Cuba and CARICOM in the changing environment

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Abstract
In 2011 Cuba approved a new economic policy with the purpose of re-launching its economy while preserving the main social achievements of the socialist model. The bet is high enough to raise doubts and questions around the success of such a major economic transformation. The reality is that, in spite of fears and resistances against the “upgrading” of the Cuban economic model, domestic changes are mandatory in order to build up a prosper and sustainable socialism, idea that President Raúl Castro has promoted as the core and key goal of the socioeconomic changes. The paper explores the current relations of Cuba and the CARICOM countries as well as the expected changes this relationship may undergo in the near future as a result of Cuban economic updating.

Key words: Cuba, CARICOM, foreign policy, Cuban economy, cooperation

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The Cuba and Caribbean relationship: Cuba and CARICOM

The Caribbean region occupies a central role in Cuba’s foreign policy. The island’s external projection, in coherence with its socialist ideology and as response to the continuous attempts of isolation by the U.S. governments, seeks to guarantee the survival of its social project by maintaining diplomatic relations around the globe and by strengthening alliances with the developing world.

The extended vision of the Cuba’s foreign policy has been accompanied by an international activism in favor of the Third World interests. Cuba prefers to support preventive actions aimed at meeting social and economic needs rather than back up coercive measures or military interventions. Its requests for responding to the basic demands of the poorer countries without jeopardize its sovereignty have been presented in multilateral organizations as UNESCO, FAO, UNDP, WHO and the Human Rights Council, among others. In 1961 Cuba joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as Member State and the Group of 77 at the United Nations in 1964.

The practice of solidarity as a main philosophy in Cuba’s foreign policy has in its cooperation programs the implementation mechanism that has supported Cuba’s international insertion. Since 1961 Cuba has registered cooperation actions in 157 countries with the participation of more than 400,000 Cubans.\(^2\)

Even if Cuba’s relationship with the Caribbean follows these main principles, the greater significance of the region obeys to additional reasons. The Caribbean is Cuba’s natural geographical location. The major island in the Caribbean Sea shares a common history of colonization and sugar plantation exploitation with its Caribbean neighbors. The spatial proximity poses common menaces as drug traffic, natural disasters and climate change negative effects.

After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution the Caribbean, at the moment under European political control in most part, joined the isolation policy towards the island promoted by the United States. The American pressure relied on targeting Cuba as the communist menace on the hemisphere. In 1962, when Cuba was expelled from the Organization of American States (OAS), the only two independent Caribbean countries—besides Cuba—members of the regional organisation were Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Both of them voted in favour of Cuba’s expulsion. Other Latin American-Caribbean countries as Colombia, Venezuela and the Central American states, also members of the OAS, voted off Cuba. Only Mexico supported the socialist island.3

The progressive process of Caribbean independence followed by the Anglo speaking Caribbean territories also reached the foreign policy projection of the region towards Cuba. In 1972, four young independent States decided to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba: Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. But in 1983 the Invasion of Grenada—led by the United Stated with the support of the OAS and Caribbean countries as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Barbados and Jamaica—frozen the relationship in the context of the Cold War. In November, 1983, the votes against the U.N. resolution condemning the invasion came from the United States, Israel, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, El Salvador, Israel, Jamaica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the UN representative in Grenada. The 27 abstentions included the United Kingdom and several Commonwealth countries and the European Economic Community. Australia, who previously voted in favor of the resolution, later requested the transformation of its vote into an abstention.4

The implosion of the USSR and the European Socialist Block altered the world balance. Cuba faced a severe economic crisis and was compelled to incorporate market mechanisms, receive

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3 In 2009, mostly due to the pressure of Latin American and Caribbean States, the OAS lifted 47-year-old suspension of Cuba. Although the OAS lifted Cuba's suspension, Latin leaders did not automatically welcome the nation back. Instead, the OAS set up a mechanism by which Cuba could rejoin. Much of that dialogue will center on human rights.

foreign investors and accept hard currency circulation. The loss of its main international associates forced the island to build new alliances. While the United States insisted on its ineffective aggressive policy, hardened by the approval of the Torricelli Act in 1992 and the Helms-Burton in 1996, the rest of the world understood that Cuba was no longer a communist menace. The European Union and Canada, major partners of the United Stated, decided to follow an alternative approach and deepened its relationship with Cuba. Together with other Latin American countries, they invested in the island and broadened economic relations. They developed cooperation programs and enlarged cultural and academic exchanges.

The post-Cold War context opened to Cuba the possibility of improving the relationship with the Caribbean. The island, while trying to recover its economy without adopting the neoliberal recipe, promoted a more active participation in regional fora, especially in those where the United States does not participate. Since 1992 Cuba has counted on the Caribbean countries for a general condemnation to the U.S. embargo. During 23 consecutive years at the United Nations, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions calling for an end to the embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba.

