movements and parties.

Overall, the thesis finds Mouffe's theory to be of immense assistance for democratic socialists who intend to challenge the capitalist world order. Some of the main lessons that they need to learn is to get out of the post-political way of thinking, comprehend the real nature of the political, understand the role of conflict and finally discern the effect of asymmetry of power and omnipresence of hegemony in any order. Using these concepts, they must seek to create a counter hegemony to take on the neoliberal one.

Chapter 1 – Liberal Pluralism

This thesis seeks to make a critical study of the radical democratic agonist theory of Chantal Mouffe. Mouffe has created her theory of agonism (also known as agonistic pluralism) to provide a basis for the creation of a radical democratic society or a democratic society which is radically different from the one we live in. She is a post-Marxist thinker who intends to advocate a radical change in a society without taking recourse to a revolution. She is against monist tendencies such as Marxism-Leninism which seek to establish authoritarian regimes. While being critical of liberal democracy, its ideas on pluralism and how to deal with a plurality of political opinions, she advocates a different brand of pluralism. To understand her critiques of the liberal order, it is important to understand the basic tenets of liberal pluralism. That is the purpose of this chapter. It provides the liberal understanding of pluralism and introduces the agonist critique. The next chapter deals with the agonist alternative.

1.1 Approaches to Plurality

All societies are marked by the existence of plurality. People organize themselves into various groups based on numerous factors such as race, class, caste, gender, religion, language, ethnicity, ideology and so on. When it comes to political participation and power, it is quite natural that different group would seek to get as much representation as possible. However, when it comes to government systems and political power, not all systems allow equal representation to the various groups in the society. Liberal democracy seeks to address this problem and provide a solution. The liberal democratic model based on the concept of equality of persons, presence of constitutional rights, the rule of law and free and fair elections seek to

accommodate pluralism. However, this model of representing plurality has been confronted by agonist theorists.

The crisis faced by liberal democracies today, especially after the 2008 economic crisis, makes it pertinent to consider the critique of agonist theories of democracy. Agonism challenges the philosophical foundations of the liberal understanding of the relationship between social and ‘the political.’ It provides an alternative understanding how society ought to be organized and how different (and competing) worldviews ought to be represented in society. As such, it is a radical democratic political theory that provides a very different understanding of democracy and pluralism.

This chapter seeks to provide an outline of liberal understanding of pluralism. It also discusses the centrality of individual autonomy in the liberal theory of pluralism. The chapter proceeds by an outline of the agonist critique of liberal pluralism.

1.2 Liberal Theory of Pluralism

Pluralism is an idea which is opposed to monism. It is the idea that there is no one fundamental value of well-being or a ‘good life.’ There are a variety of such ideas and conceptions of the good: pluralism recognizes the existence of a diversity of ideas and worldviews in a political system. How to deal with this reality of the presence of diverse opinions and worldviews has been an important aspect of theorists and political philosophers. How is plurality to be actualized in the politics? It is often assumed that democracies are pluralist societies by default due to the features like multi-party systems, elections, the rule of law and protection of fundamental rights.

Liberal pluralism is based on the concept of individual autonomy, according to which every person can act individually to make sense of her life. Individuals are supposed to be rational, autonomous beings capable of pursuing their worldviews and interests. Since every individual is separate from another, there is bound to be a plurality of thoughts and opinions. The principles of personal autonomy, liberty and equality require that the state remains neutral with respect to pluralism of the understandings of the 'good life.' The liberal theory of pluralism is at the core of the liberal democratic systems. It seeks to provide peace and stability in a society divided along different lines.

1.2.1 Isaiah Berlin on Pluralism

Isaiah Berlin was an ardent proponent of pluralism. He rejected monism as the belief that 'there is a single harmony of truths into which everything, if it is genuine, in the end must fit.' (Berlin, 1998). He includes within these monistic ideas a wide range of ideas from essentialist religious doctrines to communism, fascism, and nationalism. For him, all these monistic ideals create ideas (in their own way) about 'how society should be organized, how individual lives should be lived, how culture should be developed' (Berlin, 1998) for that is supposedly the only correct way of living a good life and all other ideals and methods are wrong.

Berlin sought to theorize an order where there would be a recognition of a plurality of separate ways of life (Berlin, 1998). However, Berlin is not a relativist. He does not argue that 'my values are mine and your values are yours and none of us can claim to be right' (Berlin, 1998). For him, values are creations of man and not some laws of nature or differences arising out of something which would be a part of 'human essence' (Berlin, 1998). Values are not

something which cannot be changed, ‘overcome or integrated’ (Berlin, 1998). Different people subscribe to different value systems which can be understood as beliefs and ideologies.

Berlin (1998) makes a case for a possibility of peaceful human understanding through pluralism where people of different values will differ but accept the idea that there is no one correct way of doing things (pluralism). This will make people understand why another person does something which he/she doesn’t do. He gives the example of Nazism- a set of values which Berlin (1998) detests but can understand how someone can become a Nazi. Berlin (1998) says that Nazis are detestable but not insane or pathological. He maintains that they are ‘wickedly wrong’ (Berlin, 1998) but not pathological. As mentioned earlier, Berlin was not a relativist. Just by understanding how a Nazi becomes a Nazi or why a Nazi thinks the way he or she does, does not exonerate the Nazi ideology. He maintains that the Nazis must be fought, ‘with war if necessary’ (Berlin, 1998).

Berlin’s theory is based on the idea that it is possible to establish a pluralist political system with different sets of ideas which are not mutually hostile to each other. He claims that the logical conclusion of his pluralist argument is the establishment of a liberal, pluralist system featuring a toleration and mutual respect of different values which are not completely incompatible with each other. This idea of ‘value pluralism’ is one of the important aspects of liberal theory of pluralism which tolerates a huge variety of political concepts. The exclusion of certain ideologies such as Nazism is justified because they are deemed to be incompatible with the basic tenets of liberalism such as tolerance and pluralism.

1.2.2 John Rawls and Political Liberalism

John Rawls is another doyen of liberal political thought. In his book 'Political Liberalism' (1993) he has discussed in detail about the importance of pluralism in a political system. He makes a case for pluralism because it is a legitimate expression of individual autonomy. Rawls (1993) argues that the two principles of justice are compatible with the liberal idea that the state should be neutral in a debate between competing ideas of the good. Rawls (1993) frames liberal pluralism as a political idea which makes peaceful coexistence between different/mutually incompatible groups possible through the application of reason.

A person is said to be reasonable when he or she views another as a free and equal citizen in a system of social cooperation where all reasonable citizens agree to participate reciprocally on the terms and conditions of that cooperation even if it is (Rawls, 1993, p. xxlv and p. 49-50). Thus, a reasonable person is one who is able to participate in a social sphere which is made up of issues common to people of all denominations. They are issues on which they have all cooperated to accept as binding decisions taken by the majority principle, even if it goes against their personal comprehensive doctrine (Rawls, 1993, p. 49-50). A reasonable doctrine is one which goes by this principle of tolerance and agreement to common public decision. For example, Catholics have every right to believe that abortion is bad and not practice it. However, if a public decision is made by the majority principle (part of the social cooperative sphere) allowing abortion, they should not impose their views on others. If Catholics use state power to do it, it will be considered unreasonable. Rawls (1993, p. lv-lvi) says that competing comprehensive doctrines need not (and will not) result in unanimity. However, the outcome of a vote and decision by the majority principle will be considered reasonable if citizens of a reasonably just constitutional regime sincerely vote in accordance with the idea of public reason (Rawls, 1993, p. lvi).

A reasonable doctrine is one which is one which consists of both theoretical and practical reason. It must also be a comprehensive doctrine which draws upon a distinct tradition of thought and remains reasonably stable over time (Rawls, 1993, p. 59). No one doctrine is endorsed or is likely to be endorsed by all in society. Hence Rawls (1993) argues that the institutions of a liberal democratic system must recognize and promote pluralism. Since there is no universally acknowledged idea of the 'good' or the correct way to live, the state cannot side with any political doctrine. This is the principle of the neutrality of the state. Rawls (1993) maintains that a liberal constitutional democracy with civil liberties and rights is a polity where individuals, each of whom are free and equal citizens, divided along lines of opposing and mutually incompatible religious, moral, and philosophical doctrines can live together peacefully despite their differences. Rawls (1993, p. xlvii) makes point that political liberalism is not a comprehensive doctrine which would confront the non-liberal and religious doctrines, but it is a political conception which non-liberal doctrines can endorse. Rawls hopes that an overlapping consensus (1993, p. xlvii) can be reached where reasonable doctrines can coexist based on the principle of reciprocity.

The Rawlsian concept of reasonableness requires each theory/doctrine to compromise on certain aspects of it so that they can participate in the social sphere of cooperation. This would require them to convert their doctrine into something which can be pliant with this system of cooperation. To participate in the public sphere/sphere of cooperation, certain doctrines must tone down on certain aspects of their doctrine. For example, Catholics must be ready to accept the fact that there will be abortion in the society if a majority in the public sphere decide to vote in its support. Rawls (1993, p. lvii) seeks to create a bifurcation of reason into public reason and non-public reason. Political liberalism is concerned with only public reason. A member of a community has every right to follow practices against the decision of the majority so long they honor public reason. He again uses the example of Catholics and the

abortion issue. Rawls (1993, p. lvii) declares that it is very much acceptable that the Catholic church, using its non-public reason, requires its followers to follow the Church doctrine and desist from abortion. For Rawls, this will be acceptable so long as they honor the public reason—that is they do not impose it on others.

