

Dilemma of the least bad, bad and worse in U.S.-Cuba relations (I)



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Recent administrations in the United States, whether Democratic or Republican, have demonstrated that they are in fact a single party defending their class interests at the national and international level. This uniqueness has been increasing rather than decreasing, in an act of plutocratic/imperialist concentration of political power.

However, there are factions within them, fiercely opposed, and although none of them are good, we could categorize them as the "less bad" (in Cuban politics exemplified by Barack Obama), the "bad" (of Joe Biden, currently in the White House) and the "worse" of the Republican ultra-right with Donald Trump, Ronald De Santis, Marco Rubio and others of such ilk. "Together" is not the same as "scrambled." The difference between a bad faction and a worse one can represent the survival or the end of Humanity.

From 1959 to 2014

It has been 61 years since President John F. Kennedy's executive order that officially imposed "an embargo on all trade with Cuba" -- something that was only the "legalistic" implementation of a blockade that had already existed de facto for a long time. The initial concept of U.S. economic pressure was to create "hardship" and "disenchantment" among the Cuban population and to deny "money and supplies to Cuba, decrease monetary and real wages, "provoke hunger, despair and the overthrow of the government". Such says the infamous Lester D. Mallory memo, well known and notorious, but which should always be mentioned.

A CIA study on the "embargo," really full-scale economic warfare, written 20 years after its imposition, has since concluded that the sanctions "have not met any of their objectives." The same was said by former President Obama on December 17, 2014. But this blockade is still in force today, causing infinite pain to the Cuban people.

It is necessary to express that more than 82 percent of Cubans had not yet been born (but suffer its consequences), when this extermination decree was made official. Already President Dwight D. Eisenhower -- in office from 1959-1960 -- imposed the first economic sanctions against the revolutionary government of Cuba.

When in 1960, Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro nationalized the U.S. and British/Dutch oil companies in Cuba for refusing to refine Soviet oil, which if it had happened would have caused a collapse of the country's economy and defense capability, Eisenhower retaliated by cutting off Cuban sugar sales to the United States, which comprised about 80 percent of Cuba's sugar exports. He later banned all U.S. exports to Cuba except food and medicine. All these sanctions were part of a broader U.S. strategy to overthrow Fidel Castro, including support for his internal opponents and preparations for an invasion of Cuba, using Cubans exiled on U.S. soil, organized, trained, armed and paid by the CIA, numerous assassination attempts and a vast panoply of aggression and hostile acts of all kinds.

The intention of this article is to discuss the role of the Democratic and Republican parties in power with respect to Cuba, and what should be the position of Cuba's friends in the United States in this regard, most particularly in the general elections in 16 months, in November 2024, which is envisioned as a confrontation not between good and evil, but between "bad and worse". Of course, any change or continuation of government in the United States has, in one way or another, an impact on Cuba. The current Biden administration has fallen far short of expectations (and of its campaign promises). But, we must ask ourselves: What would have happened if Donald Trump had been re-elected? What could have happened in April 1961 when the mercenary invasion took place or in October 1962 during the Missile Crisis (October for Cubans), if the U.S. President had been Richard Nixon and not John F. Kennedy? We will never know, but the chances are very high that our country and the world would have suffered much worse consequences. The real world is not binary, it is not just good or bad, but with nuances between the two extremes. When we see the "bad," we must consider that the "worse" is always latent.

How did the "Democrat" and Republican governments in the United States manifest themselves with respect to Cuba?

From 1959 until the very temporary and limited "thaw" of 2014, the following governments were in power in the United States.

