



When Cuba Went Regional: Latin American Post-Liberal Regionalism and Cuban Foreign Policy*

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Introduction

This chapter addresses a series of questions: since Raúl Castro's succession of his brother as the head of the Cuban government in 2008, was or is Latin America relevant for Cuba and vice-versa? Particularly important in this regard is the issue related to Cuba's links with the new wave of regionalism in Latin America at the beginning of the century and, vice-versa, the influence of this regionalism on recent Cuban political and economic evolution. In this regard, our main argument is that the development of the so-called post-liberal or post-hegemonic regionalism within a propitious context of an economic international environment and a significant shift in LAC politics with the electoral accession to

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power of center-left, left-wing and populist movements and parties were intertwined and created the conditions for the establishment of a new pattern of relationships between Latin American countries and Cuba, moving from the initially Cuban Communist Party strong involvement in “exporting the Revolution” to a more cooperative role of the Cuban government –eventually as a facilitator and an “honest broker” in conflict situations in the region (Alzugaray, 2015:193) and as a provider of professional services. This new pattern helped to reinstate Cuba not only as a full member of the LAC and hemispheric community but also to develop a new relationship with the United States. This new relationship was launched when both President Barack Obama and President Raúl Castro announced, on December 17 2014, the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries; Obama’s administration approved several Executive orders to improve these relations, and reached its peak, when President Obama visited La Habana in March 2016. However, the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States was perceived with anxiety by La Habana and his decision of announcing a new Cuban policy on June 16, 2017 –without a broader framework of a hemispheric policy– and reversing several measures of the Obama administration was received with dismay and cautious rejection by the Cuban government, already affected by the Venezuelan crisis and the change of the political landscape in Latin America which tended to reactivate Cuban isolation in the region.

Within this framework, however, some of the questions that remain unsolved are related to the role that Cuba played in the building of the new Latin American regionalism and on the influence of its development on changes in Cuba. To answer these questions, this chapter is structured in three sections. The first section analyses the development of LAC new regionalism and its importance in terms of its increasing autonomy from the United States, within the changing international landscape. The second part focuses on the current evolution of the relations of several main Latin American nations with Cuba, and their role in the regionalization process. This section takes into account mostly the economically powerful and politically most influential actors of LAC. Finally, the third section analyses Cuba’s contribution to this development as a key political and symbolic reference and as an important player in the hemisphere, and the future evolution of this process in the framework of a new international environment. The

main argument underlying this analysis is that, since the nineties, the development of the new regionalism in LAC and Cuban foreign policy were intertwined processes strongly influenced by Cuba's renewed political links with the region which at the same time brought political and economic support and cooperation to the failing economic Cuban system.

In order to contextualize the changes of Cuban foreign policy in the last decade –after Raúl Castro took full control of the government and the CCP in 2008–, it is necessary to briefly underline some important precedents that contributed to shape the current Cuban foreign policy.

After the collapse of the USSR it became gradually evident for the Cuban military and political elite that Cuba was in need both of new international political allies to counterbalance the US embargo and political pressure, and of economic partners to keep alive the political system. The Cuban economic model evidenced structural problems that urgently needed to be addressed and solved if the existing political system was to survive. The hardships that followed were characterized as the “*Período Especial para Tiempos de Paz*”, but the difficulties confronted at this new stage also marked a gradual change of the pattern of involvement of Cuba in Latin America and the Caribbean. The references to proletarian internationalism and support to the national liberation processes were nuanced (even if the anti-US and anti-imperialist rhetorical narrative was kept), and new emphasis was directed towards the search of peace and to make evident the good will to become part of the process of integration and collaboration with Latin America and the Caribbean which were later reflected in the modifications by the National Assembly of Popular Power of the Constitution of 1976 (Dominguez Guadarrama, 2013:182).

After the 90's, Cuba was in need of a diversified and broader foreign policy to support the Revolution. In a geo-strategically unipolar post-Cold War world it was difficult to find political allies and it was more difficult to find economic partners who were able to help to replace the cooperation previously provided by the USSR. But Cuba was able to count on the political capital acquired in previous years when the export of the revolutionary model and its role as a global player and as a champion of the Third World were important assets that could be used as a basis for a renewed foreign policy.

Cuba used its nationalist and revolutionary credentials to call for the political unification of Latin America and the Caribbean around the anti-imperialist struggle and the cultural revitalization of the idea of Latin America (Alzugaray, 2010: 161-185). Consequently, Cuba was seen as a symbol of a staunch anti-imperialism and a reference for a Latin American socialist model which was supposed to be achieved –in the 70’s and 80’s– through armed struggle with the assistance of revolutionary Cuba. The support to different left-wing movements and to the armed groups struggling in Latin America against both military dictatorships and feeble democratic governments, alienated at the time, however, most of Cuba’s potential Latin American allies. In 1962 Cuba was suspended from the OAS and strongly condemned by a majority of LAC governments represented at the organization. At the beginning of the 70s the exceptions to these condemnations were four recently independent English-speaking Caribbean countries (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Barbados),¹ but the existing diplomatic relations between those countries and Cuba didn’t lead to its incorporation to CARICOM,² even if in the 80s some of these countries were trying to establish socialist regimes. The US invasion of Grenada in 1983 was a strong warning to the Caribbean countries not to follow the Cuban revolutionary path.

In the 90s, the regional environment began to change and the rapprochement of Cuba with México (a country that didn’t sever its diplomatic relations with Havana in the previous period), Venezuela and even Colombia (the Group of Three – G-3), and improved ties with the Caribbean and several Central American countries (particularly Nicaragua after the arrival of the Sandinistas to power), opened the possibility for a first attempt of Cuba to become a legitimized player in the regional processes since the establishment of SELA (Latin American Economic System) in 1975, with the creation of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in 1994, followed, on a more specifically economic dimension, by Cuba’s incorporation to ALADI (*Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración*) in 1994-1998. Additionally, since the early 90’s Cuba was invited by México and Spain to attend the Ibero-American Summits, a significant breakthrough for Cuba’s regional isolation.

