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Book Review of
Rethinking Post-Cold War Russian-Latin American Relations
by Vladimir Rouvinski, and Victor Jefjets, eds.
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In recent decades, the ties between Russia and Latin America have been strengthened, within the framework of Moscow's repositioning in the global arena and its renewed interest in influencing the Western Hemisphere as part of the dispute with the US and the European Union. That is an incidence that presents itself as an alternative to the geopolitical hegemony of the West consecrated under the post-Cold War liberal order. The Russian media have strengthened their presence in Latin America. Socially and culturally, there are mentalities and values – nationalist and conservative – shared by broad segments of the Russian and Latin American populations. Likewise, in the first decades of the 21st century, Russia and several Latin American countries have experienced parallel processes of political development of illiberal and personalist regimes opposed to polyarchic pluralism. All this refers to the need to explore the deep

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historical, geopolitical and cultural roots between both parties which can be analyzed with the tools and disciplines of the social sciences.

Within this panorama, the publication of *Rethinking Post-Cold War Russian-Latin American Relations* becomes a relevant intellectual contribution.¹ The work provides a complex examination of the resurgence of Russia's interest in the region, which allows evaluating adequately the results of the rapprochement in bilateral economic, political and cultural interactions. The book joins previous efforts made in Latin America in a similar direction.² To this end, the editors convened a group of renowned academicians who, from a multidisciplinary perspective – with contributions from Political science, International Relations, History, Law, Migratory Studies, Economics, among others – allow a better understanding of the conditions in which Russia and Latin America interact. Several parts of the volume's analyses were also built from a collaborative perspective, where two co-authors intersect their views on a common theme.

In Chapter 1, Vladimir Rouvinski addresses – conceptually and empirically – the approach of symbolic reciprocity that guides Russia's dynamic action in this part of the Western Hemisphere. The emphasis is put on geopolitically influencing the backyard of the US, its main global contender. To do this, the author traces the presence of Moscow and its political objectives from the very genesis of Russian-Latin American relations. This topic dialogues with the one addressed by Alexandra Sitenko in Chapter 8, where she reminds us that the image of Latin America in contemporary Russia stems from the experiences and perceptions preceding the Soviet era. Sitenko accurately ponders on how truly “strategic” Moscow's relations are with some of the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. She focuses on the cases of Brazil, Ecuador and Nicaragua for which she recognizes the importance of such elements as the construction of trust, political will and the actions of personal diplomacy of leadership.

In perspectives that cross intellectual history and Political Science, in Chapters 2 and 3 Victor Jeifets and Dmitry Rozental analyze the evolution of academic studies on the region from its emergence in the 1960s in the then Soviet Union. They identify the strong influence of the ideology and international policy goals of the Soviet state. The authors point out the strong imprint of political approaches and actors on the agenda of contemporary Russian academic studies on Latin America. This helps to explain the differentiation of Russian Latin American studies (*Latinoamerikanistika* in Russian) from Latin American studies in other countries based on their traditions, methodology and public commitment.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Victor Jeifets, Lazar Jeifets, and Humberto Morales Moreno review some topics in political history. On the one hand, Victor Jeifets and Lazar Jeifets demonstrate how the agendas of the Comintern and Soviet diplomacy presented important differences that we can relate to the diverse nature of both phenomena (movement of revolutionary influence promoted by a State, system of foreign relations of that same State). For his part, Humberto Morales compares the similarities and differences (socioeconomic, institutional, and doctrinal) between two states/regimes (the Mexican and the Soviet ones) emanating from two of the greatest revolutions of the 20th century.

¹ Vladimir Rouvinski, and Victor Jeifets, eds. *Rethinking Post-Cold War Russian-Latin American Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

² Soledad Jiménez Tovar, and Andrés Kozel, et al., eds. *Pensamiento social rusosobre América Latina* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2017).

Chapter 6, by Mario Alberto Cajas-Sarria, can be read in close relationship with the chapters that precede it (especially Chapter 4) when addressing the controversial issue of the perceptions of the communist threat (represented by the foreign agenda of the USSR) in Latin American governments taking Colombia as a case study.

The other chapters cover specific topics, all of great relevance. In Chapter 7, Marina Moseykina addresses Russian migration to Latin America throughout history identifying its legacy in the various spheres of social and national life in the region. Victor Jеifets and Lilia Khadorich discuss (Chapter 9) arms trade and cooperation between Latin America and Russia explaining the main trends and differences of this process. According to the authors of this chapter, this cooperation is one of the main reasons behind the foreign policy strategy of Russia towards Latin America and, to a lesser extent, of Russian trade with the Latin American nations.

The work is complemented by a series of case studies. In Chapter 10, Evan Ellis sets out the perspectives and concerns of the United States regarding the return of Russia to the region that he identifies as an area with shared interests and history with the hegemonic power.

In Chapter 11, Dmitry Rozental and Lazar Jеifets analyze the bilateral relations between Russia and Venezuela examining the Kremlin's support, which encompassed the geopolitical, military, economic dimensions, etc, for the governments of Hugo Chávez and his designated successor, Nicolas Maduro. In Chapter 12, Lazar Jеifets and Anton Andreev trace the evolution of Cuba's relations with the USSR and later Russia pondering on the ideological and pragmatic factors behind that long and dynamic relationship.

Russia's bilateral relations with Mexico are analyzed by Víctor Jеifets and Jorge López Arévalo in Chapter 13 identifying the level of growing – but still limited – bilateral trade and geographic proximity to the US as factors that interest Russia in its relationship with the Aztec country. Then Vladimir Rouvinski (Chapter 14), Nikolai Dobronravin (Chapter 15) and Alberto Hutschenreuter (Chapter 16) analyze relations with Colombia, Brazil and Russia. These are three cases with interesting peculiarities. Moscow's incursion as a supplier of military equipment – above all helicopters – to Bogotá, a traditional US ally in the region, draws attention. Likewise, there are considered the synergies with Brazil within the framework of the BRICS and the emerging multi-polar approach, as well as the ties with Argentina whose historical background in such areas like migration, culture and diplomatic relations predict an even greater potential of development.

With the contribution of this group of experts, *Rethinking Post-Cold War Russian-Latin American Relations* provides a comprehensive look at the renewed Russian presence in Latin America, as well as at its historical background. This is a book to thank for the virtue of combining a balance of the links during the Soviet era and recent case studies which allow us to identify general and specific patterns behind the relaunch of Russian-Latin American ties. We are facing the volume where the plurality of views coincides with the rigor of the approaches to the chosen object.

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