In 1994 Cuba became founding Member of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). Cuba is also member of the Latin American and the Caribbean Economic System (SELA in Spanish), the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) and participates in the Ibero-American Summits. In 2000 Cuba joined the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP).

Cuba sustains diplomatic relations with all the CARICOM States but the country is not a Member State of CARICOM, nor either an Associate Member. Among the reasons why Cuba does not have requested its membership in CARICOM, it is our opinion that the main factors could be the singularity of Cuba’s economic and political model, the collective sovereignty criteria that rule on regional integration schemes and the comprehensive revision that Cuba’s economy will endure if wanting to join –as Surinam in 1995 and Haiti in 1997 did in 1995 and
1997 respectively. And last, but no least, the high dependency that CARICOM economies maintain regarding the U.S economy.

Figure 1. Exports from CARICOM to China, US and the EU from 2001 to 2010
(Millions of US Dollars)


Figure 1 illustrates CARICOM exports to the United States’ rising trend, with the exception of an expected decrease in 2009 as a result of the world economic crisis. The United States is the major destination for CARICOM exports, followed by the European Union and China in third place. In spite of the growing China’s presence in the region, the Asian country still is a very small export market vis-à-vis the United States and the European Union for the Caribbean nations.

When analyzing CARICOM imports, figure 2 reveals the key role of the United States as an exporter to the Caribbean region. Even if the European Union and China have increased in recent years, imports from the United States have not diminished significantly.
The United States also plays a central role as investor, funding source and donor in the region. Although the Caribbean has lessened its strategic geopolitical importance as regards the Cold War era, at a time when the Middle East, Afghanistan, Russia and China monopolize U.S. foreign policy attention, the area still is the “third border” that matters when considering terrorist threats, drug traffic, Latin American recent left democratic elected governments, alternative regional integration schemes as ALBA, UNASUR and CELAC, and the omnipresent socialist Cuban “menace”.

To this day, the U.S. approach towards the Caribbean has not changed in its basic fundamentals. Even if Secretary of State John Kerry declared in November 2013 the expiration of the nearly 200 year old Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. policy of carrot and stick remains operative. The return of the U.S. Fourth Fleet in 2008, the support to the coup d’état in Honduras in 2009, the Mexico–United States barrier construction and the increased military presence in Latin America and the Caribbean coexist with the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the Summits of the Americas, the Bridgetown Accord of 1997 and the Caribbean Third Border Initiative of 2001. After the collapse of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in the IV Summit of the Americas, in Mar del Plata 2005, the United States was forced to readjust its foreign policy in the region and

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narrowed its trade and investment promotion interest to bilateral negotiated treaties. In the Caribbean some examples are the Dominican Republic-Central America-USA Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) and the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE), both in 2006. In May 2013, the USA-CARICOM Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) was signed in Port of Spain. Its main purpose is, as stated in Article One, “to promote the long-term development, expansion, and diversification of trade in products and services, and (...) to promote an attractive investment climate”.  

Despite the U.S. closed ties with CARICOM, the regional organization and its Members countries have pulled of a positive relationship with the major island in the Antilles. In 1991 a CARICOM Commission visited Havana and in 1993 the CARICOM-Cuba Joint Commission was established. In 2000 it was signed the Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement between Cuba and CARICOM.  

Table 1. Diplomatic relations between Cuba and the CARICOM Member States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Year of establishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granada</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Kitts and Nevis</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Lucia</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Vincent and Grenadines</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Cuba-CARICOM relationship is systematically evaluated in the Cuba-CARICOM Summits. The first meeting was held in 2002 as celebration of the thirty years of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, and every three years the encounter repeats. The last one was held in Trinidad and Tobago, on December 8, 2011.

The summits are an appropriate occasion to discuss economic relations and cooperation programs. In terms of cooperation initiatives, Cuban cooperation in the Caribbean shows evident progress. Cuba has developed programs in healthcare, education, sports and infrastructure construction. Cuba’s cooperation attractiveness resides on the absence of ideological-political preconditions and the focus on social goals. Some of them are the “Milagro” Program (*Operación Milagro*) in the health sector; the literacy campaign “Yes I can” (*Yo sí puedo*) and the scholarship program to follow university studies in Cuba.
In terms of economic exchange, on the contrary, Cuba and CARICOM have not advanced significantly. The main factors that block the increase on trade exchange and investments flows are the high cost of air and sea transportation –the only possible between islands–, the legal and institutional differences, the insufficient finance and credit mechanisms and the United States blockade against Cuba.

