



Russia's Sharp Power in Latin America

Global Autocracy, Regional Influence

Claudia González Marrero, Armando Chaguaceda

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Contents

Russia's Sharp Power in Latin America, Global Autocracy, Regional Influence	5
Summary	5
1. Introduction	5
2. Autocratic Promotion	7
3. Shaping Public Opinion: Advocacy in Cultural and Academic Institutions	8
4. Impact on the Latin American Political Sphere	11
5. Conclusions	13
References	14
Claudia González Marrero	15
Armando Chaguaceda	15



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Summary

Global autocracies have actively influenced the Latin American political and economic environment. The patronage and projection of powers such as Russia have acted on governments and societies where political polarisation, illiberal nationalism, and limitation to the rule of law provide fertile ground for authoritarian expansion. The diffusion of autocratic values in the related media and in the positions of public intellectuals has influenced public opinion in favour of the legitimisation of autocracy. Moscow has supported the mutual recognition and strengthening of illiberal regimes, regionally limiting the defence of democracy. This article explores some expressions and results of Russian sharp power over Latin America, attending to nations with authoritarian governments and spaces of (re)production of ideas and narratives of legitimisation of the illiberal social order.

1. Introduction

A (geo)political ecosystem where consolidated democracies predominate represents a real and symbolic threat to the survival of autocratic regimes. Subverting this relationship and securing the support of systems with similar political values has been a foreign policy objective of governments such as Russia, China, Iran, or Saudi Arabia. In the Russian case, **under the government of Vladimir Putin, the global aspirations of the Eurasian power have been translated into a foreign policy objective aimed at strengthening its ability to exert autocratic influence, through means of media, academic and cultural collaborations, among other instruments of sharp power. This influence has also strengthened, legitimised, and expanded the range of action of autocratic governments in Latin America, impacting domestic processes and regional and international democratic cooperation.**

We are currently witnessing a global increase in autocratic cooperation (Weyland, 2017) through various actions and strategies – with immediate or long-term objectives, ideological or pragmatic, tactical or strategic – under the common goal of rolling back the competing political model: liberal democracy. In certain cases, this increase tends to be considered as a process lacking ideological or axiological components. However, it seems plausible to detect behind the current progression of autocratic influence an ideological content that we can define as illiberalism. This illiberal phenomenon (Laruelle, 2021) is a flexible and broad worldview of actors, movements, and regimes opposed to pluralist society in the post-Cold War world. It rejects multilateralism in favour of the nation-state. It defends a model of leader and people, without intermediary institutions. It promotes protectionism and an oligarchic and neo-patriarchal capitalism. It privileges an essentialist definition of the nation. This illiberal ideological substratum prevails today in the political agendas of various governments in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

One instrument in this context is the signing of different agreements between Russia and Latin American states, based on a policy of “non-interference”, with flexible agreements within a wide ideological spectrum.

On a global and regional scale, **the spread of illiberal ideas and values of authoritarian powers over like-minded governments and certain societies seems increasingly noticeable. This is achieved through the deployment of public diplomacy, the influence of the media, investment flows, and infrastructure development, among other relationships and actions.** Other elements include the exchange of technology and propaganda narratives that disseminate civic models, cultural values, and political imaginaries unfamiliar to those of polyarchies.

In the case of host countries with a long and robust democratic tradition – in Western Europe and the United States, primarily – the view remains that Russian influence programmes have been less far-reaching given their limited capacity to establish processes of communication and cultural exchange with the bulk of the elites and local populations. Certainly, authoritarian promotion and influence have suffered setbacks, with the disruption of activities and the growth of public criticism of autocratic influence in several Western countries. However, this is not usually the case in other countries, where the host government shares authoritarian political values, where there are historical patterns of closeness (especially in the case of the former USSR), or where greater economic interests converge.

Some of these factors appear in the cases of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, where Moscow

has managed to project elements of cooperation and political dissemination with an impact greater than that of Western powers. In the fields of media as well as academic and cultural exchange, we find stronger synergies, based on specific interests. One instrument in this context is the signing of different agreements between Russia and Latin American states, based on a policy of “non-interference”, with flexible agreements within a wide ideological spectrum. For example, training programmes for government officials and managers do not promote political-legal positions consistent with the defence of democratic principles, the defence of the rule of law, or the protection of civil society (Alfonso, 2021).

