



CUBA-US ACADEMIC WORKSHOPS

“TACE PROCESS” – EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

2008–2013

Based on the findings of the external evaluation process conducted by Prof. Wolf Grabendorff

PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

2008

PREPARATORY STAGE

Context analysis - Consultation process with scholars and institutions in both the U.S. and Cuba - Process design - Invitation to participants - Appointment of National Coordinators in both countries

2009-2010-2011

WORKSHOPS

Activities to address bilateral issues identified as priorities: São Paulo (June 2009)-Panama (May 2010)-Buenos Aires (July 2010)-Toronto (October 2010)-Mexico D.F. (July 2011)

2012

TACE IN THE CAPITALS

Turning-point in the process: participants meet in Havana, and have the opportunity to meet with several high government representatives - Later that year, they meet in Washington D.C. to present the preliminary recommendations at the Brookings Institution, to scholars and decision-makers.

2013

PUBLICATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Document with recommendations in 4 key areas published and advocacy strategies implemented to reach both governments.

Introductory words and acknowledgements

This report is the result of an external evaluation process of a unique effort by Cuban and U.S. scholars, former diplomats and foreign policy experts to explore ways of improving the bilateral relations. The whole of the **TACE Process** intended to be a building block in the development of a respectful and positive Cuban-U.S. relationship, especially in areas of mutual interest, where opportunities for cooperation exist.

CRIES would like to thank **Prof. Wolf Grabendorff** for taking the responsibility of conducting this external evaluation process, with great dedication and professionalism.

Additionally, we would like to show our appreciation to the **TACE participants** for their collaboration during the four-years project, the **Coordinators** and the **facilitation team** for their engagement and commitment with this endeavor, and to other people and **advisers** who contributed with their recommendations, knowledge and suggestions to improve this collective effort.

Finally, our special acknowledgements to **institutions and donors** who supported us throughout the years to develop this initiative (Ford Foundation; the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, CORDAID, Christopher Reynolds Foundation, Arca Foundation, the Mexico Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Center for Latin and Latino Studies at American University, UNESP, Argentine Council for International Relations – CARI-, City of Knowledge in Panama, FANJHN from Cuba, the Brookings Institution, Institute of Meteorology of Cuba, Molecular Immunology Center of Cuba, Cuban Academy of Sciences, and the Biomolecular Chemistry Center of Cuba).

“We want to express our deepest gratitude to all of them for silently contributing to improve relations between our countries and build peace in our hemisphere, within the framework of an initiative that reflects a strong commitment to the values of seeking a more peaceful and fair world.”

(Andrés Serbin - President of CRIES and General Coordinator of the TACE initiative)



“ACADEMIC DIPLOMACY

THE KEY CONCEPT

“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.” *Milagros Martínez Reinos*

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.

“A group of academics, former diplomats, experts and former officers (...) became 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 explore opportunities to improve the bilateral relationship in topics of mutual interest.”

Jorge Mario Sánchez Egozcue

Introduction & Methodological aspects

The four years lasting program of “academic diplomacy” Cuba-United States Academic Workshop (TACE) coordinated by CRIES has received a great deal of praise by academic as well as political observers for its original efforts to develop the basis for a future cooperation between the United States and Cuba. The process of slow change within Cuba had been the impetus for CRIES to suggest a medium term bilateral academic activity with tacit and rather informal support from both governments.

The selection of the members of the TACE team was in itself a successful experiment to create a basis of confidence building between not only academic but also policy experts from both sides, since about half of the team had been involved in the political decision making process of the respective governments. The 8 Cuban and the 9 US members of the TACE team have met 10 times over the four year period in 8 different countries allowing many of the US participants to visit Cuba

for the first time or re-evaluate their views about the bilateral relations after many years of absence.

As a major product of their common efforts the TACE team has recently published a compendium of joint recommendations as proposals for cooperation in areas of mutual interest called “Opportunities for U.S. –Cuban Relations” which was presented to the public in Washington D.C.

For CRIES this seemed a perfect moment of having the entire TACE process evaluated by an outside expert who was neither involved in the process itself nor related to any of the organisations funding or executing this unusual and original project of “citizen diplomacy”.

The basis for the evaluation of the project has been a qualitative method, based on a questionnaire developed by the outside expert and mailed to all members of the TACE team. Four (4) members of each side were willing to collaborate in the evaluation effort by answering by mail or phone the 8 questions about their perceptions of the development of the groups coherence, activities and goals as well as the future perspectives for the TACE program.