As Rawls (1993, p. 61) writes, people of one reasonable comprehensive doctrine would find that of others as unreasonable from their point of view. However, a reasonable person should understand that people who do not conform to his or her views do so because they have a belief in another comprehensive doctrine (to which they are entitled). If a doctrine wants to use state power to impose itself on others, it will be considered unreasonable (Rawls, 1993, p. 138). Hence, the state being a collective power of equal citizens should not have any business using force to impose one view over another.

Rawls says that political pluralism is an intrinsic part of the answer to the question of how a civilized and peaceful society is possible in a pluralist society (Rawls, 1993, p. xvii). He argues that tolerance for the plurality of the reasonable doctrines and their conceptions of the good is an intrinsic part of a liberal society. He goes on to elucidate that the liberal project is one where persons of mutually incompatible doctrines can live together peacefully. Rawls warns that the absence of tolerance would make way for (as it was for centuries) and civil strife arising out of differences. Hence, for Rawls (1993), a central aspect of political liberalism is to ensure plurality in a democratic way and erase conflict.

In ‘Political Liberalism’, Rawls says that liberal pluralism is a problem of justice but not a question of the highest good. For the modern person, the idea of the highest good lies in his or her personal ideology. The duty of the liberal state is not to interfere into that but to ensure that each person is able to lead a peaceful way of life according to his or her choice. Hence the liberal polity does not dictate a perception of the common good. However, it must

be noted that Rawls (1993) does keep in mind that there are possibilities of the existence of insane or unreasonable doctrines which can destroy the atmosphere of tolerance and plurality. Such doctrines must be contained, and it must be ensured that they do not destroy the rights and freedoms of others.

Rawls' idea is to bring people of different ideologies (religious, moral, political, philosophical, or other) together in support of a pluralist liberal constitutional regime.

1.3 Liberal Pluralism in a Liberal Democracy

The section above discussed the ideas of pluralism in two stalwart liberal thinkers in formulating their approach to deal with plurality. Liberal pluralism requires democratic political regime with a comprehensive list of rights. A liberal democratic state also demands a strong multi-party setup. Different political groups organized into political parties fight for political power. Free and free elections along with the rule of law and respect for equal rights seeks to ensure the smooth functioning of the system.

Contestation is one of the most central features of democracy. The logical consequence of the liberal democratic system is that democracy recognizes the existence of different and compatible worldviews. Different groups with different ideas about running the government and making policy organize and compete for power within liberal constitutional arrangement. Hence, liberal democracy provides, at least theoretically, the room for pluralist representation.

This leads to the idea that for liberals, the concept of 'the political' refers to a space of common action and individual liberty (Mouffe, 2005 and 2014) where individuals, being rational persons, can participate. Through debate, deliberations and free and fair elections, rational individuals take part in the political process. This kind of an understanding of the

political by liberals has drawn much criticism from opponents especially agonists. Through deliberation, these rational individuals are expected to create a liberal society where there will be coexistence of multiple values.

The chapter has introduced the concept of pluralism and how it is important in politics. It has made a brief introduction and explanation- with the examples of Isiah Berlin and John Rawls on how liberals conceive pluralism. Summing up, the liberals recognize the pluralism of ideas, values, and worldviews in the society. They are vehemently against monist tendencies. However, the liberals focus on freedom and autonomy of the individual. The individual is the unit of analysis of the liberals. For liberals, the political is an arena of freedom, individual liberty and rational decision making. However, this kind of an analysis of liberalism has been criticized by agonists like Mouffe (1993, 1999, 2000 and 2005).

Agonists claim that the liberals do not understand the true nature of conflicts in the society. They insist that conflict is central in the society. Liberals are unable to grasp this reality. This stems out of their incorrect understanding of the political. This is because liberals focus on individuals as their unit of study instead of groups. Agonists maintain that it is not possible to understand politics without considering the conflicting groups. Individuals do not act as atomized beings. Their identities and affiliations are politically determinant factors. Moreover, each regime is marked by hegemony. Without understanding hegemony or the power relations, it is not possible to make a comprehensive understanding of politics.

Based on these ideas, agonists like Mouffe have come up with their alternate versions of pluralism. Mouffe's theory of agonist democracy seeks to create a radical society while remaining within the purview of democracy and pluralism. While this chapter discussed the liberal ideas and its version of pluralism in brief, the detail of the agonist critique along with the theory of agonism and radical democracy will be discussed in the next.

The agonist theory for the establishment of a radical democracy is very important for democratic socialists because it provides a political strategy for political action to their ideals. Democratic socialists seek to establish socialism without a revolutionary overthrow of the state. Mouffe's agonism provides scope to such a project. It paints a vision for the establishment of a radical future within a broad democratic setup.

The next chapter deals with the details of the agonist alternative. Chapter three and four deals with how her theory can help democratic socialists.

Chapter 2 – Exploring the Agonist Alternative

The thesis seeks to make a case for a radical democratic alternative to liberal pluralism by incorporating the centrality of conflict of society, introduced in the previous chapter. This chapter makes a critical assessment of Chantal Mouffe's agonism as an alternative theory to liberal pluralism. To do that, this chapter explores the intellectual foundations of her theory, drawing from Schmitt, identifying two key elements, the concept of the political and the friend/enemy distinction. Mouffe has interpreted these concepts in her own way to arrive at a theory of pluralism, which is quite distinct to the monist ideas of Schmitt. This is important because Mouffe argues that liberals, obsessed with individualism, are unable to understand other concepts other than their own. This analysis provides many new means to understand politics. The next chapters will focus on how these concepts are helpful towards the establishment of an agonistic radical democracy.

2.1 Agonism

Agonism is a political theory that stresses upon the importance and centrality of conflict in a society. Agonists believe that societal conflict is inevitable and permanent. Society is marked by a plurality of groups. Groups are based on conflicting identities, worldviews, and interests. The struggle between competing groups is the central element in politics.

Contrary to liberal theorists, agonists seek to create a theory that attempts to highlight the positive aspects of conflict and create a system that would provide the suitable conditions for such conflicts. Agonism is a pluralist theory of democracy. Agonists believe that it is possible to channel conflicts between groups within a political order. While the conflict is a permanent feature of politics, the opponents would recognize each other's right to exist. It opposes monist approaches that seek to establish exclusivist and exclusionary monopoly of one

doctrine, obliterating its opponents in its way. It is also a theory against the liberal cosmopolitan brand of politics that seeks to overcome the role of conflict in society through rational accommodation.

Wenman (2013, p. 6) remarks that unlike most Western theorists of the normative political thought, agonists do not base their understanding of politics in theories of human nature, teleological ideas about the destiny of history or the ideal of the good life. Nor do they take recourse to the liberal theories of agreement between distinct groups through reason or rationality. He argues that agonism is a non-essentialist theory as it does not rely on one common denominator between diverse political actors Wenman (2013, p. 6).

The root of the term agonism is in the ancient Greek word ‘agon’ or struggle. The concept of the Greek ‘agon’ has been used in the works of several theorists including that of Hannah Arendt (2013). The subject matter of this thesis is the radical democratic agonism as envisioned by Chantal Mouffe, a post-Marxist political philosopher. Mouffe has theorized agonism as a theory that seeks to provide a radical alternative to the liberal democratic system without overthrowing the broad democratic and pluralist character of the polity. She is also a radical thinker in the sense that she has been able to raise the importance of the centrality of struggle and the concept of hegemony in a democracy. She argues that there cannot be any ‘rational’ solutions to antagonistic sets of opinions in a society. Instead of being in liberal illusion of resolving conflicts through rational deliberation, democracy should be an arena where these conflicts can wage over who can establish hegemony (Mouffe 1993, 2000 and 2005).

Mouffe has argues that the liberal democratic system has been unable to acknowledge the fact that conflict is a central part of a polity. She attributes this to their incorrect understanding of the concept of the ‘political.’ She blames the liberals for having the individual

as the focus and point of reference, which ignores the role of groups and identities in politics. Mouffe refuses to see people as atomized individuals who use rationality to take political decisions. She seeks to explain that politics takes place between political communities or groups within states. People are divided into political communities through a friend/enemy distinction. Though radically differing from Carl Schmitt ideologically, Mouffe makes use of his critical concepts: the friend/enemy distinction and the concept of the political. The next section discusses the engagement of Mouffe with the works of Carl Schmitt.

2.2 Carl Schmitt's Influence on Mouffe

The German thinker Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) was one of the most important thinkers of far-right political philosophy in the twentieth century. He was an unrepentant supporter of Nazism. In political theory, some of his most studied contributions have been his critique of liberalism and understanding of 'the political.' While Mouffe agrees with his reading of these concept, she parts ways with him on the issue of pluralism and what is to be done regarding the crisis of liberal democracy.

The next section discusses the works of Carl Schmitt on his ideas of the political, identity formation (creation of the friend-enemy distinction) and his critique of liberalism. After that, we will proceed to understand how Mouffe interprets Schmitt's work.

2.2.1 The Political and Friend/Enemy Distinction

In his book *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt writes that the core political dimension of any state-organized society is that between the friend and the enemy (Schmitt, 2007, p. 26). Only when the friend/enemy distinction among various groups of people is created, a society enters the stage of the political (Schmitt, 2007). 'The political' is different from other spheres

of value such as the ethical, moral or the economical as it primarily existential. However, it can emanate from many such sources, such as linguistic, religious, cultural and others (Schmitt, 2007, p. 25-27). The political creates collective identities that are defined through the mutual opposition elevated to readiness to die in war against the enemy Schmitt (2007).