This rise of autocratic cooperation is characterised by a series of relationships that transcend the commercial link and traditional ideological alliances. It includes alliances of symbolic support, which are important conduits for the dissemination and transfer of norms, values, and information (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 385) between different ways of conceiving the illiberal. As a result, **autocratic tendencies can be reaffirmed in the emphasis of the principles of sovereignty and non-interference, a cornerstone of the nationalist discourses of Latin American autocracies.** Tested in Russia, Venezuela, and Cuba, the principle of national security encompassed in the notion of state-centric sovereignty has guaranteed them resources for legitimising their foreign policy and, domestically, greater levels of social control.

The Russian presence in Latin America primarily pursues the reduction of Washington’s influence and, secondly, of the European Union, in the region. In this sense, Moscow and its partner countries in Latin America share a narrower concept of sovereignty and develop supposedly anti-hegemonic discourses. The principle of self-determination, usual in this alliance, has made it possible to create a coordinated platform (in forums such as the United Nations (UN) Security Council and Human Rights Council) in the face of criticism and sanctions from the international community for human rights violations in Cuba, Nicaragua, or Venezuela.

In the case of academia, **autocratic influence and cooperation have made it possible to limit criticism of these regimes, expand the recruitment of students and academics in higher education institutions, or veto professionals, programmes and institutions identified as adverse to authoritarianism.**

Intellectual influence does not operate alone, it is usually accompanied by close economic ties and similar political positions. In the case of autocracies such as those mentioned, this agreement can transcend cultural similarities and generate convergent narratives. An important enclave in public diplomacy has been the work of government-sponsored non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) that promote pro-government agendas: for example, the promotion of cultural programmes that seek to gain popular favour in the host state, without undermining the credibility of the sponsoring state.

For the purposes of this text, we understand the promotion and dissemination of authoritarianism as a force with practical impact and normative vocation within the global politics of Russia, opposed to the efforts of promotion and consolidation of democracy. We focus our gaze on channels of production, dissemination, and public discussion of ideas, values, and representations related to the illiberal social order, with Latin America as a focus. We include opinions of experts in Russian (geo)politics, interviewed in the framework of the research that serves as a basis for this article.

2. Autocratic Promotion

Autocratic promotion can be understood as a diffusion of ideas, practices, and structures that propagate from one social system to another, inherently interdependent, and electable and influenced by each other (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 378). It includes forms of planned and deliberate aid that involve influence, conditionality, and promotion of certain policies. But there are also more "spontaneous" forms of dissemination: civic and professional interactions, commercial exchanges, or cultural ties, which occur effortlessly especially conditioned by explicitly political actors and objectives. Considering the relative

ignorance of the purposes, modalities, and effects of authoritarian diffusion in Latin America, it is pertinent to address how the Russian impact on the region – in particular the synergies of practices and narratives with allied governments – contribute to the permanence and legitimisation of authoritarian leadership and regimes in Latin America.

Within some bodies that contribute to the creation and expansion of this influence, sharp power represents "an approach adopted by authoritarian regimes such as that of Russia and China that profiles, penetrates and pierces the political and information environments in the countries to which it is oriented" (NED, 2017). The impact of sharp power is intended to harm and censor free expression, neutralise independent institutions, and distort the political environment, often undermining the integrity of democratic institutions. From the intellectual and cultural perspective, various mechanisms and institutions of collaboration accompany the formulation of policies in the target country, so that they align with the agenda and goals of the autocracy that projects its sharp power. This reduces the traditional influence of global democracies (United States, Europe, Japan) in the region and weakens the cohesion and demands of neighbouring democracies and international coalitions, while breaking liberal norms of discourse and creation with impact on art, academia, and the public space in general.

From a foreign policy perspective, several governments in Latin America subscribe to principles similar to Russia's, such as the sovereign equality of states, non-intervention, and self-determination. At a general level, these principles could be harmonised with the functioning - domestic and international - of democratic states. However, in their radically state-centric interpretation – restrictive of any other criterion such as human rights – these elements have a special influence on strategic convergence of autocratic regimes within the international arena. The elaboration of a concept of "another democracy", different from the liberal one, based on populist and nationalist visions, allows governments like the Russian to dialogue, in a more or less transparent way, with authoritarian governments in Latin America, contributing to autocratic diffusion.

