

CUBA-UNITED STATES ACADEMIC WORKSHOP (TACE)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR U.S. - CUBAN RELATIONS: WORKING PAPER

**PROPOSALS FOR COOPERATION
IN AREAS OF MUTUAL INTEREST**

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This working paper presents a unique effort by Cuban and U.S. scholars to understand and explore ways of overcoming the tension between the countries and improving relations. It intends to be a building block in the development of a respectful and positive Cuban-U.S. relationship, which remains trapped in confrontational interactions after more than five decades.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2008, after changes in Cuba and the United States, the Regional Coordinator of Economic and Social Research (CRIES)¹ began to support a process of consultation among scholars from renowned institutions in Cuba and the United States, in search of alternatives to the conflict between their governments. The process is based on the concept of “academic diplomacy” (see appendix). The initiative aimed to create a space for reflection through periodic meetings between researchers, former government officials, and former diplomats from both countries, to produce innovative and realistic proposals. In this way, the project aspires to the possibility that the proposed measures could foster a constructive dialogue and overcome obstacles in the bilateral relationship.

TACE has had, since its inception, support from several institutions and individuals in the hemisphere, including in Brazil, Argentina, Canada, Mexico and Panama. The process began in June 2009, with coordinators from the University of Havana (Cuba) and American University (U.S.), and a team from CRIES serving as a third party facilitator. The first five meetings took place outside of Cuba or the United States in order to avoid a context that could influence the discussions. The sixth occurred in Havana, in January 2012, and a seventh is planned for Washington, DC.

¹ CRIES is a Latin American and Caribbean civil society network with a 30-year track record of research and the facilitation of exchanges on subjects relevant to the regional, hemispheric and international agenda.

SECTION 2: COMPENDIUM OF JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Academic, Scientific, and Cultural Engagement

In light of the positive contribution that academic exchanges have provided to the attenuation of bilateral tensions, and of the benefits both countries have derived from them, even during the most difficult times in the relationship between the two countries, we recommend:

- A. The creation of a network that would bring together scholars, scientists, public intellectuals and artists interested in promoting exchanges between Cuba and the United States.
- B. The governments of Cuba and the United States improve and accelerate the granting of licenses to academic institutions, and visas for academics, scientists, intellectuals and artists from Cuba and the United States involved in exchanges.
- C. The promotion of meetings of Cuban and U.S. legislators and other political actors with academics, scientists, intellectuals and artists from both countries.
- D. The lifting of U.S. restrictions on the sale to Cuba of equipment and other materials that enable the development of research for civilian purposes, particularly in the fields of Life Sciences and Environmental Sciences.

II. Freedom to Travel

The TACE group supports freedom of travel between the peoples of both countries and the reduction of barriers to travel between the two neighbors. Taking into account that both governments have encouraged and made possible inter-personal contacts, TACE specifically offers the following suggestions:

- A. The United States and Cuba explore ways to reduce paper work necessary for travel, to avoid increases in the cost of passports, visas and other travel documents, and to remove other obstacles that could delay or hinder the granting of licenses, visas, and departure permits.
- B. The reduction in the entrance and exit visa fees that Cuba and the United States impose on travelers to and from both countries.
- C. The U.S. government should eliminate the daily expenditure cap for U.S. citizens in Cuba.
- D. The United States look for a formula to eliminate sanctions targeted at international banks and commercial entities that affect the freedom to travel, and Cuba look for a way to withdraw the U.S. dollar exchange rate tax as it pertains to travel.
- E. The elimination of the prohibition on the use of U.S. credit and bank cards in Cuba.
- F. Medical insurance coverage and treatment for U.S. citizens in Cuba and Cuban citizens in the United States be readily available.
- G. The promotion of best international travel-related practices, which would result from both governments reviewing regulations that restrict the number of companies involved in arranging travel to and from Cuba, thereby reducing the costs to travelers.

III. International Commerce and Development

TACE recognizes that the measures being taken by the government of Cuba to “update the Cuban economic model” open spaces for changes in the areas of trade and development. The application of the new guidelines could create conditions for the promotion of the non-state sector and for increased productivity and efficiency in the Cuban economy. These aims are consistent with U.S. values, and therefore the U.S. government should review policies that impede implementation of the changes. In this regard, we recommend the following actions:

- A. The U.S. government openly recognizes that the ongoing restructuring of the Cuban economy will enable better conditions for Cuba’s development.
- B. In the context of recent Cuban guidelines, the Cuban government should examine viable formulas to ease access to foreign financing in pursuit of development, and to be able to benefit from accumulated international experience.
- C. Cuba should engage in further exchanges with the international development community, suited to its needs, in order to take advantage of accumulated experiences on international cooperation programs.
- D. The U.S. government should not impede Cuba’s efforts to reengage in such exchanges.
- E. That the United States ease restrictions on financial transfers from North American and Cuban-American citizens, similar to the treatment of Cuban Americans.
- F. The United States should remove the many obstacles to already authorized trade and investment, including requirements that a vessel wait six months to enter a U.S. port after visiting Cuba, and that Cuban buyers make purchases only with cash payments in advance of delivery.