However, the changes in Cuba's relations with LAC were still strongly defined by political, ideological and diplomatic ties, and not by trade and economic relations, within the difficult economic situation imposed by the US embargo. Within this context, at the beginning, Canada and some EU members (Spain, the Netherlands) became the most attractive economic partners. The persistence of the relations with Mexico also served at the time for looking for Mexican investments and trade. Later, at the beginning of the 21st Century, with the landing of China in LAC, and the consolidation of Hugo Chavez government in Venezuela, both became the main Cuban trade partners. They were joined by Brazil, particularly after the election of Lula da Silva of the PT to the presidency.³

The ideological and political atmosphere at the end of the century and at the first decade of the 21 century was propitious for the predominantly political feature of the relations with LAC. The “pink tide” and the left turn of some of the elected governments in the region were coincidental with previous strong ties existing with the Cuban revolution, forged during the guerrilla years, and at the Sao Paulo Forum and other venues. Cuba was perceived as an important symbol of LAC resistance to US hegemony and a stalwart of political autonomy in the hemisphere and in the world. The accession of left-wing governments to power through elections in several Latin American countries was associated and propelled by a favorable international economic environment. The demand for commodities generated a “boom” for most of the regional economies and allowed for the implementation of social and development policies aimed at increasing social inclusion and at reducing poverty and inequality.

This was the propitious regional juncture when Raúl Castro became head of state and of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) in 2008, replacing the ailing Fidel. Within this context, the new regional organizations emerging at the beginning of the century as part of the new wave of post-liberal or post-hegemonic regionalism, excluded the US and Canada, and included Cuba as a full member or as an observer country. Those were the cases of the post-liberal or post-hegemonic regionalism movements crystallized in the creation of both ALBA and CELAC. Additionally, the Cuban government –starting with Fidel Castro (who was invited to attend several presidential inaugurations)

and continuing with Raúl and other high officials –was invited, since the early 90’s, to different regional Summits, and even to the MERCOSUR meetings. Both in MERCOSUR and in CARICOM, even if Cuba never adhered as a full member, it was accepted as an observer. At that stage, Cuba became omnipresent in LAC, helped by the close alliance with Hugo Chávez through ALBA-TCP, and the less loud but sustained support of the Brazilian government of Lula da Silva. In fact, the region was instrumental both for strengthening Cuban presence in LAC under its new role of “honest broker” (in Colombia with the starting peace process, and between Colombia and Venezuela during the escalation of tensions between the two nations) and for putting a significant pressure on Obama’s administration to accept this presence on the hemispheric level, and eventually, to start to “normalize” US-Cuban relations in December 2014.

In this regard, LAC countries were mostly perceived as political allies in the confrontation with the United States. Cuban participation in most of the new regional mechanisms was mostly of a political (and eventually symbolic) nature. Since the experience with the CARICOM-Cuba Joint Commission, through the creation of the ACS, ALBA-TCP and CELAC, Cuba, following its statist model and its anti-neoliberal stand, didn’t sign full free trade agreements with other LAC countries, assuming other types of commitments for trade and cooperation based on fair exchange and solidarity or bi-lateral economic complementarity, but rejecting anything that would imply an acknowledgment of a market economy. In fact, Cuba inspired and supported the struggle by social movements, trade unions and several LAC governments against the FTAA (ALCA, according to its Spanish acronym) promoted by the US, the “Washington consensus” and neoliberal reforms, and the globalization process, as expressions of capitalism and market economies. This position was in line with the new narrative –post-liberal or post-hegemonic⁴– developed by the new regionalism emerging in LAC at the time.

Therefore, ties with Latin America were mostly ideological and political, aimed towards strengthening LACs support to end the US embargo and, eventually and more recently, to access economic cooperation and foreign investments in several sectors after the process of “*actualización económica y social*” started –particularly with Venezuela and Brazil.

Cuba and the New Latin American Regionalism

Since the 1950s, the evolution of Latin American regionalism has been characterized by three distinct stages. The first phase, between the 1960s and 1980s still under a strong US hegemony, was built around the aspiration for greater regional autonomy through the creation of regional markets and regional strategies of industrialization and import substitution. A second phase took shape at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s as a neoliberal approach was introduced into the regional processes focused on trade liberalization, economic opening, and the elimination of trade barriers, which was strongly influenced by the so-called “Washington Consensus” and by the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean’s (ECLAC) concept of “open regionalism.” Trade, investment, and economic issues became dominant in the new regional agenda. However, after the collapse of negotiations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) at the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata in 2005, new modalities of regional political cooperation as well as social and economic integration began to emerge –“post-liberal” or “post-hegemonic”– as evidenced by the newly created organizations such as UNASUR, ALBA, and CELAC.

The profound changes that the international system has undergone since the beginning of the century have been reflected in the region. After the end of the Cold War and especially after September 11, 2001, the United States reoriented its strategic priorities and generally paid less attention to Latin America (apart from its closest neighbors, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean). This weakened U.S. relations with the region as well as with the inter-American system, put under pressure by the critical Bolivarian governments. The euro crisis accentuated the decline of the European presence in the area. Links among Latin American states grew, but not through a single and coherent process of regional integration. China, India, Korea, and other Asian countries increased their presence in the region as Japan did earlier, but –with the exception of China– they limited their ties mostly to the economic realm. Other actors such as Russia and Iran were also establishing closer ties with the region, benefiting from the “geopolitical vacuum” created by the partial withdrawal of the United States in the region.

Nevertheless, after the 2008 crisis the U.S. economy has mostly recovered from its financial crisis; notwithstanding “Brexit” the euro-zone is not in immediate danger, and –despite an economic slowdown– China has avoided a hard landing of its economy and has increased its presence in LAC. Nonetheless, the international system, although it may appear more stable, shows greater signs of multipolarity and polycentrism. Thus, Latin American countries, particularly in South America, exhibited greater autonomy from the United States, a process in which closer economic ties with China played a significant role.

Within this framework, in the last decade different regional organizations have been created in Latin America, based on varying political, economic, and ideological approaches that characterize this greater autonomy from the United States and the resurgence of the Bolivarian vision of a Community of Latin American and Caribbean Nations (Serbin, 2010).

In 2004, Cuba and Venezuela formed the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America –which was later renamed as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA)– as an organization of South-South cooperation and assistance, with a strong anti-U.S. rhetoric. In May 2008, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was founded in Brasília, encompassing 12 South American states, including Guyana and Suriname. In February 2010 in Cancún, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was formed with the participation of all Latin American and Caribbean governments, creating an inter-American organization that excluded the United States and Canada, just like ALBA and UNASUR. CELAC took on the role of the Rio Group, which served as a forum for political coordination and consultation since the 1980s. The Rio Group had a significant impact in preventing and resolving some conflicts in the region, while CELAC assumed a more extra-regional role and has developed a series of extra-regional dialogue initiatives with actors such as the EU, China, India, and Russia. The creation of the Latin American System (SELA) in the mid-seventies, and of the Association of Caribbean States (AEC) in the mid-nineties, excluding the United States, paved the way for this process. SELA was eventually considered to become the economic body of CELAC, which never happened. Finally, it is worth to mention the creation of the Pacific Alliance –founded in

2012 by Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Mexico— which has started out fundamentally as a revitalized free trade agreement between these four countries. The Pacific Alliance members stand to gain from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) signed in October 2015, even if US participation was cancelled by the incoming Trump administration.