Just as Moscow has its own official political imaginaries around a “different democracy,” or “sovereign democracy,” its leaders, officials, and intellectuals uphold the right to alternative designs to the liberal one, which must be defended from the Western idea of democracy. Based on this perspective, a renowned Russian researcher and academic director points out that: “Each people or entity has the right to have its culture and civilization, and not all must coincide, since there are cultural differences, so political systems cannot be similar (...). The same is true in Latin America where many countries do not meet the democratic standards of the United States or Europe. The idea of cultural identity has a lot to do with the idea of democracy proposed by Russia” (Razumovsky, interview 13.04.2021).

In the context of current international relations, another researcher explains the typology of the concept of sovereignty that underpins the political narrative and agenda of global autocracies: “(...) the two principles that are untouchable in both the case of China as well as Russia, are sovereignty and non-intervention (...). This is a version of the Westphalian system, where we return to the vision of the black box of each State, where we have relations between States as well as the capacity to eventually project our ideas towards other States. But there should be no interference, and when we talk about interference, it is basically of an economic or military but not of an ideological nature” (Serbin, interview 26.03.2021).

In general, the combination of populist, anti-liberal, and anti-imperialist (i. e. anti-United States) elements is forging a certain imaginary within Latin American nations, favourable to the fertile insertion of the narrative of global autocracies. In turn, it advances the common interest of non-democratic governments keen on obtaining economic and political successes while maintaining social control through manufactured consent. If, in addition to alternative sources of assistance and investment, populist and/or autocratic Latin American regimes receive symbolic support in their narratives through foreign policy principles, they will be much more likely to distance themselves from the democratic paradigm, and even

better resist pressures – endogenous or exogenous – for democratisation.

The transfer of political and legal know-how from global autocracies, linked to radically state-centric ideas of sovereignty and non-interference, has also favoured a strengthening of legal restrictions in Latin America. It is important to consider the consequences of the growing reduction and control of independent spaces and citizen participation in several countries of the region, linked to the criminalisation of projects or organisations that receive funds from abroad, and which are outlawed and persecuted. Sensitive points are the persecution, with the use of the legal framework and police action, of the work of activists, independent journalists, and other autonomous organisations. The new laws and practices implemented in Latin American countries in these fields refer at various points to their Russian and Chinese counterparts. Examples have been the punitive push against the emergence and action of alternative movements and organisations, the laws of regulation of the Internet, and the practices of coercion of cultural and academic freedoms.

The matrix, contents, and autocratic goals of sharp power generate restrictions on academic and cultural freedom in target countries (Pils, 2021). First, because native institutions press for prevention to avoid the disapproval of donor countries and to maintain relations with them. Second, because it creates the precedent for preventive (self-)censorship and the renunciation of the autonomy of the domestic academy. Third, because all this fertilises the local pro-autocratic narrative (culture, media, etc.) and anti-democratic tendencies that impact government agencies as well as public space and civil society, as in the case of state activism in Cuba, Venezuela, or Nicaragua (González Marrero, 2021).

3. Shaping Public Opinion: Advocacy in Cultural and Academic Institutions

In its policy towards Latin American autocracies, Russia has privileged a “natural society”, based on the shared rejection of “foreign interference”,

always in reference to the practices of advocacy and sanctions developed by the United States and Europe, as well as other governments and organisations such as the Organization of American States. This shared rejection translates into collaborations from cultural centres, channelled through their embassies, as well as through academic exchanges with links through their political parties. For example, the Center for International Policy Research – the result of the unification of the Centers for Regional Studies, a unit of the Department of International Relations of the Communist Party of Cuba – has carried out annual analysis publications and conferences on international strategic studies including an exchange with Russian specialists, political cadres, and academics.

Several academics agree in identifying conservative, illiberal, and anti-American factors in the relations between the Eurasian power and its allies in Latin America: “Many Latin Americans continue to see Russia as the USSR. The Russian state rejects liberal ideology, as the way the state is constructed is different from that of a liberal democratic state. This makes it possible for Russia to establish relations with regimes other than liberal democracies” (Rouvinski, interview 29.04.2021).

This logic has been fundamental in the establishment of academic relationships. Founded on the dynamics of the Cold War, and around the imaginary of the Cuban Revolution and its influence on the continent, it is a narrative of which the post-1990 Russian school remains an heir.

