



Original Article

COMPARISON OF MARXIST AND LIBERAL VIEWS ON POWER AND PROPERTY

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ABSTRACT

Background. Power and property have historically influenced how wealth, resources, and influence are distributed, with significant implications for social stratification and justice. Marxism views property, particularly the means of production, as a primary source of class-based domination, where the capitalist class (the bourgeoisie) exploits the working class (the proletariat), resulting in economic inequality and alienation. In contrast, Liberalism regards private property as a fundamental individual right that promotes freedom, innovation, and market efficiency, although it also acknowledges the risk of excessive power concentration without regulatory oversight. This study explores the contrasting perspectives of Marxism and Liberalism on the concepts of power and property, which are central to understanding political and economic structures in society.

Research Methods. The research employs a normative qualitative method through literature review, examining primary and secondary sources, including classical and modern works of political economy. The methodology involves comparative textual analysis of Marxist and Liberal theories, alongside empirical case studies from various national contexts.

Findings. Both perspectives offer valuable insights: Marxism highlights systemic inequality driven by capitalism and calls for collective ownership and state intervention. Liberalism emphasizes economic liberty and the protective role of private property, advocating for market-based solutions with minimal state interference. In practice, many countries adopt hybrid systems that integrate elements from both ideologies to balance growth with equity.

Conclusion. A flexible, context-sensitive approach is necessary, one that balances economic freedoms with social justice through responsible regulation and equitable property policies.

Keywords: Liberalism, Marxism, Power and Property, Political Economy, Social Inequality.

BACKGROUND

Power and property are essential elements of the societal and economic framework of a community. Across time, people have sought to comprehend and manage the allocation of authority and property possession, utilizing political frameworks, legal regulations, and market strategies[1,2]. Within the realm of political economy, discussions about the connection between power and property are crucial as they directly relate to production methods, resource allocation, and access to social welfare. The two primary schools of thought in comprehending this relationship are Marxism and Liberalism, which present opposing perspectives on how power functions in a society centered around property ownership. In Marxist theory, property is viewed not merely as a financial resource but as an instrument of control that establishes unequal social hierarchies. For Karl Marx, control of the means of production shapes societal power dynamics: the owners of production (the bourgeois class) possess complete authority over resources and labor, while those without ownership (the proletariat class) rely on the bourgeois class for survival[3]. In this perspective, power is not evenly shared within society

but is largely concentrated among a small group of elites who possess property and control the means of production.

This concept is the main foundation of Marxist political economic analysis, which emphasizes that capitalism inherently creates economic and social inequality. According to Marx, the capitalist system allows the accumulation of wealth by a handful of individuals or groups through the exploitation of labor. Workers have no control over the results of their production because the profits generated by their labor are mostly taken by the owners of capital. This phenomenon causes alienation of labor, where individuals lose control over their work and become only part of the production machine that continues to generate profits for the bourgeoisie[4].

Furthermore, Marxists contend that the state within a capitalist framework is not impartial, but instead operates as an instrument to safeguard the interests of the capitalist class. The government employs legislation, economic strategies, and political frameworks to maintain the structure of property ownership. For instance, the policies of privatization and deregulation commonly implemented in contemporary capitalism are seen as a means of enhancing the influence of the economic elite over public assets[3]. Consequently, Marxists advocate for a different system characterized by collective ownership of production resources, wherein significant assets like factories, land, and natural resources are governed collectively by the community to eradicate economic and social disparities. Conversely, Liberalism views property in an alternative way. In the liberal tradition, ownership is a core right that safeguards personal liberty and serves as the foundation of a competitive market system. Liberal philosophers like John Locke contend that property rights are fundamental human rights that the state should safeguard, rather than regulate or seize under the guise of equality[4,5]. Locke contended that each person possesses the right to manage and benefit from the results of their own labor, which encompasses the right to possess land, capital, and possessions obtained through personal endeavor. From this perspective, owning property not only encourages individuals to strive and innovate but also acts as a safeguard against excessive government interference.

In a liberal economic framework, free markets are viewed as the most efficient means for fairly distributing resources. This theory highlights that when people are allowed to own property and participate in economic activities, competition will foster innovation, boost productivity, and generate benefits for society overall[6]. Consequently, liberals generally resist substantial government involvement through stringent regulations or redistributive measures thought to impede economic development. Nonetheless, while liberals advocate for property ownership as an individual entitlement, they also acknowledge that in the absence of explicit regulations, economic influence may become concentrated among a small group of elites, which could ultimately weaken market competition. Consequently, in certain contemporary liberal traditions like neoliberalism, there is an effort to reconcile economic liberty with the necessity for specific regulations to guarantee fair competition and safeguard vulnerable populations[7].

