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A case of American exceptionalism:

Why is there no socialist tradition in the United States?

Master thesis
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Abstract

Unlike other major developed nations, the United States has never witnessed the development of a broad socialist-inspired movement, nor have its most prominent socialist party organizations ever achieved electoral success at the national level. It is the purpose of this dissertation to explain the exceptional nature of the nation's social and political experience and, most importantly, to provide an informed, sensible and credible answer to why there is no socialist tradition in the United States. In order to do so, the analysis will focus on two influential works – Werner Sombart's *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?* and Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks' *It didn't happen here: why socialism failed in the United States* –, both of which contain a comprehensive depiction of the American socialist movement at distinct historical times, and that, most importantly, provide well-founded answers to the initial research question. The main conclusions pertaining to why socialism did not thrive in the United States may be summarized as the product of the interaction of human agency and several distinctive factors of social, historical, political and economic nature. In addition, whilst the recent political developments may demonstrate that support for socialism in the United States is on the rise – especially amongst Democratic voters and the younger generations –, most indicators reveal that the latter still constitutes a minority. Hence, although support for socialist-inspired policies will most likely never cease to exist – regardless of its numerical expression –, there is ample reason to believe that the United States still remains as exceptional as ever in this regard.

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Introduction

The lack of a solid socialist tradition in the United States has long been considered an intriguing phenomenon within the academic community. Albeit the existence of several socialist-inspired parties and movements throughout American history, the ideology in question never truly obtained significant electoral expression – especially at the national level –, nor did it inspire a broad social movement amongst the population. In fact, when compared to the political and social experience of other developed nations, the limited adherence to the socialist ideology in the United States – which is politically manifested by the non-existence of a successful socialist-inspired third party or labor party, nor by the infiltration of the ideology within one of the two major parties –, along with other peculiar historical phenomena and occurrences, has often been depicted as a contributing element to the characterization of the prominent American exceptionalism thesis.

Indeed, the principles on which the American nation was founded, and which still profoundly influence its society today – values such as "liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire",[1] which Seymour Martin Lipset identified as being an intrinsic part of what he considered to be the "American creed"[2] – seem to be at odds with what socialism represents. It is especially intriguing that, albeit their undeniably strong European heritage, Americans – particularly the working-class – never demonstrated a similar attachment to the socialist ideology as did their counterpart in the Old Continent.

Furthermore, despite what the Marxist theory had predicted, the fact that an advanced capitalist society with such a substantial degree of economic and industrial

[1] (Lipset, 1996, p. 19)
[2] (Lipset, 1996, p. 19)

power as the United States was headed nowhere towards a socialist revolution concerned numerous leftist intellectuals ever since the end of the nineteenth century, including Lenin, who later dedicated their time to studying why American socialism had not achieved greater success, as would have been expected. It seems that most intellectual figures were well aware that, as Seymour Martin Lispet and Gary Marks put it, "the United States was a living contradiction of... Marxian theory, and raised fundamental questions about its validity"[3] long before the Russian Revolution of 1917 which later confirmed that the initial predictions had failed and that, instead, socialism was well under way in a semi-feudal nation.

Hence, in order to fully comprehend why the United States lacked such a solid socialist tradition, I chose to rely on the academic works of renowned intellectuals which not only presented well founded arguments that had withstood the test of time, but also that, if possible, provided a detailed historical account of the nation's character and its relation with socialism, including both the successes and shortcomings of the American socialist movements and its most prominent political actors. After having thoroughly researched the topic, it soon became apparent that there were two influential works which stood out as being quintessential to understanding the subject at hand: Werner Sombart's *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?* and Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks' *It didn't happen here: why socialism failed in the United States*.

Werner Sombart's book is often described as one of the finest earlier attempts of investigating the causes of why socialism was never truly successful amongst the American population. Albeit his political sympathies for the ideology in question, the German sociologist's work provides a rigorous account of why there was such

[3] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p.19)

generalized resistance to Socialism in the United States, particularly for a work which was produced in the beginning of the Twentieth Century.[4]

Furthermore, *It didn't happen here: why socialism failed in the United States*, is widely recognized as a meticulous work that shines a light on a part of American history that is often forgotten. In this book, the authors set out to explore the main arguments that have been presented as having contributed to the failure of socialism in the United States and to ultimately analyze their validity. Albeit its special emphasis on the events that took place during the first half of the twentieth century – which is often declared as the height of the ideology's popularity in the United States –, the fact that it was written nearly a century later than Sombart's work entails that, contrary to the latter, Lipset and Marks were able to access the empirical knowledge that derived from the events of the past century and, consequently, incorporate it into their academic text. In addition, I will occasionally include quotes from *American Exceptionalism: A double-edged sword*, which is an earlier work of Seymour Martin Lipset that also partly explores the topic pertaining to my initial research question.

I must add that, albeit having been considered at an early stage, I have chosen not to include Joseph Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* since its addition would compromise the depth of the analysis of the two previous works which have been mentioned due to the restrictions regarding the dissertation's word limit. However, I fully recognize that it is a notable academic work which is particularly relevant when discussing the object of study in question.

Moreover, I intend on complementing the authors' main arguments by employing the ideas of various intellectuals and political figures who also delved into

[4] For instance, Sombart's employment of the comparative approach and his use of detailed quantitative data regarding the wages of both German and American workers in distinct areas of activity in order to analyze their quality of live is especially impressive for a work which was produced at the time.

this issue or helped make the case for what we now commonly refer to as American exceptionalism, wherever it may seem relevant and appropriate to do so. Indeed, I believe it to be especially important to incorporate the arguments of earlier authors who precociously understood (or even helped shape) the inherent values that have accompanied Americans ever since their country's independence – for instance, their strong attachment to individual liberty and intense suspicion of state interventionism – and that greatly contribute to the nation's general contempt for the socialist ideology, namely Alexis de Tocqueville.

Finally, after having analyzed the authors' works in detail, I plan on revisiting their main arguments in the conclusion and consequently determining whether or not there are any contact points between the two academic theories, whilst addressing their overall validity in answering the research question that I set out to investigate.

Additionally, despite it not being the primary purpose of this dissertation, I believe that it would be unwise not to address the recent developments in American politics and whether or not we may be witnessing the end of political exceptionalism in the United States. Indeed, it seems that socialism has presently gained momentum in the United States, particularly following the election of President Donald Trump and the "Bernie Sanders phenomenon" – who, despite not having won the Democratic nomination once again, was able to run two energetic Presidential campaigns in the last years. Whilst evidence suggests that support for socialism is still limited at the national level, there is no denying that the latter is on the rise, especially amongst the democratic voters and the younger generations.

Hence, I will dedicate the last part of my conclusion to briefly commenting on whether this is an accurate portrayal of the recent political developments in the United States and, if so, on whether that might suggest that some of the contributing factors

which had been associated to the lack of adherence of the American population to the socialist ideology might be losing ground and how that may affect both the American political and societal structure – namely how it may precipitate a broad social movement in American society or, in a more likely scenario, increasingly impel the Democratic party towards the left.

1st Part: Werner Sombart

When beginning to address the question of *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?*, Werner Sombart dedicated his book's introduction to describing the inherent conditions and factors that paved the way for capitalism's success in the United States. The German author was especially interested in analyzing the workings of the American society in the beginning of the twentieth century and providing the readers with the tools to understand how the historical, geographic, demographic, societal and economic conditions at the time fueled the country's resistance to socialism. Similarly, after presenting an overview of the earlier socialist experiences in the country, Sombart addressed not only why they failed to achieve greater electoral success, but also why they were unsuccessful in inspiring a nation-wide movement.

The author commenced his book by writing that "the United States of America is capitalism's land of promise. All conditions needed for its complete and pure development were first fulfilled here."[5] He then argued that the United States possessed a unique set of physical factors that enabled capitalism to thrive in an unparalleled way.

According to the author, the country possessed a wide array of precious metals - including gold and silver -, fertile soils and a tremendous potential for territorial expansion. The latter was an especially important contributing factor for the success of capitalism. Unlike Europe, where almost no territory was left unclaimed and, therefore, there was limited potential for expansion – which led a set of European states to explore a number of territories in other continents, namely in order to profit from a more extensive market area –, the United States of America still possessed a vast territory that was virtually unexplored. This factor alone would constitute an unparalleled opportunity for trade, economic growth and development.

[5] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 3)

After having established the importance of the territory's distinctive physical attributes, Sombart further delved into how other contributing factors had fostered an environment that was conductive to capitalism. For instance, the author argued that the European immigrants who chose to leave the Old Continent and embrace the New World wished to "carve themselves a new life based on principles of pure reason"[6] and that, although they shared a common heritage with those who remained in Europe, they desired to put their past "feudal artisan experience"[7] aside and utilize their sets of skills into building a more profitable world for themselves and their families. The boundaries of traditionalism and nobility which were still upheld in Europe had been set aside, leaving those who chose to live in the New World with a tremendous potential for both social and economic gain.[8]

After having presented the factors that had contributed to establish what he considered to be the inherent characteristics that sustained the claim that the American territory was exceptionally favorable to capitalist expansion and that its inhabitants were fundamentally different from their European ancestors, Sombart proceeded to make an intricate critique of both the highly advanced state of capitalism in the United States and the American social structure.

Sombart wrote that only in America had capitalism reached its highest stage of development and, according to the author, this was not without grave consequences. The never-ending desire for profit had, for one, legitimized a set of labor conditions that were deemed unacceptable in most European countries. The author exemplified his argument by shining a light on the number of railway accidents that happened in the United States of America and comparing them with those which occurred in Austria.

6 (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 4)
7 (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 4)
8 (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 4)

In only two years – from 1898 to 1900 –, nearly twenty-two thousand people were killed in railway accidents in the US. Additionally, whilst accidents happened at a rate of 19 per million passengers in America, the figures dropped to 0,99 per million passengers in Austria.[9] According to the author, this apparent disregard for human life resulted in an unparalleled amount of financial rewards and capital accumulation.

Furthermore, Sombart wrote that capitalism also deeply influenced America's social structure. As has been previously established, in the beginning of the twentieth century, Americans did not abide by the same rules that had shaped the European continent for the most part, as neither feudal nor aristocratic laws were imposed on them. Thus, according to the author, the inexistence of such a rigid social structure left people completely free to pursue their own interests, which included building a wealthy lifestyle for both themselves and their families. In a way, people were dazzled by the possibilities that capitalism could give them, which led them to underestimate the results of what the relentless pursuit for wealth could provoke. Consequently, Sombart came to the conclusion that "the entire lifestyle of the people increasingly adopted a manner suited to capitalism".[10]

In order to substantiate his claims that capitalism had a predominant role in shaping America's social structure, the author gave a few examples of how this influence was becoming evident within American society.

On one hand, Sombart was convinced that one of the manifestations of such influence was the country's rapid process of urbanization. Although several statistics demonstrated that this process was indeed underway – namely how nearly a fifth of the population of the United States lived in cities of over one hundred thousand inhabitants

[9] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 5)
[10] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 11)

at the time –, the relation that the German author established between urbanism and capitalism had a deeper significance.

Sombart characterized American urbanization as a process that was purely based on rational and quantitative factors, rather than spontaneous growth. By employing Ferdinand Tönnies' famous ideal types of social organizations, the German author argued that, unlike most cities and towns in Europe which preserved the attributes of *Gemeinschaft*, those in the United States had been mostly organized according to the principles of *Gesellschaft*.[11]

Regarding a similar matter, Tocqueville had also commented on Americans' propensity to spontaneously form associations, which generally acted as a democratic intermediary between the State and the individual. On this matter, the French author famously wrote:

> "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds – religious, moral, serious, futile, extensive, or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found establishments for education, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; and in this manner they found hospitals, prisons, and schools. If it be proposed to advance some truth, or to foster some feeling by the encouragement of a great example, they form a society. Wherever, at the

[11] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 8)

head of some new undertaking, you see the government in France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association."[12]

On the other hand, according to the author, inequality was also an evident result of capitalism's impact on America's social structure. In his opinion, there was nowhere else in the world where the contrast between the poor and the rich was so conspicuous.

In addition, Sombart argued that capitalism had inspired the creation of a national character which, in his opinion, displayed "startling uniformity".[13] According to the author, the binding similarity that inherently tied all Americans together and formed the so-called "American spirit"[14], which was based on the fact that economic – and overall quantitative – principles were valued above all else and utilized in all situations, was a result of the capitalist-oriented structure of American social life. As Sombart wrote, "nowhere else is acquisitiveness as clearly seen as it is there, nor are the desire for gain and the making of money for its own sake so exclusively the be-all and end-all of every economic activity".[15]

Furthermore, the author dedicated the rest of the book's introduction to briefly characterizing the nature and the extent of socialism in America and he started off by reinforcing the idea that if one wishes to understand the "mode of existence of the proletariat",[16] one must analyze how advanced the state of capitalism is in the country which one wishes to study.

Moreover, the author further wrote how, according to the Marxist theory, socialism was a "necessary reaction to capitalism".[17] Although he believed this to be

[12] (Tocqueville, 1835/2000, II, p. 106)
[13] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 10)
[14] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 10)
[15] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 10)
[16] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 15)
[17] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 15)

true, it seemed evident that this rationale was not entirely valid in the case of the United States. If it were true, and given the advanced state of capitalism in America, one would have expected to encounter a significant number of socialist supporters, which was evidently not the case.

Nonetheless, Sombart did not agree with the perception that there was no socialism in the United States, nor did he believe that those who were supporters of such an ideology in the New World were merely a "few broken-down Germans without any following".[18] In order to prove the idea that, although socialist parties only enjoyed meager electoral success in the United States, the support for such parties was certainly not inexistent, the sociologist used the electoral data from the Presidential elections of 1904 as an example that corroborated his previous argument. Indeed, in the Presidential elections of 1904, which had only occurred two years prior to the publishing of Sombart's book, Eugene Debs - the candidate that had been nominated by the Socialist Party of America (SPUSA) - had obtained 403,338 votes.[19] In fact, with approximately 2.5% of the popular vote, Eugene Debs managed to have been the third most voted candidate, behind Alton B. Parker, the Democratic candidate, and Theodore Roosevelt, the Republican candidate and Incumbent President who succeeded in achieving his re-election.

Whilst Sombart was well aware that the vast majority of the Americans did not sympathize with the socialist ideology, the sociologist warned his readers that the latter's generalized rejection did not necessarily convey that all Americans, particularly those pertaining to the working-class, were firmly against any type of reform, nor that they had entirely dissimilar concerns from their European counterparts, which was

[18] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 15)
[19] According to Sombart, the number of votes had risen from approximately 99,000 in the previous election and was extremely volatile. (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 16)

especially evident given the demands of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) at the time.[20]

In this regard, as Michael Harrington argued in the forward of Sombart's book, the exceptional character of the United States resided in the fact that, contrary to the European experience, "a worker in America could express his drive for equality in terms of, not in counterposition to, the prevailing ideology."[21] Whilst the European socialist movement's main purpose upon its creation was to tackle civil-rights issues and strive towards "bourgeois equality",[22] not only did most Americans already enjoy such rights – which had been granted and safeguarded by the Constitution –, but it was also possible for the working-class to demand for change within the existing political system, ultimately deeming socialism unnecessary. Thus, Harrington believed that socialism had never been especially attractive in the United Sates because "Americanism" – or, in other words, "the American ideology" – was already a progressive form of capitalism, which incorporated liberal values such as egalitarianism.

Sombart further proceeded to identifying some of the characteristics that differentiated the American working-class from their continental European counterpart, which he believed also stemmed from the former's inherent capitalist outlook on life. The author classified American workers as "optimistic" and "patriotically inclined".[23] Unlike the continental-European proletariat, most American workers were not intrinsically dissatisfied with their lives, nor were they opposed to the prevailing

[20] Some of those demands included "the introduction of a legal work-day of not more than eight hours, the nationalization of telegraphs, telephones, railroads, and mines and the abolition of the monopoly system of landholding, and the substitution therefore of a title of occupancy and use only." (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 18)
[21] (Harrington, 1976, p. x)
[22] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 18)
[23] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 18)

capitalist system. Instead, Sombart argued that they "loved capitalism", [24] and wished to readily participate in reaping its benefits, even if it meant being exposed to a significant amount of peril when doing so. Moreover, the relationship between capital and labor was viewed as something that ought to be dealt with by employing a business-like approach.