To avoid to reflect only an “inside view” in the evaluation of the TACE process the outside expert suggested to involve a “control group” of 4 outstanding experts in U.S.- Cuban relations. They were asked to respond to the same questions with the exception of the one dealing with the intra group dynamics of the TACE team. Since all of the 4 members of the control group were well aware of the TACE process they were very forthcoming in their cooperation with the evaluation effort and therefore permitting an outside view of the TACE program to be included in the evaluation.

All 12 experts who have responded to the evaluation questionnaire have been ensured that their observations will be handled confidentially and no personal identification will be used in this short evaluation report.

Prof. Wolf Grabendorff

Q&A

1. Since the beginning of the TACE process until now, which changes of perception about U.S.-Cuban relations have you personally experienced, and which changes have you noticed inside the group?

Even though some members of the group reflect upon some small changes of individual perceptions most do not see a major change with regard to the groups perceptions en general. The ideological rift is still very much present as seen from both the Cuban and the US member's responses. A gap of knowledge of historical background and the national decision making processes on both sides and a lack of openness to embrace the possibilities of change are seen as the principal reasons for the slow process of confidence building within the group. But there is also a general agreement that the increasing number of meetings helped to widen the possibilities of consensus on some of those bilateral issues where the official positions of both governments seem to be totally unbridgeable.

With regard to the TACE process itself the US members seem - with one exception- to be much more optimistic than the Cuban members, who seem to doubt a medium to long term spin off effect of the TACE process. This might be explained by the lack of experience as well as the lack of impact of such exercises in "academic diplomacy" on the Cuban side.

The responses of some members also reflected certain moments of frustration about the non transparent changes over time in the groups composition. Some criticism was also voiced about the fact that all U.S team members seem to belong to the group of "usual suspects", meaning experts in favour of better relations with Cuba, and no one from the "hard line" side, which has been very influential in the U.S. policy making process during the last decades.

But none of these observations has clouded the general satisfaction of the respondents across the board with the TACE process of seeking bilateral consensus among very dedicated individuals for opening perspectives for better U.S. Cuban relations.

2. What have been the changes in the relations, the policies, the conduct and the praxis of the actors outside the group, and which of those changes would you attribute to the efforts of the initiative?

Most respondents found it very difficult to pin down some of the obvious changes in the positions of both governments to the TACE process, in part because of a certain

willingness to improve the political dialogue, which has been demonstrated clearly by both governments during the last couple of years. The Cuban members of the team are very convinced that the access to their policy makers for TACE proposals has been much better than on the US side and that some TACE proposals even found their way in formal Cuban policy proposals like the speech of the Foreign Minister at the UN in October 2012. Even some of the US members of TACE share that view but insist that the willingness to listen to the TACE proposals has also improved at the State Department and outright rejection has only been coming from the Republican hard liners in Congress.

There is also an agreement on both sides that the influence of the TACE process has been notable upon experts and officials who are not members of the TACE team but have been in contact with those members or have been participating in some of the events of the TACE process as experts and have than been able to transport some of the TACE concepts into the respective policy processes. Additional clarifications seem to be needed in one of the positive developments resulting at least in part from the TACE efforts – the increasing academic engagement. While the State Department seems to be willing to go along with some of the TACE recommendations, there are indications that the Cuban government might disclassify these efforts as "subversive objectives" and thereby endanger one of the major impacts of the TACE project.

On the critical side doubts have been mentioned by US members of the TACE team that the recent positive achievements in U.S.- Cuban relations are concentrated upon issues of mutual interest, where it has been rather easy to make the necessary "concessions" on both sides, but that even the sum of those single issue improvements will not very likely have a lasting impact upon the willingness to consider concessions upon the central conflictive issues in the complex and complicated bilateral relationship which is of enormous "intermestic" importance in both countries.

Q&A

(cont.)

3. How would you evaluate the process as such? (Its methodology, its organization, and the coordination by CRIES?)

The TACE process as such has been praised as excellent, thoughtful and original especially from the members of the control group, who stressed the political importance of the participation of members from both countries, which was hardly the case of many other “Cuba policy recommendations” elaborated and published by import US institutions.

From the inside, there was some criticism - principally from the US members of the team -on the methodology, organization and coordination of the process. Especially the role of the facilitator was not seen as very positive or even necessary given the wide academic and in part also policy experience of the participants. The role of the national coordinators received very positive comments from all members while some would have preferred also a stronger role by the CRIES coordinator.

