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Cuba within the logic of the US border: The crossroads between symbolism, geopolitics and elections

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A few days ago, Cuba was confirmed on the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, issued by the United States Department of State. What is the reiteration about, given the evidence that, actually, time and time again, the Island has been and is the target of terrorist action? It is then right to examine the fact, which should not be surprising, in light of the reasons that inspired it, within the framework of the prolonged and deepened conflict of successive North American governments, Republican or Democratic, since the triumph of the Revolution.

If you look at history, from Eisenhower to Biden, the practice of comprehensive hostility —overt and covert, economic, diplomatic, ideological, media— has persisted, despite the latter's statements, which raised frustrated expectations, that he would dismantle the numerous measures adopted by his predecessor. And, at the same time, if you look at the current situation, do not lose sight of the fact that the 2024 electoral campaign is already underway. Although, as a rule, foreign policy issues are not decisive, with some exceptions, it would not be

wise to ignore them, especially in the turbulent context that the US and the world are both experiencing today. For the presidential elections, the stance regarding Cuba, although it is not a major issue in the traditional partisan agendas in the presidential competition, mobilizes the vote in certain segments of public opinion that cannot be overlooked.

In these sixty years' span, with different formulas and combinations, without excluding the military ingredient or terrorism, all of which have failed, that has been the pattern. In essence, the inclusion of Cuba in the slanderous list and the recent confirmation can be interpreted on two levels.

From a structural and historical point of view, it arises from its permanent priority place in the geopolitics of the United States and in the symbolic representations that surround it, defining the perceptions of threat to security and North American identity that accompany it. Both reasons are explained by what could be called the logic of the border, the latter understood, in American jargon, as both a geographical and cultural notion. The border, in that sense, is not only a physical and legal limit that geographically separates one from another. It is what symbolizes the distinction between the North American world, superior, ideal, and the beginning of a different one, that of the "other", which is inferior. Thus, the border becomes an available space, which invites it to be improved, penetrated, controlled, dominated. As if it were empty and could be occupied. It is the logic that underpins the myth of Manifest Destiny and its practical expression, imperial expansionism.

That is, the logic of the border is like a crossroads. It has to do with the location of the small country in the Gulf of Mexico, in maritime space and in the immediate land neighborhood of the United States. In terms of heraldry, the shield of the Republic of Cuba testifies to this, by highlighting Cuba with a visual metaphor: it is the key to the aforementioned gulf, framed between two extremes of the peninsula, that of Yucatán and that of Florida, which is why it awakened such early interest for Spain, in its colonial projection and later for the United States.

On the other hand, there is the independence vocation of Cuba, whose victorious revolution symbolizes the break with the destiny outlined by the project of imperial domination —graphically called by Ángela Grau Imperatori as **The Unrealized Dream of Uncle Sam**, in her excellent homonymous book—, for which the powerful Northern Neighbor will never forgive her. Although American governments justify their policies by declaring that what they seek is to produce reforms, the actual goal is to reverse the process. They do not want a reformed revolution, but rather a kneeling one. They seek surrender, in order to symbolically show their failure, as a radical, popular, independent and sovereign project. Cuba is located on the North American border twice.

Faced with the domination project of a nation from the north against Cuba, the project of its sovereignty arises by itself. These are projects driven by historical subjects and conflicting class conditions.

And, additionally, from the short-term perspective, another issue is added to the analysis. Given that in less than a year the presidential race in the United States will take place, that no candidate for the White House is unaware of the weight of the vote, often oversized, but never irrelevant, of the Cuban community settled there, and that to the image of weakness showed by Biden as the current president, it would not hurt him in his competition with the Republican rival to show a firm stance on an issue like Cuba, in order to expand his partisan base in the Democratic ranks. Hence, no electoral interest could be ignored in the analysis, especially if an attempt is made to broaden sympathy among right-wing sectors, who favor a hard line.

As was pointed out at the time, even in the improvement and path towards an eventual normalization of bilateral relations — announced simultaneously at noon on December 17, 2014 by Barack Obama and Raúl Castro, and continued with other actions, such as the opening of embassies and reestablishment of diplomatic ties—, what the US position took into account when making that U-turn in its policy would be the resilience of the people of Cuba. Thus, the means were changed, but not the ends. The intentions for the Revolution to vary its principled positions on issues such as democracy and human rights were never abandoned. The policy of the United States towards and

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against Cuba, with the intention of overthrowing the Cuban, anti-imperialist and independence project, fits into the well-known Machiavellian maxim: the end justifies the means.

In reality, the document issued on November 30 by the State Department reiterates a line of action complementary to the blockade. It is an instrument of foreign policy that responds to the imperial, permanent and temporary interests of the United States, that, in its status as universal judge labels and sanctions the nations that the US considers to be collaborators or participants in alleged acts of international terrorism and, of course, omits his own status as a promoter of terrorism. Along with Cuba, other countries are also in the list; namely, North Korea, Iran and Syria. Geographically distant from North American limits, given their national projects, in political, ethnic and religious terms, they are codified under the logic of the border, although with specific perspectives, taking into consideration their regional significance and for global geopolitics.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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