

The Bolshevik's Legacy in Russia's Contemporary International Relations Theory

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This paper argues that the Marxist-Leninist political thought still continues to affect Russia's present-day International Relations Theory (IRT) in several ways. First, there is a revival of the International Political Economy (IPE) strand within the Russian IRT. The Russian researchers have now a renewed interest in themes like economic foundations of world power, neoimperialism, neocolonialism, and relations of exploitation-domination. The neo-Marxist IPE theories, such as dependency theory, center-periphery analysis, world-system analysis are popular again in the Russian academia.

Second, following the Marxist-Leninist tradition, the Russian constructivist school develops sociological approaches to the study of international relations trying to understand which social forces determine world politics dynamics and identity formation. This school focuses on the role of primary actors, such as social classes and groups, nations, races, genders rather than on states or international organizations which are seen as secondary/dependent players (in contrast with the neorealist and neoliberal IRT paradigms). The Russian constructivists also try to apply the neo-Marxist Gramscian hegemony theory to explaining the soft power phenomenon in contemporary international politics.

Third, the Bolsheviks' peaceful coexistence concept is in fashion in the Russian IR community again. Given the current crisis in the Russian-Western relations and the need to develop an adequate and realistic international course, the Russian IR specialists believe that countries with different socio-economic and political systems still can and should coexist peacefully. At the same time, they do not accept that one or more dominant state(s) simply impose(s) rules on the rest of the world; instead they favor a multipolar world model (the concept which is now dominant in Russian foreign policy discourse). Interestingly, the peaceful coexistence concept is of overarching nature and equally popular among different – sometimes opposite - Russian IR schools, such as geopolitics, neorealism, neoliberalism, globalism and postpositivism.

The paper also aims to examine why the Marxist-Leninist ideas are so tenacious and still influential in Russia's contemporary foreign policy thinking.