

# EVALUATION OF MARXISM

An Evaluation of the Marxist Paradigm in Comparison to a Biblical Worldview:

The Case of Venezuela

Jonathan R. Riddick

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for graduation  
in the Honors Program  
Liberty University  
Spring 2022

# EVALUATION OF MARXISM

## Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

---

Edna Udobong, LL.M.  
Thesis Chair

---

Gai Ferdon, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

James H. Nutter, D.A.  
Honors Director

---

Date

# EVALUATION OF MARXISM

## **Abstract**

This research was conducted to address the pressing paradigmatic split in modern American society between Marxism and Christian governing principles. The prevailing concept that governed this research is that Marxism degrades governments and societies and is inherently destructive. The exposition of Marxism's deconstructive character transpires in this research by comparing the implementation of Marxist principles in Venezuela to the application of biblical principles in the United States. A brief historical context of Marxism and Christianity is considered alongside each worldview's values and implementation of such values. Each worldview's foundation is then evaluated by an investigation into Venezuela's utilization of Marxist ideals accompanied by the effects the worldview had on the nation's institutional structure, economic health, and crime situation and justice system. Upon analyzing the effects that Marxism had on Venezuela is an analysis of the impact that biblical principles had on the United States in the same measures as Venezuela: institutional structure, economic health, and crime situation and justice system. In evaluating various research institute findings, government-issued reports, and assorted foundational documents of Marxism, Christianity, Venezuela, and the United States, this thesis considers a wide scope of data to adequately determine the effect of both worldviews on each nation. The findings of this inquiry revealed that Marxism quickly dismantles governments and societies, replacing them with ineffective and inadequate institutions incompatible with the needs of a nation's citizens.

# EVALUATION OF MARXISM

## Contents

Abstract	iii
1. An Overview of Worldviews	5
2. Context of Marxism	6
3. Marxist Values and Their Application	8
4. Biblical Worldview in Context	10
5. Biblical Values and Their Application	12
6. The Two Struggles – A Comparative Analysis	14
7. Marxist Foundations in Venezuela – How it Began	16
8. Marxist Principles Implemented – The Consequences	20
9. The United States and Its Biblical Foundations	24
10. Biblical Principles Implemented – The Consequences	28
11. Summation of Venezuelan and American Systems of Governance	34
12. Bibliography	39

## **An Evaluation of the Marxist Paradigm in Comparison to a Biblical Worldview: The Case of Venezuela**

### **An Overview of Worldviews**

Even the briefest of evaluations of human history will reveal that mankind has struggled to engage with each other and their environment efficiently or sustainably. As time progresses, schools of thought have endeavored to confine humanity into ideological restraints to explain behavior. Theories like ontology, epistemology, teleology, and axiology have been the concern of philosophers for centuries, yet there is no consensus on which all theorists have subscribed. Governments have come and gone while human nature remains the same. The worldview that one subscribes to legitimately morphs their interpretation of the events, values, and ideas before them.

Modern civilization finds itself between a balance of principles in which the consequences of either side are drastically different than the other. While a Marxist and a Christian may confront the same fact, they will interpret that fact in two separate ways. The Marxist paradigm and the biblical paradigm have come to battle for the minds of ideologues. The values of the Christian and Marxist paradigms differ greatly, as do their origins, goals, and practice. While the context and values of each worldview will be evaluated, for this paradigmatic comparison it will be brief. Upon assessment of these worldviews, individuals and nations must decide what their philosophy is based upon, not only for individual advancement but for the improvement of societal conditions. A comparison of a biblical philosophy with a Marxist philosophy in practice between Venezuela and the United States is fundamental for civilization to effectively navigate challenges for growth and sustainability compatible with the human condition. At a time when Marxist philosophies have infiltrated the national legislature of the

United States and many other American institutions, it is crucial for all nations who strive to operate efficiently for their citizens and posterity to recognize the degrading character of Marxism and to subscribe to some basic biblical principles.

Marxism draws drastically varying conclusions about the nature of humanity and the values that influence human behavior compared to the biblical worldview. These differences have produced two contradictory belief systems that cannot coexist; instead, individuals and nations are left to discern which system they consider fact and truth. Understanding the historical context of Marxism and Christianity provides the framework that each worldview perceives certain philosophical values related to governance. Venezuela and the United States are two nations that have made the decision, enabling the consideration of how such values impact the operation of governing institutions and societies. Considering the foundational presuppositions of Marxism and Christianity will contribute a basis for which an examination of their real-world application can be understood.

### **Context of Marxism**

While various models of Marxism exist, only the basic precepts and assumptions of Marxism will be reviewed to focus on its comprehensive impacts. As a denotation cannot fully grasp and capture the entirety of the theory, it is beneficial as a starting point. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Marxism as “a body of doctrine developed by Karl Marx and, to a lesser extent, Frederick Engels in the mid-19th century... [consisting] of three related ideas: a philosophical anthropology, a theory of history, and an economic and political program.”<sup>1</sup> One cannot comprehend any event without the context surrounding it, thus the theories of Karl Marx

---

<sup>1</sup> H. Chambre and David T. McLellan, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Marxism,” updated December 14, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Marxism>.

must not be interpreted within a vacuum of ignorance. The works of Marx were conceived within a precapitalist continental Europe despite being developed in England, a society assumed to have been built and operating within the structures of Capitalism.<sup>2</sup> Marx built his work upon Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who desired to produce a developmental moral philosophy of the individual, state, and society within a consideration of the progress of humanity in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, following the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s, Frederick Engels contributed a fundamental factor to Marxism with the division of labor concept. In contributing the proletariat and bourgeoisie division to the Industrial Revolution, Engels elaborated upon a vital component that Marxism would come to rely on.<sup>4</sup> Knowing that Marxism is a wide-reaching paradigm that grasps most of the major existing societal institutions, an investigation into which specific structures it seeks to overhaul will be straightforward. In its earlier years, Marxist ideology was distinguishingly different from Christian doctrine, just as it is now, as subscribers accepted the following ideas:

Capitalism activated the natural inclination towards socialism in society; Public ownership of land would eliminate exploitation and inequality, abandoning discrimination of race, nationality, sex, or religion; wage-labour must be abolished for the universal development of culture and warfare; Revolution of the masses will erase Capitalism; and Religious doctrine will vanish when class antagonisms and exploitation are abolished.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> George C. Comninel, "Marx's Context," *History of Political Thought* 21, no. 3 (2000): 470. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26219716>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 477.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Heller, *The Birth of Capitalism: A 21st Century Perspective* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 177. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p671.10>.

<sup>5</sup> Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 2, *The Golden Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 5.

The revolutionary sensation of Marxism was attractive to some Europeans struggling within the new capitalist system. Marx was able to capitalize upon the struggles of a certain socio-economic demographic and society divided between two classifications: the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

### **Marxist Values and Their Application**

In deconstructing and redefining history, Marxism created a new radical approach to viewing the struggles that have afflicted civilizations since its origination by enlisting the classifications of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The first chapter of the Communist Manifesto establishes a dissatisfaction with societal inequity stating that the history of the existing society is the history of class struggles in which the bourgeoisie, the class of modern capitalists and owners of the means of production, have exploited the desperation of the proletariat, the class of modern wage laborers who are reduced to selling their labor to live.<sup>6</sup> Marxism naturally takes advantage of the human instincts that produce greed and animosity by pitting the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Whether or not that was Marx's intention is still to be determined.

Understanding a Marxist's stance on values such as justice, liberty, and morality will help to understand where Marxism attempts to lead society. In *The Housing Question* written by Frederick Engels, the essence of justice and what it should look like in society is explained as he comments on the historical standard of justice: "... [T]he standard which is taken to determine what is natural law and what is not, is precisely the most abstract expression of law itself, namely, *justice*... The conception of eternal justice therefore varies not only according to time

---

<sup>6</sup> "Manifesto of the Communist Party," Bourgeois and Proletarians, Marx/Engels Internet Archive, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>.

and place, but also according to persons...”<sup>7</sup> Engels’ view of what justice and retribution look like in a civil society is one of abstraction, but it is important to know what he and other Marxists believe justice to be. As they were not utopian socialists, but rather scientific socialists, Marx and Engels viewed justice through a very literal lens: “Justice... according to Marx and Engels, is fundamentally a juridical or legal... concept, a concept related to the law and to the rights men have under it.”<sup>8</sup> It is from this humanistic legal perspective that justice is considered, thus they frame it as an abstract social theory that is reliant upon the will of any given civil society. A subjective justice system will come to alter societal views of truth and freedom.

