

Key Historical Perspectives: Stalin

Perspective	Interpretation
Structuralist Approach: Richard Pipes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regards Stalin as a product of Russia's circumstances: a strong ruler was required because the country was just emerging from nearly a decade of war and civil war. Stalin was the natural successor to Lenin because of the way the Party had become increasingly bureaucratized
Continuity between Leninism: Robert Conquest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lenin created the single party dictatorship and system of terror, which Stalin continued. So, Stalin was the heir to the Leninist tradition.
Stalinism viewed as a deviation of Leninism: Stephen Cohen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stalin distorted Lenin's legacy. Lenin used terror during the Civil War only as a temporary, emergency measure; Lenin allowed dissent within the Party; Lenin was hostile to a cult of the leader. Stalin, by contrast, used terror as a normal feature of government when the USSR was at peace; he suppressed debate within the Party; he created a personality cult of monstrous proportions. Historians like Cohen argue that communism could have developed in a very different, less brutal way if another leader, such as Bukharin had succeeded Lenin.

How is the **structuralist approach similar** to the **continuity between Leninism** perspective?

- Both view Stalin as “natural successor”/ “heir to Leninist tradition”

How are they **different**?

- The structuralist approach takes more of a cause and effect perspective; Stalin's rise to power is a result of previous “circumstances” due to the Party's “bureaucratization.”

How is the **Structuralist approach different** to the **Stalinism viewed as a deviation of Leninism** perspective?

- Whereas the Structuralist approach portrays Stalin as an opportunist given “Russia's circumstances,” the Stalinism viewed as a deviation of Leninism perspective highlights Stalin's use of “terror” which allowed his rise to power and looks into the contrasting idea of having Bukharin succeed Lenin as opposed to Stalin.

Compare and contrast the **Continuity between Leninism** perspective to the **Stalinism viewed as a deviation of Leninism** perspective.

- Both interpretations underline Stalin's usage of “terror” which allowed for control whereas the Stalinism viewed as a deviation of Leninism perspective contrasts Stalin's systematic and habitual use of terror to Lenin's “emergency measure” of using terror as a means of consolidation.

So... Was Stalin's rise to power a continuity in what Lenin had already set up or was it a deviation?