Although political alliances in Latin America have been changing with the rise/exit of populist governments of the left and right, the spread of illiberal agendas by global autocracies continues to advance. Russia has promoted its official brands and narratives in the region through state-sponsored academic and cultural institutes. In addition, it has supported and promoted like-minded discourses in international media, publications, exchanges, congresses, as well as cultural and sporting events. Following the objectives of sharp power, its officials have also made the above explicit, presenting their initiatives of cultural exchange as an important part of the propaganda structure abroad (Putin, 2000).

The establishment of Russian foundations, supposedly inspired by schemes like those of Western agencies such as the British Council, the Cervantes Institute, the Goethe Institute, or the Alliance Française, has guaranteed flows of organic and favourable worldviews, with assets coming from government sponsorships, among other contributions, and with expenses being shared with receiving countries. However, the specific nature of the sponsoring political regime makes the nature of these actions different. While it is possible to find plural visions and criticisms of their own governments in the agendas of Western agencies, this hardly happens with their Russian or Chinese counterparts (Chaguaceda & Elnagdy, 2021).

Under Vladimir Putin's governments, these ties gained new vigour. The Russkiy Mir Foundation (Russian World Foundation) was founded by presidential decree in 2007, as an organisation aimed at promoting the Russian language, as well as to “form the Russian world as a global project”. This goal had had a precedent in 2000, with the promotion of what Putin called “a positive perception of the Russian Federation in the world, to popularize the language and culture of the Russian people in foreign states.” Since then, Moscow has established 235 institutes in 70 countries, with a presence in Latin America in Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela, among other countries.

The Rossotrudnichestvo agency (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation) was also created by presidential decree in 2008. It has three Russian Science and Culture Centers in the region and its representatives work in the Russian embassies in Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Mexico, and Nicaragua. In the description of its public diplomacy the agency states: “The capacity of soft power increasingly serves the foreign agenda of the Russian Federation, including issues such as ensuring a favourable environment, creating modernization alliances and strengthening Eurasian integration. Public diplomacy contributes not only to strengthening feelings of kindness towards our country, but also to

promoting specific state foreign policy interests at the social and interpersonal level.”

On the cultural issue, Rossotrudnichestvo has begun the exchange with different programmes and festivals of regional relevance such as the International Book Fair in Havana and the International Book Fair in Mexico, among other events where Russia has been a guest country. As a balance of this work, the agency ensures its positive long-term experience, indicating “its effectiveness as a public diplomacy tool that influences the minds and consciousness of the foreign public. They help promote a positive perception of Russia in the world and represent an important channel for developing international cooperation.”

In the academic dimension, it offers the New Generation program, a forum of young Latin American and Spanish leaders, in the field of economics, politics, as well as scientific and cultural collaboration, on a journey of “exchange, friendship and cooperation”, where the work of the office “... is defined by the Concept of Promotion of Russian Education on the basis of the Representative Offices of Rossotrudnichestvo Abroad, approved on March 27, 2014. The concept aims to create a system of effective measures for the promotion of Russian higher education abroad, as well as the creation of media and support for the coordination of the activities of universities in the development of international relations”.

Academic mechanisms function as multipliers or channels of activism, through cultural foundations and friendship associations. They feed the values and political affections of international public opinion, going beyond the scientific agenda to encompass policy transfers and strategic projections. Thus, while these institutes may be presented as “harmless” soft-power centres, they operate by reinforcing the Russian government’s agenda (with specific goals and actions) to promote its official doctrine and worldview.

Accordingly, **academic and cultural products that support various political, diplomatic, and economic purposes are part of the public diplomacy of states like Russia and China, es-**

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pecially when it comes to geopolitical studies, international policy reports, and regional analyses. They create an agenda favourable to their interests (anti-imperialist, sovereigntist, etc.), through specialised mechanisms (donations for study programmes, academic exchanges, etc.) that contribute to an ecosystem where liberal and pluralist positions are stigmatised and intellectual support is extended to governments that violate Human Rights. All from an approach that reduces, de facto, the work of the academy to serve state interests.

These paradigms are propagated by academic activism and like-minded academics in collaboration with autocratic governments and with an important production of congresses, research, articles, and brochures that reinforce their message (Mare and Thiemann, 2021). **This influence is amplified if one considers that the contemporary academic conceives him or herself as a creator of content** (magazines, columns, Op Ed, talks, etc.). In turn, the positioning of these counter-narratives confronting liberal statements can function as an effective transnational network: it utters grievances and establishes an organised and systematic ‘campaign mentality’.

