

# The Development of Marxism in a New Global Order: A Comparative Study of Chinese and Western Theories and the Practical Pathways of the “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind”

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## Abstract

Against the backdrop of accelerating global multipolarity and the structural failure of traditional governance models, Marxism has regained significant theoretical attention and practical relevance as a critical system of thought. Taking the divergence between Chinese and Western Marxist traditions as a point of departure, this article systematically analyzes the fundamental distinction between the “practical rationality” orientation of Chinese Marxism and the “subjectivity critique” tradition of Western Marxism. It further reveals their complementarity in terms of historical context, methodological approach, and political value orientation. The paper focuses on the concept of a “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind,” arguing that it represents a Chinese Marxist response to global crises through institutional innovation and ideological advancement. This concept demonstrates theoretical potential to transcend the capitalist hegemonic order and contribute to a fairer and more rational global governance framework. Finally, the paper explores how China, under the transformation of global intellectual structures, is reconstructing Marxist discourse through theoretical innovation, institutional contributions, and discursive strategies, thereby providing Chinese perspectives and practices for building a “World Marxism” community.

## Keywords

Marxism; Global Governance; Comparative Studies; Community with a Shared Future for Mankind; Discourse Power; World Marxism.

## 1. Introduction

The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. The unipolar international order is experiencing structural upheaval, with escalating challenges such as climate change, widening wealth gaps, pandemics, and geopolitical conflicts exposing a global governance deficit. In response, China has proposed the notion of a “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind,” which advocates global cooperation, institutional reform, and value consensus, and has drawn increasing attention from the international academic community.

Marxism has re-emerged as a key intellectual resource for analyzing global inequality and institutional crises. In China, Marxism has not declined with the end of the Cold War; rather, it has continued to evolve through indigenous practice, forming a self-sustaining system with both theoretical depth and institutional implementation. In contrast, Western Marxism has largely remained within the realm of cultural critique and philosophical discourse, with limited influence on policymaking or institutional construction.

This paper compares the theoretical trajectories of Chinese and Western Marxism within the context of the evolving global landscape. It focuses on how China integrates the idea of a shared

future with Marxist principles to engage in global governance and institutional discourse, thereby contributing to the reconstruction of a pluralistic and interactive “World Marxism” discourse system.

## **2. The Historical Context of Marxism in a New Global Order**

### **2.1. Shifting World Order and the Reshaping of Ideology**

Following the Cold War, the bipolar global order transformed into a unipolar system dominated by the United States and its allies. A neoliberal governance model centered on free markets, liberal democracy, and so-called “universal values” emerged as the dominant paradigm. Fukuyama’s “End of History” thesis embodied the West’s premature confidence in capitalism’s triumph, while Marxism was temporarily dismissed as outdated.

However, in the 21st century, the structural contradictions of global capitalism have become increasingly visible. The 2008 financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia–Ukraine conflict, and environmental degradation have severely shaken the legitimacy of neoliberalism. Meanwhile, the rise of emerging powers such as China, India, and Russia has shifted the global power structure toward multipolarity, challenging Western discursive hegemony and highlighting the institutional demands of the Global South.

At this turning point, Marxism has re-emerged as a powerful framework for critiquing inequality and deconstructing capitalist logic [1-3]. Particularly in China, Marxism has not only remained resilient but also grown through integration with national development, becoming a vital resource for institutional innovation in developing countries.

### **2.2. From Classical Theory to Pluralist Transformation**

As a 19th-century system of critique targeting capitalist structures, Marxism emphasized historical materialism, surplus value theory, and proletarian emancipation. In the 20th century, it diversified along multiple trajectories:

Soviet Marxism emphasized centralized planning and ideological unity, achieving rapid industrialization but stagnating due to institutional rigidity.

Western Marxism, represented by the Frankfurt School, Gramsci, Althusser, and others, shifted toward cultural critique and subjectivity, focusing on ideology and social theory [1-3].

Chinese Marxism fused revolutionary praxis with social development, and in the contemporary era has highlighted values such as “people-centered development,” “common prosperity,” and a “Community with a Shared Future,” displaying strong practical concern and systemic innovation.

In the 21st century, Marxism has moved beyond any singular tradition and is now developing toward a multi-centered, multi-path “World Marxism” to respond to diverse development challenges worldwide.

### **2.3. China’s Rise and the Contemporary Expression of Marxism**

China’s global rise is not only reflected in its economic and geopolitical influence but also in the reconstruction of its ideological and discursive systems. Through the sinicization of Marxism, China has established a highly practical and systematized theoretical framework. The articulation of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era has deepened the integration of Marxism with national strategy.

The concept of a “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” represents a contemporary Marxist response to global problems [4,5]. It inherits Marxist ideals of human emancipation while incorporating the Confucian vision of “Great Unity under Heaven,” emphasizing coexistence, mutual respect, and dialogue among civilizations. This concept offers new

perspectives and institutional designs to address global imbalances, ecological crises, and systemic fragmentation.