Nevertheless, the dominant trend of political coordination and increasing autonomy from the United States (more or less cautious or stridently radical) prevailed in the region for the last two decades, notwithstanding the persistent fragmentation and the lack of consolidated institutions, particularly regarding the roles of ALBA, UNASUR, MERCOSUR and CELAC. Within this context, Cuba increasingly was invited to attend regional summits and high level meetings and became a frequent and active participant at the most relevant political coordination summits and events. Treaties and cooperation agreements of different kinds were signed between Cuba and different Latin American countries during this period, and Cuba became one of the founders of CELAC. The culmination of this process was the II Summit of CELAC held under Cuban pro-tempore Presidency in La Habana in January 2014, with the participation of LAC Presidents and Head of States, and the attendance of the SG of the OAS. This was a smooth process of gradual Cuban inclusion into the LAC community, eventually punctuated by declarations of support to the Cuban government and the denunciation of the US embargo on the island at different international forums (Romero, 2015: 107-133). This process of increasing Cuban governmental involvement in the LAC region in recent years has several relevant precedents (Serbin, 2011: 229-267), but one of the most important steps was taken when Presidents Fidel Castro from Cuba and Hugo Chávez from Venezuela decided to create the Bolivarian Alternative of the Peoples of Our America (ALBA)-Trade Treaty of the Peoples (TCP) in 2004, the main regional integration and cooperation organization in which Cuba participated at the beginning of the century, and an important and alternative regional political mechanism to promote both economic relations and political and ideological identity and coordination among its members. There exists abundant literature on the role played by Cuba in fostering this organization and the close relationship established with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, but it also important to note that this process was simultaneously associated with and contributed to an increasing Cuban involvement in other regional

schemes. Starting with its participation at the Ibero-American Summits in the 90's, Cuba attended the meetings in Brazil and México of the Summits of Latin America and the Caribbean on Integration and Development (CALC, according to its Spanish acronym) which paved the way for the creation of CELAC. The emergence and development of all of these organizations, particularly ALBA, UNASUR and CELAC, is primarily due to the leadership of a few LAC countries (Briceño, 2015: 189-190). With the exception of the Pacific Alliance members, most of them not only prioritized the role of the state in economy, politics, and development, and an inter-governmental approach (often strongly inter-presidential) but they have also introduced a new regional agenda that prioritizes new issues through the framework of primarily or exclusively intergovernmental initiatives, with relevant importance given to the summits of heads of state and a lesser role for other actors. This presidentialist approach –and the emphasis on the role of the State and on governmental agreements– was keen to the Cuban existing political system. Another relevant topic on the regional agenda was South-South cooperation, also in line with Cuban international orientation.

Despite the convergences on a general thematic agenda –which included not only political agreements and social issues but also energy, finance, infrastructure and security–, there were multiple perspectives in the region associated with the distinct interests, priorities and visions of different countries⁵ and a unified vision didn't take shape with regards to global transformations and challenges and the role of the region in the economic international system. Regional fragmentation and diversified foreign policy objectives persisted through this phase of the new regionalism and Cuba was not an exception in simultaneously pursuing its own national interests and participating at several new born regional organizations. What was particularly noteworthy was the fact that there were no questioning of the Cuban political system and the path followed through the “*actualización del modelo*” to preserve the predominance of a centralized economy.

The predominant regional trend at the time towards increasing autonomy (in a variety of degrees and modalities of contestation) from the United States and diversification of international relations in a multipolar international system clearly reflected similar trends expressed by Cuban foreign policy, particularly since the nineties. Similarly, the

anti-US, anti-neoliberalism and anti-globalization approach promoted by social movements during their struggle against FTAA and shared by the Cuban government permeated—with different degrees and nuances—most of these initiatives. There is no way of establishing neat relations between the two processes, but it is clear that the increasing Cuban presence in the Latin American and Caribbean community contributed to translate some of these topics to the agenda and the spirit of the regional organizations born with the new wave of regionalism that lasted until the regional political map started to change and the international environment became more hostile (Grabendorff, 2015).

The role of the key Latin American and Caribbean countries

Since the mid-nineties and particularly at the beginning of the 21st century, three primary leading actors emerged in the region—Venezuela, Brazil, and Mexico (Serbin, 2009)—with different capacities and regional reach, and with distinct patterns of relations with Cuba. One might also add to these three players the weight of Argentina's strategic association with Brazil (which was not without its own tensions and rivalries) and the sympathies with the Cuban government of the Kirchner-Fernández administrations, and the emerging role of Colombia as the third economy of the region going simultaneously through peace negotiations between the government and the FARC and ELN guerrillas. However, the weight of these two latter actors as leaders of regional processes during the last 20 years was much lesser than that of the three nations mentioned initially. The current changing political geography of Latin America will eventually show if any of these two will be able to become in the future a regional leader on its own in a new international environment and, particularly, after the election of Donald Trump.

Affirmations about the rise of Brazil in the international system at the beginning of the 21st century have become part of conventional wisdom in academic and diplomatic discourse—as well as in international economic forums—as a specific phenomenon that was part of the rise of emerging countries in a world economy fueled by the commodities boom for a decade. The magnitude of this process and the regional

implications for South America, Latin America, and the inter-American system remain unclear, particularly due to the ambiguous global and regional roles that Brazil seeks to play and that changed significantly after the impeachment of Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 (Vigevani and Aragusuku, 2016; Gomes Saraiva, 2016). However, the impact of the economic and political weight of Brazil in the region and in the global scene is an important factor to consider. Within the hemisphere, since the nineties, Brazil tended to focus its energies on South America but also on the Caribbean and Africa, whereas the United States tended to center on North America and Central America, and more recently on the Pacific Rim countries. While Brazil and the United States maintain, modify, or deepen their policies toward the rest of the hemisphere and specific sub-regions, other LAC countries also seek to influence a hemispheric dynamic that was undergoing significant political, economic, institutional, and ideological transformations. The “strategic void” initially left by the United States in Latin America in the 1990s, with its repercussions and its impact on the current evolution of the Organization of American States (OAS), was partially filled by Brazil’s growing leadership and its promotion of a South American space with greater autonomy. This promotion is linked both to the creation of the MERCOSUR in the early nineties, and to the establishment of UNASUR in 2008 as a follow up of the efforts to counterbalance the FTAA promoted by the United States and to foster the creation of SAFTA (South American Free Trade Area, promoted by Brazil in the 90’s) and CALC. The world’s seventh largest economy, Brazil –notwithstanding its current political crisis– is the most important power in South America and, at that time, became an increasingly important actor at the global level, particularly with the creation of the BRICS. Within this framework, during the last two decades, Brazil developed a cautious but sustained diplomacy oriented toward strengthening its regional and global leadership⁶ progressively consolidating its influence in South America despite the reluctance of some countries in the region. Brazil therefore was carrying out its own policy of projecting power regionally and globally, with the creation of a constellation of different sub-regional platforms (MERCOSUR, UNASUR, more recently CELAC) and the participation at extra-regional organizations as part of its international strategy (BRICS, IBSA, and its participation in the G20). At the time, its objectives were oriented towards regional stability and development as well as the creation of