The political is a practice that precedes the state: friend/enemy distinction must be established first (Schmitt, 2007, p. 38, 43-44). This is the meaning of Schmitt's famous claim that the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political (Schmitt, 2007, p. 19). To explain this, Schmitt makes a distinction between 'the People' (Das Volk) and 'the Nation' (Die Nation). The People, he argues, is a pre-political category. It is a cultural association which lacks any political consciousness. For Schmitt, it means that 'the people' at this point lack political will. This is because they are yet to draw a friend/enemy distinction. When persons within this group of 'the people' identify the antagonistic 'others', they group together as 'friends,' and become the Nation- a political community. The others are the enemy (Schmitt, 2008, p. 126-135).

The Nation by the virtue of being a political community is capable of political action. It is an organized group which can defend itself and fight for its interests (Schmitt, 2007 and 2008). The state is created by the Nation, for the realization of the same. Hence, the state represents the Nation, as the organization which carries out the political activity on behalf of the Nation. In other words, the state has the sovereign power and the obligation to fight against the enemies of the nation (Schmitt, 2007). Schmitt (2007) also remarks that the territorial boundaries of the nation and citizenship (state) must coincide. This is important to make the nation into a united political community. An additional important, state-specific category is that of the sovereign. The sovereign is the one who wields the will of the nation. Schmitt (2007) wants the sovereign to create a state of emergency in a situation where others are identified as

enemies against whom the action is warranted. The Sovereign has the responsibility of taking care of the interests of the Nation. It is the Sovereign's duty to do what is necessary to achieve the political interests of the Nation. This means to act against enemies. The enemies are to be expelled from the boundaries of the state and the same must be done to those within the state who do not conform to the friend/enemy distinction (Schmitt, 2007, p. 46-48).

2.2.2 Schmitt' critique of liberalism

Schmitt's critique of liberalism departs from the claim that liberal society based on individualism cannot come up with the idea of the political. He claims that the individualist liberal democratic thought opposes and is distrustful of communitarian organizations like the state and politics. Schmitt's project clearly indicates the creation of a homogenous nation state. As mentioned above, he opines that it is necessary for the territory of the nation and citizenship (state) coincide. The transformation of the pre-political People into the political Nation as a homogenous community of 'friends' implies that there is no room for pluralism and heterogeneity within the state. To be a citizen of a Nation, one must identify with the substantial marker of that Nation and must agree with the political distinction which has politicized the nation.

Schmitt severely attacks liberalism for not providing conditions for the creation of homogenous nation states to happen. He flays the liberals for allowing internal pluralism within states and extending citizenship rights to those who do not belong to the Nation. He alleges that this would result in depoliticization of the political Nation. Pluralism would also create internal weakness by allowing for the presence of internal enemies within the Nation. It would result in the demise of the liberal state either through internal strife or through a defeat by an enemy which is more politically united (Schmitt, 2007, p. 69-79).

In his book the *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, Schmitt argues that liberals falsely believe that it is possible to resolve political conflicts through discussion and compromise. Liberalism tries to domesticate the political or in other words weaken the political community in the name of individual freedom (Schmitt, 1988, p. 33-50). This is so because liberalism believes in the possibility of a rational deliberation and consensus: people from separate groups in a society would use reason to act in the political sphere. However, insists Schmitt, the actors in the sphere of the political are not individuals but existentially defined groups (Schmitt, 2007).

2.3 Mouffe's Critique of Liberalism

Chantal Mouffe is certainly influenced by Schmitt's critique of liberalism. However, there are many points on which she differs from Schmitt. She takes from Schmitt (2008) the concept of the political: people act as members of groups, politicized through the consciousness of the friend/enemy distinction (Mouffe (2005). However, she differs on how the politicization takes shape, and what its consequences are.

For Schmitt, the conflict between groups means antagonism between friends and enemies, and between opposing nation states. However, for Mouffe, the inter-group conflict points to legitimate political cleavages in a society. Accepting this conflict is the basis of her understanding of pluralism and agonist democracy. In Schmitt, there is no room for pluralism (it has been discussed above) within a state, but Mouffe talks about a plurality of ideas both within societies and in the international sphere.

Mouffe (2005) critiques liberalism by identifying its two main paradigms. First is the 'aggregative' one advocated by scholars like Rawls (1993) which seeks to understand politics as a compromise between individuals with different views. Every individual is supposed to be a rational being who will act politically in an instrumentalist way for the betterment of his/her

interest. Scholars like Rawls (1993) talk about the existence of a plurality of rational mutually incompatible views in the society where nowhere soon is it expected that all will accept one viewpoint. Mouffe (2005, p.12) remarks that this paradigm seeks to create a compromise between individuals. Through individual rationality, atomized persons will seek to maximize their self-interest is basically imported from liberal economics and its model of free market. Liberals like Rawls (1993) hope (or so Mouffe feels) that individuals (of different viewpoints) will behave in such a way trying to maximize their interests in the best possible instrumental way without leading to a conflict.

The other paradigm of liberalism is the deliberative one which Mouffe (2005, p. 13) claims to link morality and politics. It seeks to offer an alternative to the aggregate paradigm, through a normative justification to the concept of rationality. This paradigm replaces rational instrumental rationality with communicative rationality, which justifies the ideas of consensus and plurality from an ethical standpoint. Advocates of deliberative democracy like Habermas (1996) argue that the field of politics is a place of dialogue and debate where morality can be applied through free discussion. It is assumed that rational individuals with different viewpoints can arrive, through dialogue, at a consensus, which makes possible the prospects of a peaceful coexistence of different political opinions. It is assumed that moral considerations and questions of justice can be used to maintain this order of plurality.

Mouffe (2005, p 13) insists that liberalism ignores the ground realities of the conflictual nature of the political. She remarks that both the aggregative and deliberative paradigms are unable to grasp with the true nature of the political. She insists that people will not behave politically as 'rational individuals' but as members of the group to which they belong. Nor is it that morality and deliberation will be able to neutralize conflicts. It is the friend/enemy consciousness which creates political consciousness in a society, leading in turn to the creation

of distinct groups. This results in the political cleavages in a society. Unlike liberals and following Schmitt, Mouffe (2005, p. 20) maintains that there can be no rational resolution to certain conflicts. Hence, the liberal project does not provide a plausible understanding of pluralism. Liberalism makes a massive mistake by seeking to neutralize collective passions from the public sphere to arrive at a rational consensus. However, passions cannot be eliminated. The efforts to arrive at a so-called rational consensus by excluding passions results in the channelization of passions against the establishment- something which she claims to have resulted in the growth of support for far-right parties (Mouffe, 2000, p. 80). This aspect is discussed in the next chapter.

In short, for Mouffe the conflict is the perpetual feature in society. For this reason, it is necessary to reframe, redraw the contours of democracy to accommodate this conflict (Mouffe, 2000 and 2005). The goal of the theory is to give a new and radical perception of democracy. The focus should be on an alternative interpretation of societal and political pluralism. This positive argument is outlined in the following two sections.

2.4 Agonism vs Antagonism

For Mouffe (2000 and 2005), conflict need not be about eradicating the opponent and establishing a forced homogeneity Schmitt envisioned. In agonism, the opponents (adversaries, not enemies) recognize each other as perpetual adversaries with whom there will be continuous conflict and no compromise. This means recognizing the right of the other to exist and to take part in the political process. It should not be understood as a compromise as there is not rational solution to the conflict. However, Mouffe wants agonism to be a system where there will be a very broad consensus on pluralism (Mouffe, 2000, p. 102). Within this very broad consensus, there will be an agonist conflict between adversaries. Agonism would replace Schmittian friend/enemy distinction as the central political category. The adversary will always have the

agonistic respect or the right to exist and defend himself/herself. However, the idea of the enemy does not disappear completely. The enemy in agonism refers to monists who by questioning the very tenets of pluralism cannot take part in the agonistic space. Mouffe (1993, 1999, 2000 and 2005) consistently maintains her commitment to pluralism. Mouffe wants to convert the antagonistic friend/enemy divide into an agonistic conflict which would retain the pluralist character of the democratic system.

As Mouffe's model seeks to create a novel understanding of the political, it may be called radical. She remarks that her agonist model is not revolutionary in the Jacobin or Leninist sense of the term as it does not eliminate the opponent, but it is also not the liberal model or the model of the 'post-political' which eliminates the role of adversary. The demand for transformation of society reads as the demand for the institutionalization of struggle between agonist forces. It will still be a democratic pluralist society (Mouffe, 1993, 2000 and 2005). The basic framework (institutions) of democracy will still be there. However, there will exist among agonist adversaries, serious differences on their use and implications (Mouffe, 2000, p. 102).

Due to the fact there are many groups of opinions (or say ideologies) which do not have any possible rational resolution, exclusion of some groups of ideas is a possibility. Mouffe (1993, 2000 and 2005) argues that her theory of agonism makes this reality of exclusion clear yet seeks to provide room for pluralism as an adversarial fight between alternate projects of hegemony. It is made clear that one will rule while the other will be excluded but allowed to exist. The concept of hegemony is discussed in detail in the next section.

Finally, it is important to note that Mouffe (2005, p. 21-23) uses the theory of Canetti (1963) to argue that parliamentary democracy has created a system where warfare without

killing is possible. She argues following Canetti (1963) that this unravels the potential of parliamentary institutions to convert antagonism into agonism.

2.5 Hegemony

Mouffe (2005, p.17) argues that the concept of hegemony is the other important aspect of the political. The other being antagonism. The essence of the political is the fight for hegemony among the opposing groups. All societies are marked by hegemony. Every ruling hegemony is challenged by counter-hegemonic tendencies in agonist struggles. The idea of pluralism should be to create a system where this struggle for hegemony can take place.