Furthermore, initiatives such as the Belt and Road, Global Development Initiative, and Global Security Initiative demonstrate China's capacity to integrate theory with institutional design, contributing consensus and solutions to global governance and establishing Marxism as a driving intellectual force in building a new international order.

#### **2.4. Global Challenges and the Need for Theoretical Transformation**

The world today faces systemic risks including governance failure, technological hegemony, and a global trust deficit. Traditional Western governance models are increasingly ineffective. While Western Marxism retains analytical value in critiquing ideology, it lacks actionable institutional alternatives, thus limiting its practical impact.

In contrast, Chinese Marxism combines theoretical insight with policy implementation, forming a "practice-closed loop" from ideological proposition to institutional embodiment. To confront new challenges—such as artificial intelligence, data capitalism, and ecological imbalance—Marxism must re-engage with global governance, social organization, and technological structures through renewed interpretation and methodological innovation.

In this context, the development of Marxism is no longer a linear extension from a single theoretical center, but a reconfiguration driven by multipolar interaction and praxis. Its central mission is to respond to the issues of the times, construct mechanisms of consensus, and promote the universalization of values and institutional innovation from a global perspective.

### **3. A Comparative Study of Chinese and Western Marxism**

#### **3.1. Theoretical Starting Points: Practical Rationality vs. Subjectivity Critique**

The divergence between Chinese and Western Marxist theories originates from their distinct social structures and historical contexts. In China, Marxism has always been closely linked with national liberation, state reconstruction, and social development. It emphasizes the alignment of theory with practical needs and the well-being of the people, forming a tradition centered on "practical rationality." From Mao Zedong's assertion that "practice is the sole criterion for testing truth," to Deng Xiaoping's emphasis that "development is the hard truth," and to Xi Jinping's formulation of a "people-centered" development philosophy, Chinese Marxism consistently highlights practical orientation and a strong sense of historical mission.

In contrast, Western Marxism developed primarily in advanced capitalist societies where revolutionary practice was constrained. Thinkers such as Lukács, Gramsci, Althusser, and Habermas largely used Marxism as a tool for ideological and cultural critique, focusing on issues like alienation, cultural hegemony, and epistemic control. Their approaches form a theoretical lineage grounded in "subjectivity critique," wherein the aim is not necessarily to overthrow existing systems, but rather to expose the subjective mechanisms of oppression within capitalist logic, with the goal of awakening individual consciousness and promoting cultural autonomy.

#### **3.2. Methodological Paths: Historical Materialism vs. Cultural Deconstruction and the Linguistic Turn**

At the methodological level, Chinese and Western Marxism follow two distinct paths. Chinese Marxism adheres to historical materialism, emphasizing the dialectical relationship between economic base and superstructure, and paying close attention to changes in productive forces and social structures over time. In the contemporary era, this method has evolved through "creative transformation" and "innovative development," enhancing its adaptability to policy-making and theoretical relevance.

In contrast, since the mid-20th century, Western Marxism has gradually shifted toward cultural studies and linguistic analysis. Althusser's "structuralist Marxism" underscored the role of ideological state apparatuses in constructing the subject; meanwhile, post-structuralist thinkers such as Derrida and Foucault extended Marxist critique through the "linguistic turn," transforming social issues into discursive analyses. While these developments expanded the theoretical horizon of Marxism, they have also been criticized for excessive abstraction and disconnection from practical realities, thereby weakening their ability to inform institutional transformation.

### **3.3. Political Aspirations: Collective Emancipation vs. Individual Freedom**

Chinese and Western Marxism also diverge in their political aspirations. Chinese Marxism focuses on collective emancipation and overall social advancement, with national development, cultural rejuvenation, and common prosperity as its core objectives. In this framework, individual freedom is viewed as contingent upon collective conditions, achievable only through the improvement of social institutions and historical progress.

The "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" extends this value orientation into the international domain. It calls for not just inter-state cooperation but also collective security and development for humanity as a whole, reflecting a globalized logic of collectivist Marxism.

By contrast, Western Marxism emphasizes individual freedom and the liberation of subjectivity, focusing on the rights of marginalized cultural groups and balancing diverse voices and discursive powers [6-8]. Rather than pursuing structural overhaul, its political orientation often favors incremental reforms within the existing system, blending elements of liberalism and leftist critique. While this approach enhances humanistic concerns and supports individual agency, it is limited in its capacity to drive systemic transformation or deliver policy outcomes.

### **3.4. Theoretical Complementarity and Tensions in Practice**

Despite the profound differences in origins, methodologies, and value orientations, Chinese and Western Marxism are not mutually exclusive; rather, they possess the potential for theoretical complementarity.

Chinese Marxism, with its emphasis on practical application and structural reform, offers developing countries a referential model for governance and social construction. Western Marxism, with its critical acumen and cultural sensitivity, provides valuable insights into ideology, discourse structures, and social psychology.

For instance, China's recent emphasis on "soft connectivity" through the Belt and Road Initiative—such as cultural exchanges and educational cooperation—demonstrates an indirect absorption of Western Marxist ideas on cultural theory [4,9]. This indicates that Chinese Marxism is increasingly extending from structural focus to cultural interaction, thereby expanding its global influence.

