

Marxism, the ‘updates’?

I. Leninism, principles expounded by Vladimir I. Lenin, who was the preeminent figure in the Russian Revolution of 1917. Whether Leninist concepts represented a contribution to or a corruption of Marxist thought has been debated, but their influence on the subsequent development of communism in the Soviet Union and elsewhere has been of fundamental importance.

In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels defined communists as “the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others.” This conception was fundamental to Leninist thought. Lenin saw the Communist Party as a highly committed intellectual elite who (1) had a scientific understanding of history and society in the light of Marxist principles, (2) were committed to ending capitalism and instituting socialism in its place, (3) were bent on forcing through this transition after having achieved political power, and (4) were committed to attaining this power by any means possible, including violence and revolution if necessary. Lenin's emphasis upon action by a small, deeply committed group stemmed both from the need for efficiency and discretion in the revolutionary movement and from an authoritarian bent that was present in all of his political thought. The authoritarian aspect of **Leninism** appeared also in its insistence upon the need for a “proletarian dictatorship” following the seizure of power, a dictatorship that in practice was exercised not by the workers but by the leaders of the Communist Party. Source: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2006

II. Stalinism, the method of rule, or policies, of Joseph Stalin, Soviet Communist Party and state leader from 1929 until his death in 1953. Stalinism is associated with a regime of terror and totalitarian rule.

[...] Stalin stood for a practical approach to revolution, devoid of ideological sentiment. [...] By 1929 Stalin's major opponents [in the USSR and its communist party] were defeated [...]. Stalin's doctrine of the monolithic party emerged during the battle for power; he condemned the “rotten liberalism” of those who tolerated discussion on or dissent from party policies. Lenin's pronouncements, except those uncomplimentary to Stalin, were codified as axioms not open to question. Persons opposed to these new dogmas were accused of treason to the party. What came to be called the “cult of personality” developed as Stalin, presenting himself as Lenin's heir, came to be recognized as the sole infallible interpreter of party ideology.

Basic to Stalinism was the doctrine of “socialism in one country,” which held that, though the socialist goal of world proletarian revolution was not to be abandoned, a viable classless society could be built within Soviet boundaries and despite encirclement by a largely capitalist world. Stalin, appealing both to socialist revolutionary fervour and to Russian nationalism, launched in the late 1920s a program of rapid industrial development of unprecedented magnitude. A “class war” was declared on the rich farmers in the name of the poor, and Russian agriculture was rapidly collectivized, against considerable rural resistance, to meet the needs of urban industry. The need for expertise and efficiency in industry postponed the egalitarian goals of the Bolshevik Revolution; Stalin denounced “levelers” and instituted systems of reward that established a socioeconomic stratification favouring the technical intelligentsia. Heavy industry was emphasized to ensure Russia's future economic independence from its capitalist neighbours.

While socialist ideology foresaw a “withering away” of the state as the classless society became a reality, Stalin asserted that the state must instead become stronger before it could be eliminated. Stalinism held that the enemies of socialism within and without Russia would try to avert the final victory of the Revolution. To face these efforts and protect the cause, it was argued, the state must be strong. Power became more and more centralized in Stalin, who in the late 1930s launched a bloody purge of all those he regarded as even potentially dangerous to the Soviet state. As part of the struggle against those whom he considered political rivals, Stalin identified political opposition with treason and used this as a weapon in his struggle against Leon Trotsky and Nikolay I. Bukharin and their supporters. By February 1939 most of the “Old Bolsheviki,” those revolutionaries who in 1917 had begun the Revolution, had been exterminated. Millions more (estimated at from 7 million to 15 million) were sent to the forced-labour camps that Stalin made an integral part of the Soviet economy. [...]

In 1989 the Soviet historian Roy Medvedev estimated that about 20 million died as a result of the labour camps, forced collectivization, famine, and executions. Another 20 million were victims of imprisonment, exile, and forced relocation. Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Stalinism>

III. Maoism, variably and officially known as **Mao Zedong Thought** (simplified Chinese: 毛泽东思想; traditional Chinese: 毛澤東思想; pinyin: Máo Zédōng Sīxiǎng), is a variant of Marxism derived from the teachings of the late Chinese leader Mao Zedong, widely applied as the political and military guiding ideology in the Communist Party of China (CPC) from Mao's ascendancy to its leadership until the inception of Deng Xiaoping Theory and Chinese economic reforms in 1978. It is also applied internationally in contemporary times. Maoist parties and groups exist throughout the world, with notable groups in Peru, India, and Nepal. Notably, in Nepal they won the country's first free elections in 2008.

The basic tenets of Maoism include revolutionary struggle of the vast majority of people against the exploiting classes and their state structures, termed a People's War. Usually involving peasants, its military strategies have involved guerrilla war tactics focused on surrounding the cities from the countryside, with a heavy emphasis on political transformation through the mass involvement of the basic people of the society.

Maoism departs from conventional European-inspired Marxism in that its focus is on the agrarian countryside, rather than the industrial urban forces. This is known as Agrarian socialism. Notably, Maoist parties in Peru, Nepal and Philippines have adopted equal stresses on urban and rural areas, depending on the country's locus of economic activity.

In its post-revolutionary period, Mao Zedong Thought is defined in the CPC's Constitution as "Marxism-Leninism applied in a Chinese context", synthesized by Mao Zedong and China's first-generation leaders. It asserts that class struggle continues even if the proletariat has already overthrown the bourgeoisie, and there are capitalist restorationist elements within the Communist Party itself. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maoism>

Annotations:

expound (n.)	<i>darlegen, erklären</i>	collectivize (v.)	<i>vergemeinschaftlichen, kollektivieren</i>
subsequent (adj.)	<i>folgend</i>	stratification (n.)	<i>Gliederung, Schichtenbildung</i>
resolute (adj.)	<i>entschlossen</i>	wither (v.)	<i>absterben, verwittern</i>
stem (v.)	<i>stammen</i>	assert (v.)	<i>beteuern, versichern</i>
discretion (n.)	<i>Umsicht, Klugheit</i>	avert (v.)	<i>verhindern, abwenden</i>
devoid (adj.)	<i>leer</i>	relocation (n.)	<i>Umsiedelung</i>
dissent (n.)	<i>abweichende Meinung, Meinungsverschiedenheit</i>	ascendency (n.)	<i>Aufstieg</i>
axiom (n.)	<i>Axiom (etwas, das nicht wissenschaftlich bewiesen werden kann und daher einfach als gesetzt gilt)</i>	inception (n.)	<i>Beginn (hier: Amtsübernahme)</i>
infallible (adj.)	<i>unfehlbar</i>	conventional (adj.)	<i>konventionell, üblich</i>
viable (adj.)	<i>machbar, praktikabel</i>	locus (n.)	<i>Ort, Platz</i>

Tasks:

- a) In your own words, define what Leninism, Stalinism and Maoism were about.
- b) Compare them to Marxism.
- c) Explain the reasons for these differences.
- d) Discuss if Leninism, Stalinism and Maoism were still Marxist or whether these were in fact new ideologies.