In general some members would have liked more forceful and disciplined discussions, which could have been streamlined by stronger moderators. At the other hand many respondents felt that the conciliatory and efficient conduct by CRIES has been a great asset for the success of the TACE process. There seemed to be a preference for having the meetings rather divided between the U.S. and Cuba and not involving third countries, which was by some members attributed to the lack of funds and the necessity to involve other institutions with limited interest in the bilateral issue. Other members felt to the contrary that the involvement of Latin America and the characterization of these difficult bilateral relations as a hemispheric problem could help to facilitate a political dialogue between the two countries.

4. Are you in agreement with the published recommendations? If not, which ones do you disagree with? For what reasons?

It comes at no surprise that all TACE team members (who responded) as well as all control group members are in agreement with the published recommendations. Some would have liked others to be included and blame the lack of time for hammering out an intra group consensus for the missing recommendations on some important issues. Others would have preferred more time for the editing process since they are not entirely content with the form of their presentation.

A few of the TACE members seem to feel that some of the recommendations - especially with regard to the academic and cultural exchanges and the environmental cooperation - are redundant since some of those ideas have already been implemented by the two governments.

5. Which of the recommendations would you consider the most important ones and for what reasons?

The most important recommendation is for all respondents by a large margin the terrorism and security issue followed by the environmental, commercial and academic issues which are seen by about half of the respondents at about an equal level as the second most important recommendations. The travel freedom recommendation was only seen by two TACE team members as of overriding importance.

There are various ways of interpreting this ranking of importance. Some TACE team members are taking it for granted that only in the security and the environment issues are sufficient common interest and political will on the side of both governments to move forward. At the other hand both issues appear to a certain extent much more technical than the other fields of the recommendations and therefore are seen by both governments as almost manageable without very extensive revisions of the traditional bilateral positions. The one – and very important – exception of this interpretation is the proposed removal of Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism by the U.S. government since such a move would have not only a number of ideological and practical consequences for Cuba but would signal also to the entire international community that Cuba is not any more part of the axis of evil for the U.S. For that very reason there seems to be clear opposition in the U.S. Congress against such an international “upgrading” of Cuba – which makes this very issue at the same time so essential for the Cuban side.

The academic, scientific and cultural issue is considered by some members of the TACE team as the basis for reducing all traditional political positions based on ignorance and therefore essential for all other recommendations to find acceptance on both sides. The commerce and development issue seems to be seen especially from the Cuban side as central for the success of the ongoing economic reform process. Two respondents have been missing two issues in the recommendations which are of great importance to both countries: cooperation in public health and hurricane disasters’.

Because of their technical nature such cooperation could be easily established and would not only contribute to the process of bilateral confidence building but also to an important image change of Cuba given the extensive capacity in these fields the country has demonstrated internationally.

Q&A

(cont.)

6. Would you consider fulfilled the objectives of the TACE project with the final document of recommendations? If not, what further activities would you consider pertinent for the TACE process?

To which extent all objectives of the TACE process have been met depends obviously very much on the expectations of the different members of the team. Again satisfaction seems to be higher on the Cuban than on the US side of the members. From their viewpoint it might be interesting to wait for two years – until the end of the Obama Administration – and then revisit the recommendations, and discuss why some have been implemented while others have not and what might be a promising way of establishing new ones for the incoming U.S. Administration. Meanwhile some more detailed recommendations on some of the issues – like academic exchange – might be useful to elaborate given the interest in that topic by both governments. Another suggestion was to continue the TACE process in form of an independent bi-national Commission including new members and issues.

The US members of the team seemed less convinced about the fulfilment of the TACE objectives but for different reasons. They criticized that the recommendations were concentrating too much on the converging interests and not sufficiently upon the sensitive and conflictive points of the complex relationship. Among the members of the control group there was even the feeling the recommendations were not bold enough and would therefore not create sufficient public discussion to really influence the policy making process. All U.S. members of the team felt it was now time to turn to the difficult process of “massaging” the policy makers in both capitals and possibly trying to establish a “track two” mechanism which might transport the messages of TACE directly into the policy making process. Another suggestion was to continue the TACE process but to concentrate upon formulating policy options which might draw attention to the costs and benefits of the various options resulting from the TACE recommendations.

7. Would you find the establishment of national working groups for the advancement of U.S.-Cuban relations a useful initiative for the TACE process? If yes, what type of membership would you suggest?

A wide majority of the respondents favours the establishment of national working groups, but there seems to be less agreement about their structure and membership. The US team members as well as some members of the control group are looking for a different mix of expertise for the national

working group with less Cuban experts, but more Cuban-Americans and more economists, military and cost guard representatives as well as agricultural, trade, health and environmental specialists. Such a group could overcome possibly the traditional quite secretive process of Cuban policy making and would complement the existing advocacy groups in the US who concentrate more on the educational aspects of the public discussion on bilateral issues with Cuba. Once a year that group could then meet with its Cuban counterpart not only to compare notes but rather to hammer out policy proposals which might be acceptable to both governments.