The Marxist worldview also claims to be a proponent of liberty and freedom, but it can only be attained after the class structures upheld by capitalist society are deconstructed. Living without the suppression of a governmental force while chasing one's passions was important to Marx. However, according to Marx and Engels, such freedom can only be exercised within a community: “Only in community [with others has each] individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; Only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible.”<sup>9</sup> It is strictly within the context of a community that true freedom can exist because it is a community where personal growth and individual talents are unrestrained. Individualized liberty and freedom were not a priority for Marx as his focus was on communal freedom.

---

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Engels, “The Housing Question,” Supplement on Proudhon on the Housing Question, Marx/Engels Internet Archive, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/housing-question/ch03.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Allen W. Wood, “The Marxian Critique of Justice,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1972): 246. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2265053>.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Marx, “The German Ideology,” Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook, Marx/Engels Internet Archive, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01d.htm>.

However, without morality, justice and liberty would have little standing. It is through morality that a civil society sets the standards for which the society will strive towards. The philosophy of Engels in *Anti-Dühring* reveals the Marxist view of morality where he analyzes the morality of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In doing so, Engels concluded that “men, consciously or unconsciously, derive their ethical ideas in the last resort from the practical relations on which their class position is based.”<sup>10</sup> Following the logic utilized by Engels, morality is subject to the context of society and one’s personal experience, not a concrete determination of principles. There is no room for an objective, God-derived morality in a Marxist paradigm. This humanistic approach leaves morality and ethics to be decided by the society in which it is employed.

The assumptions that Marxists make about justice, liberty, and morality impact the way that governing institutions achieve those values. The Marxist perspective of justice is an abstract principle, liberty is community-derived, and morality is subjective. Each of these values will be crucial for a comparison between a Marxism-based nation and a biblically-based nation as they are ingrained in the basic institutions that civil society operates and interacts with. The implication of justice, liberty, and morality through the Marxist paradigm contrast greatly with their implication through the biblical paradigm as will be proven.

### **Biblical Worldview in Context**

At first glance, a comparison between a Marxist paradigm and a biblical paradigm could appear futile because of the focus of each philosophy. One claims to be a body of political theory and the other claims to be a religion. However, further investigation into the Christian doctrine

---

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Engels, “Anti-Dühring,” *Eternal Truths*, Marx/Engels Internet Archive, accessed January 7, 2022, <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch07.htm>.

reveals why such a comparison can exist. Christian theologian Abraham Kuyper asserts that Christianity cannot be limited to any individual sphere, but God is the ultimate superior, giving Christianity the ability to permeate every sphere of human life. The sphere of sovereignty applies to society's structure to claim that God is the source of all power, and any legitimate authority is derived from God's grace.<sup>11</sup> It is with this notion that Marxism and Christianity can be compared, as Christianity and its presuppositions permeate the entirety of humanity, including the political and philosophical sphere.

Christianity is a derivative of Judaism, and the Holy Bible is its source of doctrine and philosophy. The overarching theme of Christianity is simple, and it is from this standpoint that all other events, values, and ideas are evaluated: Jesus was and is the living Messiah, proved by his resurrection from the dead.<sup>12</sup> As the acclaimed son of God, Jesus is thought to have lived on earth between 4 BC and 30 AD but debates still exist regarding the precise timeline.<sup>13</sup> There are four accounts of the life of Jesus in the Bible given by his disciples known as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They each speak of the birth of Jesus to a virgin, the death of Jesus on a cross, and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, but through individualized perspectives. In the account of Luke, Jesus states that "everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8-9).<sup>14</sup> It is in this verse, and many other writings

---

<sup>11</sup> Dennis P. Petri and Frans Visscher, "Revisiting Sphere Sovereignty to Interpret Restrictions on Religious Freedom," *Philosophia Reformata* 80, no. 1 (2015): 101. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24710011>.

<sup>12</sup> N.T. Wright, "Jesus' Resurrection and Christian Origins," *Gregorianum* 83, no. 4 (2002): 621. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23581348>.

<sup>13</sup> "Timeline of Jesus' life," Christianity, accessed January 8, 2022, <https://christianity.org.uk/article/timeline-of-jesus-life>.

<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

claiming to be inspired by God, that Jesus stakes his claim as the exclusive intermediary between God and humanity. As Christians accept the divinity and ministry of Jesus, God is placed at the top of the sphere of authority, and Christ's teachings and the Bible serve as the lens through which the world is evaluated. The principles of Christianity permeate the very being of the Christ-follower, nothing of this world is left untouched by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### **Biblical Values and Their Application**

As Jesus is the keystone leader of the Christian religion, his teachings serve as the guide for his followers, including the interpretation of justice, liberty, and morality. In understanding the doctrine of Christianity, one must comprehend the nature of who God is because Jesus' main purpose was to usher in the will of God to Earth according to the Bible. Christians see God as the creator of all things, heaven, earth, and all inhabitants, causing his creation to operate within the limitations of his design. Humanity is bound by the time, space, and matter which God created. Christian doctrine asserts that humanity is made in the image of God with the Bible stating that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). This verse is the foundation of how Christians perceive justice, liberty, and morality; because God created humanity in his image, humanity is ingrained with the traits and values of God to a limited sense.

In terms of justice, God is the source from which all justice is based, and it is God that is the final arbiter of justice rather than humanity. The Bible says that he is "[the] Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). The Christian paradigm asserts that God is justice rather than simply the executor of justice; He is the absolutized form of justice. This difference causes the character of God to seep into civil society as without God there would be no equitable justice. In the

biblical paradigm, the justice executed by man and attributed to God can only be righteous when compared to the character of God.

Similarly, the biblical paradigm views God as the benefactor of liberty. Paul the Apostle writes that “[now] the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17). The freedom that the Bible speaks of is not the freedom to do as one pleases, but rather a freedom from the consequences of sin, sin being any form of rebellion against God. The biblical view of freedom pertains to the metaphysical rather than the tangible, freedom to know God and to act with self-determination. Alongside freedom to know God, the Bible asserts freedom in this way:

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. (Galatians 5:13-15)

This liberty afforded by God to humanity is restrained. There are certain confinements to which individuals can enjoy freedom if it does not impede upon others. Contrary to the Marxist notion of liberty confined in the community, biblical liberty differs as liberty is from God and enjoyed by individuals without impairment to others’ ability to enjoy it as well.

In the spiritual realm, morality is confronted by the Christian to infuse into the conduct of physical and spiritual beings. Pastor Steven West describes the Christian view of morality as a “[moral] goodness [that] is defined by the nature of God, and everything he commands is in accordance with his perfect and righteous goodness.”<sup>15</sup> There is no room for compromise or arbitration in the Christian view of morality, but variations of implemented Christian morality

---

<sup>15</sup> Steven D. West, “Christian Ethics,” The Gospel Coalition, accessed January 9, 2022, <https://thegospelcoalition.org/essay/christian-ethics/>.

exist as variation exists within every worldview. The thorough explanation of Christian morality given by Bill Cosgrave best explains why this variation exists: “Though [a Christian faith] does influence our moral life, it does so indirectly, not by giving us precise moral rules but by *shaping our outlook* on the world and life and providing us with attitudes, values, and motives...”<sup>16</sup> There is not one set of moral guidelines that Christians subscribe to, but rather they are given room to interpret situations given the knowledge they have of who God is. Christian morality operates following the character of God apart from the explicit moral guidelines provided by God in the Bible.

