

## Cuba on Obama's agenda

By  
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Cuba is not the most urgent and important problem the new U.S. government has to deal with. Nor is it the most difficult.

The so-called "Cuban problem" was never very important to the United States, given the size of the island and its scant economic significance relative to its size and technological-industrial development and the financial opulence of the superpower.

Not even after the triumph of the Revolution, which freed the island from subordination to Washington, or when the topic became part of the Cold War tensions — if you exclude the days of the October Crisis (or the October Missiles) in 1961, which should not be considered a bilateral Cuba-U.S. affair — was it proper to treat the topic as a matter of the highest priority for Washington.

However, the superpower's demerit policy against the Cuban Revolution in the past 50 years — because of the way it has magnified the purported "Cuba danger" to the security of the United States, and because of the charges of alleged disrespect for human rights and an absence of democracy on the island that served as pretexts for its hostility — has manipulated consciences by means of a monumental and multimillion-dollar media campaign, both in the U.S. and the rest of the world.

The objective has been to make it incomparably more difficult to try to normalize links than to maintain tensions. But, because not a single charge can withstand the simplest test in the light of facts and history, all that's needed is willingness and a lot of valor — considering the influence of the groups in power that sponsor and benefit from the hostile policy against Cuba — to tear down the scaffolding of prejudices and fears built around the island and its passion for the defense of its independence.

To shut down the center for the torturing of prisoners that the U.S. government created in the Guantanamo Naval Base, President Obama surely will have the unanimous support of the world community, given the general repudiation this center has justifiably deserved.

Nor

would Obama meet with any objections from the rest of the world if he returns to the Cubans that territory, seized as a result of the military intervention that prevented the Cubans to achieve in 1898 the independence from Spanish colonialism for which they had struggled since 1868. There is no excuse not to accomplish this with swiftness, if the objective is to promote relations founded on reciprocal respect.

The rules that forbid Cuban immigrants in the U.S. to travel to the land of their birth and send money to their relatives under the same conditions granted to immigrants from other countries are so absurd that nobody would object to their revocation.

When this happens, the other U.S. citizens will feel discriminated against because they are prevented from enjoying their constitutional right to visit the insulted island to determine by themselves if the media are deceiving them or telling them the truth. It will then become obligatory to eliminate as soon as possible the ban on travel to Cuba imposed on the entire U.S. population, something that world public opinion would approve, despite the muck left by the campaign of defamation waged against the island for half a century.

The new U.S. president would have strong allies among his country's exporters to broaden the granting of licenses for the exportation of merchandise of all kinds, a process that is currently limited to agricultural products. This would surely be a step prior to the lifting of the blockade, something that is essential for the normalization of relations with Cuba.

Surely, the release of the five Cuban held prisoner for more than a decade on the basis of a fraudulent trial held in Miami for the crime of having infiltrated the gangs of terrorists that operated there against Cuba, would be among the decisions the president could make.

The same could be said about Washington's refusal to extradite to Venezuela — or try in the United States — the Cuban-born terrorist who was responsible for the bombing of a civilian Cuban aircraft in 1973 and for other crimes that have been widely repudiated.

The new president should especially examine the unfounded nature of the allegations against Cuba, both in the diplomatic and media fields.

The allegations regarding democratic flaws do not withstand direct confirmation, therefore lack a lasting effect, and end up backfiring against the accusers, as was recently the case in the United Nations, in relation with the purported violation of human rights by a country that is a world model in that regard, notwithstanding the demands placed by the defense of survival in the face of the violent hostility of the world's only superpower.

### Still

unresolved are concrete issues, such as who owes what to whom, in terms of damages. On one side are the U.S. companies affected by the Cuban nationalizations of 1959, which (hampered by their own government) could not at the time accept the offers of compensation from the Cuban government, and on the other side is the Cuban nation, which has suffered damages and losses as a result of the blockade and the hostile actions of the United States. Both sides would have to compare the objectivity of their respective claims.

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