Nevertheless, theoretical dialogue is not without challenges. Significant differences in institutional background, historical experience, and academic traditions can easily lead to ideological misunderstandings or even adversarial interpretations. As a result, Chinese and Western Marxist theories are sometimes reduced to simplistic labels that hinder genuine engagement.

To advance the development of Marxism in the 21st century, it is necessary to transcend dichotomies, dismantle discursive barriers, and build a "dialogical World Marxism" framework. Through pluralistic interaction and mutual learning, Marxist theory can more effectively respond to shared global problems and contribute to new institutional and ideological innovations.

## 4. Global Governance and the Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

### 4.1. Theoretical Origins and Global Context

The concept of a “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” is rooted in Marxist historical materialism and the idea of human emancipation, while simultaneously drawing upon Chinese cultural traditions such as Confucian ideals of “Great Unity.” It responds to the global challenges of the 21st century—including ecological crises, widening inequality, and governance deficits—by advocating cooperative rather than confrontational approaches [4,5].

In contrast to Western governance frameworks that often prioritize geopolitical interests and power hierarchies, China emphasizes inclusiveness, mutual benefit, and long-term sustainability. This shift highlights the growing need for alternative discourses in global governance as neoliberal frameworks lose legitimacy.

### 4.2. Institutional Practice and Multilateral Platforms

China’s proposals, including the Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Global Development Initiative, illustrate how theoretical concepts are translated into concrete mechanisms. These initiatives not only serve China’s domestic development but also provide global public goods, especially for the Global South.

At the discursive level, China has worked to strengthen its presence in international organizations such as the United Nations, the BRICS mechanism, and the G20. These platforms allow China to integrate the concept of a shared future into global norms, thereby promoting institutional pluralism and reform of international governance structures [4,10,11].

### 4.3. Discursive Power and International Reception

While China’s proposals have gained recognition in many developing countries, Western narratives often interpret them as attempts to expand geopolitical influence [10,11]. This discursive divergence reflects deeper structural differences between Chinese Marxism and Western international relations theories.

Nonetheless, the increasing visibility of China’s discourse suggests that global governance is entering a phase of competing narratives, where Western liberal hegemony is being challenged by alternative visions rooted in Marxist and postcolonial traditions [5,12].

## 5. The Future of Marxism in a Multipolar World

### 5.1. Emerging Trends: From “National Marxism” to “World Marxism”

The development of Marxism today is no longer confined to individual states but is evolving into a global theoretical dialogue. With the decline of unipolar dominance, multiple cultural and political centers are emerging. Marxism is undergoing a transition from national adaptation to transnational resonance, forming what may be described as “World Marxism.”

In this framework, Chinese Marxism plays a central role by integrating theory with institutional innovation, while Western Marxism contributes through critical reflection and cultural analysis [6-8]. Other regions—including Latin America, Africa, and South Asia—are also revitalizing Marxist traditions in response to their own developmental challenges.

### 5.2. Technology, Ecology, and New Frontiers of Marxist Analysis

The rapid rise of artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and digital capitalism is reshaping class structures, labor relations, and governance mechanisms. Marxism must expand beyond its classical focus on industrial capitalism to address these new contradictions.

Chinese Marxism emphasizes “technological sovereignty” and state-led innovation, while Western Marxism offers penetrating critiques of surveillance capitalism and digital alienation [3,13]. The convergence of these approaches may generate new insights into global governance of technology.

Similarly, the ecological crisis represents a key site for Marxist renewal. Eco-Marxism, which critiques the capitalist mode of production for generating ecological imbalance, is increasingly relevant. China’s vision of “ecological civilization” provides a practical response, combining Marxist principles with sustainable development.

### 5.3. Toward a Dialogical and Inclusive Marxism

The future of Marxism lies not in uniformity but in dialogue. A pluralistic, interactive “World Marxism” would embrace diverse traditions—Chinese practical rationality, Western critical theory, and Global South perspectives.

This transformation requires transcending ideological confrontation, promoting epistemic equality, and building discursive bridges across civilizations. In doing so, Marxism can remain a vital intellectual resource for addressing global inequality, governance crises, and the future of humanity.

## 6. Conclusion

The evolution of Marxism in the context of global transformation demonstrates both divergence and convergence. Chinese Marxism, rooted in practice and institutional construction, highlights collective emancipation and offers systemic solutions to global governance crises. Western Marxism, with its emphasis on subjectivity and cultural critique, provides critical depth and theoretical diversity but lacks institutional applicability.

The concept of a “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” embodies the creative transformation of Marxism in China, extending its theoretical vision to the international stage. This marks not only a renewal of Marxist theory but also a contribution to global governance discourse, particularly for the Global South.

Looking ahead, the vitality of Marxism lies in its ability to transcend binary oppositions, to integrate multiple traditions, and to respond to emerging global challenges—technological, ecological, and institutional. Through pluralistic interaction, Marxism can develop into a truly dialogical “World Marxism,” offering both critique and constructive alternatives for a multipolar world order.

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