The prevalent theme throughout the Christian interpretation of societal values is the impervious dominance of God’s essence and character in the paradigm. As Kuyper and other theologians have asserted, it is solely through God that Christians evaluate justice, liberty, and morality. Contrary to the Marxist perception, justice is confined to the denotation from God rather than some abstract principle, liberty is found in Jesus and not through the community, and morality is determined by the character of God instead of the subjective decisions of humanity. As God takes superiority in the biblical paradigm, it produces an inevitable conflict with the Marxist paradigm that gives such authority to humanity.

### **The Two Struggles – A Comparative Analysis**

While the Marxist paradigm relays the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Christianity tells the story of the fight between good and evil which can be attributed to two individual actors: God and Satan. The prominent difference between these different conflicts is that one focuses on the physical realm while the other focuses on both the abstract

---

<sup>16</sup> Bill Cosgrave, “Understanding Christian Morality,” *The Furrow* 69, no. 5 (2018): 303. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44738733>.

and the material. An impasse exists between a Marxist and a Christian because their respective paradigms differ in their desired outcome for a civil society. Marxism seeks revolution, to tear down existing institutions to elevate the imputed oppressed: “Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”<sup>17</sup> The revolution Marx speaks of is far-reaching in civil society and focuses on the broader sense of the state for the sake of the individual. The Christian paradigm is individualized and intends to transform civil society by God through the individual. Christian doctrine demands that followers “[do] not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2). The transformation that Paul the Apostle speaks of is of the individual’s desire to pursue God’s will. Once again, the Christian paradigm is concerned with God’s will over human desires which leads to a conversion of society. As such, Christian doctrine asserts that “[blessed] is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage” (Psalm 33:12) and that “[righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to many people” (Proverbs 13:34). While the Christian paradigm is more concerned with the individual transformation over a societal revolution, Christianity relies on God for any sort of change, individual or societal.

The disconnect between the Marxist Worldview and the Christian worldview is vital to understand as it is this impasse that produces such different outcomes. Both paradigms seek to

---

<sup>17</sup> Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” IV, Marx/Engels Internet Archive, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch04.htm>.

answer a problem that humanity faces; however, they do not see the same problem and thus they answer it differently.

At a time when 30% of the youngest generation, Generation Z, has a favorable view of Marxism, it is important for nations to grapple with the worldview and how its implementation impacts governing institutions and societies.<sup>18</sup> Considering a nation that was based on Marxist values and a nation that was founded on Christian values will aid in the pursuit to determine why a biblical worldview is better suited to serve humanity than the Marxist paradigm.

### **Marxist Foundations in Venezuela – How it Began**

For this comparison, the history of Venezuela begins with the colonization of the land by Spain. Venezuela was once a colony of the Spanish kingdom, and its society took shape in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when cocoa cultivation began and a hierarchy between the Spanish-born and the indigenous peoples and African slaves arose. The Spanish-born were placed at the top of the class system while the indigenous and African slaves were placed at the bottom.<sup>19</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century following the French Revolution and the Revolutionary War of North America, Venezuela was galvanized to acquire independence from Spain. The independence movement produced the Third Republic of Venezuela in 1817 declared by Simón Bolívar. The early history of Venezuela has been described as marked by revolutions, counterrevolutions, and dictatorships that have produced governmental and philosophical complexity.<sup>20</sup> From 1870-to 1888,

---

<sup>18</sup> YouGov, “Fifth Annual Report on U.S. Attitudes Towards Socialism, Communism, and Collectivism,” 2020 Poll, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://victimsofcommunism.org/annual-poll/2020-annual-poll/>.

<sup>19</sup> “A Short History of Venezuela,” *New Internationalist* (2006): 12. <https://http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fmagazines%2Fshort-history-venezuela%2Fdocview%2F200012989%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

<sup>20</sup> “Constitutional History of Venezuela,” Country Profiles, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, accessed January 12, 2022, <https://constitutionnet.org/country/constitutional-history-venezuela>.

Venezuelan leader Antonio Guzman Blanco brought in foreign investors which helped to modernize the nation and develop institutions like agriculture and education. Later on, the nation would become the world's largest oil exporter from 1908 to 1935.<sup>21</sup> It is from this background that democratic rule began in 1958 around the time of the rise of the Venezuelan economy marked by the following events: in 1973 Venezuela benefitted from the oil boom, the Venezuelan dollar rose against the U.S. dollar, and the steel and oil industries were nationalized.<sup>22</sup> The 1970s was a time of prosperity and growth for Venezuela, allowing the corruption of the government to be muffled by the economic growth that the nation experienced. Yet eventually the Venezuelan economy would come to a halt. In 1998 things in Venezuela began to change when Hugo Chávez, who had previously attempted a coup on the president in 1992 but was pardoned, took hold of the presidency through a democratic election. Chávez ran on policies that promised to correct the course of Venezuela following their experience with corruption, vowing to bring transparency to the government, end wealth disparity, and generate an open political dialogue.<sup>23</sup> Instead, Hugo Chávez brought to Venezuela the fundamental principles of Marxism to the nation's institutions which would permeate into the everyday life of the Venezuelan society.

Chávez intentionally brought about a drastic transformation in the Venezuelan government and society. However, the transformation that he brought would later come to bring a great decline in the quality of life for the average Venezuelan. Scholars have noted that Chávez

---

<sup>21</sup> "Venezuela Profile – Timeline," Latin America, BBC, last modified February 25, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19652436>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "Venezuela's Chavez Era," Timelines, Council on Foreign Relations, accessed January 12, 2022, <https://cfr.org/timeline/venezuelas-chavez-era>.

successfully restructured the state through the 1999 Venezuelan Constitution which was completed through a legally questionable process. Regardless of how it came about, the new Venezuelan President systematically destroyed its existing institutions to create new institutions which benefitted his administration's policies under the guise of class and racial equality.<sup>24</sup> Chávez appealed to the racial grievances of his citizens which he then tied to the determination of one's economic class to maintain power and support from his nation. Using the grief of his discontent citizens and the unaddressed racial transgressions of the past was how the Venezuelan leader transformed his institutions and civil society. He proposed that there were two Latin Americas: one of the upper and middle classes of European heritage and one of the lower working classes of black and indigenous ancestry.<sup>25</sup> Through the division of classes, a key philosophy of Marx, the new Venezuelan President convinced a majority in the nation that transformation of the state was the only way for true progress.

The best approach to understanding the fundamental principles of Venezuela is to analyze the 1999 Constitution that replaced the previous constitution at the request of Chávez. The first thing to mention is that the name was formally changed from the Republic of Venezuela to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, signifying the importance that Simon Bolivar and his independence movement had in the nation's development. Embedded within the 350-article constitution are themes and principles of Marxist philosophy, yet his approach to the class system was different from the Marxist assertion that revolution was needed for the implementation of socialism. Chávez achieved his goals through the democratic process with

---

<sup>24</sup> Henning Suhr, "Run Down: Venezuela's Road to Ruin," in *Rise and Fall of Regional Powers*, ed. by Gerhard Wahlers (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: 2016): 59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10116.6>.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Natsios, "Racial Politics and Hugo Chavez's Failed Socialist Legacy," Hudson Institute, last modified March 11, 2013, <https://www.hudson.org/research/9526-racial-politics-and-hugo-chavez-s-failed-socialist-legacy>.

initial support for his policies. Article 2 of the Venezuelan Constitution asserts that the nation is a “Democratic and Social State of Law and Justice, which holds as superior values of its legal order and actions those of life, liberty, justice, equality, solidarity, democracy, social responsibility and, in general, the preeminence of human rights, ethics and political pluralism.”<sup>26</sup> This democratic and social state plainly states the importance of justice, liberty, and morality, but knowing how the institutions of Venezuela define these values will reveal how they defend such values. Also within the constitution is the state absorption of the oil industry, the main export of Venezuela, in the name of sovereignty and national strategy: “For reasons of economic and political sovereignty and national strategy, the State shall retain all shares of Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. or the organ created to manage the petroleum industry...”<sup>27</sup> In taking over the nation's oil industry, Chávez effectively brought the nation's economic welfare into the will of the state. The state would also assume the tourism industry for the same purposes. It is with the nationalization of private industries, implementation of currency and price controls, and the expansion of government-run social welfare programs that Chávez brought a once vibrant economy to a socialist decline.<sup>28</sup> This time of change for Venezuela was known as the Bolivarian revolution and it was during such time that Marxist values transcended into a socialist system for the nation through multiple reforms.