Hegemony refers to the dominance of certain forces, ideas, and values of certain groups in a society. The beliefs and ideas of the hegemonic group come to be accepted as normal in the society. Mouffe borrows the concept from Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci, Hoare, and Smith, 1971). She insists that deep irreconcilable conflicts are present in every political order, and that the concept and practice of hegemony are necessary to transform uncontrolled antagonisms into an agonistic pluralist democracy. Mouffe argues that other agonist scholars, like Honig (1993), have not emphasized the role of hegemony which is why their approaches to agonism are inadequate to provide for a proper understanding of the political or establish an ideal pluralist democracy. Agonism is not simply the perpetual struggle for power nor is it only the emancipation that comes through this process of struggle. The aim of politics is to establish the hegemony of one group over another.

Since every society is marked by hegemony and since power structures determine social positions, decision-making is also very much influenced by them. Mouffe (2000, p. 134) claims that decision making is always about exclusion. Instead of creating the pretense of consensus

and compromise, agonist democracy would recognize alternating concepts of hegemony competing as adversaries. The logical conclusion of this is that the exclusionary element of the decision-making process will be open and palpable. The adversaries of the ones in power (who are a counter-hegemonic group) will openly propagate their counter-hegemonic project. There will be no compromise. Nor will there be an illusion of inclusion in the framework of a common normative system.

In short, Mouffe believes that her radical democratic theory through the agonist model, by acknowledging the interplay of hegemony and counter-hegemony, enables radical transformation of society while keeping the pluralist framework intact.

A critical remark is due. While the concept of hegemony sheds some additional light on Mouffe's core positive argument, one point of ambiguity remains. She talks about the establishment of a radical democratic order, but she explicates little about its institutional contours. While it has been clearly extrapolated that a radical democratic regime will be one where agonistic adversaries will be locked in a perpetual struggle for hegemony, there seems to be little theorized on the nature of norms and institutions and the relations between them. So, while we know that she is envisaging a new model of democracy, we seem to have little idea about how institutions are going to look like.

2.6 Putting Mouffe in Historical Context

Mouffe's theory can be interpreted as the expression of the discontent with the emergence of the so called 'post-political' order. The end of the cold war allegedly marked the 'end of history' (Fukuyama, 1992) and end of ideology, as the liberal democratic political model wedded to a free market capitalist economy seemed to have emerged as a 'winner' in

the battle of ideologies. In the political arena the deliberative democratic model seemed to have created a political center marked by political compromise. This new ‘post-ideological’ system effectively compelled the parties to compromise on their values and preferences to get their share of government power. Mouffe (2005) argues that by continuing to compromise on their ideology, the center-right and center-left parties disappointed their voters. This is because these major groups of parties have little policy-based differences, in consequence of the string of compromises they made. They agreed on a wide variety of issues, which has led to the establishment of a broad neoliberal consensus. According to Mouffe (2005) this liberal post-political order is a political disaster as this kind of political arrangement tries to push conflict under the carpet. While it claims to give representation to pluralism of voices in society through deliberation and consensus building, it offers little plurality as it minimizes the scope for any meaningful conflict. Mouffe (2005) argues that the so called post-political society is unable to provide any meaningful representation to the ‘we’s’ and the ‘them’s’ or various mutually opposing groups and identities in the society.

2.7 How is an Agonist Democracy Going to Look Like?

Much has been discussed about the theoretical roots of Mouffe’s agonism, its critique of liberalism and its alternative as a theory. However, as stated above, there is an ambiguity regarding how an agonist democracy would look like in terms of institutions. While Mouffe is yet to lay down the precise details about the structure of an agonistic regime, there are some indications in her works on how she wants democracy to be arranged. These details are important in the understanding of how agonism can be a theory for democratic socialists.

The first aspect is her approach towards liberal democracy. In the Democratic Paradox, she writes:

“This category of the 'adversary' does not eliminate antagonism, though. and it should be distinguished from the liberal notion of the competitor with which it is sometimes identified. An adversary is an enemy, but a legitimate enemy. One with whom we have some common ground because we have a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality. But we disagree concerning the meaning and implementation of those principles, and such a disagreement is not one that could be resolved through deliberation and rational discussion” (Mouffe, 2000, p. 102).

This is evidence of her commitment to the broad structure of liberal pluralism. While she has castigated the theories and assumptions of liberalism, she does not abandon (at least the basic tenets of) liberal democratic systems completely. It may be said that she is trying to provide a theory for radical change within the broad structure of the liberal democracy. Radical democracy will be a radical hegemonic change within the larger spectrum of liberal democratic systems. Her criticisms of liberal theory are very powerful indeed. However, when it comes to institutions of liberal democracy, it seems that she is (perhaps passively) more sympathetic.

In ‘*Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism*’ (1999, p. 756) she writes that consensus is temporary in politics and created by hegemony. She makes a very interesting comment about the contemporary hegemony of liberalism. While criticizing the nature of consensus that liberal democracy seeks to promote, she has also praised it for accepting the plurality of ideas and being opposed to an ‘organic’ theory of society. She has also remarked, with hope, that contrary to what liberal democrats would have wanted, the liberal democratic system is not entirely a collaborative venture. She has used the term ‘mixed-game’ to describe it as a system which is part conflictual and part collaborative (Mouffe, 1999, p. 756). Her

reference to Canetti (1962) also reiterates her commitment to democratic pluralism (Mouffe, 2005, p. 21-23).

Mouffe also argues that it is important to channel institutions for the establishment of a radical democratic hegemony. While there needs to be more explication of this idea if one were to understand its practical ramifications, it may be possible to derive a hint that Mouffe must be comfortable with the preservation of the basic institutions of a liberal democracy such as periodic free and fair elections, parliamentary democracy (at least some version of it) and political freedoms (which are essential for the adversaries to exist). Of course, the focus is on the radical transformation of these institutions through hegemony. Mouffe (2000, p. 127) also talks about transformation of political passions for democratic ends. This indicates that a radical democratic society would be one with a lot of scope for political activism and protest. It may be easy to imagine that there would be a wide range of rights and freedoms in these societies.

In 'Return of the Political' (1993) Mouffe has a chapter with a self-explanatory name 'Towards a Liberal Socialism' which talks about the use of the state and its welfare institutions for the achievement of the attainment of socialism (Mouffe, 1993, p. 91-102). One can imagine that this indicates that in an agonist regime, conflict would be about how to use state institutions. Of course, she would want a radical democratic regime with a government which spends a lot of money on welfare and social services.

We may ask that is it possible to transform liberal institutions into ones which serve a radically different purpose. Is this not contradictory? It is easy to understand that liberal institutions are designed for the perpetuation of a liberal-capitalistic hegemony which seeks to perpetuate individualism and market domination. How can such institutions be used to serve the ends of another radically different hegemony, say a socialist project? An answer or an

indication to one may be derived from Mouffe's (1999, p. 756) comment stating that there is no doubt that liberal democracy and its institutions have been designed to suit the ends of capitalism, individualism, and consensus. However, due its pluralist features they have also created room for conflict. This indicates that she does see some radical potential in existing liberal institutions. Perhaps it can be understood that she has hope that if people of a radically different ideology (competing hegemonic concept) take over power, it might be possible to use liberal institutions towards radical ends. It may also be argued in her support that roles of institutions change over time and historical circumstances. Thus, it is possible to imagine that under a government with a radically different ideology, it might be possible to change (at least significantly) the role that institutions play. An example can be the role of public spending. It is well known that the level of funding that public welfare institutions get are determined by the ideological position of the political parties. A simple change in the levels of funding can have drastic effects on the society. Hence, Mouffe's assumptions are not completely unfounded. However, it would do good to radical democratic scholarship to ponder over this very important question of how radical democratic hegemonic regime will transform the institutions established under the liberal democratic system.

There are two other important observations to be made here. One, Mouffe is apprehensive of revolutionary monist socialism. She clearly maintains (1993, 2000, 2005 and 2014) that the monist ways like Leninism do more harm than good. And, to repeat, she finds certain elements of liberal democracy (especially pluralism) to be beneficial. Since she is rejecting the monist model she seems to be intent on transforming the society within the liberal framework. This may be understood as an effort to engage in a politics of the possible instead of propounding seemingly utopian theories. Therefore Mouffe (like any other thinker) must be studied in the historical context that she is writing. The second observation is that Mouffe only talks about acquiescing to broad frameworks of liberal democracy. This indicates that there is

significant room for manipulation (towards radical ends) of institutions. When the radical democrats take over, there shall be (or so it seems) a lot of room for the creation and destruction of new institutions that do not fall under the broad framework of liberalism. Perhaps, theorization on this area will also depend on the trajectory of history and practical political experience. Chapter four deals with some of the experiences of the democratic socialist parties which are trying to fight elections and create a counter narrative of politics.

This chapter summarized Mouffe's critique of liberal democracy. It also outlined the positive aspirations of the proposed alternative: a radical democracy that would be more responsive to the reality of agonistic struggles within the society and provide an area for their manifestation. Regardless of whether one agrees with Mouffe, it cannot be denied that several problems have besieged the condition of the so-called post-political society. Major parties moving to the center making massive compromises on ideology is one such concern. Also, the 'end of history' has not occurred as liberal democracy and its capitalist partner on the economic front have not been able to conclusively answer the central question of political theory- 'What is a good life?'