The distinctions between these two methods have significant consequences for economic and political strategies in different nations. Systems that align closely with Marxism often implement wealth redistribution strategies, including high progressive taxes, nationalization of businesses, or programs for collective ownership to diminish social inequality. Nations adopting this strategy aim to prevent wealth from being held by a small elite, focusing instead on redistributing resources to the community via social welfare initiatives and assistance for the underprivileged. Conversely, nations with a liberal economic framework prioritize the safeguarding of private property rights, market deregulation, and

competitive processes to attain economic success[8]. In this framework, the state serves as a facilitator, ensuring individuals and businesses can operate freely, with minimal bureaucratic or regulatory obstacles that impede investment.

In today's world, the discussion between these two viewpoints persists, particularly regarding topics like economic disparity, property access, and the state's role in overseeing the market. The worldwide economic downturn, advancements in technology, and shifts in the labor market structure have prompted fresh inquiries regarding the regulation of power and property ownership to foster a more equitable and thriving society. The advancement of digital technology and automation has transformed the functioning of contemporary capitalism, with proprietors of tech-driven firms like Google, Amazon, and Facebook possessing significant economic influence. In this model, assets are no longer solely represented by tangible items like land and factories, but also include data and information, which are managed by a small number of global tech companies [8]. This situation has rekindled the traditional discussion between Marxism and Liberalism: should digital assets be solely owned by private firms, or ought they to be treated as a shared resource available to the general public?

Moreover, the topic of climate change and the control of natural resources is another significant challenge in the conversation about property and authority. A Marxist view holds that the exploitation of natural resources by major corporations represents a type of capital accumulation harmful to society as a whole. In contrast, liberals contend that technological advancements and market forces are the optimal means to tackle environmental issues with minimal state involvement[9]. Given the ongoing global dynamics, it is essential to continually assess how policies concerning power and property can be structured to achieve a balance between economic liberty and social equity. The Research Purpose was to explain the state regulation of property ownership without stifling innovation and economic growth will become increasingly important in determining the future direction of the world's political economy.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies a qualitative normative research approach rooted in political economy theory. The analysis is based on a literature review method involving secondary data sources such as books, journal articles, and existing theoretical frameworks from Marxist and Liberal schools of thought. The research adopts a comparative-descriptive design to examine and contrast the core concepts of power and property as viewed by Marxism and Liberalism. Using a philosophical and historical approach, the study explores how both ideologies conceptualize power, ownership, the role of the state, and socio-economic implications[8]. The research employs a textual analysis of primary writings of key thinkers such as Karl Marx, John Locke, and Adam Smith, supported by contemporary commentaries and interpretations from modern scholars (e.g., Hermawan, Aditya, Azizah, Rahman, Santoso). The analysis aims to synthesize how these theories have evolved in response to real-world economic and political structures across different countries and periods.

FINDINGS

The research finds that Marxism and Liberalism offer fundamentally different conceptions of the relationship between power and property. Marxist theory views property ownership, especially ownership of the means of production, as a central mechanism of class domination. It argues that economic inequality and alienation are the result of capitalist exploitation, where a small elite (bourgeoisie) controls resources and power at the expense of

the proletariat. Marxists advocate for collective ownership and state regulation as solutions to systemic inequality[8].

In contrast, Liberalism sees property as an individual right essential to freedom and market function. From this view, private ownership drives innovation, personal responsibility, and economic growth, with minimal state interference[8]. However, more modern liberal interpretations acknowledge that unregulated markets can lead to inequality and power concentration, and thus call for limited state interventions to maintain fair competition and protect vulnerable groups[10].

The study also highlights how each ideology influences policy, such as taxation, market regulation, and welfare distribution. Marxist-influenced systems emphasize redistributive justice, while liberal systems focus on property rights and economic freedom. In practice, many nations adopt hybrid systems, such as the Scandinavian model, combining market efficiency with strong social safety nets[7].

Overall, the study concludes that neither perspective offers a complete solution. Instead, a balanced approach that considers both economic freedom and social justice is essential in addressing modern challenges like digital property, corporate monopolies, and environmental exploitation[8].