The Cuban team members seem to be less sure that it would be possible to constitute such a national group given the exceptionally secretive tradition of foreign policy making in Cuba. They are also aware of the implicit imbalance between the more governmental and less governmental members such as a national working group would imply. They seem rather to favour creating specialized subgroups on the national level for the different issues of the TACE recommendations with the intention that those groups might then have a yearly meeting with their U.S. counterparts. One Cuban team member suggested establishing such a specialized subgroup on academic exchange right away.

8. Should the TACE process be extended to move from “bilateral” to “multilateral” efforts, including other countries? If so, which ones would you suggest?

The idea to involve other countries or at least experts of other nationalities in the TACE process finds little agreement among most respondents. In part because both governments have stated publicly that they do not wish to have any intermediaries in their conflictive relationship and also because the efforts by former Latin American presidents to express through the Inter American Dialogue their desire for political dialogue between the U.S. and Cuba has not been successful at all. It is rather feared by many team members that the difficult bilateral relations of some other Latin American countries with the U.S. could negatively affect the future relations with Cuba. Venezuela and Brazil come to mind in that context. There is no doubt among the TACE team that Canada and Spain, Mexico and Argentina might have an interest in the general improvement of the relations between the U.S. and Cuba but it seems doubtful that they might be willing to pay a “political price” for pressuring openly the U.S. administration. Some team members nevertheless would find the invitation of “foreign” experts to specialized future TACE meetings useful especially in a more academic context.

Conclusions

Since the outside expert had the opportunity to interview three members of the Cuban TACE team and a number of Cuban officials and academics during a recent visit to Havana a number of suggestions for possible future activities in the context of the TACE process might be useful. Some of the proposals here included have benefitted a great deal from these off-the-record conversations in Havana since they have without any doubt reconfirmed the most positive impact the TACE process has had within Cuba. Given the restricted possibilities for official media coverage of “difficult issues” on the island the extensive reporting of the TACE recommendations by Prensa Latina (The Havana Reporter June 20, 2013) could only be interpreted as a semi-official endorsement. There seems to be a wide consensus within the Cuban academic and certainly also in a substantial part of the political establishment that such a successful instrument of “academic diplomacy” should be continued - in great part because the bilateral relationship with the U.S. is still seen as the most important political issue of the country. The continued lack of a clear perspective for the establishment of a “respectful” political dialogue with the U.S. seems to be seen as having serious effects upon the ongoing - and still fairly limited - economic reform process, especially given the uncertain future of the relationship with Venezuela. The small changes in some of the contentious issues with the U.S. are not considered as clear indications for the way to further dialogue but rather as signs of “convenience” with regard to certain domestic policy necessities in the U.S.

With regard to the future forms of advancing the TACE process it appears to the outside expert that national groups with an enlarged membership to include wider issue experience and even political orientation (in the U.S. case) seem to be the best instrument for developing a more detailed agenda with specific “national” policy suggestions. The selection of new members should also be easier in a national context taking into account the personality clashes which have accompanied the TACE process in the last years. But both national groups should meet at least once, better twice a year in a secluded “retreat” for an extensive “harmonisation session” to work out agreements about the policy proposals from both sides. The process

might be easier than the current TACE process with regard to the possibilities of previous informal “test runs” with the respective governments. The heavy workload for the national chairs such a format involves should be reduced by an extensive logistical and administrative support from an outside institution like CRIES. Not only from a political but also from an efficiency point of view such an arrangement seems to fit the established TACE “philosophy” better than the suggested continuation of work in form of a Bi-National Commission, which would be much more difficult to establish and would definitively have much less flexibility in its form of operation and policy impact.

Since the idea to multilateralize the TACE process has not been very popular with the majority of the TACE members - without much difference between the Cuban and the U.S. team members - the outside expert would opt for two different strategies to continue the successful efforts of “academic diplomacy”. The first one would be the “bilateral way” with the combination of two independently operating national groups as outlined above. The second could be a “multilateral way” with the intention to “educate” the policy (and also the academic) communities in the region about the enormous international implications of an absence of political dialogue and the problem of exclusion in the case of the bilateral conflict between the US and Cuba. Such an effort of an educational campaign in Latin America by CRIES could extend the lessons of the TACE process to the bilateral and trilateral conflicts which seem currently to dominate the complex agenda of regional governance efforts. The TACE experience with previous regional partners could probably serve as a point of reference for such a program of extended “academic diplomacy” which would doubtless produce indirect benefits for the ongoing bilateral TACE process as well.

