

Marxism's Paradox: How a Discredited System Shaped the Ethics and Conscience of Modern Capitalism

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Abstract

Decades after the collapse of many communist regimes, Karl Marx's ideas continue to exert a paradoxical influence on modern capitalism. While existing knowledge has examined Marxism's political failures and capitalism's adaptability, little attention has been paid to how Marxism's ethical critique has directly shaped the evolution of capitalist societies. Drawing on a comparative historical analysis of labour reforms, social welfare legislation, and corporate responsibility initiatives in selected industrialised economies, the study traces how concerns with inequality, exploitation, and alienation have been absorbed to maintain capitalism's legitimacy and stability. The findings indicate that capitalism's endurance has depended not solely on rejecting Marxist thought, but on integrating elements of its critique to meet demands for fairness, dignity, and collective welfare. This paradox is reflected in contemporary debates on wealth inequality, gig-economy labour rights, environmental sustainability, and corporate ethics. By demonstrating Marxism's persistent moral and analytical relevance, the article offers new insights into capitalism's adaptability, showing that its evolution is shaped as much by ideological opposition as by internal market dynamics.

Keywords: Marxism, Capitalism, Social Reform, Economic Theory, Labour Rights, Corporate Ethics