

The European Union: relations with Cuba



The European Union in the World
Joaquin Roy
University of Miami

1995

- The European Union insists in crafting a cooperation agreement with Cuba.
- EU Context: Commissioner Manuel Marin
- Spain's Context: end of the socialist administration in Madrid
- Reform in the Clinton's administration towards Cuba (1994 'balsero' crisis)
- Intention of several actors to succeed in the reform of Cuba

1966

- Pressure to approve Helms-Burton in Congress
- Background: Torricelli Law 1992
- But: H-B was not sure of approval, subject of president's veto.
- February 23, 1996. Castro shots down planes of Brothers to the Rescue
- Result: on March 12 Congress passes the law.

Common Position

- 2 December: EU approves a “position” which links cooperation with reforms in Cuba.
- EU does not interfere with nature of Cuban regime; it does not demand change of political system (as H-B does), but links “full cooperation” of aid to reforms in human rights, justice, freedom of speech, etc.

Interpretation of CP by EU

- The EU commitments are “aims-oriented”, not “conditional”.
- The text is not “interference”
- It differs from US approach.
- It contains *offers* of dialogue and cooperation
- only *full* cooperation is linked to (“conditioned by?”) reforms and advance in Cuba –
- what is less than “full” cooperation is a matter of definition.

Contextual setting in EU framework

- CP is an instruments of a soft power
- instead of threats it is an offer of dialogue and cooperation.
- “Sanctions” are not really part of the EU’s political culture
- different interests among 27 MS
- Comparison: whereas the US demonised Cuba as part of an “axis of evil”, the EU’s approach is “an access to evil”.

2000

- January.- ACP approves accession of Cuba to the Cotonou Agreement, successor of Lomé.
- December. Cuba is admitted as a member of ACP.
- Cuba, however, does not sign the application for adhesion, fearing rejection. "Join a golf club and not play"

2003

- March 13. New EU office is inaugurated in Havana.
- December 10.- EU agrees to maintain 'Common Position' towards Cuba.

2003

- 5 June.- The EU imposes “measures” [branded as ‘sanctions’] on Cuba, as a reaction for the sentences imposed to dissidents and journalists, and the execution of three hijackers
- However, the EU does not cut development funds to Cuba.

2003 'measures'

profiles of the diplomatic "measures" are cause of polemic reactions:

- Invite representatives of the dissidents to national celebrations in EU embassies
- Downgrade level of official visits
- Reduce level of participation in fairs and economic meetings

2003

- 16 June.- EU ratifies 'sanctions' against Cuba.
- 26 July.- Fidel Castro rejects maintaining political dialogue with the EU and humanitarian aid.
- European diplomats in Havana become isolated, with no access to high level of Cuban government.

2004

- March 11 and 14: terrorist attack in Madrid and Spanish elections.
- Zapatero is elected, beating the PP after 8 years
- Fall 2004: Spain reviews policy towards Cuba
- Assessment: counterproductive: no results plus lack of communication
- Consults and pressures partners

Contrast with US policy

- EU: “constructive engagement” and political dialogue
- Purpose: to facilitate transition to democracy
- US: policy the based on 1960s embargo and other measures to terminate regime



EU policy permanent features

- Problems and conflicts between Cuba and the US have to be resolved bilaterally
- EU opposes embargo, especially its codification (Helms-Burton), mainly because it violates one of the fundamentals of the EU (freedom of movement of goods)
- If Cuba wants a close relationship with EU and enjoy an agreement as the rest of the LA countries: needs to reform and respect human rights (Common Position of 1996)

Is EU policy dictated by US moves?

- Cuba says it is: it is a script dictated from Washington
- Some in EU: EU policy is the result of an aim for a “soft” opposition to the US in an area of no strategic value
- EU establishment: it is autonomous

Recent-current

- 2014: talks start
- No conditions?
- Before: Cuba would not negotiate with Common Position on.
- Important change: Cuba accepted talks
- Rounds since then