international coalitions, combining “benign leadership” with a strategy of incremental concentric circles, inter-governmentalism, weak regional institutionalization, and restricted commitments to supply the resources and pay the costs of regional integration, which, however, enabled Brazilian power projection in Latin America and Africa (Costa Vaz, 2012: 176; Llenderozas, 2014: 129-149). The South American unipolarity that Brazil promoted generated two kinds of reactions from its neighbors: reticence towards its increased power and regional projection, or adherence to its project in line with their own national interests. In contrast to Venezuela, although they challenged some of Washington’s policies, the Brazilian governments of Lula and Dilma Rousseff did not take openly antagonistic positions toward the United States, even in circumstances as complex as the case of electronic espionage against President Dilma Rousseff’s government in 2012. At the same time, since 2007, Brazil developed a strategic association with the EU, which aimed to contribute to advance EU-MERCOSUR negotiations on a free trade agreement which is currently in process.

For Brazil, two trends reached a tipping point in 2010: China surpassed the United States as Brazil’s primary trading partner,⁷ and Brazil exported more commodities than manufactured goods for the first time since 1978. However, the decrease of international commodities prices, the “re-primarization” of the economy and slower economic growth affected Brazil’s international visibility and clout in the coming years, while being strongly conditioned by the evolution of its domestic political situation with the crisis that led to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and the appointment of current President Michel Temer. As a result, a scenario in which Brazil is the leader of a region that speaks with a unified voice in the world is growing ever more distant.

Within this context, the close ties between the PT governments and the Cuban government, were one important piece to play in building Brazil’s projection on the regional level and beyond South America, as the Brazilian governments not only supported Cuban position regarding the condemnation of the US embargo but also invested in Cuban “*proceso de actualización*” through the building of the Mariel port, and an initial attempt of Petrobras to join the Cuban CUPET and foreign oil companies in the exploration of the Gulf of Mexico deep water resources, among other economic and cooperation initiatives.

On the diplomatic level, bi-lateral visits of high officials (including the respective Heads of State) increased during the PT period in power. As President, Lula visited Cuba four times, and Dilma Rouseff two –the last visit in 2014 to inaugurate the port of Mariel and to attend the II CELAC Summit in La Habana–, while Raúl Castro visited Brazil three times since 2008. Both ex-presidents from Brazil flew to La Habana to attend Fidel’s funeral in December 2016. After leaving office Lula visited again Cuba apparently to favor Odebrecht, the Brazilian building company that is currently involved in corruption scandals all over Latin America. With funding from BNDES –the Brazilian development bank currently also suspected of paying bribes to several regional governments–, Odebrecht was the main company responsible for the building of the Mariel seaport equipped to handle “post-Panamax” vessels that will benefit from the expansion of the Panamá Canal. The subtle and cautious support and leadership of the PT Brazilian government, and Lula da Silva in particular,⁸ was a key factor in this process. Brazil was able to manage both the support to Cuba and the condemnation of the US embargo with the continuity of fluent relations with Washington, notwithstanding some ups and downs. However, Brazil’s policies toward Cuba were more economic than political (Merke, 2015:9). Since 2003, when Lula launched the Brazilian-Cuban alliance, Brazil became an important trade partner for Cuba. Between 2003 and 2013, Brazil’s bilateral trade with Cuba grew 580 percent and Brazil became the third Cuban trade partner after Venezuela and China (Nitsch Bresan, 2016: 322). Nevertheless, the current recession and political crisis reduced Brazil’s capacity to continue on this path and to increase its cooperation and trade with Cuba. The recent Petrobras and Odebrecht corruption scandals, involving Brazilian officials, are making this path more difficult. With the conservative Michel Temer as President the program *Mais Médicos* implemented with Cuban doctors was reviewed. In July 2016, it was announced that 1672 Cuban doctors contracts will end in August, and this number could grow to 4000 professionals with cancelled contracts, mostly explained as due to “political reasons”.⁹ In sum, within a difficult international economic environment and the transformation of the political map in Latin America, the recession and the political changes in Brazil are affecting the relations –both economic and political– with Cuba. Brazil’s recent support of the suspension of Venezuela –a close ally of Cuba– from MERCOSUR is not helping to improve the current relations. However, previous to its current crisis

and recession, it was clear that the PT governments supported the economic reforms implemented in Cuba under the umbrella of the “*proceso de actualización*”, both because of the economic stakes that it could imply for Brazil and because the PT approach understood the need of an economy that combined central planning with the opening to the private sector.

Since January 1959, Mexico’s diplomacy towards the Cuban Revolution was characterized by ups and downs, strongly conditioned by the priorities imposed by its relations with the United States. Mexico, without taking on an explicit role of regional leadership, finds itself among the ten largest economies in the world with a government that seeks to reposition the country on the regional and global levels. However, Mexico’s leadership has historically not been consistent or sustained in the region, primarily exercising its influence on economic issues and in global forums. At the regional level, it has been limited in taking on a leadership role, principally because of its close relationship with the United States and its membership of NAFTA. It is perennially torn between its ties with North America and its ability to be part (and have some influence) on the Latin American community. Mexico aspires to overcome its bi-regional identity by promoting a foreign policy based on multiple goals: strengthening its Latin American credentials; boosting its declining regional influence, especially in South America because of its exclusion from organizations like UNASUR; diversifying its international presence; and adjusting its external posture with the attributes of a middle power, but without the aspirations of a clear regional power. Despite its limited presence in Latin America, Mexico is beginning to resume its hemispheric role, beyond its ties with North America, as illustrated by its more proactive foreign policy and the role it has in the creation of CELAC, with the exclusion of its NAFTA partners, as well as by rebuilding its ties with Cuba and becoming a founding member of the Pacific Alliance. Mexico, which for many decades has played the role of a diplomatic bridge between Washington and Havana, also faces a troubled domestic front due to the escalation of organized-crime-related violence and political instability (Merke, 2015:3).

