

Lenin's impatience with theory has two direct implications for this study. First, it means that it is impossible to speak of Lenin's theory of East-West relations. Lenin never took the time and effort to systematize his views on international relations, and he cannot be said to have a theory of Soviet foreign policy. Instead, we must be content with a lower level of generality and regard it as an important step forward if we can discern recurring patterns in his general attitudes, inclinations, or views on different problems in international politics.

In studying Lenin's writings and speeches, we must not impart to them a consistency and clarity which, in fact, is not actually present. In many cases, he simply did not think through a particular problem. Often his views were stated vaguely and imprecisely. Furthermore, because he was, above all else, a practical politician, his views were frequently issue-specific and lacking in theoretical consistency. Even though his strongly held opinions of one period often directly contradicted those of an earlier time, he rarely attempted to reconcile these contradictions.

A second consequence of the fact that Lenin's works were political tracts occasioned by immediate concerns, and not carefully elaborated theoretical treatises, is that one must be extremely careful not to take his statements out of context. One would be justifiably reluctant to elaborate upon, for example, Henry Kissinger's or Pierre Trudeau's theory of international politics on the basis of isolated statements made during the heat of a political controversy; yet, this is what is often done with Lenin.

In dissecting his works, we are analyzing political pronouncements and not theoretical treatises, and we must not apply analytical techniques that are suitable for the latter but totally inappropriate for the former. Lenin was invariably convinced that unless his policy was followed, the Party would suffer an irreparable disaster, and for this reason, he was much more concerned to win the debate than to set out his views with consistency or full accuracy. What passes under the grandiose title of "Leninist theory" is often little more than a compilation of his various refutations and counter-arguments. Thus,