

From Class Consciousness to Political Literacy: Revisiting Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto

Mohammad Shah Alam Chowdhury ¹, Mohammad Mehedi Hasan ²

¹ Professor Dept. Of English, Dhaka International University & Adjunct Researcher, RMC Spectrum International University College, Malaysia

² Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Dhaka International University

Orcid ID: ¹<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0348-5739>, ²<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6357-7742>

Scopus ID: ¹60819374000

E-mail: ¹shahalam.eng@diu.ac ²nehdu.14@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The Communist Manifesto (1848) is one of the most famous works by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. While there are several ways in which the text is conventionally studied in the context of capitalism, class struggle, revolution, historical materialism, and communist ideology, there is another important field from which it can be studied as it contributed to the formation of political consciousness. In this article, The Communist Manifesto is revisited and the conceptual shift is discussed that is from 'class consciousness' to 'political literacy'. This study focuses exclusively on secondary research and uses a qualitative research design utilizing thematic analyses. The documentary basis of the research are books, peer-reviewed scientific papers, classic political books, works of Marxist and class consciousness, ideology, special issue of political education, citizenship, critical pedagogy and works on the contemporary capitalism. Literature was judiciously selected based on its theoretical and analytical connection. Thematic analysis reveals five essential themes that help to shape political awareness: class consciousness as a precondition for political awareness; class conflict as a way of understanding power; ideology as the critique of political reality; consciousness of the collective group as a factor of political awareness; and the sense of class as being transformed into a multidimensional political awareness in the contemporary context. The results suggest that The Communist Manifesto is a more than simply a revolutionary political discourse; it is also a significant historical instrument of political education. Marx and Engels attempt to link the particular experiences of economics to the larger relations of production, relations of property, classes, and power. In linking individual experiences of economics to the more general relations of production, property, classes and power, Marx and Engels promote a level of structural political understanding. However, modern political consciousness is not simply a class consciousness. There is a need to include also gender, race, ethnicity, environmental politics, globalization, citizenship, digital communication, and new forms of labour. Finally, the article suggests that the concept of class consciousness serves as an important intellectual platform for critical political literacy and current political literacy offers a wider platform for critical evaluation of the ongoing importance and shortcomings of Marx and Engels.

Introduction

No other political work had intellectual and political impact as that of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' The Communist Manifesto. The Manifesto was initially published in 1848 for the Communist League, at a time when Europe was the scene of industrial growth, expansion of capitalism, urbanization, and industrialisation-induced social displacement, build-up of the industrial working classes and the rise of revolutionary political movements. Its interpretation of history, capitalism, social classes, political struggle and revolutionary change (Marx & Engels 1848/2002) was quite strong for a short time. The

