



MARX'S THEORY OF CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM

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ABSTRACT

Because it clarifies the basic disparities and conflicts between the proletariat (working class) and the bourgeoisie (capitalist class), Marx's theory of class struggle is very pertinent to the current global capitalist situation. As a result of globalisation, multinational businesses now control an unprecedented amount of money and influence, which has worsened exploitation, increased income inequality, and exacerbated social and economic differences. The rise of global supply chains and unregulated markets has led to the commoditisation of labour, which in turn has increased the prevalence of insecure employment and decreased protections for workers. Concurrently, emerging countries have been marginalised and structural inequities have been reinforced as a result of new kinds of reliance and imperialism brought about by globalisation of capital. To better understand these processes, Marx's theory is useful; it shows how we must work together and alter our society as a whole to overcome capitalism's flaws and create a more just world.

Keywords: Class Struggle, Marxism, globalization, capitalism, development studies

INTRODUCTION

The concept of class struggle, which is a fundamental component of Karl Marx's critique of capitalism, provides light on the socioeconomic processes that lie under the surface of the global capitalist system. According to Marx, conflicts between different social classes over production, labour, and resources have always been a driving factor in the history of humanity. Due to the fact that the global capitalist system deepens the divide between the proletariat and the owning bourgeoisie, this argument is more essential than it has ever been in today's globalised society. As a consequence of globalisation, the principles of free markets, and the worldwide reach of enterprises, a complex web of inequality and exploitation has come into existence. This new evidence demonstrates how class animosities continue to exist and how structural inequalities continue to keep the capitalist system in place.

Marx contends that the manner in which power and money are distributed is a function of the technique of production, and that economic interactions are the primary agents in the formation of social institutions. Through the system of capitalism, the means of production are vested in the hands of the bourgeoisie, who, in turn, compel the proletariat to sell their labour in order to maintain their own existence. The capitalist class's pursuit of profit leads to the exploitation and alienation of workers, which in turn leads to the emergence of conflicts as a consequence of this dynamic. Within the context of this era of globalisation, these contradictions are becoming more and more apparent. As a result of the liberalisation of trade and

the establishment of global supply chains, capital and production have been relocated to regions that have cheap worker costs and a minimal amount of regulation. In spite of the fact that this process has resulted in huge wealth for investors and businesses, it has also contributed to the worsening of worker exploitation and brought about an expansion in the gap between the wealthy and the impoverished on a national and international scale.

Class struggle has taken on new dimensions as a result of the expanded breadth and complexity that global capitalism has brought us. One immediate consequence of globalisation is the concentration of economic power in the hands of a relatively limited number of multinational corporations and financial institutions worldwide. The outsized influence that big corporations have on global politics has a significant effect on a variety of fronts, including trade agreements, labour regulations, and even the political atmosphere of sovereign nations. In addition, the working class is becoming more fragmented as industrialized economies continue to replace human workers with machines and outsource their employment to countries that are still in the process of developing. Due to the lack of unity among workers, there would be a decreased likelihood of workers banding together to struggle against class oppression. Marx believed that these two factors were essential for a society that was fair. On the other hand, movements for workers' rights, fair pay, and social justice have developed all over the globe as a reaction to the same conditions that global capitalism has brought about, such as precarious employment, stagnant wages, and rising inequality.

Today, in the midst of financial crises, environmental degradation, and socio-economic polarisation, Marx's critique of capitalism as a system motivated by the incessant quest of profit and the accumulation of capital rings true. Global capitalism's commodityization of labour and resources has worsened inequality and stoked disputes over resource access, trade fairness, and environmental sustainability. In addition, local battles are now part of a larger global movement due to the increased interdependencies brought about by economic integration. Problems like income disparity, joblessness, and the weakening of workers' rights in both the North and the South show how class battles transcend national boundaries.

Global capitalism still has all the inherent problems that Marx foresaw, even while it has the ability to revolutionise many aspects of society. As an example, there is a propensity for capital to concentrate wealth in a small number of hands, commodities are produced at a pace that exceeds demand, and people feel disconnected from the outcomes of their labour. These inconsistencies have become more apparent in the wake of globalization's overaccumulation, debt, and unemployment problems, which in turn have stoked broad social unrest and political unrest. As social justice and anti-neoliberal movements gather steam throughout the globe, Marx's focus on the significance of class awareness and collective struggle becomes all the more relevant. His proposal for a massive social restructuring that puts people before profits questions the long-term viability of global capitalism and paints a picture of a more equitable and fair economic structure.