All this gives legitimacy to the mechanisms of collaboration, allows to strengthen multilateral movements and to resist other pressures of

the international community for the defence of Human Rights. At the same time, it assists in the promotion of radical political activism abroad, facilitates the realisation of lucrative pacts and, in general, the retention of internal power. In this regard, the acting director of the Institute for Latin American Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ILA RAN) explains: "In the 2000s Russia understood that it needed agents of influence, for example, contacts of intellectuals in Latin America (...) Russia is looking for contacts, such as Argentine political scientist Atilio Borón, who has many ties to Russia and to left-wing parties. He is not a Russian agent, but Russia uses him as a collaborator to spread its message and values in Latin America. Another example is that of Bolivia's former ambassador to Russia, María Luisa Serano, a left-wing intellectual, who has very good links with political forces in Russia" (Razumovsky, interview 13.04.2021).

For his part, the renowned historian Viktor Jeifets, Professor at the School of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University, expands on the above by referring to the nexus of Russian institutions (especially in the academic field) with the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO): "They serve us to establish contacts in Latin America, and we serve them to establish contacts in Russia. Although lately CLACSO is taking a very neo-Leninist line and we are more open, we have people of different ideologies" (Jeifets, interview 13.03.2021).

In its updated version, the anti-imperialist and anti-US discourse is a common point around which other distinctive axes motivated by pragmatism and commercial convenience are positioned. On this, the director of the Interdisciplinary Research Center (CIES), Icesi University, Colombia, explains that there is an alliance with countries that have an anti-American discourse: "Russia, which is a capitalist country and has nothing to do with communist ideology, builds its international relations based on symbolic points such as hostility towards the United States. Russia intends to replace the existing international order with something new, that is not guided by the US, where Russia can have a greater participation and

a greater role. This rhetoric coincides with that of some Latin American countries." (Rouvinski, interview 29.04.2021).

4. Impact on the Latin American Political Sphere

Russian public diplomacy has offered and amplified discursive alternatives to Latin American populists and autocrats based on its antagonism with the United States and other regional and global democratic actors. A first constant in this imaginary is the denunciation of "threats of American aggression", where Russia has shown itself a promoter of a (selective) discourse of foreign non-interference. To project these ideas, Russia has taken advantage of its presence as an extra-regional companion in those Latin American coalitions (CELAC, ALBA) where the United States and Western allies have no presence or have been excluded, privileging an "anti-imperialist" narrative in favour of illiberal regimes and movements.

Russia has responded to explicit demands from governments that have needed to place themselves in its orbit of influence. This relationship has important historical antecedents. It began in both Cuba and Nicaragua, when their governments declared the socialist character of the Cuban Revolution (1961) and the Sandinista Revolution (1979) respectively, a dynamic that continued

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during the 2000s with the governments of Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa, and Evo Morales. With the peaks of diplomatic activity in 2008 and 2014, the relationship with the countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), with emphasis on Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Bolivia, strengthened specific interests among these nations. The “Caribbean triangle”, composed of the first three and supported by their political and military relations since the Cold War, acted as a basis for geopolitical penetration in the region.

Following the breakdown of Russian cooperation with the West in the wake of the wars in Georgia and Ukraine, these alliances sought to develop greater mutual credibility for their institutions. Above all, since the crisis in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, and the Donbas war, multilateral mechanisms in the region have been used to produce a counterweight to international public opinion critical of Russia's actions. Specific Latin American governments had a unified position on the matter. The Cuban leadership, for example, accused the Ukrainian government of being “anti-Russian, anti-Ukrainian, and pro-imperialist” (Castro, 2014). Evo Morales and Daniel Ortega also openly backed the Kremlin and blamed the United States and Western Europe. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro claimed that the United States and Western Europe would bring back the Cold War by isolating the Russian Federation for its role in the Ukraine crisis.