thinking in the Manifesto has nothing to do exclusively with communist politics. It helped to shape modern political sociology, Political Economy, theories of class, critical theories of the State and debates on ideology and social change. Marx and Engels wished to prove that the struggle for political positions is not culturally explicable in its entirety without reference to the material reality of the economic life. They linked the power of politics and economic structure of ownership, labour and class competitiveness. The Manifesto's central theme is that historical societies have experienced struggles between social classes in the past. Revolving around industrial capitalism, Marx and Engels write about the growing antagonism between the bourgeoisie who possess the great majority of the means of production, and the proletariat who are forced to sell their labour power (Marx & Engels, 1848/2002). In itself this analysis facilitates the comprehension of what later was to be called class consciousness by the Marxist theorists. Class consciousness more generally is the awareness of social class members of their structural position, their common interests, their interclass and intra class relationships, and their ability for political action. A later development of this idea was one of the most influential philosophical explanations of class consciousness, put forward by Lukács (1971), which separated the immediate psychological consciousness of individual workers from class consciousness. His understanding of interpretation emphasises the ability to "grasp one's situation in the social totality. It has, however, not always been a universally accepted idea. Class formation is an historical process, not one created mechanically out of economic structures; Thompson (1963) placed special emphasis on this. In this sense, through culture, institutions, ideology and political leadership, Gramsci (1971) showed that consciousness is shaped. The contributions helped to expand the Marxist framework of analysis from a limited premise of determinism involving class. In the presenting study, this tradition is put on dialogue with political literacy. Political literacy as a whole usually expresses the knowledge, skills, and analytical reasoning capacities that are necessary to comprehend politics and to attain pertinent and well informed involvement in it. Crick and Porter (1978) linked political education to the education of citizens who were able to comprehend political issues and make decisions regarding them. Cassel and Lo defined political literacy in the sense of potential to informed political participation (Cassel & Lo, 1997). Traditional definitions of political literacy focus on the mastery of the election, political parties, government institutions, public policy, citizenship and participation. These are vital aspects of political skills. However, familiarity with institutional settings does not guarantee that somebody has a grasp on more intimate ties in the sphere of political and economic power. A citizen can be familiar with the rules of parliament but not with the influence of economic inequality. Likewise, someone could be on top of how elections are worked without being on top of how ownership, employment, social class, media structures or dominant ideologies influence them. Political literacy can thus be understood to be a broader competence to detect, analyze and critically assess structures and relations of power. This larger paradigm establishes vital mental linkages to Marxist class consciousness. Marx and Engels wanted to motivate workers to look at personal experiences in the socioeconomic systems of capitalism in a fundamentally structural manner. It was not only poverty, unemployment, low wages, exploitation, and insecurity that were described as individuals' problems, but these issues were also seen as part of wider relationships of production and class power. It is a shift from experience to structure, which is similar to what critical educational theory was to call, the phenomena of critical consciousness later. For example, Freire (1970/2000) has stressed education that allows people to make use of critical interpretation of social conditions and to discover themselves as capable agents for political change. Political literacy, in this sense, is more than a repository of political knowledge: it is also an interpretive ability that allows citizens to grasp what power does. There is no dearth of relevance in this discussion these days in the twenty first century. New political challenges involving class and power can be found in the context of globalization, economic inequalities, precarious employment, technological change, migration, concentration of corporate power, platform capitalism. Both Piketty (2014) and Standing (2011) provide evidence of the stability and growth of the inequalities of wealth and inequalities of work precariousness. Neoliberalism is a reconfiguration of relationships between states, markets and social classes, as argued by Harvey (2005). However, current developments in the field of Political Science prove that Political identity is not solely defined by class. Many factors including gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, religion and environmental issues, as well as citizenship status, intertwine with the economic inequalities. The political consciousness, then, must take a more multi-faceted form than the customary class

consciousness. Considering this development, the main query in this article is: How do the conditions of the class consciousness in Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto align with the current notion of political literacy? The article doesn't claim that either Marx or Engels drew a theory of contemporary political literacy. The history interpretation would be anachronolous. In contrast it suggests that the Manifesto is important in creating consciousness and a political understanding of how to construct and put into practice a participatory politics with a structural logic: it metaphorically tries to recode the disjointed experience of the fragmented segments of the socioeconomic form into a perception of the structural politicized character of the socio-economic system, and then into collective politics- a capacity for action. The article is therefore a rereading of the Manifesto not only as a political text but also as a political educating instrument. The study synthesizes several Marxist conceptions of class and ideology, and brings together research and theories from the fields of political literacy and critical pedagogy, and extends a new framework of understanding on the processes of developing class consciousness as one important aspect to wider critical political literacy.

2. Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to critically examine the relationship between class consciousness and political literacy through a contemporary rereading of Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*.

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the concept and development of class consciousness in *The Communist Manifesto* and subsequent Marxist political thought.
2. To explore the conceptual relationship between class consciousness and political literacy.
3. To analyze how Marx and Engels connect class relations, economic structures, ideology, and political power.
4. To identify the educational and consciousness-forming dimensions of *The Communist Manifesto*.
5. To examine the continuing relevance of Marxist class analysis for understanding contemporary capitalism, inequality, and political participation.
6. To identify the limitations of class-centred political analysis in explaining contemporary multidimensional political identities.
7. To develop a thematic framework explaining the transition from class consciousness toward critical political literacy.

3. Literature Review

The Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels is the key theoretical basis of this study. The text decodes the development of the history based on class relations and defines the capitalist society as one constructed by a growing antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Important, the Manifesto rescinds the idea of workers as economic class! It gives a history of their organisation, commonality and political agricultural despatch. This results, therefore, in an implicit theory of the formation of consciousness in which workers shift from a disunited economic experience to an awareness of common political interests. Marx and Engels (1845/1970) work out the materialist conception of history more systematically in *The German Ideology*. Their argument opposes those interpretations of ideas in which their objectivity and independence are dissociated from the material-social relationship. The piece has special relevance for the political argument because it asks questions about the nature of the relationship between sociality on the one hand, and consciousness on the other, and also questions the nature of the way that dominant arguments about society become established. They are the models used to explain much in the Manifesto that would have been elaborated on in the deeper political-economic framework of Marx's *Capital*. Capitalism is shown to be a non-market-based system that involves commodity production, labour power, surplus value, accumulation, and exploitation, by using concepts like these (Marx, 1867/1976). Knowing this kind of relationship provides a key part of the political consciousness. History and Class Consciousness is one of the most powerful theoretical advances of Marxist class consciousness, brought to us by Lukács. Unlike Lukács (1971), who had separated class consciousness from the add up of the individual opinions of class members. Consciousness, on the other hand, is a matter of grasping the position of a class in the whole of capitalist society. His idea of reification also sheds light on the nature of historically founded social relations that can seem natural and in extremely