There are many lessons to be learned from the TACE experiment as an outstanding example of “academic diplomacy” which should by no means be identified with the “public diplomacy” which seems to be currently the favourite concept for public relations in international affairs. Since the outside expert has had some experience with bi- and trilateral efforts for conflict reduction in the Western Hemisphere it seems worthwhile to list some of the very important working conditions for

any possible future activities in “academic diplomacy”:

- no publicity until at least some mutual confidence between the participants has been established
- no governmental tutelage of the process wherever possible to avoid any “back channel” image
- selection of very dedicated and well informed participants who in the best of circumstances cannot expect any direct benefits from the results of their efforts
- provision of international - and possibly “neutral” - logistical and financial support

There are a number of rather “permanent” bilateral and eventually very serious conflict scenarios in the region where a similar format of “academic diplomacy” as in the case of the TACE process could possibly be considered:

- US – Brazil
- United Kingdom – Argentina
- Chile – Bolivia
- Colombia – Nicaragua

Since none of these bilateral conflicts seem to have such a complex historical, ideological and economic identity as the US-Cuba conflict the lessons from the TACE process could probably be adapted without major efforts into other examples of “academic diplomacy” and thereby contribute to the reduction of regional conflict scenarios whose international impact should not be underestimated.



About TACE

Compendium of recommendations

At the outset of the process, the participants listed the grievances of each side towards the other, and then classified them in terms of their complexity, feasibility, and urgency. Ultimately, five issue areas were prioritized:

- 1) Academic, Scientific and Cultural Engagement**
- 2) Freedom to travel**
- 3) International Commerce and Development**
- 4) Terrorism and Security Issues**
- 5) Environment**

All of the recommendations can be found in a document published by CRIES, or at <http://www.cries.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/tace-final-web.pdf>

Participants

The TACE project brought together a total of seventeen (17) participants. These include eight (8) Cubans and nine (9) representatives from the United States. Nonetheless, only some of the participants have been involved in every meeting.

In addition to the group members, six (6) Cuban specialists were invited to specific workshops, where they had the opportunity to make valuable contributions to the discussion on some particular topics. Their knowledge was

taken as an input for the ideas that led to the compendium of recommendations.

TACE PARTICIPANTS

GROUP MEMBERS:

Cuba:

Carlos Alzugaray Treto; Soraya Castro*; Armando Fernández; Jorge Hernández; Rafael Hernández*; Antonio Romero; Jorge Mario Sánchez Egozcue.

United States:

Margaret Crahan; Richard Feinberg; Anya Landau-French; Theodore Piccone; Anthony Quinton; Sally Shelton-Colby; Sarah Stephens; Lawrence Wilkerson.

INVITED EXPERTS

Aurelio Alonso; Cristina Díaz; Omar Everleny Pérez; José Rubiera; Vicente Vérez; Jorge Pastrana; Anicia García; Ileana Sorolla; Juan Triana; Leslie Yañez; Teresita Borges; Ramón Pichs Madruga y Luis Enrique Fernández.

COORDINATION:

General Coordinator:

Andrés Serbin (CRIES)

National Group Coordinators:

Milagros Martínez Reinosa (Cuba)
Philip Brenner (United States)

FACILITATION:

Facilitator:

Edy Kaufman

Co-facilitators:

Ana Bourse; Eliana Spadoni **

CRIES SUPPORT STAFF:

Celeste Ronzano

* No longer a participant.

** Facilitator for first two meetings of the process.



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FROM CUBA

Carlos Alzugaray Treto - Armando
Fernández - Milagros Martínez -
Antonio Romero

FROM UNITED STATES

Margaret Crahan - Theodore
Piccone - Sally Shelton-Colby -
Lawrence Wilkerson

EXTERNAL EXPERTS

Jorge I. Domínguez (Harvard
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(American University) - William
M. Leo Grande (American
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on Foreign Affairs).

Participants in this evaluation process

This report was produced on the basis of the answers received from 12 selected participants. Eight (8) of them, were members of the TACE group, and therefore, provided an “insider” perspective regarding the questionnaire. They were randomly selected from the overall list of participants, but considering to have half of them from each national group.

The “control group” of four (4) outstanding experts in U.S.- Cuban relations, was asked to respond to the same questions with the exception of

the one dealing with the intra group dynamics of the TACE team.

EXTERNAL EVALUATOR



PROF. WOLF GRABENDORFF

Prof. Grabendorff is a German political scientist and consultant specializing in Latin American international and security relations.

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