However, concerning multilateral issues, these governments have not developed a unified front in their foreign policy. The director of ILA RAN exemplifies this divergence and its nature when he warns: “For Russia, the system is much more complicated than being multipolar. For example, Ecuador, which was Russia's partner, in 2008 refused to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent, something Cuba and Nicaragua did (...). Another important point is that some Russian advisers have claimed that Russia develops relations with Latin American elites and not with the peoples. In addition, some polls have shown that the Latin American country with the least favourable opinion about Russia is Vene-

zuela, which since the Chávez government is our main partner. Venezuela being our main partner, this happens because relations are established between the elites of the Russian state and those of other countries, and not with the peoples.” (Razumovsky, interview 13.04.2021)

Nevertheless, we can affirm that relations at the level of government elites allow an unprecedented influence in partner nations. Oblivious to transparency and exempt from accountability, they allow agreements that violate the standards of law of liberal democracies, despite public and civic interests.

The cases of Russia and Venezuela represent two emblematic and parallel processes of autocratization in the twenty-first century. The personalist regimes of their political leaders (Vladimir Putin – Hugo Chávez, Nicolás Maduro) have strengthened dialogue, collaboration, and mutual support throughout their political relations. Their practices converge in the progressive elimination of democratic institutions and actors (opposition parties, media, and civil society organisations). In parallel, both governments have ensured a strong state presence in the economy, based on relations of clientelism and neopatrimonialism.

The geopolitical synergy of the above-mentioned elements has privileged Venezuela as a Russian gateway to the Latin American market and regional space, not only in terms of the economy, but also academia, culture, and media. For its part, Russia offers a diplomatic counterweight as a global ally against the United States, against other democratic allies, and against the questions and disapprovals of the international community. Considering the results of the interviews, we cannot locate the ideological synergies of both countries within conventional parameters of the Cold War, but perceive the possible points of contact and affordances between conservatism, Russian nationalism, Venezuelan Bolivarianism, and “Socialism of the twenty-first century” (Tsygankov & Tsygankov, 2021).

These repertoires have their “echo chambers” in the Latin American academia (Bartlett & Miller,

2012), considering that the relationship of the Latin American academia with democracy is defective from the axiological and ideological point of view: an ideological hegemony remains within left-wing circles in Latin America, with anti-liberal and anti-pluralist roots. The radical left possesses a greater capacity for public influence than moderate left/right-wing intellectuals. The radical left is overrepresented in academic institutions, in public debates, and in editorial production. For example, various interventions in forums, with influential public intellectuals, in opinion articles, among other academic initiatives, have minimised or conditioned criticism of human rights violations in countries such as Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua (Uzcátegui, 2021). This finds strengthening and expansion in the illiberal nodes with political connections, in which part of the Latin American academia operates in collaboration with its Russian counterparts, and in spaces close to the foreign ministries of the respective countries.

5. Conclusions

We can distinguish three thematic axes in the intellectual and cultural influence of authoritarianism in Latin America: the dialogue between autocracies (as a type of regime), the dissemination of illiberal ideas (as a type of ideology), and the operability of sharp power (as a set of objectives and forms of projection). They are based on both material and intangible elements, with symbolic, cognitive, and ideological predominance. In addition, they provide a basis for the legitimisation of authoritarian governance (own or allied) and deploy intergovernmental networks capable of supporting related governments. From this perspective, the promotion and dissemination of autocracy on the subcontinent translates into actions aimed at protecting or preserving allied regimes from democratic solidarity agendas.

The autocratic promotion towards Latin America is far from being structured along the ideological lines of the twentieth century and the Cold War, i. e. left versus right. The advancement of the authoritarian project can

The promotion and dissemination of autocracy on the subcontinent translates into actions aimed at protecting or preserving allied regimes from democratic solidarity agendas.

preferably be understood in terms of state interests, guided by the preservation of geostrategic interests and the strengthening of the authoritarian regime.

The focus that this kind of power places on academia illustrates an authoritarian determination to monopolise ideas, suppress alternative narratives, and exploit associated institutions, where the academic, intellectual, and cultural fields have served as covert spheres of autocratic influence. Therefore, an anti-Western and anti-liberal bias is amplified in the geopolitical and media landscape of the developing autocracy.

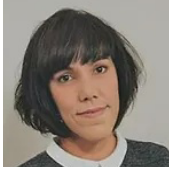
More specifically, we can conclude that autocratic cooperation between Russia and its Latin American partners is recharging the reach of the former in the region. Therefore, a bilateral confluence of values and positions opposed to the defence of democracy is strengthened, in tune with Russian sharp power, between relevant actors of the intelligentsia, within the academic organisations and the Latin American autocratic political forces.

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