TACE participants consider that the recommendations contained in the publications linked to the discussions,² including the report written by one of its members, Richard Feinberg, for the Brookings Institution, about the possibilities for cooperation between Cuba and international financial institutions (IFIs), constitute a contribution and makes sure that its recommendations are valued by both governments.³

IV. Terrorism and Security Issues

² Véase. Sánchez Egozcue, Jorge Mario (2011) “United States-Cuba Economic Relations: The Pending Normalization” (Chapter 10, p160-179) in “Debating U.S.-Cuban Relations, Shall We Play Ball?”, Edited by Jorge I. Dominguez, Rafael Hernandez, Lorena G. Barberia. Routledge Series: Contemporary Inter-American Relations. December 2011-January 2012. and Sánchez Egozcue, Jorge Mario (2011) “Complicado vs. Absurdo: ensayando ideas para desmontar el impasse entre Cuba y los Estados Unidos”, in Pensamiento Propio (Buenos Aires), No. 34, Año 16, Julio-Diciembre 2011, p. 16.

³ Richard E. Feinberg, Reaching Out: Cuba’s New Economy and the International Response, Brookings Institution, 2011

Terrorism and other security concerns have maintained a prominent position on the Cuban-U.S. bilateral agenda. TACE finds that combating global transnational terrorism is one area where cooperation ought to be possible between the governments. Neither government has any interest in seeing a proliferation of terrorist violence against its own citizens. Both governments have a legitimate interest in protecting their citizens from the consequences of drug trafficking and illegal migration. Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence that either government practices or sponsors terrorist tactics against the other today.⁴ Despite these circumstances terrorism remains one of the most contentious and emotional issues between the two governments. Some aspects remain controversial because their history is rooted in the Cold War and due to excessive politicization. The U.S. government maintains Cuba on its list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, and Cuban officials continue to denounce the United States as a major source of state terrorism throughout the world.

In order to engender confidence, cooperation on matters of terrorism and other security concerns must be a priority for both governments. In this regard, TACE recommends:

- A. The U.S. government should remove Cuba from its list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.
- B. Visits to Cuba by former U.S. military officers, ambassadors, and high national security officials should begin again for the purpose of developing exchanges between them and their Cuban counterparts.
- C. As a way to build confidence, the U.S. government should acknowledge publicly that it has received a proposal from Cuba to discuss ways to cooperate in the fight against terrorism, and both countries should begin negotiations on a joint agreement or declaration about terrorism.
- D. In light of the positive evaluation that the U.S. government made of Cuba's efforts to fight drug trafficking in its recent drug trafficking report, representatives of both governments should take steps to negotiate institutional agreements to work together on this problem.

V. Environment

The governments of Cuba and the United States both make protecting the environment a high priority, and have stated that international cooperation is a fundamental way to confront challenges and threats in this area. Both recognize that climate change will impact the region and create new challenges. Both are signatories to United Nations environmental conventions that provide a legal framework for bilateral agreements between the two countries. On this basis, TACE recommends:

- A. Both governments should prioritize and facilitate the mitigation of natural disasters and the prevention of manmade disasters in the Gulf of Mexico.
- B. Both governments should organize a series of technical workshops with officials from both governments. Some would focus on preparation for natural disasters while others would focus on mitigation of manmade disasters.

⁴ Carlos Alzugaray y Anthony Quainton, "Cuba-U.S. Relations: The Terrorism Dimension", en Pensamiento Propio, Buenos Aires, CRIES: No. 34, Julio-Diciembre del 2011.