---

<sup>26</sup> “Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, accessed January 20, 2022, <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/venezuela-constitution.html>.

<sup>27</sup> “Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.”

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Di Martino, “How Socialism Destroyed Venezuela,” Commentary, Manhattan Institute Economic Policies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, last modified March 21, 2019, <https://economics21.org/how-socialism-destroyed-venezuela>.

### **Marxist Principles Implemented – The Consequences**

Considering how Venezuela has implemented socialism through some Marxist principles will reveal how the paradigm translates from ideology to reality. As the new government was created with the 1999 Constitution under the leadership of Chávez, he had great flexibility in leading the people of Venezuela to a new governing system. His persuasive rhetoric and division of citizens helped his vision for government come to fruition without much opposition. Article 136 of the Constitution described the organization of the government, creating the branches of the Venezuelan government consisting of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Yet despite this supposed separation of powers, the legislature passed sweeping legislation that would alter the government operation under their constitution and bring unprecedented power to the executive branch. In 2000, the Enabling Law was passed by an overwhelming majority of the National Assembly which granted the President to rule by decree without the action of the Legislative branch. This effectively silenced any potential resistance, whether that be from the private sector or political opposition, giving Chávez an overwhelming concentration of power. These reforms would come to meld the power distribution between the separate branches of government into the executive.

The Venezuelan economy experienced a massive shift when Chávez began nationalizing private industries and assuming authority. This follows in suit with one of Marx's ideal elements of socialism and production: "[Man] produces in an associated, not competitive way; he produces rationally and in an unalienated way, which means that he brings production under his control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power."<sup>29</sup> The blind power of the private

---

<sup>29</sup> Erich Fromm, "Marx's Concept of Man 1961," Marx Concept of Socialism, Marx/Engels Internet Archive, accessed January 20, 2022, <https://marxists.org/archive/fromm/works/1961/man/ch06.htm>.

sector in Venezuela coming under the control of Chávez ended up having dire consequences on the market. Nationalizing businesses, in Venezuela's case, results in many things including the destruction of industry and competition as well as the fleeing of foreign enterprise out of fear of state seizure. Under the Venezuelan government's control, the steel industry saw production fall by 3.2 million tons from 2007 when the state nationalized the industry to 2015.<sup>30</sup> While the steel industry was the core enterprise impacted by nationalization, every other Venezuelan industry that relied on steel production took an economic hit after the nationalization of private steel corporations. While the destruction of private enterprise was damaging to the economy, so was Chávez's focus on social welfare programs. Chávez, using the profits from their nation's oil industry administered by the state, dramatically expanded the Venezuelan social welfare state.<sup>31</sup> The social welfare programs were intended to bring those struggling with finances out of poverty, but they had the opposite effect resulting from the burden that the programs placed on the economy. Since the main industry of Venezuela is oil and it was oil's revenue funding the social welfare programs, a dip in oil revenues had the potential to cripple the economy and worsen the nation's poverty. Such crippling would happen from 2008 to 2010 as oil revenues dropped 67%, leaving a hole in the nation's economy. Yet even after such a catastrophe, Chávez refused to revise his economic policy and denied help from any international NGOs.<sup>32</sup> Chávez's response to economic turmoil was more spending, government subsidies, and price controls

---

<sup>30</sup> Richard Obuchi, Bárbara Lira, Daniel Raguá, "Microeconomic binding constraints on private investment and growth in Venezuela," ed. Alfredo Guerra, Center for International Development at Harvard University (2016): 26. [https://growthlab.cid.harvard.edu/files/growthlab/files/microconstraints\\_venezuela.pdf](https://growthlab.cid.harvard.edu/files/growthlab/files/microconstraints_venezuela.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> "The Legacy of Hugo Chávez," The Americas, Harvard Political Review, last modified April 30, 2013, <https://harvardpolitics.com/the-legacy-of-hugo-chavez>.

<sup>32</sup> "High Cost for Venezuela Social Programs," Marketplace, last modified June 2, 2010, <https://marketplace.org/2010/06/02/high-cost-venezuela-social-programs/>.

which only acted as a minuscule band-aid to the large gash in the national economy. The School of Global Public Affairs confronts the inflationary legacy of the Chávez Presidency: “In terms of monetary policy, his regime managed to accumulate an inflation of 528% between 2003 and 2011. Such scandalous figure was followed by a 20% inflation rate in 2012.”<sup>33</sup> What needed resolving was the economic philosophy of Chávez, but his determination to implement a 21st-century type of socialism took priority over the nation’s success and brought the nation down with him. The nationalization of private industry, constant government spending on social welfare programs, and other Marxist policies left the Venezuelan economy blundered. The economic catastrophes that Venezuela faced were only symptoms of the real disease: A nation operating under some of Marxism’s presuppositions.

Evaluating the economic situation under Chávez reveals how easy it is for the application of Marxist values to denigrate a government and a society to produce considerable crime concerns. The Chávez presidency has produced some of the most serious crime issues contributed by a state in South America because of the following: “[The] centralization of power under the presidency; the politicization of the military and the judiciary; and the breakdown of transparency, accountability, and the separation of powers, which began under former President Hugo Chávez...”<sup>34</sup> Since the collection of power within a single entity or individual breeds corruption historically, it comes as no surprise that Chávez’s implementation of the Marxist strategy to nationalize industry would lead to state corruption. Venezuelan social welfare programs reliant on the oil revenues of the industry created instability in these programs and an

---

<sup>33</sup> Diego de la Cruz, “Hugo Chávez and his Legacy of Inflation,” Detail of News, IE School of Global and Public Affairs, last modified March 14, 2013, <https://www.ie.edu/school-global-public-affairs/about/news/hugo-chavez-legacy-inflation/>.

<sup>34</sup> American Enterprise Institute, “Kingpins and Corruption,” *AEI Working Group on Transnational Organized Crime in the Americas* (2017): 18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03288.6>.

environment that disincentivized economic growth. In his attempt to bring the impoverished to an improved position, Chávez produced an atmosphere in Venezuela where the citizens fought day-to-day with inflation which contributed to an increased crime rate as asserted by Stiven Tremaria: “Scarcity of basic staple foods and galloping inflation coincided with rising homicide rates.”<sup>35</sup> Tremaria continues to note that the policies intended to manufacture socio-economic inclusion did not work, but rather the many factors of economic and political instability from Chávez’s policies created a hotbed for crime and worsening poverty. When citizens of any nation struggle with economic deficiency, they naturally will do what it takes to fight for the survival of their families and themselves, leading to an increase in crime. The economic situation brought upon by government reorganization and policy implementation has produced a ripe environment for criminal activity: “Under strict currency controls first imposed by... Hugo Chávez, citizens and private companies struggled to buy dollars through the official channels to pay for import, giving rise to the parallel, and illegal, black market currency exchange. The soaring cost of dollars has in turn made imports even more expensive.”<sup>36</sup> The currency controls from the Venezuelan government directly impacted the well-being of the Venezuelan people, immediately negating the social welfare programs intended to bring about economic revitalization and crime reduction.

---

<sup>35</sup> Stiven Tremaria, “Violent Caracas: Understanding Violence and Homicide in Contemporary Venezuela,” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 10, no.1 (2016): 74. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fviolent-caracas-understanding-violence-homicide%2Fdocview%2F1831767170%2Fse-2>.

