

'Common-sense Constructivism and Hegemony in World Politics' by Ted Hopf, International Organization

In this article Ted Hopf (Political Science) shows how for BRIC countries, the 'common sense' of the masses may thwart their leaders' ambitions for their country's place in the new world order.

International Relations

literature on hegemony rarely combines attention to material power and ideas.

Cox's neo-Gramscian work is a rare exception, but it too narrowly construes Gramsci's conceptualization of common sense, reducing it to elite views on political economy.

But Gramsci argued that hegemony had to reckon with mass quotidian common



sense. If political elites do not take into account the taken-for-granted world of the masses, elite ideological projects would likely founder against daily practices of resistance. In this article, Hopf shows how mass common sense can be an obstacle to an elite hegemonic project aimed at moving a great power into the core of the world capitalist economy. In contemporary Russia, a ruling elite with a neoliberal project is being thwarted daily by a mass common sense that has little affinity with democratic market capitalism. Scholarly work on future Chinese, Brazilian, or Indian participation in constructing a new hegemonic order would do well to pay attention to the mass common senses prevailing in those societies.

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