Furthermore, Sombart wrote that the same rationale could be applied to the operation of most American trade unions or other worker's organizations. The author argued that, whereas the largest German trade unions united their workers in "oppositional consciousness"[25] against their employers and sought to reap both labor and social rights from this struggle, their American counterparts wished to reap benefits from working within the system and engaging with those who Sombart named the "bourgeois social reformers",[26] namely "non-partisan social reformers."[27]

The sociologist was especially interested in understanding the workings of the AFL, which was made up of a variety of trade unions and accounted for "more than four-fifths of all organized workers in America".[28] According to the author, although the latter included a set of socialist-led trade unions, the vast majority of its groups and its leadership engaged in a "purely business approach"[29] to representing their fellow associates "without much regard for the proletarian class as a whole and without even less regard for the underclass of unskilled workers."[30] Sombart was critical of its general configuration and argued that it was producing a "vertical structuring of the proletariat".[31]

[24] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 20)
[25] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 22)
[26] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 23)
[27] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 23)
[28] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 21)
[29] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 21)
[30] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 22)
[31] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 22)

Given the circumstances at the time, it was precisely this idea of American exceptionalism that intrigued Sombart and incited him to delve into the issue of why the socialist ideology had never permeated crucial areas of American society, such as politics and unionism, nor why it failed to garner widespread support amongst the American people, as opposed to what had generally occurred in the European Continent – from where most New World immigrants originated –, and whether or not it was expected that the trend would remain unchanged in the future.[32]

1.1 The political factors that condition socialism's success in the U.S

In the first section of his book, Werner Sombart intended on examining not only how a set of distinct political factors affected the position and condition of the American worker, but also how certain features from what he considered to be the "American life"[33] influenced the country's politics.

Firstly, the author argued against the common understanding that the United States' unique political choices were simply a product of the inherent "anti-socialist" characteristics of the Anglo-Saxons. Sombart promptly rejected this notion and argued that the Anglo-Saxons were not, in fact, entirely unsusceptible to socialist-inspired ideas, which could be proved by the popularity of the Chartist movement in England, as well as "the pattern political development in the Australian colonies and even in the mother country".[34] Furthermore, the sociologist resorted to the 1900 Census in order to make the case that the majority of the New World proletariat did not consist of Anglo-Saxons. Instead, German immigrants had largely contributed to the American working force and, given this fact, an unanswered question remained: Why were there millions

[32] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 23)
[33] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 28)
[34] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 27)

of workers who had travelled from countries where socialism had thrived and chose not to uphold the same ideology in America?

Moreover, the author addressed how the United States' complex political machine was creating a set of problems, namely how it was one of the issues that he considered to be at the core of why neither American socialist nor social-democratic parties had enjoyed political success. The sociologist began his argument by stating that the United States had an intricate democratic system of government due to how it was internally organized according to federal laws.

According to Sombart, there was no denying that the United States had a democratic form of government, not only since universal suffrage had been institutionalized as the law in all federal states,[35] but especially due to the extent to which one could exercise one's right to vote. Indeed, the American man had the possibility to vote not just for the legislative branch of government, but also "almost all higher administrative officials and superior judges."[36]

The demanding nature of the United States' political system, along with the large dimension of the country in question, made it necessary for there to be professionals in charge of managing and supervising this nationwide process. This scenario created incentives for what Sombart named the "demagogues who endeavored to take possession of the electoral machinery for themselves"[37] and was aggravated by the "democratic tidal wave"[38] of the 1820s. According to the author, the complexities of the electoral machine also negatively affected people's political participation.

[35] One must note that formal and informal restrictions were still in place at the time, namely concerning both womens' and African-Americans' voting rights.
[36] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 29)
[37] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 31)
[38] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 31)

Furthermore, the phenomenon that Werner Sombart described also had a profound financial implication in the American political system. In the sociologist's words: "finances must correspond with the amount of manpower available, so that the adequate functioning of the Machine is made possible."[39] According to Sombart, both the average election and campaign costs in America at the time confirmed this idea.[40] Thus, political parties were also profoundly limited by their own financial capabilities, which made it even more difficult for a newcomer to acquire an influential position in a scenario that was traditionally dominated by two major players.

According to Sombart, the American political system – aggravated by the monopoly of the Republicans and the Democrats – created disproportionate incentives for people to support the two major parties for a multitude of reasons, which, in his opinion, ultimately strengthened capitalism itself.

In the case of self-interest, given that the "Spoils System"[41] applied, if one were to aspire to reach an important administrative position, for example, one would have a strong incentive to become an ally of either the Republicans or the Democrats, depending on a set of factors, such as the record of their results in a particular geographical area. This incentive would derive from the perception that the placement of people in certain offices was carried out mostly according to the party allegiance of the candidate – which seemed to be the strongest factor –, rather than his/her qualifications. According to the author, this structure also had notable implications within the trade unions, especially the most influential ones, as the leading trade unionists fell prey to the influence of the larger parties. In many cases, the promise of

[39] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 32)
[40] For instance, according to Sombart, "the total expenses for the Presidential campaign are estimated at $5,000,000." (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 32)
[41] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 35)

a more rewarding position in trade for their allegiance would render them "harmless" in pursuing their initial goals of improving general social and labor conditions.[42]

However, the incentive system that "binded the great mass of people to the old parties"[43] also applied to cases other than self-interest. If one had a strong desire to pass a reform or shape public policy, one would also naturally ally oneself with those who had the power to see it through, regardless of one's political inclinations, for practical reasons.

The author further wrote that there were also a set of "hidden causes" which explained why two specific political parties dominated the American system – and, consequently, earned the majority of the proletarian vote – and that, in order to fully understand the reasoning behind this phenomenon, one should study in depth their particular characteristics and what the author would later deem their "inner nature".[44]

On this matter, first and foremost, Sombart argued that there were no significant differences between the two major parties in the beginning of the twentieth century. The issues that had once divided the Federalist Party from the Democratic-Republican Party, such as their "respective positions towards the roles of the Federal government and the individual states",[45] were no longer applicable in order to distinguish their successors – the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, respectively – at the time during which the author was writing his book. According to the sociologist, the political parties' positions regarding issues such as trade, currency or even State intervention were not nearly as distinct as they ought to have been.

Furthermore, Sombart further wrote that the Republican Party which had "emerged with a sharply defined program whose essential point was the determined

[42] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 36)
[43] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 37)
[44] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 44)
[45] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 45)

opposition to slavery"[46] at the time of the Civil War, was not dismantled when its prime objective was accomplished, as it should have been. With this example, the author was reinforcing his previous argument that what had truly motivated the durability of both parties within the American political system was not their devotion to promoting their own "clashing" ideals, but rather their dedication to upholding the same incentive scheme which permitted the winner to choose whom he wished for certain offices "based on the principle that to the victor belong the spoils."[47]

Additionally – and this seems be what concerned Werner Sombart the most –, it was not even possible to distinguish the two major parties according to the social class of its supporters. In fact, the author believed that other factors aside from class membership played an even more important role in influencing a person's vote at the time, such as geography and place of origin.

Thus, according to the author, the characteristics of the two major political parties – be it their lack of clear and distinctive political principals, their social heterogeneity or the distorted incentives which fueled their purpose –, made it extremely easy for American workers to ally themselves with either one. Indeed, when choosing which party one should support, it was easier to be practical and consider which had more influence over a certain place at a given time, for example, rather than trying to decipher the party that came the closest to one's personal and societal ideals.

According to the author, in knowing that the masses were the roots of the two major parties, they were both obliged to retain the people's unwavering trust and high spirits by "making concessions to the wage-laboring class whose members, at least in many districts, deliver the decisive votes."[48] One example of such a concession was

[46] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 48)
[47] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 35)
[48] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 51)

their increasing adoption of "the system of questioning candidates",[49] also known as the Winnekta system,[50] to which most supporters of the socialist parties were opposed, as it represented how, once more, the two major political parties had been able to reinforce the worker's vote by administering a partial remedy to solve a problem which, in their opinion, would only be truly solved with the adoption of a socialist agenda.

After having presented a set of reasons that hindered the emergence and success of socialist parties within the United States due to the intricacies of the American political system, Sombart attempted to explain why the ideology itself remained unpopular amongst the people, especially the working class.

The Americans, he argued, had in fact developed a strong devotion to both the "existing State" and their Constitution.[51] According to the author, this particularly powerful connection derived from the long-established principle of popular Sovereignty within the United States. This sentiment in which "the citizen believes that he is still king in the State and that he can bring things to order if he only wants to"[52] was especially exacerbated not only by the fact that Americans were frequently called upon to vote in numerous elections, but also due to the decisive role of public opinion in decision-making – which was generally known to work in favor of the proletariat in a number of cases.

However, Sombart was adamant on reinforcing the idea that the existence of a democratic principle, which formally bestowed equality of rights upon all its citizens,

[49] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 51)
[50] According to the author, the Winnekta system "consists of the representatives of the workers' interests, i.e., the leaders of the trade unions or of the large trade-union alliances, presenting to the candidate who wants the workers' vote a carefully prepared questionnaire and making their decision whether to vote for him or not dependent upon the outcome of the questioning" (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 51)
[51] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 55)
[52] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 56)

was not a sufficient condition to guarantee the general welfare of the people. On this matter, the author wrote that:

> "A radical-democratic system of government can indeed attract the population of the idea of the State, but it will not be able to prevent criticism of the prevailing society, and especially of the existing economic order, if the latter does not also guarantee a tolerable material existence to the people." [53]

1.2 The economic factors that condition socialism's success in the U.S

In the second section of Werner Sombart's book, the author intended on illustrating how a set of economic factors within American society have also hindered both the electoral success of socialist parties in the United States and the inhabitant's adherence to the ideology in question. In order to do so, the sociologist chose to make a comparative analysis based on the empirical data that he collected from the two realities which he wished to examine: Europe – especially continental Europe and, most particularly, Germany – and the United States of America. In making this comparative analysis, by studying a set of decisive economic factors and conditions, his principal aim was to measure the standards of living of workers in both continents and draw conclusions that could partly explain why, albeit its success in Europe, socialism had failed to thrive in the United States.[54]

[53] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 58)

[54] Sombart reserved the first two pages of this section in order to exclusively comment on his methodological choice. Although the author recognized that the comparative analysis was flawed – especially given the lack of data regarding some aspects which he wished to examine –, he was not only confident that he could compensate for this issue by looking for other sources of data without compromising his initial intention, but also that this approach was indeed the right choice for what he had set out to do in the second section of the book.

The author started by analyzing the average wages earned by industrial workers in America and how they were distributed geographically. According to first set of the data that Sombart presented, which was based on the 1900 Census, the average wages for industrial workers throughout the United States was homogenous, with an obvious exception that was detectable in all of the three categories (men's, women's and children's wages): the Southern states.

To get a better understanding of the distribution of wages, and how there was an evident disparity between the American and the German reality regarding this matter, the sociologist was adamant on comparing the average salary of workers from both continents in the same industry. After presenting a table that contrasted the average wage earned by American and German workers in a set of industries – such as the leather, tobacco and chemical industries –, the author provided a number of particular cases where he was certain that the external influencing factors would be minimized.

For instance, in one given table, Sombart presented his readers with the "distributions of average weekly wages or wage rates of adult male workers in the woodworking industries in 1902 in Germany and in 1900 in the United States." In this particular case, 41.2% of German workers earned less than 20.01 marks each week, whereas only 3.2% of American workers received less than 5 US dollars (approximately 21 marks) for the same type of work in the same industry.

The data that Werner Sombart gathered, however flawed, revealed a pattern that led to an inescapable conclusion: wages in the United States were significantly higher than those that were practiced in Germany. In fact, according to the author, not only

were the former "at least twice as high"[55] as the latter, but, in a set of particular cases, a "fourfold difference"[56] could also be reached.

However, even though there was an obvious discrepancy in terms of wages, since Sombart's aim was to evaluate the living standards of workers in both continents, determining the cost of living in Germany and the United States was paramount. Regarding this topic, the author firstly argued that prices in America were "particularly influenced by two forces: the continuing colonial character of the country and the highly developed state of capitalism."[57]

According to the sociologist, the former was especially evident given the high price of labor and the cheap price of land in the United States. Therefore, all products that were manufactured based on highly intensive labor methods were expensive. The same rationale applied to services, especially those which were considered to be a luxury, such as domestic workers. However, this inherent characteristic also rendered products that were more reliant on land and, thus, more conditioned by its price, cheaper. Sombart wrote that this was perceptible in the case of agriculture products "grown in bulk", [58] which he considered to be relatively inexpensive.

Furthermore, the highly advanced state of capitalism had also manifested itself in innovative technology, which reduced both the cost and the price of mass manufactured products. On this matter, Sombart concluded that "America becomes more expensive as more personal services are required and the demand for luxury increases."[59]

[55] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 74)
[56] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 74)
[57] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 75)
[58] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 75)
[59] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 75)

In order to provide a more detailed analysis on the cost of living in both the United States and Germany, the author then proceeded to examine and compare a set of essential components in a typical worker's life, namely housing, lighting, heating, room-furnishings, nutrition and clothing prices.

According to Sombart, carrying out this research was admittedly difficult, since many factors were at play. For instance, when analyzing housing prices in both countries, the author pointed out that one's initial perception might be mistaken. Although the empirical evidence gathered by the sociologist revealed that, at the time, Americans paid a somewhat larger rent than their German counterpart, their houses were generally equipped with better conditions, such as heating. Thus, after further research, the author concluded that Americans actually paid less than the Germans for a house with the same requirements.

The author had a similar conclusion regarding lighting and room-furnishings. Whereas the Americans paid less for lighting given their countries' abundance in natural resources, including oil, they also spent less money in order to buy a set of "standard items of furniture."[60] Although one should not dismiss the differences in quality when comparing room-furnishings, Sombart's data evidenced that, at the time, Germans were obliged to spend more on staple furniture pieces than their counterpart.

However, when writing on heating, nutrition and clothing prices, the sociologist's conclusions were slightly different. For instance, heating prices were generally the same in both countries, as they were highly dependent on the price of bituminous coal, which had an equivalent value in the two continents at the time.

Furthermore, when analyzing the prices of several food items, the author encountered a greater set of difficulties, namely the distinct nutritional habits – which

[60] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 82)

meant that, when comparing food items, one should be aware that the price of certain commodities would have a greater impact on one population, whilst being possibly insignificant for the other –, the variations in quality and even the price oscillations depending on the time of year. Nonetheless, after presenting a succinct analysis on the nutritional habits and the prices of such items in both countries, Sombart argued that "the prices of the most important foodstuffs are by and large the same in the United States as in Germany."[61]

Finally, when analyzing clothing prices, other complexities arose which made it problematic for Sombart to provide a wide array of empirical data. Once again, these complexities were mostly related to existing disparities in quality. For instance, although two jackets may be manufactured with entirely different materials, for statistical purposes, they may not be distinguished as distinct clothing items. Additionally, it may be customary for a population to buy a certain type of clothing or to prefer a specific material in detriment of another. Evidently, these possibilities introduced a great challenge. However, albeit limited, the data that Sombart was able to collect allowed him to state that "one will find that even clothing costs the American worker no more, or only infinitesimally more, than it does his German counterpart."[62]

Given that we have previously established that American workers earned higher wages and generally paid the same – or even less – for a number of essential components such as housing, the author was interested in knowing where and how these families would generally spend their domestic budget surplus. The author was certain that the answer could only be one of three: either American families saved a

[61] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 82)
[62] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 92)

considerable amount of money or they spent it in order to "extravagantly"[63] fulfill their basic necessities or with the purpose of obtaining luxury products and/or services.

In order to answer the previous question, Sombart gathered a number of studies which analyzed a considerable array of worker's housekeeping budgets in locations such as Washington, Massachusetts, Berlin and Nuremberg.[64] The author's first conclusion was that American workers did not channel most of their household budget surplus into savings. In fact, although the data showed that American workers generally saved more than their German counterpart, it was still far less than what one might have expected, considering the significant difference between what they earned and the cost of living.