OBJECTIVE

1. Define the concept of class.
2. Describe the various criteria for class formation.
3. Identify the various stages involved in the history of society that change due to class conflict or change in mode of production.

Class Struggle and Revolution

The economic system, or the mode of production, is obviously fundamental to Marx's view of society. Modifications to this framework will have far-reaching effects on a society's superstructure and, by extension, its way of life. Alterations to the production method reflect changes in the production forces and relations. There was no exploitation or injustice stemming from private ownership of production means in the prehistoric communal stage since there was no excess output. Everyone in the community had an equal stake in the means of production. A rise in output was a natural consequence of progress made in the forces of production. The result was a shift in the relations of production and the privatisation of production means. Slavery came into being at the same time as this, marking the end of the primitive-communal system and the beginning of a long history of class strife, inequality, and exploitation.

As a result of the escalating class strife in the slave-owning society, the method of production shifted from slavery to a feudalistic system. According to Marx, class conflict has been a constant throughout the history of our current civilisation. This suggests that class strife has been a constant throughout society's history. Class conflict has a long and storied history, beginning with societies that owned slaves and continuing through mediaeval societies where the lords of the land and the serfs, who worked the land without ownership, fought for control. The long-established feudal system gives way to a new social stage, capitalism, as a result of changes in production methods and class strife.

Capitalism is a method of production where class animosity is most pronounced. There is a zenith and a beginning to the working class movement. Socialism eventually triumphs over capitalism as a result of a struggle between the capitalist and industrial worker classes. According to Marx, this violent upheaval is known as a revolution. In what follows, we will go deeply into this idea of revolution. This is the fifth stage of social evolution, as Marx argues. Do not go to the following subsection until you have finished Activity 2.

Karl Marx predicted that a socialist revolution will replace capitalism due to class animosity and class strife inside the capitalist system. The issue then becomes, why is this hostility even present? Marx argues that this hostility stems from a fundamental conflict between the forces and the relations of production. Powerful new industrial tools are always being developed by the bourgeoisie. However, there is a disparity in the pace of transfer of the relations of production, which seem to include both ownership and income distribution. Even while the capitalist system may create in large quantities and lead to a rise in wealth, the vast majority of people nevertheless live in abject poverty. Conversely, there are a few of families whose fortunes are beyond comprehension. As a result of these enormous and disparate gaps, there are a few wealthy areas that stand out among the sea of poverty and suffering. This inequality is a result of exploitative and unequal relations of production that lead to unequal distribution of the products.

Marx argues that a revolutionary crisis will arise as a result of this conflict. A social entity with aspirations of power grab and relational change, the proletariat now makes up and will make up an even larger portion of the population in the future. According to Marx, social advancement was defined as the gradual triumph of one social class over another. Achieving proletarian triumph was his life's work. He was involved in a campaign and, in a sense, became a commander. In his quest to vanquish the adversary, Karl Marx placed an emphasis on studying society's past and the rules that govern its structure. Karl Marx did not address class-war ideas in his magnum opus, *Das Kapital* (Capital, 1861–1879). To him, proving the need for such

arguments was a pointless exercise. Emotionalism, humanitarianism, appealing to idealism, etc., were all things he despised. He foresaw class struggle everywhere and advocated for the establishment of a political party that would emerge victorious and conquer the oppressed.

It is not required to make the assumption that Marx was the one who first articulated the idea of class conflict before anybody else. Saint Simon, the author, saw the history of humanity as an epic drama with class strife at its centre. Weitling and Blanqui, who were pupils of the French political agitator Babeuf, refined Babeuf's beliefs in the nineteenth century from his rhetoric on the proletariat dictatorship, which he first suggested in the 1790s. Babeuf's views were developed during the course of the nineteenth century. French state socialists outlined the duties and obligations of workers in the countries that would eventually become industrialised. In the 17th and 18th centuries, a large number of thinkers really published ideas that were quite similar to one another. Marx was the one who did the honourable task of sifting through all of this knowledge and constructing a new set of social analyses. His perspective on the struggle between classes was innovative since it brought together theoretical concepts and practical issues.

Marx identifies the proletariat as the lowest social stratum in society. Since there is no socioeconomic strata that exists below the proletariat, the freedom of the proletariat will really imply the liberation of all groups of people. Marx takes into account the fact that the bourgeoisie has the authority to conduct the last war. The proletariat, on the other hand, is battling for its own survival in this struggle, and it is imperative that they survive.