- C. Both governments should encourage collaboration between municipalities in each country so that local governments, communities and NGOs can share experiences and learn from each other.
- D. The U.S. Government should modify current regulations that prevent the transfer of technology to Cuba related to disaster mitigation and related environmental challenges.
- E. Both governments should engage in bilateral discussions, as well as in multilateral fora, about contingency planning for the mitigation of a manmade disaster, given that oil exploration in the deep waters between Cuba and the U.S. has begun. If a deep water accident were to occur, the ability of the United States to supply equipment necessary to contain a spill would be constrained by current U.S. sanctions. Specifically, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should be authorized to contract relevant private firms with the technical capacity to provide assistance to Cuba in the event of a catastrophe.
- F. Both governments should encourage the exchange of scientists working on environmental issues. For example, Cuban scientists have developed strains of bacteria capable of attacking oil and converting it into organic matter; this could significantly benefit the U.S. were the U.S. to be able to purchase this technology from Cuba.
- G. Both governments should expand their existing cooperation on hurricane tracking. In this regard, the U.S. government should authorize the transfer of new technologies to Cuba.
- H. Both governments should plan for the mitigation of earthquake disasters, because the entire Caribbean is geologically active as a result of tectonic forces. In fact, seismologists anticipate major earthquakes along a plate extending through southern Cuba.
- I. Both governments should develop a joint fisheries conservation regime. Depletion of fish stocks is a growing international problem with several fish species already extinct. The same could happen to preserve coral reefs and their ecosystems.

APPENDIX

A. Meetings and Participants

1. Chronology of Meetings

From the beginning of the academic workshop initiative in mid-2009 there have been a series of meetings, which are as follows:

- a. June, 2009: São Paulo, Brasil
- b. May, 2010: Ciudad de Saber, Panama
- c. July, 2010: Buenos Aires, Argentina
- d. October, 2010: Toronto, Canada
- e. July, 2011: México City, México
- f. January, 2012: Havana, Cuba

2. Participants

The initiative brought together a total of 22 participants, plus the facilitation team from CRIES. TACE is made up of seven Cubans, and eight from the United States, along with one Cuban and one U.S. coordinator. Only some of the participants were involved in every meeting. In addition, specialists were invited to specific workshops where they made valuable contributions to the discussion on particular topics.

Coordinators:

Cuba:	Milagros Martínez
United States:	Philip Brenner
CRIES:	Andrés Serbin, Edy Kaufman, Eliana Spadoni

Participants:

Cuba:	Carlos Alzugaray, Soraya Castro, Cristina Díaz, Armando Fernández, Jorge Hernández, Rafael Hernández, Jorge Mario Sánchez
United States:	Margaret Crahan, Richard Feinberg, Anya Landau-French, Theodore Piccone, Anthony Quainton, Sally Shelton-Colby, Sarah Stephens, Lawrence Wilkinson
Specialists:	Aurelio Alonso, Omar Everleny, Anicia García, Ileana Soraya, Juan Triana
CRIES Staff:	Celeste Ronzano, Anita Bourse

B. “Academic Diplomacy”

1. How TACE Developed

Cubans and North Americans have tried before now to find ways to sustain a non-hostile relationship between the two neighbors. In fact a legacy of failed attempts to establish peaceful and constructive relations makes each new effort that much more difficult. Still, the distinctive features of the Cuban-U.S. Academic Workshop provide reason to expect that this time the effort could bear fruit:

- (1) the Workshop was initiated and is organized by a Latin American non-governmental organization (CRIES) which is well-respected in both countries;
- (2) it involves Cubans and North Americans who have had government experience or who have worked closely with government officials;
- (3) it encourages and enables the participants to focus on solutions that by their nature contribute to a process of building confidence and trust among themselves and between the countries;

Knowledge alone of how to build trust and engage in mutually respectful interactions will not produce normal relations between Cuba and the United States. But such knowledge is an essential building block in the construction of a sustained positive Cuban-U.S. relationship. The focused goal of the Cuban-U.S. Academic Workshop is to develop that knowledge.

2. The Concept

The key concept that underlies the development of this initiative has been that of “academic diplomacy,” (a term used in the context of the bilateral conflict between Cuba and the United States, coined by one of its coordinators):

“In the history of the conflict between Cuba and the United States there have been collaborative spaces that, despite not being highly publicized, have been sustained and are growing.” Given the tension that has characterized the relationship between Havana and Washington, participants engaged in these exchanges have been, to a large extent, the real diplomats representing their nation in the other country. These individuals have represented the channels for the necessary and fruitful contact between people.⁵

As a result, “a group of academics, former diplomats, experts and former officers in organizations associated with these topics, became a part of an initiative to create a space for exchanges, where the discussion of perspectives, ideas and proposals started creating options rooted in mutual agreement, and where academia started contributing to end the existing stalemate.