Thus, one thing was certain: American workers were spending a part of their generous household budget surplus. Furthermore, the sociologist argued that, similarly to what he had suspected, the data confirmed that American workers were less frugal than their German counterpart in satisfying their primary needs. As a result, in sum, the former generally acquired bigger houses with overall superior conditions; bought better clothing and had the means to replace it more often; and ate more robust meals than their European colleagues. In fact, as Sombart himself observed, the data confirmed that the American worker's life paralleled the standards of the "better sections of the German middle class"[65] or of the bourgeoisie, rather than those of their German counterpart. Interestingly, this more extravagant manner in which American workers chose to live meant that, after having fulfilled their primary needs, they ended up with

[63] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 93)
[64] Similarly to what has been previously observed throughout the book, the American statistics were more reliable than the German data. For instance, whilst the largest German study that Sombart presented was composed of approximately nine hundred household budgets, the statistics gathered from the "Washington Bureau of Labor" were made up of more than twenty-five thousand household budgets. This introduced obvious discrepancies which Sombart endeavored to overcome.
[65] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 97)

a similar percentage of money for other expenses – such as religious donations, taxes and entertainment – to the German workers in relative terms.

Therefore, after having presented a detailed description of the economic situation of the proletariat in both the United States of America and Germany, Sombart argued that there was an indisputable conclusion: the American worker lived a much more comfortable life than his European counterpart.

Moreover, the author argued that this irrefutable fact had an evidently profound impact on the lack of success of the socialist ideology in the United States. Indeed, the American proletariat's high living standards were a product of capitalism and, thus, the idea of overthrowing the political and economic order that had led to the worker's prosperity could not be further away from the people's minds.

Additionally, in the final paragraphs of this section, Sombart intentionally addressed a matter that had been hinted at throughout his book. Ever since its introduction, the author was keen on emphasizing how the United States had become a precocious consumerist society. According to the sociologist, unlike many of their European counterparts, American workers lived in a state of "comfortable domesticity"[66] and, once "they experienced the temptations of materialist depravity", [67] they became dependent on the system that had provided the goods and services that they longed for. Therefore, the American workers were persuaded to acquire a capitalist-oriented mindset in order to uphold their materialistic society, to which they had become accustomed. Patriotism was also an inevitable outcome, as the workers grew proud of the United States' advanced state of capitalism, which was not only

[66] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 105)
[67] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 105)

producing astounding internal benefits, but also pushing other nations in what they considered to be the direction of progress.

Interestingly, Tocqueville also wrote about materialism and its unintended long-term consequences. Indeed, the philosopher warned about the dangers that arise if one neglects to comprehend the intrinsic value of freedom and, instead, appreciates it for the material goods that it yields. On this matter, he wrote:

> "Nor do I believe that a true love for liberty can ever be inspired by the sight of the material advantages it procures, for they are not always clearly visible. It is very true that, in the long run, liberty always yields, to those who know how to preserve it, comfort, independence, and often wealth, but there are times when it disrupts these blessings for a while, and there are times when their immediate enjoyment can only be secured by a despotism. Those who only value liberty for the sake of material advantages have never preserved it long."[68]

1.3 The social factors that condition socialism's success in the U.S

According to Werner Sombart, American workers not only benefitted from more favorable economic conditions than their European counterpart, but they also generally profited from a better social environment. The author argued that the "social position of the worker",[69] namely "his relations to people and social institutions, and in his position in and to society",[70] was profoundly different to the European state of

68 (Tocqueville, 1998/1856, p. 204)
69 (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 109)
70 (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 109)

affairs. The sociologist claimed that, whereas ideals such as equality and liberty were still a dream in the old continent, they had become a reality in the United States.[71]

Furthermore, Sombart was adamant on attributing the cause of such a favorable "social position of the worker" [72] to both the "radical-democratic system of government" [73] and to the "comfortable standard of living" [74] of the American proletariat, which we have previously established. In the author's view, the societal results that this combination produced were obvious, such as the fact that public life was infinitely more democratic in the United States than anywhere else in the world.

For instance, social class was not viewed as an impediment in the United States. On the contrary, American workers were not ashamed of their situation and alternately cultivated self-respect. Instead of class, Americans seemed to revere work. According to Sombart, this was yet another aspect in which American society was intrinsically different from its European counterpart. On this matter, Sombart wrote that:

> "In his appearance, in his demeanor, and in the manner of his conversation, the American worker also contrasts strongly with the European one. He carries his head high, walks with a lissome stride, and is as open and cheerful in his expression as any member of the middle class. There is nothing oppressed or submissive about him. He mixes with everyone – in reality and not only in theory – as an equal."[75]

[71] One must note that this was not entirely true for all inhabitants of the United States, especially not for a large part of its African American community, particularly those who lived and worked in the Southern States.
[72] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 109)
[73] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 109)
[74] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 109)
[75] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 110)

Moreover, this logic was also applicable to the relation between the workers and their employers in most businesses. Similarly to what has been previously established as being the case for most areas of American society, their business-oriented relationship was based on practical principles. Instead of adopting a hostile approach by setting in place an adversarial logic that was reminiscent of feudal times and that was commonplace in Europe, most American employers provided a set of amenities to their workers – such as the possibility of taking one or two days off work, having cigar-breaks, providing better heating and cooling conditions in the workplace or even supplying their employees with showers and lockers[76] –, which instilled in the employees a greater sense of dedication for the business which they were actively contributing to.

However, according to Sombart, this "small gifts preserve friendship"[77] policy was merely an intricate means to an end. In the author's view, this "generosity in small matters"[78] approach was put in place in order to keep the workers in high spirits so that they wouldn't be able to acknowledge their real condition, which was one of exploitation.[79]

Furthermore, according to Sombart, the informal system that was set in place by most businesses in the United States in order to instill the idea that the workers' and the employers' interests were aligned, and that the former reaped as many benefits from

[76] Despite having argued that American workers generally received better amenities than their European counterpart, Sombart stated that most employers in the United States provided less protective measures in the workplace. In fact, this is not the first time that the author has linked the advanced state of capitalism with lack of security or protective measures. For instance, in the introduction of *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?*, the author provided empirical evidence that demonstrated how the never-ending pursuit of profit had indirectly caused the death of millions of railway workers at a much larger rate than those which occurred in Europe at the time.

[77] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 111)

[78] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 112)

[79] This is one of the cases where Sombart's sympathies for the Marxist theory are apparent. This line of thought coincides with the latter's view on the workings of capitalist society and the workers' condition of exploitation.

capitalism as the latter, was composed of a set of cross-cutting measures, which included profit sharing, accepting employees' suggestions and complaints – certain enterprises would often make a "suggestion box" available for this purpose – or even by enticing them to buy company stock. In the author's view, this particular course of action was producing the desired effects. The American proletariat was infinitely more involved – both physically and psychologically – in their employer's business than the European counterpart, namely by becoming increasingly more dependent on its success. Thus, not only did this system discourage the adversarial logic that defined the relation between those two groups in the Old Continent, but it also enabled workers to acquire a "capitalist mentality."[80]

In the book's last pages, Werner Sombart addressed what he believed to be the main questions in his readers' minds: did all of the political, economic and social factors that the author presented throughout his work constitute a sufficient reason to explain how socialism had failed to achieve tangible success in the United States? Additionally, did they fully explain why American workers did not wish to overthrow the prevailing economic system?

Albeit having thoroughly delved into such issues throughout the book, as he approached the end of his notable work, the sociologist wished to emphasize how two factors were indispensable in explaining both the American "proletarian psyche"[81] and the lack of socialism in the United States.

Firstly, Sombart was certain that a defining characteristic of American society – and, consequently, of the American "proletarian psyche"[82] itself – was the tangible possibility of class movement. For several reasons – namely "the newness of society,

[80] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 114)
[81] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 115)
[82] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 115)

its democratic character, the smaller gap between the employing class and the workers, the colonial vigor of many of its immigrants and the Anglo-Saxon determination of purpose"[83] –, in no other country was it as likely that a member of the working-class had such high prospects of becoming wealthy and moving up in society. However, as has been previously established, the American proletariat did not live obsessed with questions of class nor did they feel as stigmatized by others – namely employees – as did their European counterpart. According to the author, the motivation that fueled people's desires of fulfilling "The American Dream" and achieving "petty-bourgeois livelihoods"[84] was, in fact, attaining freedom from the constraints that capitalism imposed on the working-class people.

Furthermore, Sombart argued that the United States provided the dissatisfied worker with another indispensable tool towards attaining his freedom. The scarcely populated lands of the West had an enormous potential that, in the beginning of the 20th Century, was yet to be fully explored. Thus, several American policies incentivized the migration of people to the Central and Western states, mostly by facilitating grants of land to those who wished to become independent farmers in such territories. This was the case of the Homestead Act, which came into effect in 1863 and allowed for citizens over twenty-one "the right to take possession of eighty acres of public land if these acres lie within railway land grants, or 160 acres if they are located elsewhere"[85] for a small fee.

As expected, the Homestead Act produced considerable results in the second half of the 19th Century. According to the author's calculations – which were based on the data that he retrieved from the Census –, "an area with twice the expanse of the

[83] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 115)
[84] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 115)
[85] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 116)

German Empire became cultivated for the first time in the two decades from 1870 to 1890."[86] Additionally, a significant amount of those who wished to live as independent farmers in the Western territories of the United States were not only immigrants but also Americans, some of which deserted industrialized urban areas in order to pursue this alternate course of action.

However, in order to establish a causal link between this form of migration and the advancement of capitalism, Sombart focused on tracking the evolution in the number of Homesteads on a yearly basis. The sociologist's conclusion was that their numbers rose in years of economic depression. Since there was an evident decrease in immigration to the United States during such years, the logical explanation would indicate that Americans who lived in industrialized areas chose to migrate to the West due to financial uncertainty and/or difficulty. Sombart argued that, as people became increasingly displeased with capitalism and opted to disperse by migrating to the West in years of economic depression – namely in the 1880s, when the United States' economy was hit by a downfall –, they failed to sustain the rise of alternative political parties and social movements in the industrialized urban areas where they might have had the largest change of success.

In fact, in the author's view, the mere acknowledgment of the fact that one had the possibility to choose freedom over capitalism, namely by becoming an independent farmer in the Western territories of the United States, profoundly shaped the "American proletarian psyche."[87] According to the sociologist, the existence of such a choice pacified any of the workers' desires to rebel against the prevailing economic system. Thus, Sombart came to the inevitable conclusion that, alongside many other

[86] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 116)
[87] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 115)

determinant factors, the existence of "free, unsettled land"[88] was perhaps one of the most essential components to what we now know as American exceptionalism.

Finally, the author ended his work with a controversial statement which, for the most part, contradicted his findings and for which he did not provide any further explanations:

> "These are roughly the reasons why there is (no) Socialism in the United States. However, my present opinion is as follows: *all the factors that until now have prevented the development of Socialism in the United States are about to disappear or to be converted into their opposite, with the result that in the next generation Socialism in America will very probably experience the greatest possible expansion of its appeal*."[89]

[88] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 119)
[89] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 119)

2nd Part: Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks

Similarly to Werner Sombart's earlier endeavor, albeit with a contemporary perspective, *It didn't happen here: why socialism failed in the United States* set out to provide an explanation to why, contrary to the experience of similarly developed nations, there had not been a viable party nor a widespread socialist movement throughout the history of the United States.

In order to explain the phenomenon, Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks aimed at examining the validity of the main arguments that were professed by prominent intellectuals, politicians and academics ever since the end of the nineteenth century. Additionally, they intended on making a thorough comparative analysis of various plausible hypothesis by testing them "across and within countries",[90] with the purpose of isolating "as far as possible the causal effects of particular factors."[91] In doing so, the authors wished to provide "not only a political sociology of Socialism's failure in the United States, but larger insights into American society and polity."[92]

2.1 The essence of American exceptionalism

After having explained their aims and the methodology they intended on using throughout the book, the authors dedicated the first chapter of their work to providing an overview on the most popular arguments that had been put forth by renowned leftist intellectuals in order to explain the absence of socialism in the "New World."

As was previously mentioned in the introduction of this work, according to the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the socialist revolution would inevitably occur in the most developed capitalist countries of the

[90] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 11)
[91] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 10)
[92] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 10)

world. Given that the United States had been at the forefront of capitalist development ever since the end of the nineteenth century, various leftist intellectuals promptly declared that it would be most likely be one of the first nations to witness a socialist revolution. Thus, as it became increasingly clear that socialism was nowhere near to attaining extensive support amongst the American people – not even amidst the working class –, prominent socialist figures promptly set out to justify the latter's absence from both the United States' society and politics.

Hence, in the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, several leftist figures, namely Werner Sombart, published detailed works that addressed not only how the United States differed from other industrial societies at the time, but also how those differences directly impacted socialism's progress in the New World. However, as the authors mentioned, American exceptionalism remained a source of embarrassment to most socialist intellectuals – especially after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 –, as it was an indisputable contradiction of the Marxist theory.

Lipset and Marks further wrote that, according to the pre-World War I socialists, one of the most distinguishing social factors that characterized American society, especially when compared to the countries of the Old Continent, was "the absence of a feudal past".[93] On this matter, the authors quoted both Friedrich Engels and Max Weber who, more than a century before their work was published, had also attributed particular importance to this defining characteristic of American exceptionalism and widely commented on how it negatively affected socialism's possibility of success in what Weber had previously deemed as "the only pure bourgeois country."[94]

[93] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 21)
[94] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 21)

Furthermore, the consequent value system that was established due to the unique circumstances in which the United States was founded was also a decisive factor that remained entrenched within American society throughout the twentieth century. On this matter, Lipset and Marks wrote that such values included "both secular, liberal laissez-faire and America's distinctive, individualistic religious tradition, based on the dominance of the Protestant sects that, as [Max] Weber stressed, facilitated the rise of capitalism."[95]

Moreover, socialist authors also highlighted the role of the Constitution and the generalized antagonism towards centralized power – which also profoundly flourished within the labor movement – as indispensable contributors to the "essence of American exceptionalism."[96] Additionally, leftist intellectuals not only alluded to how racial heterogeneity and large-scale immigration also inherently defined the American reality at the time, but also how they contributed to hindering the chances of a successful socialist party and movement in the United States. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Marx and Engels had already addressed these matters by arguing that class consciousness was compromised by ethnic diversity since it put "native-born white workers"[97] in an advantageous position over other workers, "thus enabling the bourgeoisie to play workers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds against one another."[98]

However, as the socialist intellectuals of the beginning of the twentieth century rightly noted, the previous social and cultural variables were not entirely responsible for the absence of socialism in the United States. Firstly, various economic factors also

[95] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 22)
[96] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 31)
[97] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 29)
[98] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 29)

partially explained this phenomenon, namely the fact that American workers had a substantially higher standard of living than their European counterpart at the time, a fact which had not gone unnoticed by previous leftist intellectuals. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, social mobility allowed for the average worker to have the tangible possibility of moving up in society and to attaining a level of freedom that was unbeknownst to the European proletariat.

Furthermore, "Americanism" was also subsequently identified as a relevant factor in explaining the "essence of American exceptionalism"[99] and how, according to several authors, it had acted as a substitute for socialism in the United States. Instead of simply symbolizing a combination of ethnic characteristics that identified the people of the United States, "Americanism" was as much of an ideology as fascism, communism or liberalism. As Lipset and Marks eloquently wrote, "The American ideology, stemming from the Revolution, can be consumed in five words: anti-statism, laissez-faire, individualism, populism, and egalitarianism."[100] Thus, socialism was infinitely less appealing to the "democratic, socially classless, anti-elitist society"[101] that characterized the United States, especially when compared to the European post-feudal reality of the 1920s.