Theory and Practice

Marx believed that his publications, particularly *Capital*, were more significant to the working class than any political action that he could take at this time. Furthermore, his vision put a focus on the critical relationship that exists between theory and practice. Marx believed that theories that were founded on dialectical analysis were essential for leading revolutionary action because they had the potential to impact both short-term reforms and longer-term, systemic transformations. It was also an argument that Mao made, which was that theory was pointless if it did not have any practical application. Without this connection between theory and practice, revolutionary movements are unable to effectively operate. Theorising from a dialectical viewpoint has the potential to shed light on class exploitation and other structural issues associated with capitalism. This, in turn, may lead to more significant adjustments in policy rather than improvements that are only cosmetic.

Lenin went even farther by stating that revolutionary theory is necessary for a revolutionary movement. This statement further emphasises the significance that theory plays in revolutionary circumstances. Theorising and acquiring knowledge are not only theoretical pastimes; rather, they are potent instruments that may be used to organise the masses for revolutionary change and to shape political practice. However, theory alone is not sufficient; actual power is comprised of mass organisations and class consciousness, as well as agitation, propaganda, and programs. In this way, theory becomes a weapon for altering the capitalist system rather than just studying it. This is because it identifies and addresses the structural underpinnings of exploitation.

Economic Determinism and Eurocentrism

Marx and Marxism have been associated with Eurocentrism and economic determinism, where economic 'laws' determine the course of human history and where 'the economy' determines other spheres of human life such as politics, ideas and state actions. Once such a starting point is accepted other precepts can logically follow: A comprehension of capitalism as operating according to its essential 'laws of motion' that cannot be disregarded (or contravened); a linear (straight line) view of history, where all countries follow the same path, for example, through the five stages of human history (primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism); and a form of Eurocentrism, where the economically dynamic West 'delivers' development to the stagnant East. Criticising such an approach, Edward Said highlights Marx's early writings on India, arguing that 'every writer on the Orient including Marx saw it as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction and even redemption' (2003: 206) and that 'Marx succumbed to thoughts of the changeless Asiatic village' (Said 1993: 183). Similarly, Eisenstadt (2000: 1) writes that Marx (and Durkheim and Weber) 'assumed... that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies'. Hobson (2011: 115) argues that 'the Eurocentric cue in Marx's work emerges in his belief that European societies self-generate through an endogenously-determined linear development path according to their own exceptional properties...'

There are indeed writings by Marx that can be construed as embodying such an approach. Far more damaging, however, such formulations were subsequently adopted and formalised by latter-day Marxists. Thus in early 20th century Russia for example, Georgi Plekhanov argued that 'the organisation of any given society is determined by the state of its productive forces', and that 'technical progress constitutes the basis of the entire development of humankind' (Plekhanov 1976: 33, cited in Kiely 1995: 17). In the same vein, an official (1963) Soviet text, 'fundamentals of Marxism' (cited in Kiely 1995: 14), states that:

'All peoples travel what is basically the same path... The development of society proceeds through the consecutive replacement, according to definite laws, of one socio-economic function by another'.

In his criticism of English colonialism in India, it would seem that Marx is saying that the efforts of industrialised countries may assist "backward" governments break out of their stagnation. This is the most straightforward interpretation of his argument. At this point, he is subjected to intensive criticism from Said and other individuals for being too Eurocentric. The following are some of the ways that Marx characterised the impacts of British colonialism on India in his analysis:

'English interference... dissolved these small semi-barbarian, semi-civilized communities, by blowing up their economical basis, and thus produced the greatest, and to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia'. (Marx: 1853)

England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating – the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia'. (ibid)

As stated in the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels differentiate the dynamic character of capitalism from the economic forms that existed before to the advent of capitalism. They make the statement that "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society" (1848). 8. Additionally, it seems that

"the bourgeoisie has given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country through its exploitation of the world market" (ibid).

If the quotes that were presented before are genuine reflections of Marx's perspective on human development, then ignoring Marx would not constitute a significant setback. A kind of Marxism that "has rightly been identified as an example of the worst kind of Eurocentric, modernist arrogance, in which the "superior" west looks at the "inferior" Rest as a backward, stagnant and incomprehensible "other"" (Kiely 1995: 23), according to Ray Kiely, who labels this kind of Marxism as dogma. On the other hand, Kiely argues that Marx provides an alternative interpretation of human progress. This interpretation, which I shall demonstrate in the next section, was founded on dynamic and occasionally combative interaction between different social classes.