Most important, however, is how Cuban officials initially perceived the triumph of Enrique Peña Nieto in the 2012 Mexican presidential

election as the victory of a man determined to bring back the Washington Consensus as the dominant ideology in the region. From Cuba's perspective, Mexico was still too closely aligned with Washington to serve as a diplomatic partner. Peña Nieto acknowledges this and has therefore opted to put aside discussions on democracy and human rights (preferring them to be discussed at the United Nations) and to concentrate instead on Mexican trade and investment opportunities in Cuba (Merke, 2015:3).

The first meeting between Raúl Castro and Peña Nieto happened in Chile during the I CELAC Summit in 2013, followed by the condoning of the Cuban debt of 487 million USD to México by the new government of PRI, and a visit in January 2014 of Peña Nieto to Havana (where he met with Fidel Castro), reciprocated in November 2015 by an official visit of Raúl Castro to Mexico. In 2013 bilateral trade reached 386 million USD, while Mexican investments in the island reached in 2015 730 million USD. According to the WTO, México became at the time the seventh destiny for Cuban exports, while the island increased a 28,6 % its imports from México (Benitez Manaut, 2016:191-207).

The reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States in December 2014 acted as an “accelerator” of Cuban-Mexican relations (Benitez Manaut, 2016: 2020). The re-launching of Cuban-Mexican relations was related to the official Mexican position of support, since 2013, to the “*modelo de actualización*” implemented in the island.¹⁰ However, on the economic level, those relations are still limited, even if some investments and trade involves Mexican companies such a CEMEX, Industria Molinera de La Habana, Aeromexico and Interjet, and, in 2016, there were 31 Mexican investment projects planned to land in the island. After Venezuela and Brazil, México is the third Cuban Latin American trade partner, but in a ranking of countries trading with Cuba, in 2011, Mexico was the sixth one after Venezuela, China, Spain, Brazil and Canada. The free zone of Mariel currently includes the establishment of two Mexican companies – Devos Caribe (painting and coating) and Richmeat of Cuba (beef products),¹¹ but the tourist and energy sectors offers also opportunities, while addressing migration and drug-trafficking are key on the bi-lateral agenda. However, after the election of Trump the new US policy towards Cuba and the reformulation of US-Mexican relations

can influence the future possibilities for the improvement of Cuban-Mexican economic relations. The review of the NAFTA agreement can affect both this relation and the relations of Mexico with the rest of the Caribbean and it is highly possible that the historical triangle of US-Mexican-Cuban relations will prevail and condition the evolution of Cuban-Mexican links. Meanwhile, economic reforms in Cuba open the opportunity to increase Mexican economic interests in the island, as shown by the active presence of several Mexican companies.

At the beginning of the century, momentarily, **Venezuela** under the presidency of Hugo Chávez also emerged as a strong contender for regional leadership, moving beyond its traditional influence in Central America and the Caribbean to the rest of the continent (Serbin, 2010).

Although Venezuela was never before one of the major players in South America, over the last 18 years it promoted strategies that—with nuances—eventually diverged from Brazil's (notwithstanding the close ideological ties between Chavez's government and the PT governments), using its oil wealth to build international alliances. Chávez cultivated and bought the loyalty of countries that were within Brazil's sphere of influence, such as Bolivia and Ecuador, in addition to several Central American and Caribbean countries. Although in the long run a foreign policy based on oil wealth is subject to the whims of the international price of a barrel of oil, during the Chavez' tenure Venezuela was torn between being an ally or an obstacle to Brazil's ability to control its neighborhood. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is an actor whose foreign policy over the last 18 years has been over-extended, subsidized by the high price of oil and characterized by a highly charged ideology, but under Chavez was aspiring to become a regional leader on its own. Venezuela also resorted to the creation of regional organizations to increase its influence. Since the creation of ALBA in close association with Cuba, in 2004, the Bolivarian government has sustained it through oil assistance and by incorporating countries with similar anti-hegemonic and anti-U.S. attitudes in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Originally, Chavez designed ALBA to be the “core” of the process of building a Latin American Community of Nations following the ideas of Simón Bolívar, but keeping ALBA alive was not an obstacle for the Venezuelan government to request to become a full member of MERCOSUR in

2012 and eventually to contribute to the creation of UNASUR and CELAC. However, currently it is losing the influence that was driven by Chávez's leadership. Under President Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela lost its weight as a regional leader due to the drop in the international oil prices, its economic problems as well as the inherent difficulties involved in replacing a charismatic leader such as Chávez. Nevertheless, Venezuela's regional influence on the intergovernmental, political, and social levels did not vanish completely as shown by the difficulties of the OAS to apply the Inter-American Democratic Charter to the Maduro's government during the current political and humanitarian crisis, but is strongly contested by its neighbors and regional organizations such as the same OAS and MERCOSUR. However, it maintains a two-pronged foreign policy based on a soft-balancing strategy designed to weaken the U.S. hegemonic presence as well as a growing militarization of its bureaucracy and its domestic social and political affairs (Serbin and Serbin Pont, 2014: 287-325). Similarly, while Cuba continues to be a close ally of Venezuela, the economic reforms in the island until recently were going in a slightly different direction compared with the growing statist policy of the Bolivarian government (Serbin Pont, 2016: 167-190).

Nevertheless, Venezuela played an important role in the crusade for Cuba's inclusion in the LAC community, particularly since the establishment of ALBA, generally associated with inflammatory anti-US rhetoric. Venezuela was a key regional player in the regional policy toward Cuba. With the election of Chávez to the presidency of Venezuela in 1998, the South American country gave unconditional support to the Castro regime, support that has continued in the post-Chávez era. Economically, Cuba depended on Venezuela as its main trade partner. Venezuela provided cheap oil supplies to Cuba in return for teachers, doctors, and intelligence advisers. Politically, Caracas relied on Havana as its intimate political adviser and bulwark of anti-imperialist socialism, but the political and economic crisis that followed the election of Nicolás Maduro after the death of Chavez are clearly hindering Venezuela's capacity to maintain the economic support to Cuba. In July 2016, Raúl Castro announced that the fall in Venezuelan oil supplies and Venezuelan internal problems were going to affect Cuban economy. According to several sources, for 2016 Venezuela reduced in 40% the shipment of oil to Cuba –from an estimated of more than

105.000 barrels a day it dropped in 2016 to 77.000, and the provision of crude oil to the Cienfuegos refinery (managed by a joint Cuban-Venezuelan company) was drastically reduced until it finally stopped the production (Mesa-Lago, 2016).

