

How Marxism Has Survived in America for More Than 200 Years

Marxism: a materialistic concept of history developed and promoted by Karl Marx meant to explain the development of societies and predict future social changes.

Marxists see the world, nature and society in constant motion. In their view, three classes of society exist in relation to property: owners of means of production, landlords and laborers. The capitalist stage of production eliminates one class, leaving only capitalists and laborers. Class conflict occurs when workers develop a sense of shared identity.

American democracy: rule by the people and their representatives. Citizens vote for their government officials. At least in theory, social and economic mobility have eliminated the dominance of a single group of people.

Marx brought his ideas to the United States in the mid-1850s. In an interview associated with the Society for U.S. Intellectual History in 2017, Andrew Hartman, eminent historian and associate professor of history at Illinois State University, commented that Marx wrote articles for a New York newspaper for some four years. The interviewer added that Marx served during those years as the European correspondent for *The New York Daily Tribune* and even corresponded with President Abraham Lincoln.

Initially, the American public seemed reluctant to accept Marx's ideas, but slowly labor movements and similar groups began to ponder his ideas. When he died in 1883, the hall in which the memorial service was held overflowed with attendees, several of whom offered great tributes.

Numbers of professors and non-academic intellectuals seemed inspired by the ideas Marx espoused. Before his death in 2000, a Jesuit priest, writer and theologian by the name of Father John A. Hardon wrote an article titled "The Influence of Marxism in the United States Today." In the article, Hardon contends, "the United States is a Marxist country." He felt the U.S. had been deeply infected by Marxism. In fact, to him, "The United States of America is the most powerful Marxist country in the world."

The attitude toward Marxism among younger Americans varies.

According to a U.S. government report titled "U.S. Attitudes Toward Socialism, Communism and Collectivism" published in October 2020, some 30% of Generation Z—those individuals born between 1997 and 2012/15—favor Marxism. Twenty-six percent of Gen Z view Marxism as a totalitarian state that would suppress citizens' freedom. Twenty-seven percent of Millennials, those individuals born between 1981 and 1996, favored Marxism.

Karl Marx's attitude toward Jews to a great extent reflected his family background. His mother and father were originally non-religious Jews, but the father converted to Lutheranism when Karl was a very young child. The mother remained a member of the Jewish faith until her father's death. Early in adulthood, Karl became an anti-Semite.

In an article titled "Karl Marx and the Jewish Question," published in *Political Psychology* in 1984 (Vol. 5, No. 3), William H. Blanchard wrote that Marx's social rebellion reflected his early-life experience, and his response to his Jewish background dictated the direction of his rebellion. He regularly attacked manipulators of money but gradually came to focus on capitalists rather than Jews. In his final writings he used "no antisemitism" as a basis for attacking the rich and the concept of capitalism.

Marx was initiated into the Christian faith through baptism in

a Lutheran church at age six. During his university career, he began to explore sociopolitical theories and question the tenets of the faith. He became extremely irreligious and a staunch opponent of any belief in the supernatural. To him, churches served as instruments of exploitation and bewilderment of the working class. He composed radical critiques of religion and suggested religion was the “opium of the people.” His concept of a religious worldview reduced the value of the human being in relation to a superior entity operating not within but outside human beings impervious to human influence. He embraced a level of atheism rather than agnosticism.

While the influence of atheism in America has remained relatively low for many years, the number of Americans identifying as atheists has increased modestly but significantly over the past 10 years. Telephone surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2018 and 2019 showed that the number of Americans identifying as atheists rose from 2% in 2009 to 4% at the time of the surveys.

Marxism has not thrived but has survived in the United States for more than 200 years. It has posed no major threat to American democracy to date. Today, relatively few members of Congress espouse any form of government that resembles Marxism. Relatively small percentages of Gen Z and Millennials view Marxism favorably. The average U.S. citizen remains concerned about the future of America and personal freedom; they continue to embrace the concept of electoral democracy, majority rule and the principle of “one nation under God.”
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