<sup>36</sup> Kirk Semple, “In a Venezuela Ravaged by Inflation, ‘a Race for Survival’,” *New York Times* (1923-) (2017): 12. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fvenezuela-ravaged-inflation-race-survival%2Fdocview%2F2463434605%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

Marxist values implemented in the Venezuelan government and economy led to increased crime which exposes the impact that the application of the paradigm can have on a once prosperous nation. While Venezuela under Chávez is not the only nation to have implemented Marxist policies in pursuit of socialism, it provides the best example for outsiders to study due to its recency and its conception in the age of technology allowing an in-depth study of the nation. As the nation comes to terms with its decision to be led by a socialist president, the rest of the globe could learn from their example.

### **The United States and Its Biblical Foundations**

The historical background of the United States begins similar to Venezuela's having been a former colony of England in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and comparatively a rather young nation. However, the colonists' reasons for leaving their mother country for a foreign land differed which would impact the course of the nation: the pursuit to freely practice religion. Religion in Europe was very much a government operation as the monarchs and leaders determined how, when, where, and who their citizens would worship with no regard for an individual's moral obligation creating civil strife among religious dissenters.<sup>37</sup> Many religious groups came to North America as colonists, influenced by their European background but with the desire to pursue freedom of religion. In 1606 the first British settlement was established as the Virginia colony. Soon after, other colonies along the east coast of North America would follow suit, slowly beginning to develop the North American continent to eventually become the United States after a war for independence with England which was justified by Christian religious convictions. The Declaration of Independence, a formal declaration sent by the

---

<sup>37</sup> "Religion and the Founding of the American Republic," America as a Religious Refuge: The Seventeenth Century, Part 1, Library of Congress, accessed January 22, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel01.html>.

American colonists to the King of England in 1776, addressed the numerous objections to Britain's tyrannical governance in North America. It enumerated a list of grievances against the king and explained their justification for declaring their independence from the monarch:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.<sup>38</sup>

According to the signers of the declaration, the necessity for independence arose from their rights derived from God, which King George III of England had been obstructing. Since God was the source for their rights as individuals and the king had stepped outside of the bounds of his authority, the colonists were justified to pursue self-governance. The signers were known as the founding fathers of the United States, a collection of colonial leaders that would set the trajectory for the United States.

In the same way that Hugo Chávez initiated Venezuela's transformation into a new nation of Marxist principles, the founding fathers of the United States formed a new revolutionary system of governance based on biblical presuppositions. At the Second Continental Congress, there was a collection of editors who helped to form the final version of the Declaration of Independence made up of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston, but credit for the principles embedded in the declaration was given to John Locke, Montesquieu, the Scottish Enlightenment, and the fight for English civil liberties.<sup>39</sup> John Locke was an English philosopher who theorized the state of nature and

---

<sup>38</sup> "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription," America's Founding Documents, National Archives, accessed January 22, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

<sup>39</sup> Matthew Wills, "Who Wrote the Declaration of Independence?," JSTOR Daily, last modified July 2, 2016, <https://daily.jstor.org/who-wrote-the-declaration-independence/>.

how man best operates under the government. Locke's philosophy of natural law and natural rights is in his *Second Treatise of Government* where he outlines that the ultimate standard for right and wrong is determined by God which governs all of humanity regardless of an individual's belief system.<sup>40</sup> Another important concept comes from Locke's theory of government known as the consent of the governed. He asserts that there is no justifiable form of government without the consent of the governed, that governing systems and institutions exist for the sole protection of their citizens' rights to secure the public good.<sup>41</sup> The founders drew from Locke's philosophies of natural law and consent of the governed evidenced by the founder's justification for independence as well as textual elements of the United States Constitution. Like Locke's influence, Baron de Montesquieu shaped the minds of the founders revealed in their grievances against the king and the absolutized power that he held for use as a tyrannical ruler.<sup>42</sup> It was Montesquieu's separation of powers philosophy that contributed to the founder's understanding of power and how it should be addressed in the new nation.

Montesquieu explains that in the course of human history "constant experience shews us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it, and to carry his authority as far as it will go... To prevent this abuse, it is necessary, from the very nature of things, power should be a check to power."<sup>43</sup> Acknowledging the danger of centralized power in a single figure was highly relevant to the colonists and the founding fathers. The colonists' experiences with the abuses of King

---

<sup>40</sup> W. von Leyden, "John Locke and Natural Law," *Philosophy* 31, no. 116 (January 1956): 25. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3749204>.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Moseley, "John Locke: Political Philosophy," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed January 23, 2022, <https://iep.utm.edu/locke-po/>.

<sup>42</sup> "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription."

<sup>43</sup> Charles Montesquieu, *Complete Works, vol. 1 The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. and trans. T. Evans (London: Online Library of Liberty, 1748), Chap. IV, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/montesquieu-complete-works-vol-1-the-spirit-of-laws>.

George were incorporated into the founders' understanding of centralized power. The United States government would come to adopt Montesquieu's and Locke's ideas into the new government that was being constructed. Similarly, Montesquieu and Locke both accepted the assertion that God is the source of natural law, a key component of the founding of the United States.<sup>44</sup> Influenced by various philosophers who held some basic biblical presuppositions, the United States government was founded as a democratic republic in 1787 by the U.S. Constitution which incorporated such biblical principles in a way that respected the moral obligations of each citizen.

Evaluating how the United States interpreted and implemented biblical values into its Constitution will help to understand why the government operates in the way that it does. The original draft of the Constitution was completed in 1787 at the Constitutional Convention which sought to provide the people of the United States with a more effective government. Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the Constitution divided government power between three branches of government: the legislative, executive, and judicial.<sup>45</sup> The division of powers recognizes the innate depravity of mankind following the sin of Adam and Eve as the predisposition of humanity to sin creates the necessity for divided power (Genesis 3). While this may seem like Venezuela's division of powers, the reasons and efficiency of such division distinguish Venezuela from the United States. Additionally, there are more key biblical principles found in the Constitution such as its acceptance of private property. In the Bible's Ten Commandments are the provisions to not steal and covet (Exodus 20:15-17) and within the Constitution's fourth amendment is protection from

---

<sup>44</sup> Augusto Zimmermann, "God, Locke and Montesquieu: Some Thoughts Concerning the Religious Foundations of Modern Constitutionalism," *The Western Australian Jurist* 1 (2010): 2-6. <http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/WAJurist/2010/1.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> "The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription," America's Founding Documents, National Archives, last modified October 7, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

unreasonable search and seizures.<sup>46</sup> The private property rights of American citizens will come to play a significant role in the economy of the United States as they are left to foster and steward the growth of private materials, physical and intellectual. Also, the Bible asserts the value of labor: “In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty” (Proverbs 14:23). It is through work that one can attain provisions, but should one become lazy they will succumb to poverty. Lastly, the due process of law guaranteed to each citizen by the Constitution is directly contributed by the Bible as it states that only “[on] the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness” (Deuteronomy 17:6). Article 3 Section 2 of the Constitution creates the requirement for a trial by jury for anyone accused of breaking the law: “The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment, shall be by Jury...”<sup>47</sup> An ample amount of the original laws in the United States were biblically influenced and such laws would come to impact the government’s exercise of authority with each principle contributing a key component to the constitutional framework.

### **Biblical Principles Implemented – The Consequences**

Each of these biblical principles that are found in the United States constitutional government is significant to the efficacy of the system created. The organization of the United States within the Constitution was an important reflection on the default state of humanity: imperfect. Knowing that humanity was deeply flawed, the founding fathers drafted the Constitution with biblical principles and gave it supreme authority to protect the rights of

---

<sup>46</sup> “The Bill of Rights: A Transcription,” America’s Founding Documents, National Archives, last modified January 19, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>.

<sup>47</sup> “The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription.”