changeable. This is an important work which enriches the analysis of political consciousness, the Selections from the Prison Notebooks by the Italian communist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Ruling groups also exercise control by building cultural and ideological power, according to Gramsci (1971). His notion of hegemony reveals that political consciousness is created in a space that exists in civil society, in school, in the media, in religion, in culture and in the “common sense” of everyday that we engage with. One way to be politically literate is to be able to discern and read critically Althusser (1971) focuses on ideological reproduction through the institution of education, family, religion, communication and the law. His theory of ideological state apparatuses is of special relevance because it takes an analysis of political consciousness beyond political institutions. Taking this view, politically engaged people must understand that political values and assumptions are created in several ways through social institutions. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* is a challenge to determinist views of class. Thompson (1963) claims that class is an historical construct, as a result of similarities of experiences to others and similarities of imaginations of self and others. His analysis is crucial in this study because it has been revealed that consciousness is not automatic, nor tainted by economic status. *The State in Capitalist Society* is a book by Miliband on the ties between the economic elites and state institutions. In order to understand capitalist democracy, one should focus on background, network and interests of people exercising power in the state, as Miliband (1969) argues. His efforts serve to confirm the notion that the politician must be familiar with the economic, as well as governmental power. The structural approach by Poulantzas (1978) to the capitalist state is a different account to that of Miliband. The concept of a state as the direct instrument of an economically dominant class is unable to be sufficient in his analysis. Instead, political institutions are relatively autonomous in capitalist social relations. In this theoretical debate, it is clear that much more complexity is needed if politicians must learn about state power if political literacy is to be achieved. Wright's *Class Counts* shows how an analytical Marxist approach is created to the class structure of modern capitalist societies. In her discussion of the development of space in class Wright (1997) clearly argues that the modern-day class types and spaces are far more complicated than either bourgeoisie/proletariat polarities. Sometimes managers, supervisors, professionals, skilled workers and other. This scholarship is very significant for updating the class analysis of the Manifesto. An important piece of reference for a current debate about political literacy is provided by Crick and Porter (1978). They are focusing on political education that can bring about citizens capable of comprehending political controversies and interests, institutions, and participation opportunities. Political learning is hence not knowledge of governmental facts or details, but political competence. Cassel and Lo (1997) define political literacy as “the capacity to engage in political participation” which is informed. The analysis links literacy to an understanding of political concept, the recognition of political differences, and having enough/information to participate in political life. The method adopted connects the knowledge to political participation in a first direct conceptual way. One of the most influential empirical studies of political knowledge is by Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996). They show that people's political knowledge ranges widely and that citizens' knowledge of political institutions, actors, and processes impacts democratic competence. Their work supports the notion that important engagement depends on a solid cognitive base. Galston (2001) reviews the literature on the linkages between political knowledge, civic education, and political involvement. He asserts that knowledge is important to the quality and effectiveness of democratic participation. This scholarship complements Marxist consciousness in that it shows that political consciousness means something in terms of citizenship. One of the most important conceptual linkages between consciousness and political literacy is given in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Instead, Freire (1970/2000) says that education is not a passive process, and that one must work on his or her critical consciousness. Students need to be able to recognize oppressive situations, analyze reality, and practice “practices of transformation”. This is very similar to what has been looked at in the present study, the shift from structural awareness to political agency. Giroux (1988) extends critical pedagogy and sees teachers and educational institutions as actors in the community of democratic life. Educational practice cannot be completely divorced from power, culture and politics. The critical thinking ability and the power to question the dominant imagery, accordingly, is essential to political literacy. Harvey (2005) reads the term neoliberalism in more than just an economic sense, and as one of a series of political processes that are connected with regime renewal and consolidation of the power of class. The relationships between

