

Brazilian IR and Marxist Research

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The influence of Marxist thought in the human sciences throughout history cannot be ignored, even by its most active critics. In History, Sociology, Economics, Linguistics, among others, the contribution of Marxists to the epistemology, ontology and theory of these areas was intense. However, the same does not occur in the field of International Relations (IR), in Brazil and abroad. IR, traditionally understood as (generally conflictual) relations between states in an anarchic international system, has been systematically distanced from the thought inaugurated by the founders of modern socialism; it is one of the few social sciences in which it has been relatively easy to avoid an encounter with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

In fact, since its birth as an area of scientific knowledge in 1919, IR has insisted on ignoring (thus far for over a century) Marx and Engels and the Marxists, their theorisations and concrete analyses of international phenomena. It has been argued that Marxism would have nothing to say about international relations, considered to be an economistic theory that reduces the phenomena of international politics to the dynamics of the capitalist economy; that it does not offer a theory on the state (the main agent of international relations); that it is merely a normative perspective dedicated to the socialist utopia and thus incapable of carrying out analyses of concrete reality; or that it is even one more among the various Eurocentric perspectives that would not be useful to analyses of the periphery (on these arguments, see Sclofsky and Funk, 2018).

In Brazil, the field follows the same line, except perhaps in the area of International Relations Theory (IRT). In that area, however, some textbooks of IRT present a Marxist theory pertinent to IR in which Marxism and Marxist-inspired approaches appear as possible theories of IR. Nevertheless, in both cases the entries of Marxism occur in a caricatured way, concealing the potentiality of this critical thought for the field and revealing an ignorance about the vast field that is Marxism and its various contributions to international relations. What calls our attention is that some approaches do not even quote or make reference to Marxist studies, especially when referring to Marx and Engels, who supposedly have remained oblivious to the issues of international politics. They hide the copious studies by Marx and Engels on the subject.

The RIMA Network (Rede Relações Internacionais e Marxismo) has represented, in Brazil, an attempt to overcome Disciplinary IR's marginalising overtures against both Marxism and peripheral thinking in its colonised adoption by mainstream Brazilian academia. The proposed roundtable aims first to present a general overview of RIMA's activities as well as what has been published and researched in Brazilian IR from Marxist perspectives. This will be followed by a discussion around what this variety of perspectives contributes to understanding International Relations as a Social Science (IRSS). Most particularly, the participants will be questioned on how Brazilian Marxism has advanced within IR beyond works produced within Marxism as a broader research programme and why this is relevant for IRSS.

Our roundtable participants, all members of RIMA, are in different moments in their professional careers and represent varied perspectives within Marxist theory. In speaking to the empirical contributions and advancement of theoretical thinking, the roundtable will cover theoretical contributions from the Poulantzian, neo-Gramscian and Dependencista perspectives, and possibly others, as well as discuss what these have to contribute to debates on peripheral agency and systemic dependency.

References

SCLOFSKY, Sebastián; FUNK, Kevin. The Specter That Haunts Political Science: The Neglect and Misreading of Marx in International Relations and Comparative Politics. *International Studies Perspectives*, v.19, n.1, 44–66, 201

Abstract time zone

Membership

Track Classification: International Relations as a Social Science Working Group