The above- mentioned sections make it evident that Mouffe's theory of a radical democracy established through agonistic struggle provides a substantial amount of support to democratic socialists who are trying to establish another democratic order without a revolution. The question is how can the left parties benefit from Mouffe's agonism? How does Mouffe deal with the left? Chapters three and four shall deal with some of these issues.

Chapter 3- Agonism and Socialist Strategy in the 21st Century

The theory of agonist plurality as espoused by Mouffe (1993, 1999, 2000 and 2005) is not simply to address the question of how to give representation of people of different opinions. Unlike scholars who claim to take a neutral stand among ideological adversaries, Mouffe designs her theory with a purpose. Mouffe is a political philosopher of the left. She comes from the post Marxist tradition of political philosophy. Her criticism of liberalism is not just an academic pursuit, it is also a part of her political ideology- a political project which she intends to be a part of. The political project focuses on socialism in contemporary times. In all her works she stresses on the hegemony of the 'neoliberal' capitalist order and the need to counter it. All this makes her work very essential for scholars, leaders, and activists of the contemporary left.

The fall of the Soviet Union was a serious blow to left-wing politics worldwide. However, the demise of the authoritarian Leninist state of the USSR (Lovell, 1984) and its satellites in East and Central Europe (Geddes, 1995) also created room for the burgeoning of different (non-Leninist, dogmatic) strands of the left-wing political thought. The authoritarian nature of Marxism-Leninism had already been exposed for many decades. States like the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (all existing self-proclaimed socialist states) claimed that Marxism-Leninism and its' variants (like Maoism, Hoxhaism, Titoism etc.) was the only way to establish real socialism. However, the problems within the authoritarian communist systems were exposed by various political theorists of the left (Tampio, 2009). The body blow to the USSR and its allies, the end of the Cold War resulting in the geopolitical defeat of the Leninist Left, and the rightward turn of the PRC proved many such scholars to be prescient.

However, this also provided some serious opportunity for left-wing scholars and politicians to rethink their strategy.

It is high time that the contemporary left realizes the ethical and normative superiority of pluralism as well as the fact that a monistic and autocratic doctrine such as Leninism will have few takers in the twenty-first century. Hence, it is important for the left to think about democratic socialism seriously.

Democratic socialism is a theory which has many variants. However, the crux of the theory lies in the literal meaning of the two words- democratic and socialist. It means the establishment of socialism through democratic means. It also means that socialist order would be democratic. What exactly 'democratic' or 'socialist' means is subject to debate. Democratic socialists such as Eurocommunists and other left-wing parties identifying themselves as left of social democrats such as Podemos (Spain), Die Linke (Germany), La France Insoumise and others usually do not shun the institutions of a liberal democracy. Parties claiming themselves to be democratic socialist such as the ones mentioned above tend to contest elections and attain their goals through elections. Left-wing parties willing to establish themselves in power will need to go through this process to gain popularity and mass support. Socialists of the twenty-first century need to think how to transform the democratic system currently dominated by capitalism into a socialist one.

3.1 Mouffe's Agonism and Democratic Socialism

It is here that the works of Mouffe are indispensable. She provides a theory of socialism staying within the broad walls of democracy and pluralism. She correctly acknowledges the presence of capitalist hegemony and the need to fight it with a left-wing counter hegemony. Mouffe (1993, 1999, 2000 and 2005) is a scholar of radical democracy- a democracy which would bring in radical but democratic transformation of society. As discussed in the previous

chapter, she provides a theory of democracy where a radical regime (a regime which would establish a radical change with a change in hegemony) could be established without resorting to authoritarian means. Agonist thought of Mouffe provides the possibility for the establishment of socialist hegemony while retaining the pluralist and democratic character of the system. Her ideas and theories provide a possibility of a synthesis between the radical and the existing.

3.2 Mouffe and Left-Wing Political Thought Post 1991

Among theorists of the post-Cold War era, Mouffe (2005) has engaged with two strands of left-wing political theorists. The first are the group which has sought to establish a so called ‘third way’ between capitalism and socialism. The major scholars of this group are Anthony Giddens (1998 and 2000) and Ulrich Beck (1992, 2002). She argues that these theories have led the left-wing parties to compromise upon their principles. This will be discussed later in the chapter. Second, she criticizes the far-left scholars like Hardt and Negri (2000). Hardt and Negri make a scathing critique of the transformation of the globalized political order. They focus on a theory of global imperialism led by the USA and G8 (Hardt and Negri, 2000). Mouffe argues that these scholars are unable to provide a clear-cut concept of the political.

3.2.1 Mouffe and the Third Way

The ‘third way’ politics as espoused by scholars like Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens have been the recipient of some of the fiercest criticism by Mouffe. They are the major scholars of the third way is the changing nature of the politics in the age of globalization. The believe the old political divisions of left and right are not so relevant. Rather, politics should be understood in terms of providing for the newer challenges which have come up in the globalized world. The third way scholars advocate the acceptance of the free market, ask socialists to abandon the goal of abolishing capitalism and want leftists to abandon socialism

as a goal. Giddens (1994, 1998 and 2000) has claimed that there is no need for the abolition of capitalism as social democratic governments in Europe have established welfare states, which have been able to neutralize many of the unethical aspects of capitalism. The third way is a philosophy which seeks to adapt socialist ideals as ethical ones (Giddens, 1994 and 1998) within a market system.

Mouffe (2000 and 2005) believes that the third way theorists have ignored a major aspect of politics – the role of power relations in politics. This has made them falsely believe that the adversarial model of politics is outdated. Mouffe also accuses them of believing that the role of collective identities in politics is over due to the individualization of politics. Consequently, they are unable to discern the role played by hegemony in politics. As they have overlooked these issues, they are unable to grasp the “dynamics of politics” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 54).

Mouffe (2005, p. 35-44) traces the logic of the third way theorists to their sociological understanding of politics. They have grounded their analysis on the transformation of societies over the decades. According to her, they believe that changing contours of a polity merely correspond to the changes in the society. They have used the word ‘modernization’ to brand opponents as outdated: the end of the adversarial model of democracy is for them a direct result of the social changes or modernization. Mouffe (2005) has said that this portrayal using the rhetoric of modernization apparently gives the third way theorists an air of scientific incontestability (p. 54). Hence, Mouffe claims that anyone who argues against the third way could be tagged as ‘unscientific’ or not up to date with the latest developments of the day (p. 54). However, she argues that this scientific and neutral way of clubbing adherents of adversarial model of politics as ‘traditional’ is itself a political move (p. 55).

Mouffe (2005) goes on to describe how this pseudo-scientific logic is used to create an exclusion in the political process. The idea of a deliberative democracy as is supposed to provide for a democracy of dialogue and thus accommodate a plurality of opinions. However, this leads to exclusion. Only the ‘modern’ people or people who believe in the individualization of political thinking are included in the dialogue of democracy. They so called traditional people- those who still believe in the we/them distinction in politics are deemed to be unscientific and thereby excluded from the dialogue (Mouffe, 2005, p. 55).

Mouffe (2005) argues that the Third Way philosophy has severely affected the social democratic parties in Europe. She has come down heavily on Giddens (1994, 1998 and 2000) who has been the ‘main player’ (Mouffe, 2005, p. 56) in the construction of a new strategy for British Labour Party in the post-Cold War era. Giddens (1998, 2000) has asked social democrats to realign their political positions by re-defining the term social democracy, claiming that the end of the Cold War has marked the end of socialism as a regime. It has also resulted in the demise of the bipolar world order. The social democrats must come to terms with the realities of the unipolar world. Social democrats must deal with the ideological crisis that they face due to the collapse of communism because although they had opposed communism they also shared a few common traits with them like state control over several key industries and sectors of the economy. For Giddens (1994, 1998), it is essential to realize the redundancy of the left/right divide. Mouffe (2005, p. 44) reprimands them for propagating this myth. She also feels that it is wrong to believe that the role of groups in politics is over. Mouffe (2000, 2005) remarks that this erroneous reasoning has made social democratic parties move further to the right. They have been caught in the web of the post political essentialism- as if the role of identities is over in politics. The practical consequences of the adoption of the third politics by the center-left will be discussed later this this chapter.

It is not unusual that the Third Way has been at a receiving end of criticism from radical theorists like Mouffe. However, the criticism of Mouffe (2005) towards the third way is not merely an ultra-leftist diatribe against a group of leftists who have allegedly compromised upon their ideals. It is a genuine critique of a fundamental problem that has been plaguing all spectrums of the political order after the end of the Cold War. That is the problem of the post-political illusion. Mouffe (2005) has done a commendable job in critiquing how the proponents of liberal pluralism ignore the role of hegemony in political decision making. The self-proclaimed declarations of ideological neutrality of the current global order and the greatness of the plural, liberal cosmopolitanism and individualism and market economy is the only way can easily be expected from those who are in power in the current world order. It is no surprise that the supporters of the capitalist right like such as Fukuyama (1992) will defend the idea of the post-political world order as it serves their interest. This is because they have the hegemony. However, what is concerning is the capitulation of the left towards the seduction of the post-political order.

The social democrats, who have for many decades been accused by the proponents of the hard left of having betrayed the socialist cause and compromised with capitalism, can easily be susceptible to such traps laid by capitalism. However, as Mouffe (2005) demonstrated, the problem is much deeper. The specter of globalization being a superior form of social existence has according to Mouffe (2005) also haunted the more radical thinkers.

3.2.2 Mouffe on Hardt and Negri

The political establishment of the post-Cold War order has declared the antagonistic and adversarial character of politics and the left-right ideological divide to be redundant. The previous section discusses how the capitulation of social democrats to this order through the acceptance of a post-political world has been highly problematic. However, Mouffe (2005, p.