In 2014, the main recipients of Cuban exports were Venezuela, the Netherlands, Canada, China, and Spain, and the main exporters to Cuba were Venezuela, China, Spain, Brazil and the United States, which shows a high level of concentration of Cuban trade with a reduced group of countries. Besides the fact that the main Cuban trade partners are China and Venezuela, economic relations improved with Latin America during this century –in 2003 the trade exchange with LAC countries represented 33,4% of the total exchange, but in 2012 it reached a 61,2%. According to a 2014 report, Cuban exports to the region grew from 21,7 to 28,6%, while imports from the region went from 31,3% to 48,8%. In 2012 the main destinies for Cuban products in the region were Venezuela and Brazil (46,4 % of exports to the region which with the exports to Argentina and México reached 53,1%), being service exports of qualified labor –particularly health services– one of the main components of the exports, as in the cases of Venezuela and Brazil (Rodríguez, 2014). By large, Venezuela was the leading Cuban Latin American partner since the beginning of the century and the main supporter of Cuban economy.

Within the framework of the recent evolution of these main actors, Latin American nations have been deepening the relations with Cuba since the mid-nineties, both on a bi-lateral level and within the existing and the emerging multilateral and inter-governmental organizations such SELA, the Rio Group, ALBA, UNASUR and CELAC.

Nevertheless, the decision taken by the Panamanian government to invite Cuba to the VII Summit of the Americas in 2015 was the crystallization of the regional process of including Cuba in the hemispheric community as a full actor, notwithstanding the existence of several voices that echoed its distrust regarding Cuban democracy and human rights performance, and the limited reach and slow pace of the economic reforms in the island.

Even if the US-Cuban bilateral talks were initiated in December 2014 by a year-long and secret facilitation of the Vatican and Canada, one

of the key pending questions is if LAC governments played any role in contributing to this dialogue, within the framework of increasing autonomy from the United States, the development of post-neoliberal regionalism and the changing Hemispheric relations.¹² To answer this question, it is important to insist on two important factors that played into this process –the changing landscape of regional governance in the region after the end of the Cold War and S 11 with the gradual strategic disengagement of the US from the region, and the cautious performance of some of the key Latin American and Caribbean countries in influencing US positions towards Cuba.

The two factors are inter-wined, as the emerging new Latin American regionalism was closely linked to the leading roles played by Brazil, Venezuela, and México in this process. But a third –additional factor– should not be underestimated: since the seventies, beginning with the closer ties established with the CARICOM countries, to the nineties when, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country was admitted to ALADI, Cuba developed a consistent strategy of broadening and deepening its relations with Latin America within its “concentric circles” foreign policy strategy, particularly after the gradual accession to power by akin left-wing or populist parties and movements, most of which were sympathetic to Cuba’s revolution and members of the LAC left-parties Sao Paulo Forum. The seasoned and skilled Cuban diplomacy was a crucial actor both in the process of developing closer ties with Latin American and Caribbean countries and in preparing the ground for the US- Cuban bilateral talks.

However, there is no way of measuring the real influence of LAC countries on the process of the re-establishment of bilateral relations between Cuba and the United States in terms of the specific role performed by individual governments and countries. What remains clear is that most of them supported the cancellation of Cuba’s suspension from the OAS in 2009, and created an adequate environment through the statements and declarations of regional organizations to pressure the United States for the full re-incorporation of Cuba to the hemispheric community, as illustrated by the preparation of the VII Summit of the Americas held in Panamá in April 2015. In any case, even if the bilateral talks that started in December 2014 were the result of sovereign decisions by both the US and the Cuban administrations,

the regional environment through its changes since the beginning of the century was propitious for the initiation of this process and, even if marginally and not through direct intervention, pressure or facilitation, clearly influenced it.

Within this context, Cuba's direct or implicit participation in the evolution and expansion of the so called post-liberal or post-hegemonic regionalism since the nineties is crucial to understand the closer ties forged with LAC after the end of the Cold War and the never officially announced end of the policy of exporting Cuban Revolution to the region. Cuba persisted as the main symbolic reference in the highly anti-US and anti-hegemonic rhetoric of the development of the new regionalism, while knitting closer links on a bi-lateral level with most of the relevant players in the region which, at the same time, were some of the leading promoters of this new wave of regionalism.

Cuba and Latin America and the Caribbean: the current situation and possible scenarios of evolution

On December 17th2014, Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro announced, the beginning of bilateral talks in order to start the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. Even if most of the LAC governments continue to denounce, in regional and international forums, the US embargo on Cuba, since the V Summit of the Americas held in Port of Spain in 2009 with the attendance of President Obama and the promise of an opening and a different approach to US-Latin American relations, expectations were on the rise regarding Cuba's return to the Inter-American system. The VI Summit of the Americas held in Cartagena de Indias in 2012, confirmed this trend and the increasing pressure by LAC states to include Cuba. The June 2009 OAS General Assembly decision to withdraw the 1962 suspension of Cuba, reinforced this trend and showed that most of the Latin American and Caribbean governments –and not only those aligned with ALBA– were keen to a rapid reincorporation of Cuba to the Hemispheric community.

Within this context, in 2016 Cuba remained as a signatory of the ALADI agreements; a full member of the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS),

and an active founding member of ALBA-TCP and CELAC (SELA 2013), but persisted in its reluctance to sign free trade agreement with its neighbors, even if it was an observer at CARICOM and MERCOSUR. In the case of UNASUR—as a South American exclusive political club, Cuba received repeatedly its support on the demand of ending the US embargo and on the positive role that Havana played in the Colombian peace process.

On the domestic front, after the approval of the “*lineamientos de política económica y social del Partido y de la Revolución*” during the VI Cuban Communist Party Congress on April 2011—which was preceded by an extensive discussion of the draft documents—the Cuban government fostered a series of reforms. The final document stated the prevalence of an economic system based on the predominance of “the socialist property of the people of the fundamental means of production”, allowing however for the establishment of a private sector, private entrepreneurs and cooperatives. A series of reforms followed the issuing of the “*lineamientos*” and a new non-state economic sector started to develop. As analyzed in detail in other contributions the reforms affected several sectors, but a slow pace was the distinctive trait for most of them (Serbin, 2013: 177-207; Mesa-Lago, 2016:53-67).