Intersections of Capitalism, Other Societies, and Human Development

An interpretation of Marx that is based on the theory of economic determinism would mean that Marx believed that the development of the economy and the advancement of the productive forces were the primary elements in the evolution of human beings. On the other hand, via his reasoning, he often opposes such views. On the contrary, he demonstrated how the dynamic relationship between social class, the state, and the global system gives birth to a vast range of human accomplishments and experiences during the course of life. If we focus our study on the links and conflicts between different classes, we may be able to get a greater understanding of the ways in which different forms of human development vary along this vector.

Throughout this section, we will examine four separate occasions in which Marx addressed the consequences that various global class formations and struggles had on the development of humanity. It exemplifies his understanding of these instances as representing fights against capitalism rather than socialism (in the Australian colonies), for better working conditions under capitalism (in Industrial England), internal and external to capitalism (in the French Commune), and possibly even beyond capitalism (in rural Russia).

We are going to demonstrate that Marx was of the opinion that the emergence of a worldwide socialist society was already within grasp during his lifetime. According to him, the growth of the creative forces was sufficient to bring about socialist change. This shows that he believed this to be the case. Rather than arguing that they required to be further developed under capitalism, as some dogmatic Marxist schools of thought did, the important issue was how a society that did not practice capitalism in the future might exploit capitalism's legacy of creative dynamism. This was the topic of discussion. However, he also saw that the working class was struggling for a variety of causes in addition to socialism and protest against capitalism. However, this did not in any way diminish the significance of them to him. Instead, he attempted to determine the developmental consequences that they had on current working classes by studying them, taking into consideration the environment in which they occurred and the shifting global system.

The Longest Road from Capitalism To Capitalism

However, despite the catastrophic events that occurred during World War I, many people anticipated that the early twentieth century would be marked by ceaseless progress and worldwide unification. The year 1914 saw the outbreak of war, which had a negative impact on the global capitalist system. This occurred

despite the optimistic hopes of individuals such as Sir Norman Angell, who argued that fighting was irrational owing to the economic unity of Europe. Several empires, including the Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg ones, were brought down as a consequence of the widespread economic and political weakness that was brought about by the catastrophe. The Bolshevik revolution was a pivotal moment in Russian history, as it marked the beginning of Lenin's unexpected rise to power in the midst of the chaos that was caused by the civil war and the revolution.

The years after World War I marked the beginning of the reconstruction of capitalist economy; nonetheless, Europe continued to be vulnerable as a result of the hyperinflations and reparations that afflicted the continent throughout the 1920s. A brief period of economic expansion preceded the Great Depression, which began in 1929 and wreaked havoc on economies all around the world. In order to further exacerbate the crisis, the gold standard mandated contractionary monetary policies, which in turn led to the collapse of the economy and the creation of a significant number of unemployed people. As a direct result of the conflicts that ensued, extremist ideologies such as Nazism were able to acquire traction in Germany. There was also a historical factor that had a role in Hitler's ascent to power in 1933. Hitler used political manoeuvring to take advantage of the power vacuum that had been created as a result of the economic crisis.

The Second World War had even more far-reaching repercussions on a global scale than the First World War already had, continuing the bloodshed that had begun in the First World War. Due to the fact that these countries were defeated in the fight, the collapse of European empires and the subsequent loss or abandonment of colonial territory happened as a consequence of the conflict. Beginning in the 1940s and continuing until the 1980s, European countries such as France and Britain relinquished their authority over their colonies as part of the decolonisation process. The power dynamic in the region was drastically transformed as a result of the communist revolution in China. Additionally, Japan's defeat in the war and the end of its colonial authority over Korea and Taiwan were other factors that contributed to the general transformation of the region. Because of this, the political and economic environment underwent a major transformation as a consequence of the two world wars, which led to the establishment of new power structures on a worldwide scale.

CONCLUSION

The theory of class struggle proposed by Marx provides a powerful lens through which to examine the inner workings of global capitalism. In this system, the fight between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is the primary impetus for the advancement of society. This struggle has become more intense as a result of the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few numbers of multinational corporations as a result of global capitalism. Workers, particularly those in the Global South, are subjected to exploitation and insecure conditions. The fact that global inequalities continue to exist despite the advancement of technology and the prevalence of mass production is evidence of the impasses that exist between productive forces and restricting relations of production. Marx's framework is still necessary for understanding the deep-seated injustices in contemporary capitalism and for seeing the possibility of a revolutionary uprising when workers from all over the world band together to build a better society. This is true even considering the fact that his economic determinism and Eurocentrism have their critics.

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