107) has remarked that the lack of a properly political idea is also very much present in the works of far-left thinkers such as Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri are highly regarded scholars among the far-left in the post globalization world. The book *Empire* (Hardt and Negri, 2000) has been regarded by many leftists as one of the most important revolutionary books of the post globalization era. Mouffe (2005) contends that while Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) are against the current global order, their works have some severe lacunae which render them incapable of providing a proper solution to the problems facing the world. Mouffe (2005, p. 107) remarks that Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) are unable to provide a proper political dimension to their thesis. Despite the vitriolic diatribe that they unleash on capitalism and the existing world order, what is common to their theory and that of the third way is the lack of a proper understanding of the political. Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) have, according to Mouffe (2005, p. 107), been unable to understand and provide a central dimension to antagonism and conflict. They have not focused on the power and hegemony in politics. They have also dismissed the central question of sovereignty in politics. This, according to Mouffe (2005, p. 107) renders their theory to be little more than an ultra-left version of liberal cosmopolitanism.

Mouffe (2005) challenges the central tenet of *Empire* (Hardt and Negri, 2000). According to Mouffe, it is the idea that the days of imperialism have gone by and imperialism of the old has been replaced by the emergence of a new kind of sovereignty which lacks a center. Mouffe (2005 p. 108) counters that the wars waged by the USA after the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 refute this central argument. Mouffe (2005, p.108) expressed her astonishment that even after these wars, Hardt and Negri have not been able to identify the USA as an imperialist power in the book *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Hardt and Negri, 2005). Instead, they describe power as a decentralized network and a tendency which is manifest through a network of complicated agencies.

Mouffe also accuses Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) of following the idea that globalization is a historical trajectory of improvement. In other words, Mouffe (2005, p. 109) claims that much like the Third Way thinkers and liberal cosmopolitans, Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) also feel that the globalized world order is an improved world order which is creating the space for a better future. While Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) do provide a challenge to the idea that there is no alternative but capitalism, they fail to provide an organized alternative to the hegemony of the neo-liberal order that exists today. Her criticism focuses on the claim of the revolutionary potential of the not so well organized and networked multitude. Multitude cannot work as an organized counter-hegemonic project. Mouffe (2005, p. 110) remarks that due to these shortcomings, Hardt and Negri offer merely another version of the post-political. Their theory is unable to provide either a theory or strategy to establish a counter Empire or hegemony.

Mouffe (2005, p. 110) is also critical of Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) for their celebration of globalization and the corresponding decline of the power national sovereignty as something progressive and liberating from the clutches of state sovereignty. Mouffe (2005, p. 110) remarks that in this quest against sovereignty, Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) have sought to downplay struggles which defend welfare states and ignores the role played by the European Union. However, when it comes to providing with an alternative, the logical question that can be asked following Mouffe's (2005, p. 110-114) critique is 'if the current power of the Empire is in a decentralized network and national welfare states or the EU cannot be the solution, where is Hardt and Negri's alternative network which can provide this solution?' Mouffe demonstrates that Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) have great faith in unconnected movements of the various parts of the world as multitudes but do not provide any theory or strategy to create a counter hegemonic project or to build a counter network of power to defeat the supposedly decentralized Empire.

Mouffe (2005) dismisses the theories of Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) as viable alternative to existing world order. The post-political tendencies in Hardt and Negri (2000 and 2005) can also do harm to the anti-globalization movements. Without a political vision, these movements seem to be unable to resist the global dimension of the political hegemony of the capitalist world order. The unnecessary rant against national welfare states is also damaging as it does not help people organize politically against the problems such as welfare cuts. The denial of sovereignty is not complemented by an organized alternative.

3.3 Bringing Back the Political

The previous chapters and sections have explained how the post-political way of conceptualizing politics and political order has been detrimental in the post-Cold War period. The last section spoke about the need to bring the political into the way of conceiving politics. It also demonstrated that the problem of thinking post-politically is not a monopoly of the liberals and those on the center-left. Even ultra-left radicals are susceptible to it. The solution is not a simple one. It must be a long, protracted fight against the hegemony of the post-political illusion. Mouffe's radical democracy is a left-wing project which seeks to establish a model of socialism within a pluralist democracy. Thus, to speak in terms of praxeology and action, it is a task of the left-wing forces to carry it out. It must be understood that the hegemony of world politics belongs to the capitalist right-wing. The compromises made to reach the consensus of the post-political age came mainly from the left.

A simple observation about how much politics has changed since 1991 provides evidence to the above claim. Have the right-wing parties like the Conservatives and Christian Democrats moved to left? If so, then by what degree? Then ask the opposite question. Have the social democrats and other left-wing parties moved to the right? If so, then by what margin? It will not take a great statistical survey to discern that left-wing parties have compromised

much more than the right (if the right has compromised at all except make some small concessions). Thus, it is very clear that the current hegemony in politics belongs to the right. It follows that the right (with hegemony in its favor) will not favor the demise of the post-political order. Hence, it is the onus of the left to bring back the political. Mouffe's theory is of great advantage in this regard. The first thing that the left needs to discern is to get rid of the post-political illusion. This must work in diverse ways for separate groups of leftists depending on their position at the given moment. Subsequent sections shall discuss this in more detail.

The current political order is exclusionary. The post-political consensus model of democracy wrongly claims to include all shades of opinion and offer a viable plurality. However, the previous chapters and sections have demonstrated how the post-political order pretends to include everyone in the political discourse but this 'everyone' refers only to all those forces who agree to the post-political vision. The ones who talk about the political and the we/they distinction are excluded from the political circles. Mouffe's theory provides several valuable resources for the left to make a comeback to the forefront of world politics.

The theory of Chantal Mouffe is a mix of what can be called the 'old left' and some sections of the new left. On one hand it criticizes Marxism-Leninism for being an authoritarian, monist ideology. However, she does retain, in some respects a few aspects of the old left. Some of these aspects can be taken to be the ideas of division of the society into mutually antagonistic groups (it is like the notion of the irreconcilability of the class interests of the old left) and the struggle among them for power (reminiscent of class struggle in orthodox Marxism). Agonism as a theory of perpetual struggle between opponents does have some similarity with the old left. However, Mouffe's agonism is not a teleological theory which talks about a goal of history. Having her roots in the post-Marxist tradition, Mouffe has also adopted elements of post-structuralism. As Mouffe and Laclau (1985) have demonstrated, class is not the only axis on

which political struggles can be fought. Similarly, the friend-enemy distinction that Mouffe talks about may not necessarily be on the lines of class.

This has a very important lesson for the contemporary left. The need of the hour is to bring back the left-right division and ideological contestation (or agon) into the politics. The left must understand that it must strive to create these political distinctions in the society and polarize the society on these lines. However, class is not the only (although a very important) axis of polarization. There are several other areas, issues and factors based on which it is possible to do this political polarization. Only when the left seeks to polarize people politically, can it possibly seek to get the scope to establish hegemony in the political sphere.

The other lesson that the left needs to learn from Mouffe is the importance of creating political hegemony. Democratic socialists must come up with a theory of an alternate political hegemony in the society. The creation of the post-political must also be the project of creating an alternate hegemony. To polarize the society also means to create a viable and distinct alternative. It is not enough to talk about or think that another world is possible. It is very important to clearly theorize and indicate how that would will be radically different from the current world. It is through this radical vision that a radical democracy can be possible.

3.4 The Way Ahead

This chapter has shown how the rethinking of societies to envision a post political order by both Third Way thinkers and other far-left scholars like Hardt and Negri have had disastrous consequences. The next chapter will discuss what ails the left and the detrimental concerns of the post political order in more detail and with examples. It will go on to discuss what can be done by the left to bring back the element of contestation and the political into the political

discourse. It will seek to chart out a course for democratic socialist political action in the twenty-first century. There will be discussion on some of the democratic socialist projects which are trying to take shape in the world. The chapter will also discuss the vicious threat that the rise of the far-right (another creation of the post-political order) poses to democracy. It will, through a critical discussion of the parties and ideas, seek to point towards a democratic socialist praxeology based on agonist theory. The chapter also discusses the international dimensions of Mouffe's agonist theory and its ramifications.

Chapter 4- What is to be Done (in a non-Leninist Way)?

The previous chapter discussed Mouffe's critique of the post-political order and her issues with the contemporary left. This chapter demonstrates with examples the situation of the post-political world. It contends, following Mouffe, that the traditional left has surrendered to the hegemony of the post-political idea and the disastrous consequences that have emerged consequently. This chapter also deals with the problems that the consequent rise of far-right parties poses to the very foundations of pluralist democracy. Most importantly, this chapter asserts that it is possible for a genuine left-wing political platform to take on the neoliberal hegemony. Consulting examples of existing socialist movements and policies, the chapter presents a blueprint for the democratic socialists in the twenty-first century.

4.1 The State of the Left

The fall of the Soviet Union has had an immense adverse effect on the left-wing forces worldwide. As communist regimes in power collapsed, even the social democrats in West Europe felt the tremors. With the advent of the hegemony of the neoliberal world order, theories of compromise such as the Third Way have been adopted by left-wing parties across the world. As stated in chapter three, following the adoption of theories such as the third way, there was very little that differentiated the social democrats from the center-right or the liberal parties (Johnson, 2015). The neoliberal order, liberal democracy and capitalist laissez faire economy were not challenged by any significant political party of the mainstream (March, 2008). As Castaneda (2012) remarks, the people had to choose between a neo-liberalized left and a liberalized right.