American citizens. Under Article IV, any law that is passed in contradiction of any statute of the Constitution is invalid with no concern given to the individual who passed such law.<sup>48</sup> This has protected the American citizenry from government overreach as well their rights from attacks by tyrannical leaders. During the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order limiting the number of attendees able to congregate in places of worship; however, the United States Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional as it was in direct violation of the right to freely practice religion outlined in the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment to the Constitution.<sup>49</sup> The supremacy of the Constitution's provisions protected citizens' religious liberty rights against government overreach, ensuring citizens' rights have more significance than government decrees. Similarly, leaders in the United States are not immune to the Constitution and must abide by the confinements that it entails. The Supreme Court determined that the president is not above the law in the case of the United States against President Nixon: "We conclude that when the ground for asserting privilege as to subpoenaed materials sought for use in a criminal trial is based only on the generalized interest in confidentiality, it cannot prevail over the fundamental demands of due process of law in the fair administration of criminal justice."<sup>50</sup> While the case was focused on the acclaimed criminal actions of then-President Nixon, the ruling further empowered the Constitution as the supreme law of the land, taking precedence over any leader as well as ensuring each citizen was given an unbiased trial in a court of law. Additionally, the biblical principles in the Constitution enabled the distinct separation

---

<sup>48</sup> "The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription."

<sup>49</sup> "Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn v. Cuomo," Oyez, accessed January 24, 2022, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2020/20A87>.

<sup>50</sup> "Looking back: The Supreme Court decision that ended Nixon's presidency," Constitution Daily, National Constitution Center, last modified July 24, 2021, <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/anniversary-of-united-states-v-nixon>.

between the three branches of government which has ensured the rights of citizens. With all three branches having a comparative dosage of power, government operation has succeeded as it has served the American citizenry.

Since the United States prioritizes its citizens over the leaders, the citizen-focused environment has produced an opportunity for an economic system to enlist individuals and private corporations to produce rather than a centralized authority. The individuals' ability in the United States to steward private resources and, within some necessary legal restraints, freely pursue their desires has greatly contributed to the success of the American economy. The competition created when the United States government let private industry dominate the markets developed a competitive environment that has benefitted consumers and producers in the free enterprise system. The White House notes that "[healthy market competition is fundamental to a well-functioning U.S. economy... [it] leads to lower prices, higher quality goods, greater variety, and more variation."<sup>51</sup> As the economy of the United States is based on private industry and the biblical value of work, the nation has become the world's largest economy. Accessibility to natural resources in the United States alone could not produce a booming economy without an opportunistic labor force and the ability to participate in an open, industrious market which the nation was able to provide. Economic data reveals the strength of privatized industry: The Gross Domestic Product of the United States has risen from 3.4 trillion in 1983 to 8.5 trillion in 1998.<sup>52</sup> Starting as a fledgling nation with little to no established industry and trade relations, the policies of the United States enabled its citizens to be both producers and consumers of both physical and

---

<sup>51</sup> Heather Boushey and Helen Knudsen, "The Importance of Competition for the American Economy," Written Materials, The White House, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/written-materials/2021/07/09/the-importance-of-competition-for-the-american-economy/#\\_ftnref2](https://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/written-materials/2021/07/09/the-importance-of-competition-for-the-american-economy/#_ftnref2).

<sup>52</sup> Christopher Conte and Albert R. Karr, "An Outline of the U.S. Economy," ed. George Clack, Kathleen E. Hug, and Barbara Long (1981), <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/oecon/chap2.htm>.

intellectual private property, leading it to become the main economic powerhouse across the globe throughout its 245-year history. The Office of the United States Trade Representative comments on the extraordinary success of the United States economy as related to the flexibility allowed by a free market:

Expanding the production of America's most competitive industries and products, through exports, raises U.S. incomes. Shifting production to the most competitive areas of our economy helps raise the productivity of the average American worker and through that the income they earn. With the ability to serve a global market, investment is encouraged in our expanding export sectors and the rising scale of output helps lower average production costs. Such effects help strengthen America's economic growth rate. Moreover, imports increase consumer choice, and help keep prices low raising the purchasing power for consumers.<sup>53</sup>

The ability to privately own property and the means of production allowed the United States economy to adapt to the changing conditions of both the domestic and global market, contributing to the economic prosperity of the United States. Scholars have noted that “[free markets] are conducive to growth, which is why measures such as privatization, freedom to establish new businesses, freer pricing, more flexible contract laws, and less regulation of domestic and international trade and of capital transactions are important.”<sup>54</sup> It is crucial to note the remarkably different policies of the Venezuelan economy and how such differences have contributed to its demise compared to the prosperity of the American economy. Influenced by biblical principles of work, private ownership, and stewardship, the United States remains an economic success that has helped maintain order and security.

The crime of any nation can be attributed to a range of factors, but the economic situation of that nation substantially impacts the general safety of its citizens to some degree. The

---

<sup>53</sup> “Economy & Trade,” Issue Areas, Office of the United States Trade Representative, accessed January 27, 2022, <https://ustr.gov/issue-areas/economy-trade>.

<sup>54</sup> Niclas Berggren, “The Benefits of Economic Freedom: A Survey,” *The Independent Review* 8, no. 2 (2003): 205. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24562685>.

Brookings Institute completed a study to determine whether poverty impacted crime and they found that the impoverished in the United States face a higher risk of both crime and incarceration.<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting that poverty correlates with the crime rate as the economic standing of United States citizens ranks well above others. The Pew Research Center has found that “[on] a global scale, the vast majority of Americans are either upper-middle income or high income. And many Americans who are classified as “poor” by the U.S. government would be middle income globally...”<sup>56</sup> Since the United States has provided an amicable environment for private property and industry in a free enterprise, the crime industry has been impacted instead of the free market. For this comparison, crime rates in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century will be analyzed as it is more easily comparable to the crime rates of Venezuela during this period. The Brennan Center for Justice examined the crime trends between 1990 and 2016 and found that “[crime] has dropped precipitously in the last quarter-century... [and the] national crime rate peaked in 1991 at 5,856 crimes per 100,000 people, and has generally been declining ever since.”<sup>57</sup> While crime impacts every nation, the response of individual nations must be considered to assess the application of their values and principles. The United States has begun to take a preventative approach through the opportunities available at the local, state, and national levels. The national response has largely been local as the U.S. Department of Justice has advocated for the use of community policing since police power is for the state's administration and not the national

---

<sup>55</sup> Benjamin H. Harris and Melissa S. Kearney, “The Unequal Burden of Crime and Incarceration on America’s Poor,” Brookings Institute, last modified April 28, 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/04/28/the-unequal-burden-of-crime-and-incarceration-on-americas-poor/>.

<sup>56</sup> Rakesh Kochhar, “How Americans compare with the global middle class,” Personal Finances, Pew Research Center, last modified July 9, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/09/how-americans-compare-with-the-global-middle-class/>.

<sup>57</sup> Ames Grawert, “Crime Trends: 1990-2016,” Research & Reports, Brennan Center for Justice, last modified April 18, 2017, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/crime-trends-1990-2016>.

government. The Department of Justice stated that community policing “requires the active participation of local government, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals. All who share a concern for the welfare of the neighborhood should bear responsibility for safeguarding that welfare.”<sup>58</sup> The localization of policing crime changed as the administration of criminal justice depended upon preventing and responding to crime instead of solely being a response. Responding to crime locally reveals a theme in American principles: decentralization. As in the separation of branches and the diffusion of power among the local, state, and national governments, the United States acknowledges that the diffusing of power and decentralization of authority among various actors within the nation produces an effective and successful outcome for its citizens. Such a biblical principle as power diffusion has provided the nation with a framework to practically address crime.

As seen in the organization of government, the operating economic principles, and the response to criminal activity of the United States, the biblical principles that were initially infused in the nation at its founding have formed its trajectory. In separating the three branches of government and keeping them separated with constitutional supremacy, the nation’s acknowledgment of humanity’s defective nature has protected the supposed God-given rights of its citizens. Similarly, the nation’s biblical understanding of work, private property, and free enterprise have combined to elevate the United States to dominance in the global economy. In protecting its citizens, the nation has adhered to its decentralization principle to address crime

---

<sup>58</sup> “Understanding Community Policing,” Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, accessed January 28, 2022, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/commp.pdf>.

through community policing. Biblical principles have propelled the United States to become a global powerhouse and its influence remains evident in a constantly developing world.