DISCUSSIONS

In the examination of political economy, power and property are two key factors that shape the social framework and economic interactions of society. Since classical times, the discussion regarding the connection between power and property has been a key issue in political and economic theory. The two leading viewpoints in this debate are Marxism and Liberalism, both of which offer distinct interpretations regarding the role of property in power distribution. From a Marxist viewpoint, property is more than an economic resource; it serves as the primary instrument for the ruling class to uphold its dominance. Marx contended that control over the means of production is the primary element that establishes social hierarchy, with the capitalist class (bourgeoisie) managing resources and exploiting the working class (proletariat) to produce profits[8].

In this model, power resides with property owners, as they possess control over labor and the production process. Conversely, the Liberal viewpoint perceives property as a tool that restricts power. In the liberal tradition, owning property is viewed as a personal right that should be safeguarded against government interference. Philosophers like John Locke and Adam Smith contended that individual property rights foster economic liberty, which in turn propels innovation and economic development[8]. Consequently, liberals contend that the government should not excessively intervene in property ownership issues, as it may restrict personal freedom. This core distinction illustrates how Marxist and Liberal approaches yield varying understandings of the connection between power and property. In the Marxist framework, ownership serves as a means of power that facilitates exploitation, whereas in the Liberal framework, ownership acts as a tool that helps individuals preserve their liberty from control by the state or other entities.

1. Economic Inequality and Its Impact on Power

Economic disparity significantly influences the allocation of power within society, evident in the contrasting perspectives of Marxist and Liberal theories. From the Marxist view, economic disparity arises from a system of unequal property ownership, where the working class lacks ownership of the means of production and is compelled to sell their labor to capital

owners. This results in a growing concentration of wealth within the bourgeois class, while the proletariat continues to rely on circumstances that hinder their ability to enhance their well-being[8]. Marx claimed that within a capitalist framework, the wealth generated by laborers is not equitably shared, but is rather dominated by capital holders who wield economic and political influence. Consequently, economic inequality is not merely an economic issue, but also a political one, as the affluent can shape public policy to preserve their existing privileges.

Conversely, from a Liberal viewpoint, economic inequality is not an issue to be completely eliminated, but rather a normal outcome of variations in personal effort, creativity, and efficiency. Liberalism highlights that a market economy enables people to accumulate wealth through their effort and innovation, with minimal government interference. Consequently, Liberals usually resist strong redistribution strategies, as they hold that the market possesses an inherent capacity to address inequality via competition and innovation[8]. Nevertheless, reality indicates that significant economic disparity can lead to a disproportionate accumulation of power among a small group of economic elites. Nations characterized by significant economic inequality often witness a reduction in democratic practices and a rise in the power of oligarchic factions within the policy-making arena[9].

Severe economic inequality also threatens to lead to social unrest, including rising poverty levels, higher crime rates, and decreased social mobility[8]. When a small group controls the majority of wealth and resources, the chances for lower classes to enhance their quality of life diminish significantly. In this context, government regulation is crucial to guarantee that power and assets are not overly concentrated among a select few individuals. Consequently, numerous contemporary nations attempt to harmonize market freedom and government involvement to foster more inclusive economic development and a fairer distribution of wealth.

2. The Role of the State in Regulating Power and Property

The state's function in managing property and authority greatly relies on the ideology embraced by a nation, particularly in establishing policies concerning property rights and wealth allocation, which influence individuals' well-being, social inequality, and economic stability. Nations following a Marxist model often pursue wealth redistribution via progressive taxation, nationalization of key industries, and collective ownership initiatives to diminish economic disparities and guarantee that control over production means isn't monopolized by a few entities[8]. This model is utilized in multiple countries like Venezuela and Cuba, which depend on complete government oversight of the energy and natural resource industries to bolster social welfare[8].

Nonetheless, this method frequently encounters obstacles in efficiency and creativity because of complicated bureaucracy and limited motivation for the private sector to advance[8]. Conversely, nations with a Liberal stance focus more on safeguarding private property rights, deregulating markets, and adopting pro-business strategies to stimulate investment and economic expansion, as seen in the United States and the United Kingdom[6]. In this framework, the government functions as a regulator, maintaining a fair market with limited interference in wealth distribution, allowing individuals and businesses the liberty to grow their assets and enterprises with little oversight[9]. This method promotes swift economic expansion, yet also poses the danger of heightened social inequality as wealth often concentrates in the higher economic class[6].