Given that all the significant political parties have espoused the neoliberal order, there is apparently no significant political force to oppose the fundamentals of neoliberalism, leaving people adversely affected by neoliberal policies without a voice. As Mouffe (1993, 2000 and 2005) has remarked, this has created a disenchantment among certain sections of society which gradually adopted an anti-establishment stance. It was this phenomenon which provided a fertile ground for far-right populist parties to burgeon.

The European financial crisis of 2008 compounded the problems of liberal democracy. According to Streeck (2011), this was a natural consequence of the rule bound economic policy of capitalism which protected markets from political interference and regulation. The social democrats were the most affected (Johnson, 2015). The crisis led to the implementation of an array of policies collectively known as ‘austerity’, which implied cuts in several welfare measures of the state such as spending on housing, healthcare, and education. Streeck (2011 and 2012) calls this a part of capitalism’s crisis where it is the markets and big companies that are bailed out at the expense of ordinary people. This caused miseries among a significant section of the affected societies (Streeck, 2011, p. 5-7). He also refers to this as the culmination of capitalism’s incompatible wedding with democracy. With the left-wing parties (who are supposed to represent the poor and the working classes) enacting measures of austerity, people lost faith in them (Johnson, 2015 and Noack, 2017). In several European countries, they were pushed out of office (Lloyd, 2017). In most others, they lost a significant section of votes at the expense of rising far-right populist parties.at the expense of rising far-right populist parties.

4.2 Rise of the Far-Right

The rise of the far-right has been spectacular in the past few years (Golder, 2016). From Golden Dawn in Greece to the Front National in France, it threatens democracy and pluralism. The far-right brings back the scourge of exclusionist, illiberal politics which threatens the very

essence of pluralism and democracy. The term ‘illiberal democracy’ has even been introduced in the public sphere (Zakaria, 2007). Mouffe had argued since the nineties (Mouffe, 1993) that the liberal ignorance of the political will have ugly consequences. In *On the Political* (2005), she argues that the rise of the far-right populist parties is greater where the difference between the traditional parties has become less significant. The liberal consensus is stifling to the ordinary people who want a real alternative to neoliberalism (2005, p. 66). Populist demagogues can create a rhetoric which is terrifying, monist and foul but appealing to many sections of the society which have been alienated by the consensus of the neoliberal establishment which has failed them.

Mouffe (2005, p. 65) criticized liberals for trying to dismiss the rise of the far-right thorough a number of excuses such as ‘uneducated people are easily manipulated by demagogues’, ‘working people are easily susceptible to populist rhetoric’ and/or dismissing it as an anomaly. Mouffe (2005, p. 72) also attacked the liberals for using morality to dismiss the far-right as ‘evil’ and create the ‘we good democrats’ category. This strategy cannot resist the rise of the far-right. As Mouffe remarks and recent political events have also demonstrated, the support for the far-right is not limited to any exclusive class or educational section of the society or group or country. Mouffe’s argument, that populist right wingers increase support wherever the established political parties have little choice to offer, stands vindicated.

Mouffe (2005, p. 72) also makes another pertinent point. The way traditional parties respond to the challenge of the populists is also a ‘we’/‘them’ antagonistic divide. It proves once again that the ‘we/them’ antagonism still exists in society. It is another example asserting Mouffe’s claim that the liberal claim that the days of antagonistic ‘we/them’ politics are over is an illusion.

The crux of the argument regarding the rise of far-right parties remains that the liberal center-based consensus is unable to provide a viable alternative to the voters. The liberal inability to grasp the concept of the political does not mean that the political does not manifest itself in public space. When democratic parties are unable to provide a channel to the conflicts in society, they will manifest themselves in antagonistic forms. This claim by Mouffe has been prescient. The liberal democratic model based on the idea of consensus is unable to provide a viable outlet for the manifestation of the political agon. The far-right parties are bad (I agree with the liberals on this, so does Mouffe) however, the point to note here is that the far-right parties are anti-establishment. They provide a horrible but significantly different alternative to the present order.

Mouffe has also criticized liberals for attempting to remove the role of passions from the sphere of the political (Mouffe, 1993 and 2005). This has been a result of an attempt to create consensus. However, this does not mean that passions have gone. They have just gone to support parties which represent an alternative to the current regime- the far-right.

I want to draw the attention to another important unsettling factor. In some countries such as Hungary, the established right wing is moving further to the right and incorporating far-right ideas and policies. In this way, the political discourse is shifting further to the right. The left is unable to do anything to stop such things from happening. The share of votes of the left in these countries such as Hungary (where the left is a neoliberalized one (Bozoki, 2002)) has drastically fallen over the past decade. Whatever is happening, the neoliberalized left is unable to gain a significant amount of support.

4.3 What's Left

As argued by several scholars like Hamilton (2006) and Lavelle (2016), there seems to be little left-wing ideology remaining in the social democratic parties. What is imperative for

the left is to give people a real alternative. For this to happen, left-wing parties should stand for something different, something which is a genuine left-wing ideology. The previous chapter has discussed how the hegemony of the current order is held by capitalism. The left needs to reinvent itself and what it stands for. It is high time that the left tries to grasp the meaning of the political and seek to polarize the society on this basis. The left must discern that the current regime is one with the hegemony of the right. While I agree that the left needs to adapt its ideology to changing circumstances, it does not mean giving up its ideals for power. The left needs to stand effectively and sincerely for those values that it has traditionally claimed to represent- equality, distributive and social justice. Left-wing policy should work towards the core goal of socialism- to establish common ownership of the economy and economic equitability. The left must seek to establish another world order instead of trying to adapt this one (dominated by capitalist hegemony). The liberal order must be challenged. The capitalist system cannot be accepted as the inevitable end of history. In other words, this would mean working to invent another hegemony- one different to the existing hegemony - a democratic socialist one which would be marked by common ownership of the economy and a deeper socio-economic and political equality.

It is perceivable that in most countries, the left would be divided along ideological lines such as Eurocommunists, Democratic Socialists, Social Populists (Marche, 2008). However, now it would be strongly advisable to create an alliance of left wing forces which oppose the status quo (neoliberal world order) yet do not wish to capture power by force and remain respectful of plurality. The task on hand is the creation of a left-wing parliamentary force (a party or an alliance of parties). As later discussed, this can be done through two ways- either by creating a new party or converting/taking over a neoliberalized left party into one which can be called 'truly left.' Either way, it is essential to create a force in parliament which will be locked in an uncompromising struggle against neoliberalism.

Another vital role is to be played by mass movements and activism by left wing sections of society. Tarrow (2011) defines movements as collective challenges based on a common motive and social solidarity in which there is a sustained interaction with opponents such as the elites or authorities. It should be remembered the ‘left’ is much more than political parties. Using this definition of movements, we may remark that while the parliamentary left has suffered many setbacks over the years, the intellectual left and the left-wing movements have remained active in trade unions, college/university campuses and other sections of the society. Anti-globalization movements, feminist and environmental movements often have a strong left-wing character. At a time when few mainstream parliamentary forces critique liberalization, privatization, and globalization, it is often from these circles that critiques of globalization come (Plihon, 2017). Free from the shackles and compulsions of electoral politics, it is often the left-wing movements and intellectuals not associated with political parties who have been able to maintain their distance from the neoliberal vortex into which the parliamentary left has entangled itself.

As recommended by Mouffe (2000 and 2005), a parliamentary left-wing force must learn from and collaborate with protests like mobilizations against austerity, welfare cuts or movements in support of women’s rights, protection of the environment among others. The movements are representative of the desires of many sections of the society as they are opposed to the establishment. For example, there were massive protests by students against austerity across Europe after 2008 (Cini & Guzmán-Concha, 2017). This clearly indicates that a certain section of the society (students or at least a significant section of them in this case) are dissatisfied with one aspect of life- education. Mouffe (2000, p. 123) opines that the rise of social movements demonstrates a crisis in social democracy- the inability of the social democrats to address popular needs. A genuine left-wing political platform must do something to consider the popular demands of the students. Agonist struggle demands the establishment

of a counter hegemonic force that can do this at every level. If the example states above are to be taken, the students protesting- if organized, can be a force which takes part in the agonistic struggle against neoliberalism. Similarly, the establishment of a counter hegemony demands the creation of such organizations/fronts in all aspects of life including among workers, peasants, students etc.

4.4 Creating the Alternative

Given the state of the left and the need of the hour, it seems that there are two broad paths to a progressive political formation. The first option is to create a new party from a movement. This is perhaps a harder option in terms of practice. Nevertheless, this happens at a time when the established left has ossified and there seems to be no sign that they want to change to a more left-wing position. In such a situation, massive movements with a left-wing mindset can emerge and create a new political party which arises out of a movement. An example is the creation and rise of Podemos in Spain.

The other option is to take over an existing party with its structures and networks. This would be easier to work out in terms of electoral success as the existing party structures help in fighting elections. However, it also requires a lot of effort on the part of democratic socialists to fight an internal civil war within the party against the established Third Way supporters. A very good example of this is the Labour party in the UK. Another path that can be considered is that of Jean-Luc Melenchon and the left alliance in France. These examples are discussed in the next section.