The VII Cuban Communist Party Congress, held in April 2016, was not preceded by a debate or a discussion of draft documents among grassroots and party organizations and approved a diluted document on the advance of the reforms, but Raúl Castro announced that he will step down as the Head of Government in 2018 and that he will only keep his position as First Secretary of the Party until 2021. Nevertheless, already in January 2016 it was clear that the reforms were advancing on a very slow pace showing the reluctance of some sectors of the political elite and the party bureaucracy to proceed with the expected changes. The original “*Lineamientos*” were updated and approved by the Plenary of the PCC Central Committee and by the National Assembly of Popular Power and circulated, in July 2017, as a new document –“*Conceptualización del modelo económico y social cubano de desarrollo socialista*”– with a strong emphasis on the “*dirección planificada del desarrollo económico y social*”. As stated in the document: “*Los objetivos estratégicos de la actualización del Modelo son: garantizar la irreversibilidad y continuidad de nuestro socialismo*”

afianzando los principios que lo sustentan, el desarrollo económico y la elevación del nivel y calidad de vida con equidad” .

Within the framework of the reforms intended to be implemented under the “*modelo de actualización económica y social*” by Raúl Castro, the need for foreign investment (Pérez Villanueva, 2017) and international cooperation was evident since its beginning. After the passage of a new foreign investment law in March 2014 and the approval of 83 investment projects worth more than 1,5 billion USD, Cuba is still failing to meet its self-imposed foreign investment target of 2,5 billion USD.¹³ However, additionally to the development of cooperatives and small entrepreneurs (*cuentapropistas*), the delay in the expected flow of foreign investment was parallel to the slow process of reforms. The re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States in 2014, helped to the landing in Cuba of several US investments –allowing the establishment of Starwood hotels and Airbnb in tourism, the arrival of US airlines, and the establishment of the Clever agricultural machinery factory in Mariel’s Free Zone (which after a year was closed), but the European investment –even if the “*posición común*” regarding human rights of the UE was finally cancelled– is not arriving as expected, besides the installation at the Mariel Free Zone of French, Spanish, Dutch and other European corporations. And with the exception of Brazilian and Mexican investments¹⁴ and Venezuelan inter-governmental enterprises, the flow of Latin American capitals is not arriving even if in previous years trade with the neighbor countries increased, as most of the region’s countries are currently suffering from the same deprivation of foreign investment.

Even if the tourist sector increased significantly after 17 D, with the arrival of US and Cuban-American tourists, this trend will not contribute to the growth of the economy. While in 2015 the Cuban economy grew 4,4%, on December 27 2016, President Raúl Castro stated that “the reduction in the supply of fuel and financial tensions that become in the second semester”, conducted to a reduction of the GDP in a 0,9%.¹⁵ According to some sources, even if currently flights from the US increased, the remittances grew, and US tourism to the island also is growing significantly, many opportunities were lost after 17 D because of the slow pace of the reforms and the reluctance to open the economy, even if the US embargo was blamed as one of the main obstacles.

Within this context, the current re-configuration of the regional political landscape poses some new and serious challenges to the Cuban government on the regional level. The main Latin American trade and political Cuban partners are in retreat. Venezuela reduced its oil assistance, forcing the Cuban government to establish severe adjustments in the consumption of energy in the island and to acquire additional oil supplies at international oil prices. The Cuban-Venezuelan Cienfuegos refinery was temporarily closed. Brazilian government cut partially the participation of Cuban doctors at the *Mais Medicos* program, with a potential impact on the 500 million USD that it provided for services to the Cuban government, while it reduced Cuban imports and the Odebrecht scandal expanded. México will be struggling with a new relationship with US with the arrival of Trump's administration, a process that will probably hinder its interest in Cuba. For Argentina and Colombia, Cuba could represent a symbolic reference but hardly will become an important target for trade or investment. After the Summit of Panama, the recently emerged post-liberal organizations are weakening or are prioritizing other issues than Cuba on their agenda, particularly after the Venezuelan crisis escalated. The regional political environment changed and the new wave of post-liberal/post-hegemonic regionalism that emerged at the beginning of the century is progressively vanishing jointly with the power and influence of the organizations that it created and nurtured. The window of opportunity offered by the re-establishment of Cuban-US relations during the Obama administration –with the sustained support of Latin American and Caribbean countries– to open the economy and attract foreign investment apparently could be lost. The contradictory statements by the new US President torn between the advises of conservative Cuban-Americans to reverse the normalization process and the pressures of US business sectors do not help to anticipate how the relations with Cuba will evolve.

On June 16, 2017, President Donald Trump announced his new Cuba policy in a speech in Miami and signed a new National Security Memorandum which replaced President's Obama Presidential Directive signed in October 2016. The announcement tightened the restrictions on travel to Cuba, banned any transactions that could benefit Cuban military and broadened the list of "prohibited government officials" that could receive remittances, but didn't lead to the break of diplo-

matic relations, to the reintegration of Cuba in the list of countries that support international terrorism or to the cancellation of almost two dozen bilateral agreements on mutual interests signed by President Obama after the announcement of the normalization of the relations between the two countries in December 17, 2014 (LeoGrande, 2017). But some additional setbacks to Obama's measures regarding Cuba are eventually foreseeable and his strategy towards LAC based on the new Cuba-US relationship, the approval of the TPP and the agreements with México and Central America, with the aim of containing China both on a regional and global levels and reasserting US presence in a new political environment through the traditional instruments of trade, security and migration agreements are in the process of being cancelled, reversed or changed. The election of Trump to US presidency, in a different international environment, and the announcement of June 16 arrived as a shock, both for Cuba and for the rest of LAC, at the same time that the death of Fidel Castro closed an important chapter of Cuban influence in LAC, and opened serious questions about the continuity of the special relationship between Cuba and LAC developed at the beginning of the century.

Nevertheless, these two events should be contextualized not only in terms of the birth of a new stage of regional and Inter-American relations but also with regards to the emerging new international environment and the emergence of a new world order. A new global situation with the eventual re-alignment of relevant global players such as China, the US and Russia, and the ambiguities of Donald Trump's administration foreign policy raise the questions about both the survival and sustainability of the "normalization process" between Cuba and the United States, and the future of a Latin American wave of regionalism which was sympathetic with Cuba. The deepening of the Venezuelan crisis and its impact on US-Cuban relations and the region could also threaten previous advancements in the relation between Washington and LAC and eventually contribute to drag La Habana to a new regional isolation.