Moreover, sectarianism, political freedom and the American political system itself were also considered to be major obstacles in the path of socialism's success in the United States. Firstly, American socialists were organized in small factions, as their wish to be doctrinally pure not only hindered their capability of setting in motion any

[99] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 31)
[100] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 30)
I must note that this is an updated version of what Seymour Martin Lipset had written in his previous work, *American Exceptionalism: A double-edged sword*, where he stated that "The American Creed can be described in five terms: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire." (Lipset, 1996, pg. 19
[101] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 30)

tangible course of action, but also rendered them unwilling to work together with "mainstream" groups and movements, most of which represented the majority of the working-class itself. Secondly, and more controversially, as Morris Hillquit, the American Socialist leader argued, "political freedom undermines class consciousness."[102] This rationale derived from the fact that, unlike the European class-struggle for political, social and labor rights that was well underway in the early twentieth century, the United States already provided most of those rights to the working-class who, in return, did not find it necessary to mobilize against the prevailing system.

Finally, the electoral system used to elect Congress and the President of the United States, which was in place since the eighteenth century and had helped produce a two-party system, was recurrently mentioned as having hindered the success of the SPUSA. Although Lipset and Marks dedicated the second chapter of their work to providing an extensive examination of the American political system, the authors added that most socialist intellectuals attributed American third parties' failures not only to the fact that, whenever they gathered sufficient electoral support that could seemingly rival one of the major parties, the latter would incorporate the former's ideas in order to eliminate what could be perceived as a possible threat, but also due to the fact that the political system that was set in place encouraged Americans to resort to tactical voting, as they would rather vote for candidates that had a tangible possibility of winning and, thus, of accomplishing what the voters wished to see fulfilled.

[102] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 35)

2.2 The American political system

In the beginning of the second chapter, and as has been previously established, Lipset and Marks wrote that the American political system had been frequently deemed by various intellectuals as one the main causes for having "inhibited Socialism as a political movement by making it difficult for any minor political party to survive."[103] Interestingly, the academics also remarked that previous authors, such as V. I. Lenin and Morris Hillquit, were certain that several aspects of the American political system – such as federalism and the early "gift of the suffrage"[104] –, were particularly more impactful regarding the lack of success of the SPUSA than that of other third parties in the United States.

However, given the overwhelming evidence that the majority of the United States' electorate had consistently chosen to vote for one of the two major parties in existence, the authors questioned whether the failure of the Socialist Party was simply an element of a larger phenomenon that was present within the American political system: the inability for third parties to successfully compete against the two established major parties.

Indeed, given the characteristics of the system that was chosen by the founders of the United States to elect both Congress and the Presidency, which rests on the plurality or first-past-the-post system, it is especially difficult for third parties to have a chance of winning decisive elections. Since only the winning party within a particular constituency receives any representation, the plurality system converts "votes into seats in a way that hurts small parties if their limited support is spread across many

[103] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 44)
[104] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 44)

constituencies."[105] Therefore, the electorate is encouraged to engage in tactical voting not only in order to avoid "wasting" their vote on a party that most certainly will not win, but also with fear of hindering the chances of success of the major party whom they consider to be the "lesser-evil".[106]

However, the authors argued that the negative effects caused by the plurality system could be successfully limited. For instance, third parties may choose to put in more effort in the constituencies where they have the strongest chances of winning elections. They may also opt for making an agreement with one of the major parties within a particular constituency so as to not further divide the vote.[107] Additionally, Lipset and Marks gathered sufficient empirical evidence which strongly indicated that the Socialist party had worse electoral results than a set of other third parties in the United States. Thus, albeit having agreed that it hindered the success of third parties, the academics did not fully accept that the failure of the SPUSA was mostly due to the negative effects of the first-past-the-post system.

Nevertheless, due to the substantial emphasis that was given to the role of the American political system in the failure of the socialist party – which the authors agreed that, to a certain degree, was not without reason –, Lipset and Marks dedicated the second chapter of their work to examining the effects of "three distinctive American institutions – the presidency, federalism and restrictions on ballot access"[108] and how their unique characteristics played a part in hindering socialism's success in the United States.

[105] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 45)
[106] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 45)
[107] This proved to be particularly difficult for the SPUSA, which was, as has been previously established, extremely sectarian in nature.
[108] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 48)

Firstly, the academics stated that the election of the United States' executive branch was especially unique due to the combination of two factors that are particularly harmful to the chances of third parties' electoral success: "the principle of plurality and the aggregation of national votes through the Electoral college."[109] Although other industrialized nations possess similar features, none of them simultaneously combine both factors. According to Lipset and Marks, the election of the executive branch "via a plurality electoral system with a single round of voting"[110] creates a political environment which is highly prejudicial for third party success, as it diminishes the possibility for such a party to "improve its national chances by cooperating with other parties to limit competition or by taking advantage of geographical concentrations of support",[111] which were previously identified as successful strategies that limit the negative effects of the plurality system.

In addition, the strict separation between the executive and the legislative branches of government also negatively interferes with the chances for third parties to gain "some executive influence as a coalition partner."[112] Therefore, since the American electoral system produces strong incentives for a two-party system and, consequently, for the consolidation of the two major parties, "factional coalitions"[113] tend to be created "within, rather than between, political parties."[114]

Furthermore, the empirical evidence that was gathered by the authors made it possible for them to declare that, indeed, the Presidential electoral system was particularly harmful for third parties' chances of success. According to Lipset and

[109] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 48)
[110] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 49)
[111] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 49)
[112] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 49)
[113] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 49)
[114] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 49)

Marks, although Americans consistently voted for one of the two major parties in presidential elections – mostly due to the "wasted vote thesis", which we have previously addressed –, the proportion of votes for third parties generally increased as the electoral level decreased. Empirically, this rationale was also applicable to the SPUSA, as contrary to what previous observers had stated regarding how Eugene Debs' candidacy had increased nation-wide support for the socialist party, the latter's electoral performances actually appeared to be stronger at the local level rather than at the national level.[115]

Lipset and Marks further concluded that the support for third parties during presidential elections seemed to mostly vary not only according to the perceived difference between the candidates of the two major parties, but also in proportion to the importance that was attributed to the election in question. For instance, if there was a close election, where either major party had a tangible possibility of winning, "potential socialist voters"[116] would normally opt to "follow a second-best strategy",[117] in order to prevent the election of the party or candidate which they truly disliked. On the other hand, if voters perceived an election's outcome as predictable – and, consequently, believed that there was a considerable distance between candidates which could not be easily shortened – or were convinced that the latter was not necessarily relevant, they would be more inclined to vote according to their true preference.

[115] In order to substantiate their claims, the authors provided an example that had occurred in the state of Wisconsin. On this matter, Lipset and Marks wrote that "despite participating in less than one-third of Wisconsin's House elections between 1904 and 1932, socialists managed to gain more votes in the state than did their presidential candidate on four of seven occasions. In the three presidential election years (1904, 1908, and 1912) in which the socialist presidential candidate, Eugene Debs, received a slightly higher share of the Wisconsin vote than the House candidates, the party put up only three, two, and three candidates, respectively, in the eleven House constituencies." (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 49-50)
[116] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 50)
[117] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 50)

Furthermore, whilst discussing how federalism impacted the chances of success of third parties -– and those of the Socialist party in particular –, the academics promptly recognized that it was a double-edge sword. Indeed, whereas some authors believed that federalism was "a source of weakness for third parties",[118] others were adamant that this characteristic benefited the latter's chances of electoral success.

According to Lipset and Marks, those who were convinced that federalism hindered the third parties' prospects of success often corroborated their thesis by falling into one of the two main lines of argument regarding this matter. Various intellectuals believed that socialism was unsuitable within the framework of a federalist nation and that, therefore, if one wished to improve labor conditions in the United States, one should seek to do it via collective bargaining rather than legislation. On the other hand, other authors were certain that federalism had contributed to "the fragmentation of political authority",[119] making it harder for the socialist ideology to spread across the different realities of the country, which actively contributed to weakening "efforts to generate working-class consciousness or confirm socialist criticisms of American society as a whole."[120]

Both lines of argument seemed to recognize, to a certain degree, that this particular feature of the American political system deemed legislation as an inefficient means of procuring labor improvements in the United States. Whilst, in the end of the nineteenth century, several British intellectuals, such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb, argued that "legislation of working conditions had practical advantages over collective bargaining",[121] namely its universality and permanent nature, and that, thus, unions

[118] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 53)
[119] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 53)
[120] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 53)
[121] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 54)

should be encouraged to take political stances in order to efficiently pursue their objectives, it soon became clear that the same rationale was not applicable for the American reality.

Indeed, as Lipset and Marks wrote, "the task of gaining legislation is far more uncertain, complex, time-consuming, and expensive in the United States than in a unitary parliamentary democracy."[122] Unlike centralized states, the approval of a particular nation-wide legislation within the American political framework requires the agreement of each individual state. This means that a considerable amount of efforts must be spent on convincing both the people and the courts of each state that the law will bring about positive change, which is not an efficient manner of achieving better labor conditions, especially when there is a high likelihood that the law will not be approved in all states. Therefore, trade unions generally preferred to seek improvements in working conditions at the state-level and, even in such cases, state court judges would every so often fail to approve the particular legislation on a technicality or by evoking the Constitutional right of owners "to do what they wished with their property."[123] Hence, as the authors stated, "more often than not, unions discovered that legislation was effective only when they had the organizational resources to ensure that it was enforced."[124]

In fact, according to several academics, the "distinctive institutional structure of the American state" had profoundly impacted the labor union's strategy since the beginning of the twentieth century. For instance, rather than seeking political reform, which, as has been previously established, was difficult under the institutional

[122] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 54)
[123] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 54)
[124] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 54)

framework of the American political system, the AFL consistently opted for a business-oriented strategy – also known as business unionism – in order to pursue their goals. Naturally, albeit practical, business unionism also contributed to limiting the popular adherence to the socialist ideology as trade unions did not wish to undercut their independence and self-reliance with state intervention nor did they intend on "dividing their members into exclusive political camps."[125]

However, as Lipset and Marks have previously alluded to, not all authors were certain that federalism had a negative impact on third parties' electoral success. On the contrary, regarding this subject, some academics believed that it was a positive feature of the American political system, as it divided the national arena into smaller constituencies, where, as has been previously established, third parties – including the Socialist party – had higher prospects of winning elections.[126]

The authors further wrote that, when analyzing other nations' realities, it became evident that the link between regime type and social-democracy was ambiguous. In fact, federalism had not impeded the success of socialist-inclined parties nor the subsequent political reforms that came into effect in countries such as Australia, Germany and Canada. Consequently, the authors were led to conclude that "the federal character of the American political system"[127] was not a sufficient explanatory reason for the absence of a widespread socialist movement nor the failure of the socialist party in the United States.

[125] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 55)
[126] According to the authors, this proved to be true on several occasions. As Lipset and Marks put it, "social democratic or near social democratic movements were able to win statewide elections and/or major party primaries in North Dakota, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Wisconsin, California, Oregon, and Washington between 1918 and 1940." (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 56)
[127] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 57)

Another feature of the American political system which seemingly hindered the electoral chances of third parties, and of the Socialist party in particular, was the "complicated and time-consuming process of gaining access to state ballots."[128] According to the authors, intricate and somewhat random regulations were imposed on smaller parties if they wished to compete in an election. These barriers were imposed by "individual state legislatures",[129] who were "dominated by the major parties themselves",[130] in order to squash competition. For instance, in states such as Montana, California and Oklahoma, the regulations demanded that minor parties obtain at least five per cent of the state's registered voters.

In addition, the latter were often denied ballot access simply due to technicalities. For example, this occurred "to the Socialist party in New York in 1946, when petitions collected in each county of the state with the requisite fifty signatures were held invalid because in some instances the canvasser inadvertently misstated his own district."[131] However, similarly to their previous conclusions, although it was obvious that third parties – and the Socialist party in particular – had been, at times, unjustly denied rightful ballot access, the authors came to the conclusion that it did not explain the phenomenon which we have set out to analyze in its entirety.

Lipset and Marks further examined the contribution of two other features of the American political system, "the gift of suffrage" and party flexibility, to the nonexistence of extensive support for the socialist ideology and the Socialist party in specific. According to the authors, since white males' voting rights were granted prior to industrialization and without there being a widespread need for popular revolt,

[128] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 63)
[129] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 63)
[130] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 63)
[131] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 64)

"working-class political consciousness"[132] in the United States, as the authors put it, never came close to reaching European standards.

However, Lipset and Marks wished to emphasize that, albeit a relevant feature of the American political system, this did not portray the whole picture. In fact, a cross-national analysis revealed that, although countries such as Australia and Switzerland had also achieved widespread suffrage at an early stage, both their political system and the society in general still incorporated socialist-inclined ideas, movements and parties.[133] The authors also noted that, although "the gift of suffrage" was undoubtedly important, one should especially dedicate one's attention to examining a consequential phenomenon: the major political parties' abilities to incorporate the support of the proletariat before the establishment of the working-class parties. According to the authors, the two major political parties in the United States were able to do so by capturing the votes of the working-class people, along with other social groups, long before the socialist ideology reached American politics, establishing "cross-class alliances."[134] Consequently, as Lipset and Marks put it:

> "The existence of democratic rights in America compelled socialists to focus narrowly on worker's economic interests and to emphasize economic exploitation in their attempts to attract workers away from established parties and existing channels of political expression."[135]

[132] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 58)
[133] The Australian experience was especially revealing since, similarly to the United States, it had also been a former colony of the British Empire. Nonetheless, the authors clarified that the two cases had several distinguishing elements, namely the fact that the immigration to Australia was less heterogenous both in terms of class and origin compared to that of the United States. Thus, Lipset and Marks concluded that, "working-class culture and class traditions were more deeply rooted in Australia than in the United States." (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 58)
[134] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 60)
[135] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 62)

Similarly to the previous argument, due to their dimension and inclusive nature, both major political parties in the United States encompassed a variety of opinions, promoting the creation of internal factions within their broad ideological scope. This inherent flexibility also allowed them to integrate elements of other ideologies whenever it appeared to be opportune – namely when such ideologies were obtaining increasing popular support –, which not only dissuaded a considerable number of voters from supporting minor parties, but would also often seemingly deemed their creation unnecessary.

In fact, several examples illustrate this phenomenon. For instance, Lipset and Marks extensively wrote on how, following the Great Depression of the 1930s, in order to accompany a growing "anti-capitalist" sentiment, Franklin Delano Roosevelt played an important role in steering the Democratic party to the left, whilst both ensuring the preservation of the two-party system and the stability of the American political system as a whole. According to the authors, the former President was able to do so not only by co-opting a series of leftist ideas – that had become prevalent amongst the American people –, but also by integrating the leaders of a set of radical and alternative movements into his own body of support, which, as Lipset and Marks put it, "reflected conscious efforts to undercut left-wing radicals, to preserve capitalism."[136] Thus, although the conditions at the time were favorable for the emergence of a viable Socialist party in the United States, the authors argued that "the constitutional system and the brilliant way in which Franklin Delano Roosevelt co-opted the left prevented this."[137]

[136] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 73)
[137] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 78)

In conclusion, whilst most arguments that were presented regarding how a set of features of the American political system negatively influenced the success of socialist movements – and the Socialist party in particular – in the United States were compelling, Lipset and Marks once again noted that, in their view, they did not fully explain this complex phenomenon.

In fact, none of them provided an explanation for why leftist intellectuals were never able to create powerful factions within one of the two major parties with the intent to introduce socialist-inclined policies into mainstream politics, contrary not only to what had happened in other industrialized democracies, but also within the Republican party, which had, on several occasions, been influenced by "more conservative and libertarian groups."[138] Additionally, unlike what occurred in the United States, cross-national examinations demonstrated that social democratic parties in other industrialized democracies where the two-party system was in effect were able to successfully overcome a set of barriers and become predominant actors in the political scene.

Furthermore, although one may unquestionably argue that several elements of the American political system acted as barriers to the triumph of third parties, they also did not account for why the Socialist party had worse electoral performances than other minor parties on numerous occasions since the end of the nineteenth century[139] nor why Socialist leaders had never become "a major vehicle for protest in the United States."[140]

[138] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 82)
[139] On this matter, Lipset and Marks wrote that "since the Civil War, socialist electoral performance has been eclipsed by the Greenbackers with more than a million votes in the midterm elections of 1878, the Populists with over a million votes (8.5 percent) in the 1892 presidential election and 1.5 million votes in 1894, La Follette's 16.6 percent of the presidential vote in 1924, and the post-World War II presidential candidacies of George Wallace, John Anderson, and Ross Perot." (Lipset & Marks, 2001, pg. 82)
[140] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, pg. 82)

2.3 The relation between the Socialist party and the trade unions

In the following chapter, Lipset and Marks set out to explain why there had consistently been an evident separation between the American socialist movement and the trade unions, which they firmly characterized as being "one of the greatest weaknesses of the socialist movement in America."[141] As a result, the authors wished to explain whether the SPUSA or the major trade unions should be held accountable for this phenomenon and its widespread impacts.