citizens, the state, the market, and the corporation have changed by privatization, deregulation, marketization, and institutional restructuring of welfare institutions. He has expanded on the class-based analysis of political economics that remains relevant to this day. In his book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Piketty offers a lot of historical evidence on wealth and income inequality. Piketty (2014) shows how a capitalist economy can have these sorts of persistent inequality settlements. His theoretical approach is neither that of orthodox Marxism, but it brags that his results raise new questions on the fundamental themes asked by Marx and Engels on economic disbalance and political power respectively. Standing identifies the “precarariat” as a social group of unstable employment, insecure income, lack of occupational identity and vulnerability (2011). The notion implies that classifications of class are becoming more complex, as are changes in labour, and so too is the significance of economic insecurity for political action in the nineteenth century. Following Fraser (2019), who seeks a more expansive definition of capitalism that could be looking not only at economic production, but also social reproduction, political control, and ecological conditions? Her strategy is especially relevant for steering away from the class consciousness and towards a more dynamic political awareness. One of the latest studies relevant to the topic is the work by Llorente (2021). In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels do not so much use the language of class consciousness as have beliefs of it; he points to essential beliefs, which he argues can be identified within the text. The “Manifesto” is well supported as a consciousness-creating political statement. Young (2000) has shown how sensitivity to social difference and structural inequality are essential for democratic inclusion. Her alternative approach highlights a crucial shortcoming of a purely class-based political literacy- the modern politics of democracy needs to be considered in terms of identity, experience and patterns of marginalization. The literature examined shows the existence of three main scholarly streams. The first, along the lines of Marx, Engels, Lukács, Gramsci, Thompson, Miliband, Poulantzas and Wright, deals with class, ideology, consciousness, capitalism, and political power. The second (with the other victims represented by Crick and Porter, Cassel and Lo, Delli Carpini and Keeter, Galston) argues and reveals the domains of political literacy, knowledge, citizenship and participation. The third one, which is more closely linked to Freire and Giroux, relates to consciousness, education, power, and transformative agency. The literatures often cross over, and often come together around *The Communist Manifesto*, but are not integrated throughout comprehensively. The lacuna was, however, the lack of Gedanken experiments between the Marxist class consciousness and today's political literacy, which is the main research gap of this article. In this regard, the present study tackles this problem, defining a new, critical group of political literacy not as ‘class consciousness’ per se, but as a possible base of critical political literacy.

4. Research Methodology

The research design is a qualitative, interpretative, secondary data-based. There are no surveys, interviews, focus groups, experiments or primary data collection. Analysis is based entirely on secondary sources, such as scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, classical political writings, and academic research on Marxism, class consciousness, political consciousness, political education, citizenship, capitalism, and inequality, especially *The Communist Manifesto*, as well as research that interprets, critiques, or builds on Marxist ideas concerning class consciousness and political consciousness. Documentary sources were selected using purposive sampling because they can be directly related to the content of *The Communist Manifesto*, their theoretical importance to class consciousness, their contribution to Marxist theories of ideology and the state, their discussion of political literacy or political knowledge, their relevance to critical political education and their contribution to contemporary debates on capitalism and inequality. The materials selected were analysed using a general thematic analysis approach, similar to that used by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021). The analytical process consisted of familiarising one's self with the chosen literature, initial conceptual coding, comparison and grouping of related codes, construction of more general analytic themes, and interpretation of the themes in relation to the research objectives, with the following recurring concepts emerging during this process: class, consciousness, exploitation, ideology, power, knowledge, education, participation and agency. In this systematic analytical process, five main themes eventually arose and this resulted in the conceptual structure of the presentation and discussion of the study findings.

5. Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis yielded five themes that are closely related and reflect the ways in which the notion of class consciousness as found in *The Communist Manifesto* can help in the development of a broader understanding of critical political literacy. The first theme is an understanding of class consciousness as a basis for political awareness. Marx and Engels (1848/2002) conceptualise the proletariat less as a group of economically disadvantaged people and more as a social class in terms of its structural relationship with capital. While individuals may suffer economic hardship, and while workers may even be in conflict with each other in the early stages of capitalist development, under these conditions, there are shared conditions of labour, exploitation, insecurity and inequality that can lead to a sense of common interests. This argument is elaborated by Lukács (1971) in his distinction between immediate individual consciousness and class consciousness, on the one hand, and Thompson (1963) in his focus on class consciousness as a product of lived experience, social relationships and political struggle. These views are pertinent to the issue of political literacy because political awareness must be meaningful, that is, it must relate personal experiences to social and institutional structures. The feeling of being excluded from the job market, of having low wages, of being left at the mercy of the labour market, of facing housing problems or of being excluded from the job market can happen to us as individuals, but it is important to understand these issues politically: they are produced and maintained by the structure of the economy. Accordingly, the study proposes a developmental sequence from the individual to the structural, to the collective. As such, the analysis contributes to the idea of a developmental sequence from the individual to the structural to the collective, which becomes an important basis for the development of critical political literacy.