Within this context, as previously suggested by Feinberg in a recent volume, there could be different scenarios for the process of internal reforms in Cuba. The first one – "inertia and exit" – can show that "the forces of inertia and authoritarian resilience – the one-party monopoly

and bureaucratic control— (can) prove too powerful for those Cubans pushing for profound change”. The second one —“botched transition and decay”— suggests that Cuba “comes to look more like other Caribbean countries, manifesting many of their less desirable traits”, including systemic corruption and organized crime. Finally, the third scenario —“soft landing-sunny 2030”— implies that “by 2030 Cuba will be well on the road toward becoming firmly integrated into the global economy”, with a stable hybrid economy and a vibrant political life (Feinberg, 2016: 202-221). Within the current regional and international environment, additionally to the mentioned internal constraints presented by the three scenarios, on the regional level, it is difficult to envision a new distinctive role for LAC in any of them. After achieving the full re-incorporation of Cuba to the hemispheric community and after helping to re-establish Cuban-US relations, at this new stage LAC as a region will be not able to perform the same role as in the past, both on the political front and in terms of investment and trade. And it is difficult to foresee Cuba playing a similar role in the region as in previous years. Cuba is part of Latin America and the Caribbean and as such it probably will be forced to confront similar challenges and constraints in the foreseeable future trying, at the same time, to make its national interests and priorities to prevail on a drastically different regional and world stage.

NOTES

1. And, for a brief period, Chile, while the Allende government lasted, and Argentina during the short presidency of C ampora in 1973. M exico, however, maintained its special links with Cuba.
2. In 1992 Cuba requested observer status at CARICOM. The next year was established a Cuban-CARICOM Joint Commission which paved the way for the Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement CARICOM-Cuba signed in 2000, and open the possibility for a limited Free Trade Agreement between CARICOM and Cuba with the aim to foster the development of the Association of Caribbean States created in 1994.

3. In 1990 by a joint initiative by Fidel Castro and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva a first meeting of left-wing parties and organizations was convened. The meeting led to the consolidation of the Sao Paulo Forum, which contributed to start the process of re-structuring and programmatic redefinition of the Latin American and Caribbean left.
4. For a discussion of the reach of those concepts, see Introduction and first four chapters of Serbin, Andrés; Laneydi Martinez and Haroldo Ramanzini Jr. (eds.) *El regionalismo post-liberal en América Latina y el Caribe*, Buenos Aires: CRIES, 2012.
5. A clear example of this is the lack of coordination among the three Latin American members of the G20 (Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico) within that group, the existing rift between Mercosur and the Pacific Alliance which the current governments of Chile and Argentina are trying to overcome, and the difficult attempts to unify a common agenda at CELAC to engage with global actors such as the UE, Russia, India and China.
6. Spektor argues that Brazilian policy toward South America is built on two main pillars. First, protecting against threats and preserving Brazil's freedom of action against regional instability, U.S. interference, or the negative effects of globalization. Second, regional activism is a tool through which to increase its power and support Brazil's broader interests in the world. (Spektor, Matías 2010: 25-44)
7. After Argentina as its most important partner.
8. Whose links with Fidel started at the time of the arrival of Sandinistas to power in Nicaragua in the 80's and continued after until today. Lula was also instrumental for the inclusion of Cuba in the Río Group in 2009.
9. See www.socialistamorena.com.br/governo-cubano-convoca-medicos... and www.redebrasilatual.com.br
10. www.gob.mx/periodico/articulos/10-datos-sobre-las-relaciones-Mexico-Cuba , November 6 2015.
11. www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/america-latina/cuba-es/article/112534382.html , November 4 2016.
12. Additionally to the role of government and intergovernmental initiatives, a key role in the building of the previous steps for the beginning

of Cuban-US conversations, was a the development, since 2009, of the *Taller Académico Cuba-Estados Unidos* (TACE), a dialogue between academics and former officials from both countries coordinated by the Latin American think-tank *Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales* (CRIES). See www.cries.org

13. “Cuba falling short of foreign investment goals”, *The Seattle Times*, October 31 2016, www.seattletimes.com/us-companies-see-grim-outlook-in-Cuba-despite-obama-opening
14. “La economía cubana se estanca, mientras el gobierno Cierra puertas a negocios con EEUU”, en *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami), November 1 2016, www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/america-latina/Cuba-es/article11190772.html
15. AFP “Cuban economy in recession for 2016: Castro”, in *The Independent*, December 29 2016, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/arcprint/details/74383/2016-12-29>

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ABSTRACT

When Cuba Went Regional: Latin American Post-Liberal Regionalism and Cuban Foreign Policy

This chapter addresses the issue of the relevance of Latin American post-liberal regionalism for Cuba after Raúl Castro succession of his brother in office, and vice-versa, the relevance of Cuba for the development of Latin American regionalism at the beginning of the century. The main argument of this chapter is that the development of the so-called post-liberal or post-hegemonic regionalism within a propitious context of an economic international environment and a significant shift in LAC politics with the electoral accession to power of center-left, left-wing and populist movements and parties in the first decade of the century created the conditions for the establishment of a new pattern of relationships between Latin American countries and Cuba. However, this pattern is beginning to change under the impact of the transformation of the current Latin American political landscape and the new Cuban policy of U.S. President Donald Trump.

RESUMEN

Inserción regional de Cuba: el regionalismo post-liberal latinoamericano y la política exterior de Cuba

Este capítulo aborda el tema de la relevancia del regionalismo post-liberal latinoamericano para Cuba luego de que Raúl Castro sucediera en el poder a su hermano y, viceversa, la importancia de Cuba para el desarrollo del regionalismo latinoamericano a principios de siglo. El

principal argumento planteado en este capítulo es que el desarrollo del llamado regionalismo post-liberal o post-hegemónico, en el marco de un contexto propicio creado por el escenario económico internacional y el importante cambio en la política de América Latina y el Caribe con el acceso electoral al poder de partidos y movimientos de centro-izquierda, izquierda y populistas durante la primera década del siglo, generó las condiciones para el establecimiento de un nuevo patrón de relaciones entre los países latinoamericanos y Cuba. Sin embargo, este patrón está comenzando a cambiar bajo el impacto de la transformación del panorama político actual de América Latina y la nueva política sobre Cuba del presidente estadounidense Donald Trump.

SUMMARIO

Inserção regional de Cuba: o regionalismo pós-liberal latino-americano e a política exterior de Cuba

Este capítulo aborda o tema da relevância do regionalismo pós-liberal latino-americano para Cuba depois que Raúl Castro sucedeu ao seu irmão no poder e, vice-versa, a importância de Cuba para o desenvolvimento do regionalismo latino-americano no início do século. O principal argumento apresentado neste trabalho é que o desenvolvimento do chamado regionalismo pós-liberal ou pós-hegemônico, no marco de um contexto propício criado pelo cenário econômico internacional e a importante mudança na política da América Latina e do Caribe com o acesso eleitoral ao poder de partidos e movimentos de centro esquerda, esquerda e populistas durante a primeira década do século, gerou as condições para o estabelecimento de um novo padrão de relações entre os países latino-americanos e Cuba. No entanto, este padrão está começando a mudar sob o impacto da transformação do panorama político atual da América Latina e a nova política sobre Cuba do presidente americano Donald Trump.