As Lipset and Marks put it, "the separation of political from economic organization distinguishes the left in the United States from that in every other industrialized democracy."[142] According to the authors, this division had been present ever since the establishment of the main American trade unions, which, albeit a few exceptions – such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the federation of unions that famously had communist influences –, had "remained free from party-political control."[143] Indeed, instead of pushing for the creation of a new party or supporting alternative movements, the most influential trade unions (and federation of unions) in the United States – with a special emphasis on the AFL and CIO –, preferred to exert influence by cooperating with the two major parties, especially with the Democratic party.

Whilst analyzing these issues, the authors firstly wished to emphasize how American trade unions greatly differed from other labor organizations around the world. In order to do so, they explained that American unionism was not only a reflection of the American peoples' values, but also of the institutional framework

[141] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, pg. 85)
[142] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, pg. 85)
[143] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, pg. 85)

imbedded within its society. These characteristics helped create a favorable environment for the establishment of exclusive (or craft) unions – rather than inclusive (or industrial/general) unions –, which dominated the American labor movement.

According to the authors' understandings, the former type of unionism was "based on skilled groups of "craft" workers who attempt to improve their working conditions mainly by limiting the inflow of unskilled workers into their job territory",[144] whilst the latter could be characterized as being "based on less skilled workers who attempt to improve their working conditions by mobilizing large numbers to pressure employers and/or gain political representation."[145] Table 1, which has been directly extracted from Lipset and Marks' book, explains the distinction between exclusive and inclusive unionism in greater detail and according to different criteria.

[144] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 88)
[145] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 88)

Table 1

Types of Unionism

	in a particular occupation	unskilled as well as skilled, in a particular industry
Labor Market Strategy	**Internal Restriction:** Attempt to control the supply of labor in a given job territory	**External Pressure:** Inability to control supply of labor; Attempt to pressure employers by force of numbers
Membership Strategy	**Exclusionary:** Defense of apprenticeship regulations and other barriers to entry in relevant labor market(s)	**Encompassing:** Expansionist effort to encompass all who work for given employers
Political Resources	Relatively **small membership thinly spread** across country	Relatively **large membership geographically concentrated** depending on location of industry
Political Orientation	**Weakly politicized:** Political activity viewed as marginal to regulation of working conditions	**Highly politicized:** Focus on gaining improvements in working conditions through legislation

Note: Reprinted from *It didn't happen here: why socialism failed in the United States* (p. 91), by Lipset and Marks, 2001, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright 2001 by Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks.

Although towards the end of the nineteenth century, European labor movements became more diversified in order to accommodate an increasing number of unskilled workers as a consequence of the societal evolutions at the time, this phenomenon did not happen with the same intensity in the United States. [146]

The conflict between exclusive and inclusive unions within American society, who wished to pursue their goals using different economic and political approaches,

146 According to the authors, "from the establishment of the American Federation of Labor in 1886 to World War 1, exclusive craft unions accounted for at least three-quarters of the total membership of the federation in any year." In fact, even with the "rapid postwar expansion of unionism (…) the portion of craft unionists declined, but it still remained in excess of two-thirds through the 1920s." (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 89)

was a contributing factor that led to the split between the AFL and the CIO in 1935. In fact, as Lipset and Marks put it, the dispute also partly explained why the "repeated attempts to develop an independent class-based party",[147] namely one of socialist inclinations, ultimately ended poorly. Whilst the exclusive unions, who dominated the AFL, adopted a business-like approach and, hence, "were convinced that they could achieve their goals through occupational organization in the labor market",[148] the inclusive unions were extremely politicized and wished to "induce governments to legislate improvements in workers' welfare."[149]

Lipset and Marks further wrote that, as expected, socialists condemned exclusive unions for perpetuating and, at times, exacerbating the class division within society since, according to the authors, such collectives wished to "remain above the unskilled proletariat"[150] and "to preserve their niche in the division of labor rather than to abolish the division of labor itself".[151] Thus, since they recognized the importance of the AFL, socialists wished to increase the influence of inclusive unionism within the labor organization by supporting the latter "as a principle and as an indispensable part of the class struggle."[152] Although such attempts were somewhat successful in a few cases – namely in the Pennsylvania Federation, where the inclusive unionism principle prevailed and the labor organization supported an Industrial Workers of the World strike in 1912 –, they were not sufficient to overthrow the predominant role of exclusive unions within the AFL.

147 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 89)
148 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 91)
149 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 92)
150 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 90)
151 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 90)
152 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 94)

Moreover, as has been previously established, "American cultural dispositions",[153] which, as the authors put it, were "forged in an egalitarian, anti-statist, individualist revolution",[154] were also a determining factor that greatly contributed to the major unions' reluctance of supporting, alongside the socialists, an independent labor party. In fact, according to the authors, these so-called "American values" had been reinterpreted "under different historical circumstances", [155] often condemning movements and ideologies that represented dissimilar principles, namely socialism, to failure.

Interestingly, on this matter, the authors quoted historian David DeLeon, who had previously stated that the nature of the "American values" – which included a profound esteem for liberty and anti-statism – deemed anarchism to be a better fit for the "American insurgent"[156] than socialism. As DeLeon put it,

> "Social democracy, communism and other relatively authoritarian movements that rely upon coercive centers of state power have run against deep libertarian currents in American culture and as a result have never succeeded in developing deep roots. Statist radicalism in its various forms has been an ephemeral influence in American politics, while the black flag (of anarchism) has been the most appropriate banner of the American insurgent."[157]

Notwithstanding the fact that most American trade unions did not wish to support or establish an independent political party, there were several attempts to do so throughout the end of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. A vocal minority

[153] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 97)
[154] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 97)
[155] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 98)
[156] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 98)
[157] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 98)

within the AFL – which mostly consisted of a set of inclusive unions and exclusive unions that stood for "declining sectors of the economy"[158] –, tried to do so on several occasions, namely during the last decade of the nineteenth century, when "the most severe economic depression of the nineteenth century made many unionists sensitive to the potential benefits of broad-based independent political cooperation with other hard-pressed groups."[159]

However, whatever advances had been achieved towards this particular goal were squashed in 1895 with Samuel Gompers' re-election as President of the AFL – who, according to the authors, "exemplified the distrust of the state among unionists"[160] –, which greatly diminished the chances of the latter establishing an independent political party. The so-called "Gompers doctrine" made it clear that the AFL would not bound itself to party politics. Instead, it would adopt a practical approach, which consisted of "rewarding labor's friends and punishing its enemies regardless of party affiliation."[161]

Furthermore, and as has been previously established, the split between the trade unions and the Socialist party was especially prejudicial to the latter's success in the long term. In addition, and as the authors stressed, it also had other widespread implications, namely on the Socialist party's organizational strength, its ideological orientation and on (the lack of) class consciousness in the United States.

[158] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 101)
[159] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 101)
[160] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 99)
[161] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 103)

This separation had a grave impact on party organization, which was reflected in the SPUSA's consistently low membership rates.[162] This lack of capability in attracting members was an especially undesirable scenario at the time, since newcomers, such as the Socialist party, were expected to overcome their disadvantages – namely being "outsider parties" and the fact that, in the latter's case, they represented "less privileged sectors of the population"[163] – by achieving "power in numbers."

Moreover, as the authors argued, even the workers who were affiliated in a certain trade union did not feel like they were part of a broader labor movement, nor of a subculture or counterculture which exerted special influence on their way of life. Whilst in most European countries, being part of a trade union would incentivize membership in a "labor-friendly" party, the low membership rates of the SPUSA revealed that this rationale did not necessarily apply to the American context. This phenomenon was especially prejudicial for the party, since, as has been previously established, it depended on attracting members in order to overcome a set of internal and external obstacles that hindered the its success.

As a result, since almost no pressure was applied on the Socialist party by the proletariat in order for it to act in a more pragmatic manner and to seek the realization of specific labor and economic reforms, the former was steered by fervent intellectuals into becoming ideologically strict and, as the authors put it, into fostering "radical tendencies."[164] Lipset and Marks further wrote that the split from the trade unions also deeply affected a number of socialist policies at the time, especially the decision not to

[162] In fact, as the authors wrote, "by the turn of the twentieth century, in its fourteen year of existence, the American Federation of Labor encompassed 750,000 workers. By 1913 the figure was 2.5 million. For its part, the Socialist party never exceeded 118,000 even at its peak in 1912." (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 109)
[163] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 109)
[164] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 114)

support the American participation in the First World War, which turned out to be extremely unpopular amongst the general population.[165] One may easily argue that such a stance wouldn't have been taken if more American workers had been involved in the workings of the Socialist party.

Finally, the split between the trade unions and the Socialist party also contributed to the lack of class consciousness in the United States. As I have established in these last paragraphs, unlike the reality in most post-feudal European countries at the time, not only did American workers not generally feel like part of an all-encompassing labor movement nor of a subculture which had a direct influence on their way of life, the existing structures set in place in the New World, along with its inherent diversity, incentivized people not to view their world in class-terms.

However, the authors believed that the lack of class consciousness was not equivalent to an absence of intense conflict associated with the labor movement. Instead, as Lipset and Marks conveyed, "industrial conflict rarely deepened class consciousness"[166] in the United States and American workers "tended to view their interests in ethnic, religious, or community terms."[167] According to the authors, there was an evident "split between orientations in the workplace and in residential communities"[168] that was partly due to the influence of exclusive unions within the AFL, which, unlike the socialists, wished to undermine class consciousness and "segment labor organization into specific trades or occupations."[169] Naturally, the obvious failure in promoting such a sentiment amongst the American people impeded

[165] According to the authors, the latter derived from the socialists' intention of abiding by two strong components of the Marxist doctrine: internationalism and pacifism.
[166] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 113)
[167] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 113)
[168] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 113)
[169] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 113)

workers from viewing their economic and political interests in the same manner, which, in the long term, was especially damaging to the success of the Socialist party.

Furthermore, in order to demonstrate the validity of their argument that the Socialist party's electoral strength greatly depended on establishing strong links to the trade unions, Lipset and Marks provided several examples of American cities where socialist-inspired candidates and policies triumphed as a result of such a connection between the two. This was the case of cities like Milwaukee (WI), Reading (PA), New York City (NY) and Minneapolis (MN), where the link between the Socialist party and the trade unions was powerful and where, consequently, workers recognized the importance of both parts in constructing a solid and socialist-inspired labor movement that defined both their private and public lives. As the authors wrote, such ties "provided the (Socialist) party with resources, both human and financial, that were lacking in other areas of the country", [170] which ultimately contributed to the party's success in those regions.[171]

2.4 How immigration affected American socialism

As has been previously established, when analyzing the failure of the SPUSA – and of the popular adherence to the socialist movement in general –, various factors must be considered. Several authors, including Marx and Engels, have emphasized how immigration profoundly affected the socialist movement in the United States.

[170] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, pg. 122)

[171] Nonetheless, although they believed the latter to be true, Lipset and Marks also recognized that, when regarding socialism's success in those four American cities, other factors had come into play, especially the fact that support for the socialist ideology "was predominantly ethnically based" and that immigration had been heavily composed of people who originated from countries and regions that already had a strong social democratic tradition, namely Germany and Scandinavia.

However, contrary to what one might expect and, as Lispet and Marks stressed, there was not a consensus amongst intellectuals on whether immigration *ipso facto* helped, or not, promote socialism within American society. Although several authors have stated that immigrants, particularly from central and northern Europe, were thought to have been a cornerstone of American socialism, others have asserted that most immigrants were never truly associated with the Socialist party. Most importantly, the ethnic and religious diversity that immigration to the United States produced was also considered to have undermined class consciousness, which, naturally, had a direct impact on socialism's lack of success in the long-term.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the American working-class was already predominantly comprised of immigrants of numerous origins, which, as was previously mentioned, was not necessarily positive for the American socialist movement. According to the authors, the strong heterogenous character of American society created an "extremely unpropitious [environment] for socialism."[172] The high levels of racial, ethnic and religious diversity hindered the development of class solidarity – which, naturally, must exist in order for Socialism to thrive –, as people generally organized their private and public lives according to group identities instead.

Lipset and Marks further added that Friedrich Engels extensively wrote on this matter during the last decade of the nineteenth Century. Although Engels believed that conflict amongst workers was purposefully aggravated by the American bourgeoisie as a diversion "to deflect pressure away from themselves",[173] the authors wrote that "he

[172] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 122)
[173] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 129)

was also aware that ethnic and racial divisions were major obstacles to the creation of a class-conscious worker's movement irrespective of ruling-class strategy."[174]

This inherent characteristic of American society also had profound implications on party-politics and, consequently, on the workings of the trade unions. Firstly, as Lipset and Marks put it, "class consciousness in the workplace was secondary to ethnicity as a basis for organization and political activity."[175] For instance, whilst "immigrants from Britain, native stock, and Northern European Protestants were predominantly Republican, Irish Catholics and Eastern and Southern European workers were largely Democratic."[176] Thus, since the political allegiances of the American proletariat were scattered across the political spectrum, unions had to adapt to those unique circumstances and make sensible choices, so as not to alienate a number of its members. This was one of the reasons why trade unions were especially reluctant in supporting the creation of an all-encompassing labor party, as their leaders understood that it would be impossible for one party to truly represent and condense the distinct political views of the American working-class.

Additionally, as Lipset and Marks put it, although it was expected for trade unions to strive towards representing the working-class as a whole, a significant part of their policy choices during the beginning of the twentieth Century was "motivated by the fear that "old immigrants" and their labor markets would be overrun by "new immigrants."[177] The AFL itself adopted strategies that aimed to protect native Americans, "old" immigrants and their trades – which, consequently, were aligned with the exclusive unions' objectives and, therefore, such policies reinforced their power

[174] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 129)
[175] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 131)
[176] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 131)
[177] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 133)

within the AFL – from the presumed menace that "new" immigrants, often unskilled, posed on the *status quo*. Eventually, trade unions began to demand greater restrictions on immigration, which resulted in an increased tension between native Americans and "old" immigrants "who dominated organized labor",[178] and "new" immigrants "who remained outside the labor movement."[179]

Moreover, Lipset and Marks further wrote that in order to truly comprehend the role that immigration played in both American society and socialism, one must understand that it is not paradoxical to state that "only a minority of immigrants were socialists, but, for extended periods of time, most socialists were immigrants."[180] Indeed, whilst most of those who supported socialism were immigrants – especially Jews, Finns and Germans –, they represented a small percentage of all immigrants in the United States. In fact, as Oscar Handlin, an American historian that was cited by Lipset and Marks put it, "perhaps the most prevalent myth about immigrants links them with radicalism. The overwhelming majority were exceedingly conservative in politics, as in other forms of social expression."[181]

Furthermore, Lipset and Marks resorted to quoting the works of several authors in order to explain the reasons for such conservatism amongst immigrants. Firstly, Richard Hofstadter stressed that the peasant background of a significant part of those who immigrated to the United States in the beginning of the twentieth Century rendered them "totally unaccustomed to the active citizen role."[182] According to Hofstadter, they generally only wished to participate in politics for "concrete and personal

[178] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 133)
[179] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 133)
[180] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 138)
[181] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 145)
[182] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 146)

gains."[183]Secondly, Handlin, Hofstadter and Martin Shefter all emphasized that "urban city machines, mainly Democratic, won the allegiance of immigrant communities by providing them with services, representation, and avenues of mobility before socialists appeared on the scene."[184] Thirdly, many immigrants were not interested in American politics, as they only wished to work in the United states for a limited period of time and ultimately desired to return to their homeland after having accumulated a significant amount of money. Finally, several theorists – including those who were sympathetic to the socialist ideology – have argued that immigrants were simply not attracted to socialism because, regardless of the problems that America faced, their standard of living was much higher in the United States than anywhere else in the world.