The second theme is on class conflict and structural analysis of political power. *The Communist Manifesto* sets up a crucial connection between economic organization, class interests and political power (Marx & Engels 1848/2002). In his later work on political economy, Marx also shows how the unequal social and economic relations are created by the condition of ownership and control of productive resources (Marx, 1867/1976). This debate was continued by later Marxist state theorists. While there are important differences between the interpretation of the relation between state and capitalist society that can be found in the work of Miliband (1969) and Poulantzas (1978), both theories focus on the need to examine the more general distribution of economic and social power in order to understand political institutions. The result extends the traditional definition of political knowledge. While knowledge of constitutions, elections, legislatures, executives, political parties and judicial institutions is still very much necessary, institutional knowledge does not always explain political influence in society. Citizens also need to be attuned to the distribution of powerful economic resources, which has more access to powerful decision makers in the political process, who can shape public agendas, and who can be impacted by the costs and benefits of public policies, among other things, in order to be politically literate. These questions have become even more relevant today, as Piketty's (2014) study of wealth concentration shows. The results thus suggest that political literacy needs to include not only some knowledge of formal political institutions, but also some structural understanding of economic power, inequality and competing interests.

The third theme emphasizes the importance of ideology and critical interpretation in political literacy. Although Marx and Engels (1845/1970) focus on the connection between dominant ideas and material social relations, Gramsci (1971) extends this connection into the concept of hegemony, which shows how political and social dominance can be achieved by persuading people as well as forcing them to do so. Another example of the "institutional" reproduction of ideology outside the formal apparatus of government is provided by Althusser (1971). Theories of these types are important in the modern political situation. Citizens today are now more likely to access political information from newspapers, television, political campaigns, social media, the internet, and information filtered by algorithms. The availability of vast amounts of political information does not necessarily lead to political understanding, however. The politically literate citizen needs to be able to reflect critically on the way political narratives are put together, what their assumptions are, what evidence underlies specific claims, who is being served and who is being left out, and whose points of view may be overlooked. Political literacy should be considered, then, not only as a body of political knowledge but also as the ability to analyze and critically understand political communication and the ideological underpinnings of conflicting political narratives.

The fourth theme is concerned with the concept of collective consciousness and political agency. The analysis shows that consciousness in *The Communist Manifesto* is not taught only in an intellectual manner, but is intimately linked with the process of organisation and collective action. Marx and Engels (1848/2002) were not only trying to explain the nature of capitalism as a mode of social relations, they were also trying to get the workers to see that there were common interests among them and gain political agency. Freire's (1970/2000) notion of praxis is a useful later parallel to highlight the connection between reflection, critical consciousness, and transformative action. The findings indicate that there are three components that are interrelated in political literacy: knowledge of politics, interpretation of politics, and participation in politics. The knowledge of politics is the understanding of institutions, political actors, concepts, rights and decision-making processes; the interpretation of politics is the critical evaluation of power, ideology, interests, inequality and conflictual political claims; and the engagement with politics is through participation, deliberation, communication, organisation and informed democratic decision making. Political literacy should not only be limited to facts about the politics. Rather, it is a dynamic that is created by the combined process of political knowledge, critical judgment, and democratic agency, which allows citizens to not only learn about politics, but to engage in politics in a meaningful way.

The fifth and most important theme is the shift from class consciousness to a political education of many dimensions. The results indicate that class consciousness maintains its importance to political consciousness in the present day since there is a continued disparity in income, lack of jobs and uneven distribution of wealth and power in present society. The analyses by Harvey (2005), Standing (2011) and Piketty (2014) and others continue to show the relevance of class relations and of socioeconomic inequality in the present era of capitalism. However, one cannot explain political experience of the 21st century with the help of class alone. In a democratic political culture, difference, representation and inclusion matter, as does Fraser's (2019) critical analysis of capitalist production and its entanglements with social reproduction, ecological considerations and political power. To be politically literate, therefore, one must acknowledge that political power is dynamic and multi-faceted and is experienced across class, gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship, environment, globalization, technology, political institutions and ideology. This is not a statement of the value of class – it places class in a larger context that can account for the complexities of modern political life. Taken together, the five themes support a conceptual progression from-

Socio-economic experience → recognition of inequality → structural understanding → class consciousness → ideological critique → recognition of multiple forms of power → political knowledge and critical judgment → collective and democratic agency → critical political literacy.