During Republican Party administrations, the following developments in bilateral relations occurred:

Dwight Eisenhower eliminated the sales of sugar from Cuba to the United States, by the way after the harvest was completed and with full warehouses that could not be easily sold in other markets. He then banned all U.S. exports to Cuba except food and medicine. He supported internal counterrevolutionaries, including all kinds of acts of terror and sabotage and preparations for an invasion of Cuba, formed the infamous Brigade 2506, using Cubans exiled in the United States, paid for by the CIA. Richard Nixon oversaw the strict enforcement of the blockade. He also encouraged and/or permitted countless aggressions of all kinds against Cuba. Pirate launches, numerous bloody provocations on the borders of the illegally occupied Guantanamo naval base, terrorist attacks against diplomatic installations and other Cuban entities abroad. Closely linked to the most reactionary and terrorist Cuban circles, several people of Cuban origin participated in the criminal act known as the Watergate Scandal, which finally forced his resignation. During the anodyne administration of Gerald R. Ford Jr. the foreign policy of the United States depended entirely on the evil but intelligent Henry Kissinger. Faced with growing resistance from a group of countries in the OAS, Washington chose not to confront the majority of members and several states in the region re-established relations with Havana. The U.S. vote was part of Secretary of State Kissinger's failed effort to try to "normalize" U.S.-Cuba relations, lifted some limitations on trade between Havana and subsidiaries of U.S. companies operating in third countries, and partially lifted the ban on ships trading with the island docking in the United States. Ford's term in office saw one of the most terrible and criminal attacks against Cuba, the terrorist bombing of Cubana Airlines Flight 455 in Barbados.

Ronald Reagan was a sworn enemy of human progress and especially of socialist society throughout the world. He imposed new sanctions to "punish" Cuba for its support of revolutionary movements in Central America and other regions of the world. It reinstated the ban on travel to the island for most U.S. residents, prohibited most Cubans from visiting the U.S., prevented the importation from third countries of any product containing Cuban nickel.

It placed Cuba on the list of State Sponsors of International Terrorism, on which it remained until 2015. Most of the sanctions resulting from the inclusion on that list were already part of the blockade of Cuba, but it made international financial institutions more reluctant to do business with the island.

One of the most notorious U.S. scandals occurred during his tenure, known as Iran-Contra, also involving notorious Cuban-born terrorists in key positions.

Reagan, likewise, ordered the brutal 1983 invasion of Grenada, in which 24 Cuban internationalists and hundreds of Grenadians were killed. While President George H. W. Bush (and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev) "negotiated" the end of the Cold War - or rather the unconditional surrender and demise of the Soviet Union - the United States pressured the dying socialist giant to cut off collaboration with Cuba as a condition of U.S. aid to Moscow. Russia's first president, Boris N. Yeltsin, oligarchic, pro-American and pro-US, bowed to Washington's demand.

With the Cuban economy in precarious conditions, the United States Congress passed the Torricelli Act. It was quickly enacted by George H. W. Bush on October 23, 1992, in the midst of the election campaign, with the purpose of winning over the Florida electorate. The Torricelli Act was designed to tighten the blockade to the maximum in the hope of finally achieving a regime change in Cuba by turning it into a vassal state of the United States. It also reinforced the extraterritoriality of the blockade and the subsidiaries of U.S. companies in third countries cut off some 700 million dollars in trade, mainly food and medicines. It restored the ban on ships trading with Cuba to dock in U.S. ports only after 180 days, and gave the president the authority to cut off foreign assistance to any country helping the island. Finally, he specified that the blockade should only be lifted when Cuba had become a democracy modeled on the U.S. political system, and authorized increased multi-billion dollar support for the island's counterrevolution to achieve this. Undoubtedly, this Republican president led one of the most aggressive administrations against Cuba.

His son was not far behind. Cuban-born ultra-rightists in Florida played a key role in President George W. Bush's 2000 election victory in Florida and he was "especially receptive" to their demands to tighten the embargo. He appointed a "Free Cuba" Assistance Commission to chart how to "bring about an expeditious end to Castro's dictatorship." Following its recommendations, Bush abolished people-to-people travel.

He restricted academic exchanges so severely that only a handful of study abroad programs between U.S. and Cuban universities survived and travel by Cubans to the United States virtually ceased. Those of Cuban Americans to the island were limited to one every three years, and limits on family remittances were significantly reduced. In the second part of this article, we will analyze the characteristics of the governments led by presidents of the Democratic Party. (to be continued...)

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(Taken from Firmas Selectas)

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