Lastly, Lipset and Marks made several comments on how, albeit its follower's "sympathies to collectivism and welfare",[185] Catholicism also played an important role in the lack of success of popular adherence to the socialist ideology. This was mainly due to the large influence of Marxism within the SPUSA and, consequently, its "overtly antireligious and anti-Catholic"[186] character. Therefore, the SPUSA was never truly able to attract Catholic members, who, in the beginning of the twentieth Century, were rapidly becoming a "growing portion of the working-class."[187] Instead, most Catholics became fervent supporters of the Democratic party, a political actor that was especially committed to upholding the political, social and economic interests of "new" immigrants within urban and industrial areas.

[183] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 146)
[184] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 146)
[185] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 149)
[186] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 151)
[187] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 149)

Lipset and Marks further wrote that that the strict ideological and sectarian character of the SPUSA – of which the antireligious and anti-Catholic sentiment was a result – were at the core of why "American Socialists were unwilling to follow labor parties in Britain and Australia."[188] In those countries, socialists were aware of the fundamental role that Catholics played within the labor movement – given their known sympathies for "welfare reforms and unions"[189] – and, thus, they "took pains to avoid anticlericalism or atheism."[190] In the United States, albeit the existence of devoted Protestants within the SPUSA, there were no such active attempts to facilitate the inclusion of several religious groups, especially Catholics.

2.5 The Socialist party of America: sectarians and reformists

As has been previously established, the SPUSA had been frequently described, even by Marx and Engels, as a profoundly sectarian party, especially in comparison with most of its European counterparts. However, whilst nearly all authors have agreed that the party's excessive "concern with ideology"[191] and inherent inflexibility were especially harmful for its success, others have argued the exact opposite, that the failure of the latter was actually due to the fact that it was "not radical enough"[192] and that, thus, it's attempted receptiveness to incorporate more moderate elements left the party "vulnerable to co-optation by non-socialist forces."[193]

Regardless of the approach with which one may or not agree, Lipset and Marks wanted to draw attention to the fact that there had always existed tension within the inner workings of the SPUSA, especially between those who favored "a short term need

188 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 151)
189 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 151)
190 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 151)
191 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 168)
192 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 168)
193 (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 168)

for political compromise"[194] in order to reinforce their electoral strength and those who "stressed the moral aspect of the movement and believed that any goals short of complete social transformation were unworthy."[195] According to the authors, such distinctive views "reflected the dilemma of political effectiveness versus ideological integrity faced by all radical political organizations."[196] Furthermore, Lipset and Marks believed that, in order to truly comprehend the internal tensions of the SPUSA, its strategical choices and their consequent results, one should analyze a particular time period which was crucial for the party: from 1912 to 1920.

As has been previously emphasized throughout this work, although American socialists depended on union support – especially in attracting members – in order to establish a successful party, the SPUSA and the unions maintained strained relations. Despite the fact that a set of moderate socialists, such as Morris Hillquit, were in favor of cooperation between both parts, the party's leadership generally showed no interest in doing so. According to the authors, there was such hostility towards the AFL that Eugene Debs, in the capacity of leader of the American Railway Union, once proclaimed that "working with the American Federation of Labor (…) was as wasteful of time as to spray a cesspool with attar of roses."[197] Instead, Eugene Debs and other socialists supported the "revolutionary"[198] Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) after its establishment "as a dual union competing with the AFL in 1905."[199] The radical inclinations of the SPUSA seemed to be incompatible with the general guidelines that were followed by the AFL, especially under Samuel Gompers' leadership.

[194] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 168)
[195] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 168)
[196] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 168)
[197] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 171)
[198] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 171)
[199] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 171)

This evident separation from the labor movement isolated the SPUSA even more which, in result, encouraged its leaders to make a set of political strategies that, one may argue, negatively affected the American socialist movement in the long-term – namely the decision not to support the creation of a labor party. The authors wrote that the socialists who were opposed to supporting the creation of a labor party, alongside a set of unions, often explained that there was no real necessity for such a party, since the working-class was already represented within the SPUSA. Others, outright "denounced the notion of an inclusive labor party as a trap "designed by the capitalists to stop the growing vote of the Socialist party."[200] In their view, "a vote for a labor party was a vote for capitalism."[201]

The left-wing faction of the SPUSA eventually became so predominant that the party soon turned against its local government representatives – including socialist mayors, state legislators and councilmen – due to their moderate political approach, which often included non-Socialist collaborations, namely with local trade unions. Municipal socialism, which one may argue was the Socialist party's most successful endeavor, was criticized by the left-wing faction as being "sewer socialism."[202] According to the latter, municipal socialism abided by capitalist rules and, most importantly, in wishing to solve urgent local problems, it compromised "the end and aim of the Socialist party",[203] which, according to a resolution that was approved at a convention in April 1917, was to foster an outright social revolution.

Lipset and Marks further discussed how the SPUSA's decision not to support the First World War not only had an overall adverse effect, but was also taken due to

[200] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 173)
[201] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 173)
[202] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 178)
[203] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 182)

the party's isolation from the labor movement and its devotion to ideological purity. Whilst the decision not to support the First World War in its early years – on the grounds that "Socialists opposed foreign wars as imperialist conflicts fought on behalf of capitalist class interests"[204] –, was not harmful at first, their refusal to review their choice once the United States entered the war, unlike what most American unions did, proved to be extremely detrimental. According to several intellectuals, "the Socialists' determination to pursue an ethical policy led to an organizational collapse from which they never recovered."[205] As the authors stressed, unlike the trajectory of their European counterparts, votes for the Socialist Party in the United States "fell to almost half"[206] during the years of the First World War as numerous voters and party members chose to support Woodrow Wilson and the Democratic party instead. Additionally, whatever support the American socialists may have wished to gain from the unions, whose role within society was reinforced during this period, was never given, due to the generally strained relations that they maintained.

Although, by the end of the chapter, Lispet and Marks' positions became increasingly clear, once again the authors reiterated that the lack of success of the Socialist party must be analyzed in a comprehensive manner, and that, as such, one must not "emphasize mistakes in strategy or extremist ideologies as the crucial factors affecting Socialist support."[207] As the authors put it, "the failure of socialism in America was overdetermined"[208] and, although the party would have blatantly gained if its leadership had chosen to proceed in a "less factionalized and more pragmatic"[209]

[204] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 184)
[205] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 185)
[206] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 186)
[207] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 200)
[208] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 200)
[209] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 200)

manner, “a strategy adapted to the particular circumstances of American society and culture was regarded by most Socialist leaders, as well as followers, as unprincipled, even if it might promise electoral success.”[210]

Lastly, the authors delved into why the SPUSA had such a strong sectarian propensity, especially when compared to their European counterparts. In their view, this was mostly due to the fact that, whilst European Socialist or labor parties were forced to “adjust to the existence of affiliated union movements oriented to improving conditions within capitalism”,[211] the SPUSA was isolated from the rest of the labor movement, particularly from the unions and their members, which entailed that it wasn’t incentivized to compromise its views. According to the authors, “like the Russian Bolsheviks, the American Socialist party was isolated from the inherently broad reformist stream of trade unionism.” [212]

Interestingly, the authors ended by arguing how “the influence of Protestant sectarianism” [1] on shaping American values and, consequently, on the overall structuring of the nation’s society, might also partly explain the sectarian nature of the SPUSA. Lipset and Marks added that, whilst such overt “pietistic moralism”[213] was generally avoided by the two major parties in order to appeal to larger groups of people and, hence, boost their electoral chances, this was not necessarily the case with other organizations and social movements, some of which did not shy away from embracing such a conspicuous sectarian nature. On this subject, the authors wrote that:

[210] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 200)
[211] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 201)
[212] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 201)
[213] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 202)

> "The sectarian denominations have fostered a variety of moralistic responses from prohibition to militant anti-abortion efforts and recurrent opposition to war (…) Given the influence of religious sectarianism on American values, it is not surprising that the American socialist parties have been more sectarian than socialist parties in other industrialized nations, and have been relatively unwilling to compromise their ideological convictions."[214]

Tocqueville also famously wrote about the role of religion in American society and not only how, contrary to the continental European experience, there was no evident tension between the latter and liberty, but also how the "safeguard of morality is religion, and morality is its best security of law as well as the surest pledge of freedom."[215]

2.6 Socialists and communists in the United States

Whilst, as Lipset and Marks put it, "before WW1 (…) the labor movement was split by enmity between Socialists and mainstream unionists",[216] ever since the 1920s, "the political wing of the labor movement was itself divided between mutually antagonistic Socialists and Communists."[217] Hence, the authors were keen on analyzing what they considered to be a decisive time period, the 1930s, in order to comprehend the power struggle that existed between both parts, in addition to the distinct strategies which they employed to "capitalize on Depression-born discontent and the

[214] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 201-202)
[215] (Tocqueville, 1835/2000, I, p. 43-44)
[216] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 204)
[217] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 204)

radicalization of a significant segment of the population",[218] as well as their consequent results.

At the start of the 1930s, the Socialist party had only 8000 members, which, as the authors wrote, put the latter "in a poor position to take advantage of burgeoning mass discontent at the start of the Depression."[219] However, merely two years later, party membership reached 15000 people and the socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas obtained 2.5 per cent of the votes at the national level, more than double of what had been achieved in 1928. Albeit the increase in numbers and the fact that, according to Lipset and Marks, "the years 1932-1933 were the high point of Socialist strength during the Depression",[220] the authors further emphasized that socialist leaders had hoped for a better outcome and that they attributed their meagre results to tactical voting, as a significant amount of leftist sympathizers preferred to vote for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, rather than for Norman Thomas, in order to keep the Republican candidate Herbert Hoover from winning the elections.

Nevertheless, there was a rapid decline in the following years, which the authors not only attributed to both President Roosevelt and the New Deal, but also to the "endemic factionalism"[221] that, according to them, plagued the Socialist party. Lipset and Marks wrote that during the 1930s, the militant left – a faction that operated within the Socialist party which was "largely based on young recruits"[222] and that "sought out to give the party a revolutionary cast and favored a united front with the Communists"[223] – became increasingly powerful within the party structure and

[218] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 204)
[219] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 205)
[220] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 206)
[221] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 206)
[222] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 206)
[223] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 206)

eventually motivated the Old Guard's – which was "composed primarily of party veterans who were largely European and self-educated" [224] and that "opposed revolutionary rhetoric and cooperation with the Communists"[225] – departure from the Socialist party and their consequent regrouping as the Social Democratic Federation in 1936.

The split – or according to the authors, "expulsion, as the Old Guard defined the situation"[226] – aggravated the condition of an already frail Socialist Party. This division not only brought about "a 40 percent fall in Socialist Party membership, a sharp decline in influence within the various garment unions, and loss of control over various party institutions such as the Jewish Daily Forward, the New Leader and the Rand School (a party educational center in New York)"[227], but also, contrary to what one might expect, did not foster unity within the party structure, which remained incohesive.

However, Lipset and Marks argued that it was President Roosevelt and the New Deal that weakened the Socialist party the most. At a time of severe hardship, his leftist policies attracted not only most of the voters who were already inclined to vote for the Democratic party, but also those who were positioned to their left on the political spectrum. As the authors put it, "his economic and trade union policies had great appeal to the poor, to the unemployed, to African-Americans, and to trade unionists and their leaders."[228] Roosevelt's progressive plan for the United States became so appealing that numerous socialists overtly argued that their party should have endorsed his

[224] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 206)
[225] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 207)
[226] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 208)
[227] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 208)
[228] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 209)

Presidential candidacies, believing that it was the closest and most viable political embodiment of their leftist agenda. Additionally, many socialists and union leaders came to be closely linked to the Democratic party, the President and his advisers, playing an important role in securing mass support from different organizations within the labor movement, particularly at the local level, in several American states.

Nonetheless, according to the authors, socialist leader Norman Thomas was not convinced that his party should support Roosevelt's plan – despite its general popularity amongst the American people – and, thus, chose not to alter his strategy. Thomas personally opposed Roosevelt due to strong ideological beliefs, namely that "a socialist movement could not be built through support of major-party candidates, that the socialists must educate the population, and that reforms could not eliminate capitalist unemployment and war."[229] The fact that the socialist leader chose not to support Roosevelt but, instead, opted to run against him in the presidential elections of 1936 was, yet again, a decision that not only decimated the party's membership to little more than 10,000 people, but also practically eliminated whatever influence it still had in the labor movement.

Although it soon became evident that the Socialist party was no longer able to attract the support that they had received just a few years before – so much so that Norman Thomas suggested suspending its electoral activity in 1938 –, with the outbreak of World War II, it was decided that Thomas should run against Roosevelt on a "peace platform"[230] in the presidential elections of 1940. The authors argued that such

[229] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 210)
[230] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 218)

a choice was a strong indicator of the profoundly sectarian nature of the SPUSA. On this matter, Lipset and Marks wrote:

> "There is no better example of the party's sectarianism than its persistence in maintaining its historical opposition to capitalist wars in the face of the Nazi juggernaut, a position rejected by every other affiliate of the Socialist International."[231]

Whilst the socialist strategy that was employed during the 1930s may best be described as having been dictated by a fierce desire to remain ideologically pure, which often entailed sacrificing the party's political tactic for the nobility of the cause, the communists' "opportunistic reformist strategy"[232] of the second-half of the decade revealed, as the authors put it, "how leftist movements in America could gain support by dropping sectarian policies."[233]

Although the meagre Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) entered the 1930s with an "ultraleftist sectarian line dictated to it by Joseph Stalin and the Communist International"[234] – which prompted a refusal to cooperate with other leftist or labor organizations, including the Socialist party and the AFL, both of whom they labelled as "Social Fascists"[235] –, this strategy was dropped due to international guidelines that reflected the menace that Nazi Germany constituted to the Soviet Union. Thus, alongside other political groups and parties, all communist

[231] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 219)
[232] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 219)
[233] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 219)
[234] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 219)
[235] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 219)

organizations became united in a "Popular Front"[236], which encouraged widespread cooperation between "all progressive forces and nations against the fascists." [237]

During this time, the public face of American communism underwent a profound change, which was not only reflected in the overt support for Roosevelt and his policies, but especially in the elimination of certain expressions and concepts which had always been a core component of the communist ideology – namely capitalist exploitation – from any formal texts, such as the party's national program. According to the authors, such a strategy was extremely successful in the United States, since the Communist party was said to have reached nearly 100,000 members – of which approximately 30,000 derived from the Young Communist League – in 1939, which represented a significant increase compared to what they had registered a decade earlier, when it had only been comprised of 7,500 members.[238]

This pattern of an ever-changing strategy that was based on the dictates of Moscow was maintained until the Cold War. Whilst uphold for the "Popular Front" [239] temporarily ceased in 1939, due to the Stalin-Hitler pact, it was quickly reintroduced after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. In fact, the authors emphasized that, in order to demonstrate full support and aid in facilitating the interventionist policies of President Roosevelt, the Communist Party of the United States of America "even formally dissolved as a party in 1944 to become the Communist Political Association,

[236] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 221)
[237] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 221)
[238] Lipset and Marks wrote that most academics had placed communist membership to have ranged between 80,000 and 100,000 in 1939. They also wished to emphasize that such numbers were never entirely accurate as many communists preferred to conceal their identity due to repression, which, albeit having been more intense during war (or post-war) periods, was also exerted in times of peace.
[239] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 221)

describing itself as a "non-party associations of Americans"[240] which "adheres to the principles of scientific socialism."[241]

However, once again, American communists restored their political party and returned to their ideologically rigorous strategy as soon as World War II ended and the Cold War began, not without banishing their leader, Earl Browder, "for excessive opportunism."[242] This choice negatively affected not only the party's membership – which was also deeply influenced by the repression that was exerted against its members during the so-called McCarthyism period –, but also overall communist influence in American society, particularly the labor movement, which, albeit the party's electoral weakness, had been slowly but steadily conquered due to their extraordinary organizational skills.