### **Summation of Venezuelan and American Systems of Governance**

At the core of the difference between Marxist and Christian values is the key difference in each's presuppositions regarding the requirements to acquire freedom. Karl Marx asserts that the deconstruction of the existing societal structures through revolution must occur for the liberation of humanity: "Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, Jesus preached not about the need to transform societal structures for the freedom of humanity, but rather that freedom was found in God: "Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through [Jesus that] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). It is how individuals perceive freedom that they will pursue freedom, Marxists through societal reconstruction and Christians through individual transformation. This pursuit is divergently addressed by both paradigms as socialists seek to improve the circumstances of humanity's environment while Christians seek to improve the heart of the individual. The Marxist views the condition as the primary obstacle to the individual: the Christian views the individual as the obstacle to the condition. Socialism "acts upon the philosophy that man is made by his environment; that his surroundings are the creator and he is the creature" while Jesus

---

<sup>59</sup> "Manifesto of the Communist Party."

“proceeded on the assumption that, if you can make men right, the men will make the environment.”<sup>60</sup>

Marxism’s implementation in Venezuela has proven itself to be a threat to the safety and security of both the Venezuelan people and the American people. Venezuelan governing institutions “have been utterly destroyed and the lack of institutional checks and balances has resulted in unprecedented levels of impunity and corruption cases.”<sup>61</sup> An economy ravaged by government intrusion and absorption has left Venezuela in ruins with the Heritage Foundation ranking the nation as the 176<sup>th</sup> freest economy in the world compared to the economy of the United States which is ranked 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>62</sup> Crime inevitably increases as living conditions worsen resulting from such destructive economic policies as Chávez’s, making sense why there is a “high threat from violent crime and kidnapping throughout Venezuela, which has one of the highest murder rates in the world.”<sup>63</sup> Venezuela’s state of affairs continually worsens as Marxism continues to reign over the governing institutions and society. The government has left its citizens in peril while the United States maintains its legal system where corruption is legally prosecuted and its citizens are prioritized, though not without shortcomings.

In Venezuela, Hugo Chávez was persuaded by the need to transform the environment to improve society. Yet, his intentions proved to be inadequate as he left the government of his nation corrupted, his economy in ruins, and his citizens in rampant criminal activity with no

---

<sup>60</sup> Lyman Abbott, “Christianity Versus Socialism,” *The North American Review* 148, no. 389 (1889): 451. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25101760>.

<sup>61</sup> Margarita López Maya, “Populism, 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Socialism, and Corruption in Venezuela,” *Thesis Eleven* 149, no. 1 (December 2018): 68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513618818727>

<sup>62</sup> “2022 Index of Economic Freedom,” The Heritage Foundation, accessed March 26, 2022, <https://heritage.org/index/ranking>.

<sup>63</sup> “Venezuela,” Foreign Travel Advice, Government of the United Kingdom, accessed March 26, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/venezuela>.

adequate avenue for justice. When Chávez addressed Venezuela's struggles through the Marxist paradigm by contending to the struggles of the poor, he created a new societal class: the victims. As he pursued the correction of past injustices rather than confronting the past and progressing past such injustices to strive for improvement, Chávez regressed to focus on equity and redistributing wealth that supposedly belonged to the impoverished who lost it through systemic failures.

In the United States, the founding fathers were convinced of the necessity to address humanity's flaws to improve government function. In the application of some basic biblical presuppositions and recognizing the failures of previous authorities such as King George III of England, the founders addressed the past through the future of the United States. They constructed the United States in a way that capitalized on the need for basic barriers against power abuses and implemented them into the U.S. Constitution. Their focus on the future rather than dwelling on the past proved beneficial to the United States and its posterity. The success of the United States can be partially attributed to the Constitution's ability to reasonably adapt to the changing for law-centered intervention through its amendment process. The amendment process reflects yet another avenue that the founding fathers created to protect the citizenry from an overreaching governing authority. Embedded and scattered in the Constitution are biblical principles, each of which has propelled the United States to progress toward a more perfect union for the benefit of the American people.

It was necessary to conduct this research to reveal the efficacy and impacts of the Marxist worldview by comparing it to the biblical worldview. Economic data and reports revealed Venezuela's prosperity which took a drastic turn towards Marxist ideals and considerable economic recession. Statistics from before and after Chávez's election have provided a rare

insight into the measurable impacts of his destructive policies. Additionally, the recency of the United States' founding and development presented a unique opportunity to gather current information on the nation's economic success and observe the public policy impacts of the United States and the Venezuelan government within a similar global context. Investigating journal articles, government-reported data, and nongovernmental organization economic reports enabled the comparison of each nation and revealed the efficacy of applied biblical principles.

As of 2022, the political ideologies of some elected politicians have echoed the philosophies of Karl Marx. Four members of Congress are self-identified members of the Democratic Socialists of America whose constitution declares themselves as socialists because they “reject an economic order based on private profit, alienated labor, gross inequalities of wealth and power.”<sup>64</sup> The thematic hints that the Democratic Socialists of America make are explicitly Marxist, focusing their efforts to reject the current capitalist economic system through the division of economic classes to transform society. Similarly, Marxist philosophies have crept into higher education institutions through English classes where professors focus less so on the economic aspect of Marxism, but on the division of classes with one class being the victim and the other being the oppressor.<sup>65</sup> Marxist themes have become ever so prevalent in Western culture, and it has become a leading paradigm to counter the biblical worldview in the United States.

---

<sup>64</sup> “DSA Constitution & Bylaws,” Constitution, Democratic Socialists of America, last modified 2019, <https://www.dsasusa.org/about-us/constitution/>.

<sup>65</sup> Jon Miltimore and Dan Sanchez, “The New York Times Reported ‘the Mainstreaming of Marxism in US Colleges’ 30 Years Ago. Today, We See the Results,” FEE Stories, Foundation for Economic Freedom, last modified September 10, 2020, <https://fee.org/articles/the-new-york-times-reported-the-mainstreaming-of-marxism-in-us-colleges-30-years-ago-today-we-see-the-results/>.

In what would have been an unconscionable identification in the United States previously, the Democratic Socialists of America are growing more so now than ever before. It is time for citizens of the United States, and frankly, all nations who value progress and efficiency, to confront head-on Marxism in pursuit of a governing system and society based on biblical principles. Nations that seek to provide security for their citizen's freedoms and economic gain for their posterity should choose to instill a biblical worldview into their governance and society. For Americans specifically, an indifference in belief is not a choice should they want to preserve the nation's constitutional system that was built upon basic premises of Christianity to protect the rights that have been afforded to them throughout the nation's brief history. While the history of the United States is not without blemishes, it is under the biblically influenced Constitution that Americans have been able to pursue a more perfect union.

### Bibliography

- “2022 Index of Economic Freedom.” The Heritage Foundation. Accessed March 26, 2022. <https://heritage.org/index/ranking>.
- Abbott, Lyman. “Christianity Versus Socialism.” *The North American Review* 148, no. 389 (1889): 447-453. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25101760>.
- American Enterprise Institute. “Kingspins and Corruption.” *AEI Working Group on Transnational Organized Crime in the Americas* (2017). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03288.6>.
- Berggren, Niclas. “The Benefits of Economic Freedom: A Survey.” *The Independent Review* 8, no. 2 (2003): 193-211. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24562685>.
- “The Bill of Rights: A Transcription.” America’s Founding Documents. National Archives. Last modified January 19, 2022. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>.
- Boushey, Heather and Helen Knudsen. “The Importance of Competition for the American Economy.” Written Materials. The White House. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/written-materials/2021/07/09/the-importance-of-competition-for-the-american-economy/#\\_ftnref2](https://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/written-materials/2021/07/09/the-importance-of-competition-for-the-american-economy/#_ftnref2).
- “Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.” University of Minnesota Human Rights Library. Accessed January 20, 2022. <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/venezuela-constitution.html>.
- “The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription.” America’s Founding Documents. National Archives. Last modified October 7, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.
- Conte, Christopher and Albert R. Karr. “An Outline of the U.S. Economy.” Edited by George Clack, Kathleen E. Hug, and Barbara Long (1981). <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/oecon/chap2.htm>.
- Comninel, George C. “Marx’s Context.” *History of Political Thought* 21, no. 3 (2000): 467-483. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26219716>.
- Cosgrave, Bill. “Understanding Christian Morality.” *The Furrow* 69, no. 5 (May 2018): 295-305. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44738733>.
- Cruz, Diego de la. “Hugo Chávez and his Legacy of Inflation.” Detail of News. IE School of Global and Public Affairs. Last modified March 14, 2013. <https://www.ie.edu/school-global-public-affairs/about/news/hugo-chavez-legacy-inflation/>.
- “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription.” America’s Founding Documents. National Archives. Accessed January 22, 2022. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

