

A Western Resurgence of Reading the *Communist Manifesto*

Abstract

Today, two things still continue to give Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* its force. On the one hand, its vision that capitalism is neither permanent nor stable but rather a temporary phase in the history of humanity still serves as a theoretically and practically powerful tool to understand the present of times; on the other hand, it essentially recognizes that capitalist development has long-term historical tendencies which have the capacities to continue to transform themselves by their own logic. In this context, this paper examines the three recent trends of the resurging interest in Karl Marx and Frederic Engels' *Communist Manifesto* in connection with three different events of recent times: i) the first trend that emerged around 1998, which marked the 150th anniversary of the first publication of the *Manifesto*, nearly a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, ii) the second trend that was observed in a sudden and massive coverage of the *Manifesto* by both traditional media and online media during the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, and finally iii) the third trend that emerged through the Occupy Wall Street Movement of 2011. Interestingly enough, the first period of resurgence was confined mainly to the academic circle; during the second and third periods, not only academic but also public attention was brought back to the *Manifesto*. Since then, the academic research by Western scholars on the *Manifesto* has been limited in terms of quantity; however, there has been a tremendous increase in newspaper articles and online publication on it in the West. Google Ngram Viewer shows that from the 150th anniversary of its publication on, the interest in the book began to resurge rapidly due to the escalating crisis of capitalism in general, financial capitalism in particular. After reviewing some analyses of contemporary Marxists, such as Eric Hobsbawm, I would claim that while the *Manifesto* of Marx's time was based upon the analysis of industrial capitalism, the contemporary version of the *Manifesto* as well as the contemporary analysis of the original *Manifesto* itself be based upon financial capitalism. The vision and recognition of the *Manifesto*, to be sure, are to continue to influence the West by expanding the readers from the academics to the general public, especially to the young people, and by providing them with a new interpretation and insight to understand the contemporary pains of their daily livelihood that stemmed mainly from the innate contradictions of the globalized financial system as well as the globalized market.

Keywords

Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx, Frederic Engels, capitalism, financial crisis, Occupy Wall Street, Google Ngram