2.7 Socialism and repression

Whilst they were approaching the end of their argument, Lipset and Marks remarked that various authors believed it to be true that most of the mainstream arguments which were formulated in order to explain the lack of success of the socialist movement in the United States had failed to emphasize the role of an important contributing factor: the repression of American socialists and communists, especially following World War I and during the Korean War.

According to Lipset and Marks, there was no denying that the state had intentionally exerted power in order to "intimidate, harass, and jail members and leaders of left-wing movements in America"[243], particularly in times of war. However, the

[240] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 225)
[241] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 225)
[242] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 225)
[243] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 238)

authors were not entirely convinced that repression had solely produced negative effects on such groups and, instead, believed it to be "double-edge."[244] In fact, as the authors emphasized, several leaders and their groups gained popularity from both state and popular repression, which they redirected towards the "justice of their cause",[245] often galvanizing supporters who arguably might not have been engaged in such causes under different circumstances. This was the case with Eugene Debs' famous imprisonment in 1919 – under the charges of sedition –, and the violent reactions towards Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights demonstrations – particularly those in Selma and Birmingham, Alabama. One may argue, as did the authors, that, following these events, their causes gained momentum amongst the American population.

Nevertheless, Lipset and Marks warned that "state repression is not always self-defeating."[246] This is especially true when a government does not shy away from employing "total repression"[247] and, therefore, engages in the "most brutal attacks."[248] Yet, as the authors pointed out, even when such extreme measures had been employed – which was the case " in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and, to a lesser degree, during the Franco regime in Spain and Pinochet's rule in Chile"[249] –, they did not produce the desired effects in the long-term. As Lipset and Marks put it, "it [total repression] does not appear to be a stable outcome, either in sustaining the regime or in eliminating the sources of radical opposition."[250]

Furthermore, in order to analyze whether repression was in fact an important contributing factor towards inhibiting socialism in the United States, the authors set out

[244] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 240)
[245] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 240)
[246] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 243)
[247] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 243)
[248] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 243)
[249] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 243)
[250] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 243)

to compare its effects on the national context with that of other countries and, subsequently, of its impact on several American states. In essence, albeit stronger than what occurred in the United States, state repression in Germany, Czarist Russia and Argentina was counterproductive, as the main leftist parties in each country – the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the (Russian) Social Democratic Party and the Socialist party, respectively –, towards which it had been directed against, either strengthened their membership or electoral support.

Moreover, as has been previously mentioned, although the decision not to support World War I – which was maintained after 1917 –, produced widespread negative results for the American Socialist party as a whole, the authors drew attention to the fact that this stance – which precipitated a period of intense political repression –, produced "considerable regional variation"[251] on an internal level. For instance, whilst socialists in Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York City and Reading were generally able to resist state repression, the latter annihilated the Socialist Party in Oklahoma. According to the authors, several factors influenced the efficacy of the repression that was directed at leftist organizations, namely the size of the communities – repression was especially efficient in smaller and rural communities –, the degree of support or hostility towards the anti-war stance, the inhabitant's ethnicities – which also frequently determined their viewpoint on World War I – and their general connection to the labor movement.

Although the authors were especially focused on the post-World War I experience, which arguably directly impacted socialist sympathizers the most, they reserved part of the chapter towards analyzing subsequent communist repression during

[251] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 245)

the Korean War, a period also known as McCarthyism. According to Lipset and Marks, "from the mid-thirties on, the communists took over as the major force on the radical left",[252] thus, as expected, repression was predominantly directed at pro-Communist groups during a long period of time. Similarly to what had happened before with the Socialist party, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 gave new impetus for further prosecution of anti-war groups, particularly those who were affiliated with the Communist party.

However, the authors were keen on stressing that American support for communism had faded before 1950, especially amongst those of Anglo-Saxon origins – including "liberals and unionists"[253] –, who had started to perceive this ideology as an external and undemocratic force that threatened to compromise the political system of the United States. The authors further wrote that, when persecuted, the communists generally behaved differently from the socialists that came beforehand, by not claiming "their right to be revolutionaries"[254] – such as Eugene Debs had done prior to his imprisonment in 1919 – and, instead, denying the allegations that were brought up against them. Consequently, as Lispet and Marks put it, "communists themselves played into the hands of McCarthy and his allies by rarely defending their constitutional rights to free speech, to agitate or organize as Communists",[255] which arguably affected the American public perception of communism in the long-term.

In conclusion, Lipset and Marks reinforced the idea that, although there is no doubt that repression may have negatively influenced socialism's success in the United States – nor is there any doubt about the existence of said repression –, particularly

[252] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 258)
[253] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 259)
[254] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 259)
[255] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 259)

(although not exclusively) in the two time periods which have been previously mentioned, it never achieved the levels that were practiced in both Europe and South America and, most importantly, given the previous findings, it can definitely not solely explain – nor is it, according to the authors, one of the most important contributing factors – the "[American socialists'] failure to establish a viable political party."[256]

2.8 The end of political exceptionalism?

In the last chapter of the book, Lipset and Marks provided an overview of how American socialists failed in three different manners, as they did not manage to create a solid political party or establish an independent labor party alongside the main trade unions, nor were they able to infiltrate their ideology and/or agenda into one of the two major parties of the United States' political system.

After having thoroughly researched the topic, the authors were adamant that an unpropitious environment for socialism's success had been created as a result of the interaction of several inherent characteristics of both American society and its political system, namely its values – many of which stem from anti-statism and individualism which not only has a widespread impact on American culture, but also generally deems socialism unappealing –, its political structure – namely "the plurality electoral system, the winner-take-all presidency and ideologically flexible major parties" [257] –, its heterogenous working-class – most importantly, the fact that political identity often arose from ethnic, racial and religious divisions rather than from the sentiment of belonging to a certain social class – and the fragmentation of the labor movement – that was especially evident given the party/union split.

[256] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 260)
[257] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 264)

In sum, according to Lipset and Marks, the interaction of these four factors along with human agency – which explains why, for example, American socialists were so ideologically rigid, especially when they would have gained from having chosen a different stance during crucial moments – provided a compelling insight not only as to why the Socialist party failed to become a successful electoral alternative to the major parties, but also why the socialist ideology failed to inspire a widespread movement amongst the American population, even when exogenous factors, such as strenuous economic times, provided the most potential for the realization of the latter.

Whilst explaining their reasoning, the authors were also keen on reinforcing the idea that not all of the factors which had been mentioned by previous authors as having contributed to the failure of socialism in the United States – such as early manhood suffrage, federalism and state repression –, were considered completely valid after the comparative analysis proved otherwise, as has been previously established throughout this work.

Moreover, Lipset and Marks were especially interested in investigating whether what they had previously deemed as American exceptionalism was still valid at the time of writing the book, the 1990s. After having addressed the critics of the American exceptionalism thesis by providing counter-arguments to the main lines of criticism brought up by those who disagreed with the concept, they not only argued that the latter *ipso facto* existed, but also that it still applied at the time.

In their view, even though a significant part of the center-left parties of the most developed nations in the world had undergone an ideological shift from their traditional stances – which mostly favored a strong state presence in the economy – towards a more libertarian approach, thereby fostering a convergence between most European

countries and the United States, American exceptionalism never ceased to exist. According to the authors and taking into account the time period which spanned from 1984 to 1995, political parties within Anglo-Saxon countries had generally been the object of a larger ideological shift, with a special emphasis on the UK Labor party which, after 1997 continued on a similar trajectory under the leadership of Tony Blair.

However, as was previously mentioned, at the time of writing, America remained exceptional in several regards, namely by combining high levels of per capita income and low rates of unemployment with significantly low levels of taxation and spending on social welfare, the non-existence of a comprehensive medical system, an unequal distribution of income and higher poverty rates when compared to other similarly developed nations.

As claimed by Lipset and Marks, this was mostly due to the usual – cultural and institutional – suspects, which not only direct and indirectly influenced the American people's widespread negative views on socialism, but also on higher levels of state intervention in the economy. Although during trying times, Americans seemed more favorable towards enacting a set of comprehensive social-democratic policies – as was the case under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administrations, after the strain caused by the Great Depression –, as soon as long-term prosperity was once again installed within American society – namely after the end of World War II –, its population did not hesitate to return to upholding the values that had traditionally characterized their country.

Hence, as described by the authors, the revelation that, according to several polls that were conducted in the 1990s, Americans showed higher resistance to government meddling in private and economic affairs and to the idea that wealthier

people and corporations should pay more taxes or even the fact that nearly a third of their population justified their country's high levels of income inequality as a necessary condition for national economic prosperity was not only unsurprising, but it also reinforced the idea that American exceptionalism had indeed never ceased to exist.

Conclusion

Albeit the perceived differences between both authors and the time gap that sets their works apart, not only do a significant amount of their arguments coincide, but their approach to the subject at hand is also surprisingly similar, as they understood that the lack of a socialist tradition in the United States could only be explained by the interaction of various contributing factors which spanned from the inherent values and principles of the American people to their unique political system, amongst several others.

After having thoroughly analyzed their works, there is no doubt that Sombart, Lipset and Marks believed that the United States possessed a unique set of characteristics which, in their view, validated the American exceptionalism thesis.[258] I would argue that, in both cases, it is also perceptible that the authors agreed on the fact that a significant part of what made America exceptional stemmed from the country's foundation and, consequently, from the principles of democracy, equalitarianism and liberty that defined the creation of their new nation[259] – and still remain applicable

[258] Whilst Lipset and Mark's work mostly focused on analyzing the validity of the main lines of argument that have been presented as being relevant contributing factors to socialism's lack of success in the United States and, hence, they often introduced elements with which they did not completely agree with to preserve the integrity of the text, not only did the authors always meticulously explain why they believed that – contrary to other renowned intellectuals and academics – certain factors were not as relevant for explaining the phenomenon or that their effects appeared to be blatantly "double-edged", but they also made their opinion clear on such arguments (and on their own), especially at the end of each chapter and, naturally, during the conclusion of their work.

[259] Although he was not speaking of the American experience in particular, in an article in The Economist that dates back to 1988, Karl Popper defended that "modern so-called democracies" were, in fact, unintentionally constructed according to the rationale that was inherent to his "new realist theory of democracy", where the emphasis no longer resided on the classic question of "who should rule?", but rather on the new problem that arose from the question of "how is the state to be constituted so that bad rulers can be got rid of without bloodshed, without violence?." On this matter, Popper wrote that: "And the modern so-called democracies are all good examples of practical solutions to this problem [how is the state to be constituted so that bad rulers can be got rid of without bloodshed, without violence?], even though they were not consciously designed with this problem in mind. For they all adopt what is the simplest solution to the new problem – that is, the principle that the government can be dismissed by a majority vote." (Popper, 1988/2016)

today –, which is exemplified by the celebrated passage on the Declaration of Independence in 1776, where one may read:

> "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."[260]

Indeed, the authors recurrently cited several factors which they believed had helped shape the overall distinct experience of the American people – especially when compared to their European counterpart –, namely the absence of a feudal past, the democratic system of government, the tangible prospect of social mobility and the role of the Constitution. Such factors exacerbated the egalitarian character of American society, thus producing several long-lasting effects. Sombart was especially keen on emphasizing how these particularities had created a bourgeois and meritocratic society where the "social position of the worker"[261] – which he characterized as being "his relations to people and social institutions, and in his position in and to society"[262] – was reinforced. In fact, according to the German author's observations, given that American society was profoundly influenced by its capitalist nature and, consequently, revered work (and money) instead of social class, there was virtually no stigma in belonging to the working-class nor did the latter "bow and scrape before the upper classes".[263]

[260] (US, 1776) Retrieved from http:// https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript
[261] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 109)
[262] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 109)
[263] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 110)

Interestingly, Lipset and Marks remarked that a significant amount of the considerations on social class which were made by renowned socialist intellectuals – including Werner Sombart, whose detailed depiction of American society in *Why is there no socialism in the United States?* served as a reference for authors who subsequently studied the same subject – largely coincided with the previous assessments made by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. As Lipset and Marks put it:

> "From the time of Marx and Engels, socialists have agreed with Tocqueville that social class differences (as distinct from economic class differences) were much weaker in America than in Europe. In the Old Continent, people were placed in distinct classes by the society. Workers were led to support labor parties in response to deep post-feudal divisions in society. In the United States, by contrast, class was more of an abstraction and socialists were faced with the prospect of persuading workers to think in class terms."[264]

In addition, Sombart was particularly keen on emphasizing how the United States also possessed a distinctive set of physical characteristics that, when combined, were unique to its territory and which, in his view, gave the means for capitalism to prosper from an early stage and in an unparalleled manner – namely its vast array of precious metals, its fertile soils and the potential for territorial expansion[265] –, thus indirectly affecting the essence of American exceptionalism and, naturally, how the American population would fail to adhere to the socialist ideology later on.

[264] (Lipset and Marks, 2001, p. 26)
[265] Interestingly, Lipset and Marks did not give the same emphasis to such geographic and physical contributing factors as did Werner Sombart.

Moreover, the authors made both direct and indirect references to the existence of some form of *Americanism* that encompassed the intangible aspects which have been previously identified as having helped explain why Americans were generally uninterested in what the socialist ideology had to offer. As Lipset and Marks wrote, "the American ideology, stemming from the Revolution, can be consumed in five words: anti-statism, laissez-faire, individualism, populism, and egalitarianism."[266] Thus, it was not surprising that a society with such democratically-tinged characteristics would not believe that supporting Socialism – or socialist-inspired groups or movements – was necessary in order to enact reforms or other changes to their social, political and economic system, but instead accepted that they could work within what was, at the time, not only a democracy, but also an already truly progressive form of capitalism.

Furthermore, the authors agreed that the American political system negatively affected socialism's chances of success in the United States. In this case, whilst Sombart, Lipset and Marks concurred on the identification of the elements which have negatively affected the SPUSA's electoral success for the most part – namely by ascertaining that universal suffrage, party flexibility and the electoral system were all contributing factors to the phenomenon in question –, their approaches to the subject at hand were distinct. Indeed, both authors argued that the plurality or first-past-the-post system favored the consolidation of a two-party system – such parties became more ideologically flexible, as they were more susceptible to aggregating a wider range of political views, consequently fostering the creation of differing internal factions – and, thus, created an incentive scheme for tactical voting that was ruinous for third parties,

[266] (Lipset and Marks, 2001, p. 30)

particularly at the national level and whenever the voters perceived a certain election to be “close”, as was emphasized by Lipset and Marks.

However, Sombart was concerned with the widespread implications of what he considered to be the monopoly of the Democrats and Republicans within American society and further argued that it *ipso facto* conditioned people’s allegiances – especially if they were trying to be elected for public office or pass reforms in a certain area – and, most importantly, how the incentive scheme was not only reinforcing the current system – and consequently squashing political challengers by imposing direct and indirect restrictions, some of which were of monetary kind –, but it was also strengthening capitalism itself. Indeed, whilst Lipset and Marks agreed that the two major parties actively fought to consolidate whatever advantage they could preserve over their adversaries – namely by imposing multiple restrictions on third parties in order to obstruct their access to state ballots –, they did not further establish a connection between such an incentive scheme and the overall reinforcement of capitalism.

Moreover, Lipset and Marks were keen on drawing attention to the fact that, contrary to what one might have expected, the effects of federalism on American Socialism were actually double-edged. In fact, although several authors believed that Socialism was inherently unsuited for a nation with a federalist setting, others argued that, by dividing the country into smaller constituencies, there was a higher probability for the American Socialist party to compete with the main contenders in such areas and ultimately obtain electoral success at the local level.

Nonetheless, although there was no denying that the United States’ political system had unquestionably produced a negative impact on the electoral success of the SPUSA, Lipset and Marks were interested in discovering the extent to which this factor

could explain the phenomenon at hand. As they pointed out, in some cases, not only could those negative effects have been overcome by the adoption of different strategies, which would have been possible if, for instance, the SPUSA had chosen to work alongside one of the two major parties and consequently infiltrate their ideological agenda into mainstream politics in a more effective manner, but it also did not account for why the party in question was less successful at the electoral level in comparison to other third parties on several different occasions. Lipset and Marks also drew attention to the fact that, albeit the unique character of the American political system, other nations with similar features, such as Australia and Switzerland, had witnessed the creation of successful socialist-inspired parties.