In contrast to other undertakings of this kind made by think tanks and academic institutions in both countries, a key advantage in TACE’s exercise is that it is based on unanimous consent—achieved between participants from both sides—without involving any formal agreements in recognition of the fact that there is a legacy of distrust that cannot be ignored, and that reciprocal visions are not only derived from political differences, but they also have roots in history. Despite these differences, there is no impediment to jointly exploring opportunities to improve the bilateral relationship in topics of mutual interest.”⁶

Mutual respect is the natural inclination of well-intentioned advocates in both countries who engage in joint projects. Yet, good intentions appear to be insufficient for building long-term trust unless they are accompanied by a plan intentionally designed for confidence-building. The Cuban-U.S. Academic Workshop is based on a widely used version of the successful process generally known as “citizens’ diplomacy.”⁷

Through a series of workshops guided by professional facilitators, participants in this process search for a common basis on which two parties or governments can engage with each other constructively. This endeavor, within the broader category of “citizens’ diplomacy”, intrinsically different than “back channel” negotiations, which often run parallel to or in preparation for

⁵ Milagros Martínez Reinosa, “Academic Diplomacy: Cultural Exchange between Cuba and the United States” en *Debating U.S.-Cuban Relations, Shall We Play Ball?*, eds., Jorge I. Domínguez, Rafael Hernández, Lorena G. Barbería. (New York: Routledge, 2011); Milagros Martínez Reinosa, “Cuba y Estados Unidos, entre la oportunidad y los desafíos de la diplomacia académica,” **Pensamiento Propio** (Buenos Aires), No. 34, Año 16, Julio-Diciembre 2011, p. 29 .

⁶ Jorge Mario Sánchez Egoscue, “Complicado vs. Absurdo: ensayando ideas para desmontar el impasse entre Cuba y los Estados Unidos”, in **Pensamiento Propio** (Buenos Aires), No. 34, Año 16, Julio-Diciembre 2011, p. 16.

⁷ John Davies y Edward (Edy) Kaufman, eds. *Second Track/Citizens’ Diplomacy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

official negotiations, and are mostly conducted by emissaries of the governments⁸. In contrast, the citizen workshop-negotiation process is conducted by individuals who have no official responsibilities. Their objective is to generate new options by repeatedly putting themselves in the shoes of the other, and by testing the limits of the possible.

3. The process

Successful initiatives of “citizen diplomacy” assembled workshops for several days, usually twice each year along a period of time of two or three years. The process is designed to engender the development of solutions that fall “outside the box” of prior approaches.

The process moves along four distinct stages. The first stage is of extreme importance, and has been normally neglected in official diplomacy. Once the partners are fully immersed in the spirit of the exercise, have warmed up to one another, and understand the rules of the game (which involves avoiding blame and looking toward the basis for a common ground), the facilitators can proceed with the activities. In the TACE experience, the initial job of the participants was to list the grievances of each side towards the other, and then classify them in terms of their complexity, doability and urgency.

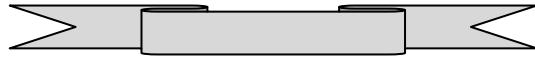
The second stage of skills-building involved individual and group techniques that can improve the effectiveness of the search for common ground by the participants. This stage also involves creating a common long-term shared vision, and learning how to move from compromise (in which each side feels it has given up something reluctantly) to win/win solutions. The third stage introduces alternative methods for brainstorming, coming up with recommendations then submitted to a consensus building process. In the fourth stage the group deals with the preparations for presenting the recommendations that have emerged from the whole dialogue process to policy makers, and at times to the general public.

Finally, it is notable that the agenda for each meeting was decided by agreement between the coordinators of the three institutions based on the initial identification of a list of 23 topics on the bilateral agenda, which emerged from both academic knowledge of the relationship and the experiences of former officials. Those issues that were already subject to direct negotiation between the two governments have not been fully analyzed to date. Beyond generating useful analysis and recommendations, the program has aimed at building confidence between the partners of both countries both through increased interaction, as well as through the joint efforts of writing articles, all the while expressing different views and positions on the topics chosen.⁹ On the eve of the third anniversary of the project, the members of the workshop decided to give it visibility and make public some of their recommendations and conclusions.¹⁰

⁸ Cfr. Serbin, Andrés (2010) “A diplomacia ciudadana no América Latina e no Caribe: uma atualizaçao”, en **Política Externa** (Sao Paulo), vol 18, No. 4., Mar/Abr/Mai 2010, pp. 115-130.

⁹ Cfr. Serbin, Andrés (2011) “Diálogo académico y diplomacia ciudadana en las Américas”, in **Pensamiento Propio** (Buenos Aires), No. 34, Año 16, Julio-Diciembre 2011, pp. 7-11.

¹⁰ Como se vera en lo adelante muchas de las recomendaciones y análisis ya aparecieron en **Pensamiento Propio**, publicación trilingüe de ciencias sociales de América Latina y el Caribe, Número 34 Año 16, Julio-Diciembre 2011, Buenos Aires.



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