- “DSA Constitution & Bylaws.” Constitution. Democratic Socialists of America. Last modified 2019. <https://www.dsausa.org/about-us/constitution/>.
- “Economy & Trade.” Issue Areas. Office of the United States Trade Representative. Accessed January 27, 2022. <https://ustr.gov/issue-areas/economy-trade>.
- Engels, Frederick. “Anti-Dühring.” Marx/Engels Internet Archive. Accessed January 7, 2022. <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch07.htm>.
- Engels, Frederick. “The Housing Question.” Marx/Engels Internet Archive. Accessed January 6, 2022. <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/housing-question/ch03.htm>.
- Fromm, Erich. “Marx’s Concept of Man 1961.” Marx Concept of Socialism. Marx/Engels Internet Archive. Accessed January 20, 2022. <https://marxists.org/archive/fromm/works/1961/man/ch06.htm>.
- Grawert, Ames. “Crime Trends: 1990-2016.” Research & Reports. Brennan Center for Justice. Last modified April 18, 2017. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/crime-trends-1990-2016>.
- Harris, Benjamin H. and Melissa S. Kearney. “The Unequal Burden of Crime and Incarceration on America’s Poor.” Brookings Institute. Last modified April 28, 2014. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/04/28/the-unequal-burden-of-crime-and-incarceration-on-americas-poor/>.
- Heller, Henry. *The Birth of Capitalism: A 21st Century Perspective*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p671.10>.
- “High Cost for Venezuela Social Programs.” Marketplace. Last modified June 2, 2010. <https://marketplace.org/2010/06/02/high-cost-venezuela-social-programs/>.
- Kochhar, Rakesh. “How Americans Compare with the Global Middle Class.” Personal Finances. Pew Research Center. Last modified July 9, 2015. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/09/how-americans-compare-with-the-global-middle-class/>.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. *Main Currents of Marxism*. Vol. 2, The Golden Age. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Leyden, W. Von. “John Locke and Natural Law.” *Philosophy* 31, no. 116 (January 1956): 23-35. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3749204>.
- “Looking back: The Supreme Court decision that ended Nixon’s presidency.” Constitution Daily. National Constitution Center. Last modified July 24, 2021. <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/anniversary-of-united-states-v-nixon>.
- Marx, Karl. “Critique of the Gotha Programme.” Marx/Engels Internet Archive. Accessed January 10, 2022. <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch04.htm>.

- Marx, Karl. "The German Ideology." Marx/Engels Internet Archive. Accessed January 6, 2022. <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01d.htm>.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. "Manifesto of the Communist Party." Marx/Engels Internet Archive. Accessed January 6, 2022. <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>.
- Maya, Margarita López. "Populism, 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Socialism and Corruption in Venezuela." *Thesis Eleven* 149, no. 1 (December 2018): 67-83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513618818727>.
- Miltimore, Jon and Dan Sanchez. "The New York Times Reported 'the Mainstreaming of Marxism in US Colleges' 30 Years Ago. Today, We See the Results." FEE Stories. Foundation for Economic Freedom. last modified September 10, 2020. <https://fee.org/articles/the-new-york-times-reported-the-mainstreaming-of-marxism-in-us-colleges-30-years-ago-today-we-see-the-results/>.
- Montesquieu, Charles. *Complete Works, vol. 1 The Spirit of the Laws*. Edited and translated by T. Evans (London: Online Library of Liberty, 1748). <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/montesquieu-complete-works-vol-1-the-spirit-of-laws>.
- Moseley, Alexander. "John Locke: Political Philosophy." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed January 23, 2022. <https://iep.utm.edu/locke-po/>.
- Natsios, Andrew. "Racial Politics and Hugo Chavez's Failed Socialist Legacy." Hudson Institute. Last modified March 11, 2013. <https://www.hudson.org/research/9526-racial-politics-and-hugo-chavez-s-failed-socialist-legacy>.
- Obuchi, Richard and Bárbara Lira, Daniel Raguá. "Microeconomic binding constraints on private investment and growth in Venezuela." Edited by Alfredo Guerra. Center for International Development at Harvard University (2016): 26. [https://growthlab.cid.harvard.edu/files/growthlab/files/microconstraints\\_venezuela.pdf](https://growthlab.cid.harvard.edu/files/growthlab/files/microconstraints_venezuela.pdf).
- Petri, Dennis P. and Frans Visscher. "Revisiting Sphere Sovereignty to Interpret Restrictions on Religious Freedom." *Philosophia Reformata* 80, no. 1 (2015): 99-122. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24710011>.
- "Religion and the Founding of the American Republic." America as a Religious Refuge: The Seventeenth Century, Part 1. Library of Congress. Accessed January 22, 2022. <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel01.html>.
- "Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn v. Cuomo." Oyez. Accessed January 24, 2022. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2020/20A87>.
- Semple, Kirk. "In a Venezuela Ravaged by Inflation, 'a Race for Survival'." *New York Times* (1923-) (2017): 12. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistoric>

al-newspapers%2Fvenezuela-ravaged-inflation-race-survival%2Fdocview%2F2463434605%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

“A Short History of Venezuela.” *New Internationalist* (2006): 12.

<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fmagazines%2Fshort-history-venezuela%2Fdocview%2F200012989%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

Suhr, Henning. “Run Down: Venezuela’s Road to Ruin.” in *Rise and Fall of Regional Powers*, edited by Gerhard Wahlers (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: 2016): 57-70.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10116.6>.

Tremaria, Stiven. “Violent Caracas: Understanding Violence and Homicide in Contemporary Venezuela.” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 10, no. 1 (2016): 62-76.

<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fviolent-caracas-understanding-violence-homicide%2Fdocview%2F1831767170%2Fse-2>.

“Understanding Community Policing.” Bureau of Justice Assistance. U.S. Department of Justice. Accessed January 28, 2022. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/commp.pdf>.

“Venezuela's Chávez Era.” Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed January 12, 2022.

<https://cfr.org/timeline/venezuelas-chavez-era>.

“Venezuela.” Foreign Travel Advice. Government of the United Kingdom. Accessed March 26, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/venezuela>.

West, Steven D. “Christian Ethics.” The Gospel Coalition. Accessed January 9, 2022.

<https://thegospelcoalition.org/essay/christian-ethics/>.

Wills, Matthew. “Who Wrote the Declaration of Independence.” JSTOR Daily. Last modified July 2, 2016. <https://daily.jstor.org/who-wrote-the-declaration-independence/>.

Wood, Allen W. “The Marxian Critique of Justice.” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1, no.3 (1972): 244-282. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2265053>.

Wright, N.T. “Jesus’ Resurrection and Christian Origins.” *Gregorianum* 83, no. 4 (2002): 615-635. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23581348>.

YouGov. “Fifth Annual Report on U.S. Attitudes Towards Socialism, Communism, and Collectivism.” 2020 Poll. Accessed February 28, 2022.

<https://victimsofcommunism.org/annual-poll/2020-annual-poll/>.

Zimmermann, Augusto. “God, Locke, and Montesquieu: Some Thoughts Concerning Religious Foundations of Modern Constitutionalism.” *The Western Australian Jurist* 1 (2010): 1-13. <http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/WAJurist/2010/1.pdf>.