This series is the main theoretical contribution of this research. The shift from class consciousness to political education needs to be seen as an extension, not a substitute for, Marxist analysis. This first step, class consciousness, has the power to move people to consider where each group stands in the patterns of economic ownership, economic production and economic power. Critical political literacy extends this inquiry by involving the study of the workings of political institutions, power distribution, the construction of identities and interests, the production of political information and ideological narratives, and the possibility of appraising competing political information and interests, and effective participation in political processes. Given the thematic result of the study, the authors conclude that class consciousness is an important component of critical political literacy but is more significant in the context of more recent democratic life if coupled with institutional knowledge, ideological critique, awareness of multiple types of inequality and power, critical assessment of political information and ability to participate effectively in politics. In this respect, *The Communist Manifesto* continues to be relevant; not only as a historical revolutionary document, but as an intellectual tool for exploring how social and economic experiences can become a structural awareness, a critical political sense and an agency for collective action. The modern relevance to political literacy is especially its ability to move readers from an individualistic interpretation of social issues to consideration of the broader connections between economic systems, political institutions, ideology, power, and inequality.

6. Conclusion

In this article the concept of class consciousness and political literacy has been returned to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* in the conceptual relationship. The study used

only secondary sources and qualitative thematic analysis and focused on the classical Marxist texts, as well as on the literature on ideology, political education, citizenship, critical pedagogy, contemporary capitalism and inequality. These five themes emerged from the analysis: class consciousness as the starting point of political awareness; structural view of political power; ideology and critical interpretation; collective consciousness and political agency; and the growth of class consciousness into multidimensional political literacy. The study reveals that the Manifesto is a legitimate document that can be read as a revolutionary call to action, but also as a significant historic means of political education. Marx and Engels tried to give their intended audience conceptual tools for understanding individual socioeconomic experiences as being part of a larger structure of relationships. In this regard, the Manifesto aims to turn experience into consciousness, and consciousness into political action. This pedagogical aspect plays an essential role in bridging to current political knowledge. The definition of political literacy cannot be limited to the factual information on elections, parties, constitution, governments and political institutions. Knowledge alone is essential but can't be separated from power, interests, economic disparity, ideology, and social organisations. Class consciousness is a factor in this structural dimension in particular. It helps people learn to ask questions about the implications of economic location, property relations, labour and inequalities for political possibilities. The significance of inequality and precarious employment is on-going; therefore, these questions continue to be relevant in modern Political Science. However, this paper also highlights relevant shortcomings of the Manifesto when it comes to its application in our society. Modern political identities and conflicts are complex. Class crosses over gender, ethnicity, race, citizenship, nationality, the environment, technology and many other systems of political inclusion and exclusion. The modern class situation is more complicated than that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, which is stereotypical of industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century. A political literacy, then, needs to keep and overcome the Marxist class analysis. Marx and Engels' focus on the study of structural power, material inequality, historical relations, ideology and collective agency should be retained. Any effort to make all political experiences into one class contradiction needs to be transcended. The major finding of the article is therefore the idea that class consciousness and political literacy are two concepts that are linked but analytically separable. Class consciousness is one of the bases for more generalized realization of structural economic power; critical political literacy is the extension of class consciousness to a greater ability to grasp institutions, identities, ideologies, inequalities, political communication, competing interests, and potential for democratic action. *The Communist Manifesto* was written over 150 years ago and, as such, it is not pertinent to Political Science in the sense that every prediction or political prescription made by Marx and Engels is necessarily adopted, but rather, it continues to help us ask fundamental questions of power: Who has it. How does inequality get created and perpetuated? What do economics have to do with politics? How is the influence of dominant ideas formed? How can personal complaints turn into widespread demands? But when and how could consciousness turn into political action? The transition from class consciousness to political literacy offers a useful and relevant framework for the present time to discuss these issues and to re-examine the ideas of Marx and Engels in their intellectual context in the modern discipline of Political Science.

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