

The Fifth Summit of the Americas: Recommendations for Action

Reframe U.S. – Cuba Relations
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Executive Summary

U.S. policy toward Cuba should advance the democratic aspirations of the Cuban people and strengthen U.S. credibility throughout the Hemisphere. The nearly 50-year old policy fails on both counts: it has resulted in a downward spiral of U.S. influence on the island and has left the United States isolated in the hemisphere and beyond.

The challenge for the United States is how to put in place a new policy based on critical and constructive engagement. If the United States is to play a positive role in Cuba's future, it must not indulge in hostile rhetoric nor obstruct a dialogue on issues that would advance democracy, justice, and human rights as well as broader national interests.

Lifting all restrictions on Cuban American travel and remittances and opening dialogue with the regime – initiatives proposed by President-elect Obama on the campaign trail – are by themselves insufficient to put the United States on a long-term, strategic path toward the normalization of relations with Cuba. To take policy further, the United States should proceed with a few unilateral measures in the short term: it should broaden and deepen bilateral and diplomatic relations, enhance contact between Cuban and U.S. citizens and permanent residents, end the communications embargo, establish civil society assistance, remove Cuba from the list of terrorist countries, it should not object to Cuba's participation in the OAS, it should permit U.S. assistance to Cuba for disaster assistance, modify licensing agreements for tradable medicines from Cuba, and respond to Cuban actions.