Interestingly, Sombart also addressed similar concerns and ultimately questioned why, albeit the obstacles that the American Socialist party faced, "a party that really pursues grand aims and really serves the common interests of the broad mass of people"[267] had been unable to "succeed in the long run against the old parties?"[268].

Furthermore, the authors referenced how the higher standards of living of the working-class and the general economic wellbeing of the American population were also pivotal in diminishing people's appeal for socialist-inspired ideas. Sombart was especially interested in demonstrating how the typical American worker compared to his German counterpart at the time of his writing. His findings were incontrovertible, not only did the American worker generally earn approximately twice as much when compared to his European counterpart – the difference was even more significant in certain specific industries –, but his standard of living was also remarkably higher than the latter in such a degree that, as Sombart put it, it rivalled the "better sections of the

[267] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 43)
[268] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 43)

German middle class."[269] Hence, in the author's view, there was no doubt that this negatively affected the American worker's willingness to support an ideology that wished to reform the political and economic structure that had provided him with such a high standard of living in the first place. Interestingly, Lipset and Marks similarly wrote that one of the reasons why the majority of immigrants were actually not in favor of Socialism was precisely due to their evaluation of the American worker's superior condition when compared to their own in their places of origin, many of which had precisely come from a European nation.

Moreover, the fragmentation of the American labor movement and the distinctive approach to unionism in the United States were also viewed as decisive contributing factors not only to the meagre electoral results of the Socialist party, but also to the widespread lack of popular adherence to the ideology in question, which thus failed to inspire a broad social movement amongst the population. Lipset and Marks extensively delved into this issue, noting how the split between the trade unions and the political parties was directly linked to party organization, which in the case of the American Socialist party eventually resulted in choosing to remain ideologically pure, even when the latter would have blatantly gained if their leaders had proceeded in a different manner; how the prevalence of exclusive unions – as opposed to inclusive unions, which rapidly came to dominate the European labor movement landscape at the time – were fostering divisions amongst workers; and ultimately how those factors, alongside what Sombart considered to be the American business-like approach to unionism, clearly compromised class consciousness in the United States and, in the German author's opinion, was not only producing a "vertical structuring of the

[269] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 97)

proletariat",[270] but was also, once again, reinforcing the inherent capitalist nature and structure of its society.

The widespread societal and political effects of mass immigration were also considered to be especially relevant when analyzing the phenomenon at hand. This subject had already sparked a debate amongst several renowned leftist figures of the turn of the twentieth century, namely Lenin. Indeed, as Lipset and Marks put it, the United States was a "nonfeudal, immigrant society with an extraordinarily high degree of ethnic, religious, and racial diversity"[271] and, as a result, political allegiance was largely shaped on the basis of the individual's identity and feeling of belonging to such groups, rather than on social class, which also evidently contributed to the lack of class consciousness and solidarity amongst its population, thus ultimately weakening Socialism's chances of success in the United States.

In addition, the tension between the old and new immigrants, often unskilled, aggravated the situation by forging new divisions amongst the proletariat. The American authors were also keen on debunking what they considered to be a common misconception, which was that most immigrants supported Socialism, and proceeded to clarifying that "only a minority of immigrants were socialists, but, for extended periods of time, most socialists were immigrants."[272]

Lipset and Marks further expanded their argument, mainly by incorporating the empirical knowledge they gained from the tumultuous events that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century – well after the publication of Sombart's work in 1906 – and by consequently analyzing their varied implications on the success of the SPUSA in particular. The authors were especially interested in demonstrating the extent to

[270] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 22)
[271] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 126)
[272] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 138)

which the latter's excessive sectarian and factionalist character – which we have previously established as having largely been the result of its isolation from the workings of the trade unions and their reformist intentions – had been extremely prejudicial on a number of occasions, namely when it's leaders adopted a widely unpopular stance against the American participation in the First and Second World Wars and when they decided not to support the Democratic Presidential candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1932 and 1936 elections, by presenting Norman Thomas as the socialist alternative instead. These strategic choices proved to be immensely ruinous for the party, whose membership decreased exponentially – from over 110,000 members at the height of the party's popularity in 1912, precisely the same year that Eugene V. Debs ran a well-received Presidential campaign, to approximately 10,000 people following the 1936 elections –, alongside whatever influence it still exerted within the labor movement.

Lipset and Marks also briefly commented on the effects of state repression on American socialists and communists, particularly directing their analysis to the periods following the First World War and during the Korean War (McCarthyism), when either social or political persecution had been more intense. However, the authors argued that, similarly to federalism, repression was also double-edged. As they pointed out, although there was no doubt that said repression existed and that it exerted unwanted pressure on these movements, several factors influenced the latter's efficacy – namely the level which was applied, to whom it was directed or the size of the communities it affected – and, most importantly, History had demonstrated that even when "total repression"[273] was employed by some of the most brutal regimes of the twentieth

[273] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 243)

century – such as Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy –, they were never truly successful "either in sustaining the regime or in eliminating the sources of radical opposition."[274]

Finally, by way of conclusion, Lipset and Marks reinforced the idea that Socialism had failed to thrive in the United States due to the interaction of several distinct factors – of which they highlighted the so-called American values, the political structure of the United States, its heterogenous working-class and the fragmentation of the labor movement – and human agency. Whilst approaching the end of his book, Sombart also emphasized the important contribution of two distinctive elements to the formation of the "American proletarian psyche"[275]: the tangible possibility of class movement and the territorial potential for exploring free land.

Are we witnessing the end of American exceptionalism?

Similarly to Lipset and Marks' approach to the last chapter of *It didn't happen here: why socialism failed in the United States*, in which – although not exclusively – the authors not only delved into whether or not the theory of American exceptionalism was still applicable at their time of writing, but also made a brief consideration on how American politics might evolve in the future, I believe that it would be inexcusable not to carry out the same exercise in my conclusion, especially given the recent political developments in the United States.

Indeed, virtually every reputable publication, be it mainstream or academic, has written extensive pieces on how Socialism is becoming increasingly popular in the United States, especially amongst the younger generations of American Democratic voters, who, unlike older and/or conservative voters, tend to associate the ideology with

[274] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 243)
[275] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 115)

the Scandinavian countries and their socio-economic model rather than with Cuba, Venezuela or even the former Soviet Union. In addition, several polls show that a decreasing number of progressive Americans view capitalism in a favorable manner.[276] However, whilst the evidence shows that the majority of Americans do not embrace Socialism, there is no doubt that its nationwide popularity is on the rise.

Furthermore, statistical data and academic research seem to confirm that the growing disaffection towards capitalism and the *status quo*, particularly by millennials, is not entirely without reason. Research shows that this generation has been severely affected by the convergence of several negative internal and external factors, most of which were aggravated by the Great Recession of 2008/2009. During that critical economic time period, most millennials were either pursuing their higher education or entering the labor force, hence they immediately felt its widespread consequences at an early stage of their career, which then impacted several other aspects of their life.[277] However, as the 2019 Poverty and Inequality Report (published by The Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality) emphasized, whilst millennials are being severely affected

[276] According to a 2019 Gallup poll, 43% of the American population consider socialism to be "a good thing for the country"[276], which is equivalent to an eighteen percentage point rise from what was registered in 1942. The figure rises even more when Democratic voters or Democratic-leaning independents are asked about their views on the matter. In this case, and according to a 2018 Gallup poll, 57% have a positive view of socialism, a number which is intensified by the younger generations, especially those between 18 and 29 years of age.[276] Furthermore, the same poll indicates that Democratic voters or Democratic-leaning independents' favourable views of socialism have slightly increased in the last decade – from 53% in 2010 to 57% in 2018 –, whereas their favourable views of capitalism have decreased seven percentage points during the same time period – from 53% in 2010 to 47% in 2018. (Younis, 2019) and (Newport, 2018)

[277] For instance, according to the 2019 Poverty and Inequality Report, which was published by The Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, student debt became more acute after the Great Recession for two main interconnected reasons. In sum, the dire state of the labor market at the time made more young Americans want to attend college in order to heighten their chances of getting a (good) job but, as State funding to public colleges was reduced, the students who were interested in attending the latter were met with either a shortage in their capacity to accept them or higher tuition fees. Thus, many students enrolled elsewhere, namely at private colleges – there was, in fact, "record enrollment at high-priced, low-return for-profit colleges" at the time. Ultimately, regardless of whether or not students ended up attending public or private colleges, their financial burden blatantly increased. (The Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality, 2019, p. 11)

by a set of distinctive challenges at a particularly vulnerable stage of their adult lives, some of the struggles that they are presently facing – which span from rising housing costs to poor real wage growth[278] – are also impacting other generations, albeit in a different manner, and its causes can be traced to problems such as "rising inequality and declining mobility",[279] which the authors of the report considered to be "the hallmark of our 21st-century economy."[280] This may explain why more Americans, particularly young Democratic voters, find Socialism and left-leaning policies more appealing than before.[281]

I would argue that it is especially important to analyze whether or not such a phenomenon is actually exerting influence on American politics, particularly within the Democratic Party, and if so, to determine the extent to which the latter has been affected. Indeed, the Democratic party seems to have suffered a perceptible shift towards the left that is especially evident given the 2020 Democratic Presidential race, in which not only were the main progressive candidates – Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders – proposing to implement bold social-democratic policies, but the main moderate candidates – Pete Buttigieg and Joe Biden – were also keen on incorporating components of a left-leaning agenda, namely regarding topics such as health-care.[282] Additionally, albeit never having won the Democratic Presidential nomination, the fact

[278] On the topic of real wage growth, a 2018 article produced by The Pew Research Center reads that "despite some ups and downs over the past several decades, today's real average wage (that is, the wage after accounting for inflation) has about the same purchasing power it did 40 years ago. And what wage gains there have been have mostly flowed to the highest-paid tier of workers." (Desilver, 2018)
[279] (The Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality, 2019, p. 3)
[280] (The Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality, 2019, p. 3)
[281] According to a 2019 Gallup poll and a 2018 Cato institute poll, support for stronger government intervention in the economy, for corporate regulation and for a set of comprehensive left-leaning policies – such as federal paid leave – have also slightly increased. (Jones & Saad, 2019) and (Ekins, 2018)
[282] Whilst Pete Buttigieg famously advocated for a "Medicare for all who want it", Joe Biden's platform explicitly states that he wishes to "build on the Affordable Care Act" and that one of his priorities is "giving Americans a new choice, a public health insurance option like Medicare." (Scott, 2019) and (Joe Biden for President: Official Campaign Website, n.d.)

that Bernie Sanders – a self-proclaimed Democratic Socialist – has run two popular Presidential campaigns for which he received a surprising number of individual donations is unprecedented.

Despite his electoral shortcomings, one may argue that Bernie Sanders was successfully able to identify and capitalize on the financial and social grievances of a segment of the American population and, consequently, to promptly provide an appealing left-leaning alternative to the *status quo* that resonated with a significant amount of people within the United States. In addition, besides his well-received Presidential campaigns, which have arguably provided the impetus for the kind of political shift within the Democratic party that has been previously established, Bernie Sanders created "Our Revolution" following Donald Trump's election in 2016, a political action organization whose mission is to "win progressive issue fights, elect progressive champions, transform the Democratic Party."[283] In fact, Our Revolution successfully endorsed several progressive candidates in the 2018 midterm elections, the most prominent being Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, who now represents New York's 14th District in the House of Representatives.

Furthermore, it seems especially relevant to determine how certain aspects of the arguments of the authors which have been the object of my study may shine a light on the recent political developments in the United States. For instance, I would argue that, by seeking to transform the Democratic party from within, Bernie Sanders was successful at identifying what might be the most efficient strategy of infiltrating socialist-inspired ideas and policies into mainstream politics, as Lipset and Marks hinted at during their work. Indeed, since the nature of the American political system

[283] (Our Revolution Website, n.d.)

places heavy constraints and produces an incentive scheme that is prejudicial to third parties, I believe that, if any form of Socialism is to become successful in the United States, it will most likely derive from the influence of internal factions within one of the two major parties – in this case, naturally, the Democratic party – rather than from an external challenger.

Additionally, it is possible to argue that the two factors which, according to Werner Sombart, were the cornerstone of both the American "proletarian psyche"[284] and the failure of socialism in the United States, have witnessed an erosion over time, thus hypothetically providing better conditions for people's overall adherence to the ideology at the present time. Indeed, if one were to follow the author's rationale, one might argue that not only is the possibility of exploring free land no longer a distinguishable trait of the American territory – especially not to the same extent as it was in the beginning of the twentieth century –, but also that, as the 2019 Poverty and Inequality Report suggests, the "tangible possibility of class movement" has been partly compromised in the last years.

However, whilst Bernie Sanders' 2020 Presidential campaign seemed to have gained momentum earlier this year, it soon ended when he was confronted with the primary and caucus results where he did poorly in more conservative states and amongst certain demographics, namely African-American people. It appears that, even amongst progressive Democratic voters, the appeal of a moderate candidate with executive experience outweighed the desire for a more profound change that would entail shifting the nation's political direction towards the left. It seems plausible that American liberals were concerned with Bernie Sander's chances of winning against the

[284] (Sombart, 1906/1976, p. 115)

incumbent President in the next general elections[285] and, instead, preferred to choose a moderate candidate who could conceivably more easily attract a wider range of voters within all demographics. I would argue that this decision not only goes to show how the inherent values of what Lipset and Marks deemed "the American ideology"[286] – namely the strong attachment to "anti-statism, laissez-faire, individualism, populism, and egalitarianism"[287] – still remain at the very core of the nation's identity, which undoubtedly remains politically exceptional, but also how difficult it is for the majority of Americans to view their society in class terms and, thus, for them to base their political preferences according to the latter rather than on the ethnical, racial or even religious groups that they belong to.

Indeed, evidence indicates that popular adherence to such left-leaning ideas is far from being widely accepted amongst all Americans and that, consequently, it is still unlikely that such a socio-economic model will thrive in the United States' near future. Yet, albeit the limited adherence to Socialism *per se*, as Lipset and Marks remarked, popular support for efforts to manage the negative effects that are a by-product of capitalism will most likely not subside in the future, especially amongst the younger generations and intellectuals.[288] Hence, I would like to end my dissertation with an extract from the last chapter of *It didn't happen here: why socialism failed in the United States*, where, amid a widespread centrist tendency in global politics, Lipset and Marks cautiously argued that, in fact, some form of social-democratic policies would likely re-emerge in the future:

[285] Hence, avoiding a scenario similar to the 2019 general elections in the United Kingdom, where the leftist leader of the Labour party, Jeremy Corbyn, suffered a resounding defeat.
[286] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 30)
[287] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 30)
[288] Schumpeter made a somewhat similar argument in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, where he concluded that, albeit capitalism's unquestionable superiority over socialism, the latter would triumph, partly due to its appeal amongst intellectuals.

"There are signs, however, that the influence of social democracy as a distinct approach to policy is not exhausted. The seemingly universal shift to support for capitalism and the free market may be of short duration. Strong advocates of such systems, including Joseph Schumpeter from the 1930s and Irving Kristol from the 1970s, have noted that they do not advance the same pretensions to solve major human problems that socialism and communism once did. Capitalism, the free market, is not a utopia even when limited to economic considerations. At best it holds out the promise of a lottery, but like all such awards, the jackpots go to a relatively small minority of players. Hence there must be many losers, some of whom will be receptive to reformist or antisystem movements. The distribution of rewards under capitalism is necessarily greatly unequal, and as Tocqueville pointed out a century and a half ago, the idea of equality presses the underprivileged to support redistributionist policies." [289]

"At the center of free market ideology is an emphasis on self-interest – in invidious terms, on greed. The argument has been put forth from Adam Smith to Milton Friedman that the uninhibited pursuit of personal or institutional gain results in a growing economy which benefits all, regardless of status or wealth. But, as we know, not only do some individuals fail to benefit, but countries differ enormously in economic performance. And the business cycle, which seems inherent in market economies, not only fosters growth, it leads to downswings – periods of economic recession and increased unemployment."[290]

[289] (Lipset & Marks, 2001, p. 292)
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Abbreviation Index

AFL	American Federation of Labor
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
SPUSA	Socialist Party of the United States of America