4.4.1 Creating a New Movement Based Party

Let us consider a popular movement against welfare cuts in a European country where the social democrats are in no mood to change. A massive movement against corruption and inequality builds up. A new party is finally born from the movement. The formation of Podemos in Spain is the best example for such a scenario. Errejon and Mouffe (2016) refer to this creation as a new democratic left formation. The social democratic party in Spain- PSOE was highly unpopular as it had indulged in neoliberal policies (Kennedy, 2012; Marx and Schumacher, 2013). The economic crisis of 2008 had a detrimental effect on the Spanish economy (Rojo, 2009). The government under the leadership of the PSOE heavily indulged in welfare cuts under the program of austerity. In such a scenario, a massive movement against austerity emerged known as the ‘Indignados’ movement. After the rise in the popularity of the movement, a new party- Podemos - was born in 2014. Podemos has participated in elections since 2014. It has gained significant success in the Spanish Parliament and has ended the two-party system in Spain becoming an effective third player.

4.4.2 Taking Over the Existing Left

The British Labour party had been one of the first and strongest adherents of the Third Way, under the leadership of Tony Blair. The Party was in power for thirteen years from 1997 to 2010. Over the years, Labour party moved to the center. ‘New Labour’ under Tony Blair had openly endorsed market economy and abandoned the project for the establishment of socialism. However, there remained within the Labour party a group of supporters of the ‘hard-left’ called the ‘Socialist Campaign Group’, who remained critical of the New Labour policies. The Labour party was defeated in the general elections of 2010. The period since 2010 witnessed a periodic decline of the Labour party. It was followed by a massive defeat in the elections of 2015. After this defeat there was an internal election for the leadership of the

Labour party where Jeremy Corbyn, a left-wing candidate often criticized for being ‘hard-left’, emerged victorious (Richards, 2016).

The leadership of Jeremy Corbyn led to a bitter internal dispute within the Labour party, where the faction supporting Corbyn had to face the adherents of the New Labour ideology which were still entrenched in the party establishment. However, he has been able to retain control of the leadership of the party. Under Corbyn’s leadership, the party has moved away from the center towards the left (Crines, 2015). He calls himself a democratic socialist and has espoused policies which are against austerity and welfare cuts. Labour’s performance improved significantly in terms of seats, as well as in terms of vote share under the leadership of Corbyn in the general elections of 2017. Several far-left groups such as TUSC¹ and Socialist Party have even extended their support to the Labour party after the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader (Cooke, 2018).

It is important to take note of some of the social movements which have played a role in this phenomenon. A grassroots movement called Momentum has sought to mobilize mass support for the Labour party under Corbyn’s leadership. It is through movements like Momentum, which have engaged with significant sections of the British Left, including other far-left parties, to create support for Labour, which is what many, especially Third Way proponents, call a ‘hard-left’ alternative in Britain (Thomson, 2016).

¹ TUSC supports Irish MPs’ call on Corbyn. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2018, from <https://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/24868>

4.4.3 Jean-Luc Melenchon in France

The left-wing forces in France have been fragmented for many years. The largest left-wing party in France was the Socialist Party or PS. It has over the decades moved steadily rightwards to the center. There are several other left-wing parties in France of which the Communist Party or PCF is the largest, which cannot form a government on their own. The PCF has often supported the PS and taken part in government. The numerous other left-groups usually don't take part in government but periodically do send some members to parliament. The PCF usually supported the candidacies of the Socialist Party in the second round.

Jean-Luc Melenchon started his career within the PS. He represented the left-wing of the party and became a dissident as the PS moved more towards the center. He parted ways with the PS in 2008 and formed a new party called the 'Left Party.' The Left Party has sought to include a wide variety of left-wing ideas into its fold moving beyond ideological orthodoxy. It has taken inspiration from Die Linke in Germany. This brand of politics is very welcome on the left as it includes issues such as environment and gender in the program. He contested the Presidential election of 2012 with an alliance with the PCF and received around eleven percent of the votes. For the presidential elections of 2017, Melenchon formed a large left-wing political platform consisting of several parties which are to the left of the PS such as the Left Party, Ensemble, Social Ecology Cooperative (dissidents from the Greens) and others. The name of this platform is La France Insoumise or 'France Unbowed'. La France Insoumise was supported by several movements such as environmental movements, LGBTQ movements and others (Damiani, 2017). Melenchon was able to capitalize on the anti-government protests where large sections of the society felt affected by the neoliberal policies of the government. Damiani writes that Melenchon has been able to do two things. First, he united many left-wing forces which were to the left of the PS into a common platform. Secondly, he was also able to

bring into the fold of the left, many people who have been adversely affected by the policies of neoliberalism (Damiani, 2017).

In the presidential elections of 2017, Melenchon came 4th with more than 19% of the votes in the first round. The PS was decimated- getting reduced to only 6 percent of votes. It was a remarkable performance. Under the leadership of Jean-Luc Melenchon, La France Insoumise is the largest left-wing bloc in the country. The bloc with the highest support- En Marche - received 24 percent votes followed by the Far-right Marine Le Penn at 21 percent.

The examples discussed above show that it is possible to establish a nexus between political parties and popular movements. Two paths to do this have been discussed above. Whichever way the party-movement axis is to be established, it is very important to note that the establishment of such a coordination is essential for a democratic socialist project. The examples stated above are trying to provide the people with an alternative to what Mouffe calls a consensus on neoliberalism. It is no wonder that Chantal Mouffe has endorsed the politics of Jean-Luc Melenchon. The establishment of an alternate political force against the neoliberal consensus is needed. They are creating clear cut lines of adversaries along the us/them distinctions which older social democratic parties are unable to create due to them being stuck with the neoliberal consensus.

The previous two chapters dealt with the agonist theory of radical democracy and its relevance to democratic socialists. This chapter sought to explain how some democratic socialist parties and movements are working towards what she might be calling a radical democracy. Podemos and La France Insoumise have openly been endorsed by Mouffe herself (Mouffe, 2016). Other democratic socialist efforts are also being made in other countries to unite the left and provide a proper alternative to the neoliberal consensus across the world. The construction of an alternate counter hegemony is a tough task and there is a lot of work to be

done in this regard. However, in line with the aims and objectives of the thesis, this chapter sought to illustrate with a few examples (which are by no means a comprehensive list of), that her theory can explain the formation of a democratic socialist alternative.

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War and the resultant fallouts have had rather detrimental effects on left-wing politics. While the mainstream left moved further right towards the political center, neoliberalism became an accepted norm in politics. At a time when none of the left-wing parties were able to provide a cure to these problems, it has become important to re-think the course and strategy of the left. On one hand, it is known that old school Marxism-Leninism has become a failure and cannot provide the solution in a pluralist democracy. At the same time, it is important to reject the theories of the Social democrats who have given in to neoliberal hegemony. Thus, time is ripe for the left to think of a radical democratic solution to the problems of contemporary time.

It was this quest to find a left-wing theory that would advocate a radical change while remaining within the purview of democracy and pluralism that led to the conception and development of this thesis. Chantal Mouffe's theory of agonism offers a tantalizing prospect—a radical democracy without authoritarianism or bloody revolution. The thesis sought to critically explore her theory and understand whether it is suitable for contemporary democratic socialist politics or not.

The thesis delved into the roots of liberal pluralism and its agonist critique. It argued that the agonist espoused by Mouffe is an alternative which seeks to incorporate the element of adversarial conflict but still retain its pluralist credentials. The thesis went on to understand her critique of the post-political left and discerned that the post-political thinking has seriously damaged the left. Finally, the thesis discussed the prospects of how some contemporary

developments in the left-wing praxis can offer an alternative. The thesis argues that using Mouffe's theory of agonism, provides an avenue to bolster the democratic socialists.

The thesis identified several positive contributions of Mouffe's theory towards this end. It demonstrated the need to understand the role of identities and hegemony in politics. Democratic socialists must work on creating an alternative hegemonic project, based on a new understanding of the political and the centrality of conflict in politics. There is the urgent need to come out of the post-political way of thinking and politically polarize the society on the lines of oppressor and oppressed. The failure to provide the people with a real alternative produces disastrous consequences- the burgeoning of the far-right. The thesis has also argued that it is possible to make progress for democratic socialists through this strategy. A critical reading of Mouffe also reifies her commitment to pluralism. It allays fears that her rejection of liberalism can create an undemocratic alternative. In this important respect, Mouffe does not reject the basic tenets of liberalism.

There are areas in Mouffe's thought which are undertheorized and ambiguous. The thesis has demonstrated that Mouffe suggests many ideas about bringing about a radical democratic change but has little to say how the radical democratic setup would look like. She gives several hints here and there but those are only broad indicators. If one seeks to understand questions like the arrangement of institutions or the nature of the constitution in an agonistic democracy, he/she will be left wanting of any direct answers.

The thesis has demonstrated that Mouffe's radical democracy can indeed be an effective theory for democratic socialists to understand politics, organize and create an alternative emancipatory strategy. The thesis did not explore the details of how exactly these objectives can be reached, but it does discuss, with examples, how an agonist understanding of democratic politics can be used to gain political success and make the left a force to be reckoned with. It

is also important to note that most of the examples dealt by Mouffe are in the West. Further research is needed to adapt the theory to non-Western situations. Much like Mouffe's theories itself, this thesis remained focused on ideas and broad directions for the democratic socialists.

It must be kept in mind that that Mouffe is a political philosopher and not a jurist or scholar with empirical perspectives. Hence, she can be exonerated to an extent for the lack of content on the ordering of the political institutions in a radical democracy. However, this does not mean that they are not pertinent questions. It is an area which should would be addressed in my next research project. It is also important to note that there needs to be more research on how Mouffe's radical democratic thought can be used to create political strategy at the ground level in various contexts, especially non-Western ones. This is a subject which needs to be addressed both theoretically and empirically. The thesis also hints at other areas of further research such as the development of an international democratic socialist bloc. It is the responsibility of us, scholars of radical democratic thought, to further navigate the theory.

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