In reality, numerous nations utilize a mixed economic model by integrating aspects of both methods, similar to Scandinavian nations like Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, which feature open economic markets while also upholding robust social welfare programs via progressive taxation[9]. This model demonstrates that the state can serve as a mediator between

economic liberty and social equity, safeguarding private property rights while making certain that the benefits of economic growth are accessible to all societal strata. Examining the different systems adopted by various nations reveals that no single approach is genuinely perfect, as each has its pros and cons. The Marxist perspective prioritizes social justice and fair wealth distribution, but it may impede economic efficiency and innovation, whereas the Liberal perspective promotes economic growth and market autonomy, yet frequently results in significant inequality [8]. Consequently, a mixed economic system represents a more pragmatic option for numerous nations, as it facilitates a balance between competitive economic expansion and inclusive social policies. In addressing upcoming global economic issues, the state's involvement in regulating property and power will evolve to meet shifting social, economic, and political demands.

3. Contemporary Policy Implications: The Case of Inequality and Property Rights

The discussion around Marxist and Liberal views on power and property rights remains highly pertinent in contemporary economic policy. A frequently emphasized aspect is the way nations manage wealth taxes and property laws. This policy is significantly shaped by the framework embraced by a nation, whether it leans more towards liberal capitalism or social democracy. Nations with more liberal economic policies, like the United States, typically maintain low property and wealth taxes. This method is based on the idea that safeguarding private property rights and encouraging investment will stimulate economic growth. Reduced taxes are viewed as a means to draw in investors, stimulate innovation, and generate additional employment opportunities. In this situation, the government often refrains from heavy involvement in wealth redistribution due to concerns about hindering investment and economic development[8].

Conversely, nations with a social-democratic stance, like France and Germany, impose greater property and wealth taxes, particularly on the affluent. This policy seeks to lessen economic disparities and guarantee a fairer allocation of wealth within the community. Increased taxes on wealthy capital owners finance social initiatives like education, healthcare, and housing assistance, benefiting middle and lower economic classes to enhance their well-being[8]. The effects of this policy on economic disparity have been extensively examined in political economy studies. Excessive economic inequality, without state intervention, can lead to social instability.

Severe inequality can lead to higher poverty levels, hinder social advancement, and possibly cause political turmoil[8]. Thus, certain nations seek to achieve equilibrium between safeguarding private property rights and curbing excessive wealth concentration by implementing stricter property regulations and wealth taxation. Alongside taxes, issues concerning property ownership rights are also discussed. In a liberal capitalist framework, ownership is seen as an inherent right that ought not to be heavily controlled by the government. From a Marxist viewpoint, concentrated ownership of property by a limited number of individuals is seen as a root of systemic unfairness that requires rectification via public policy. Consequently, certain nations impose limits on property ownership, particularly concerning land and property speculation by significant investors, to guarantee that the public maintains access to adequate housing.

Based on the different policies enacted in multiple nations, it can be inferred that no uniquely ideal method exists. Liberal capitalist nations prioritize economic growth and investment, whereas social-democratic nations stress social justice and wealth redistribution. A country's policy decisions are influenced by the economic, political, and social circumstances it encounters. What is evident, however, is that the discussion surrounding Marxism and Liberalism concerning power and property ownership will persist, particularly when

confronting the challenges posed by the global economy moving forward.

CONCLUSION

The debate over power and ownership of property is a key issue in political economy, reflected in the opposing views of Marxism and Liberalism. Marxists argue that property is not just an economic tool, but also a means for the wealthy to control and exploit the working class. They believe that capitalism benefits only the owners of capital, while workers remain dependent and vulnerable, which is why Marxists support communal ownership to reduce inequality and promote fairness. On the other hand, Liberals believe that private property is a basic individual right that should be protected by the government. They argue that in a free market, property ownership encourages hard work, innovation, and economic growth. However, this system can also lead to increased inequality, as the rich have more opportunities to gain wealth, while the poor struggle to catch up. These two perspectives have shaped different economic policies around the world. Countries influenced by Marxist ideas may push for wealth redistribution or state ownership of major industries, while liberal economies focus on market freedom with limited government interference. In today's world, the discussion is even more complex, especially with the rise of digital technology and issues like data ownership. Large tech companies now control vast amounts of personal information, raising questions about whether data should be treated as private property or regulated for the public good. As challenges like economic inequality, monopolies, and digital power continue to grow, it is clear that choosing only one system is not enough. A more flexible approach is needed one that allows for economic freedom but also enables government involvement to reduce injustice and ensure fairness for all. By combining the strengths of both systems, we can create an economy that is both prosperous and socially responsible.

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