The United Stated aggressive policy towards Cuba continues a major obstacle in the Cuba-CARICOM economic relations. In spite of the hopes many had in the Obama administration, the truth is that, so far, any noteworthy changes has happened. The United States government still ignores its own citizens’ demands to remove all travel bans –the Obama administration simply rolled back the Clinton era by allowing Cuban Americans to travel to Cuba–, continuously creates mechanisms to organize and promote internal counterrevolution –as the recent Zunzuneo or Cuban Twitter scandal has showed worldwide– and essentially maintains the position of its predecessors that seek for a “regime change” –ergo, to overthrow Cuba’s government– while denies the legitimacy of the Cuban institutions and accuses the Cuban government on violating fundamental freedoms and human rights. The Obama administration has bypassed the United Nation General Assembly resolution that demands the end to Cuba embargo. Cuba is still included in the so-called List of States promoting international terrorism made by the State Department, as was revealed on April 30, 2014\(^7\). The island has been on the list since 1982.

Out of all odds, the Obama administration has being particularly aggressive with companies that try to negotiate with Cuba or Cuban citizens, even with those located out of the United States territory –argument enough to prove that this is not only a traditional trade embargo but a more comprehensive and ambitious policy against the island. Curiously, one of the most recent examples had the Caribbean area as scenario. On April 11, 2014, it became public the decision of PriceSmart Inc., a major U.S. based bulk-shopping warehouse, to suspend memberships of

shoppers from the communist country at its Jamaica subsidiary. 

The current state of the U.S.-Cuba relationship and the Obama´s administration actions towards the island makes difficult to believe any short term policy change. However, transformations in regional dynamics and inside Cuba may impact the Cuba-CARICOM relationship in the near future. To analyse the ongoing updating process in Cuba and the expected adjustments in Cuba-CARICOM relation is dedicated the second and final section of this paper.

**Cuba´s economic transformation and its impacts in its relation with CARICOM**

In 2011 Cuba launched the process for “updating” its economic model. The initial project was developed in November 2010, underwent extensive popular debate with 8 million participants that lasted about five months. The final document was approved at the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba under the title “Lineamientos de la Política Económica y Social del Partido y la Revolución”. 

The Cuban structural economic problems have been constant object of debate in the last fifteen years. Among the most severe are: insufficient foreign investment, domestic economy distortions as consequence of an overvalued official exchange rate, dual currency economy with two different exchange rates, segmented markets, lack of convertibility, low productivity –especially in the agricultural sector– and inefficient performance of public organizations and enterprises.

Together with the economic blockade and a limited dotation of market valuable natural resources, Cuba’s poor economic performance are at the bottom of the deterioration of many domestic economic indicators: trade deficit, investment, fiscal deficit and GDP growth. The increased economic relations with Venezuela, Brazil and China have opened new opportunities

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for the Cuban economy but, unless domestic difficulties are solved, they could not be fully seized.

**Figure 3. Growth rate of Real GDP. Cuba. 1990-2012**

![Graph showing the growth rate of real GDP in Cuba from 1990 to 2012.](image)


Cuba’s purpose is to fix its economy while preserving social achievements in health care, education, culture, sports, recreation and social security. The economic transformation aspires to introduce market mechanisms without abandoning the central planning policy. The socialist state enterprise will remain as the fundamental property structure. The country is looking for attracting foreign investment and promoting small farms, cooperatives in the agricultural and services sector and self-employment, in order to reduce the state’s role in non-strategic economic areas.

**Figure 4. Human Development Index. Cuba. 1990-2012**

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Among the first measures already taken, as part of the economic transformation process, there are: usufruct granting of state owned idle lands; reorganizing the State apparatus, ministries and large enterprises; encouraging private and cooperative entrepreneurship, leasing state facilities, mostly in the services sector; removing inflated payrolls; gradually eliminating the rationing policy and universal subsidies, updating the tax policy; renegotiating the payment of the foreign debts; promoting Special Development Zones and adopting a new Foreign Investment Law.

It is still too early to evaluate the success of the present reform. Nevertheless, changes are visible. Small businesses have flourished in the service sectors and the self-employment sector has grown. Ministries have disappeared and new have emerged. In July 2012 Cuba’s Parliament approved a new Tax Law and in April 2014 a new Foreign Investment Law. In January 2014, with the presence of presidents Dilma Rousseff and Raúl Castro, the Mariel mega-port was inaugurated.

These changes have driven different reactions, some of them quite unexpected. In a recent article published in the Jamaica Observer, it was alleged that: “Cuba is a threat for development support as well as investment from many who were once bullish on the Caribbean’s development
and integration agenda”. The argument presented Cuba as a country that “has emerged as a growing threat as a location for foreign direct investment and development inputs from the outside world”, especially because of the mega-port in Mariel, the renewed relation with the European Union, the possibility of an improved relationship between Cuba and the United States (really!?) and the Canada, Brazil and China increased presence in the island as foreign investors.

Curiously enough, the article does not mention any of the many advantages that CARICOM possess to promote its economic development and that Cuba cannot benefit from, such as a full economic relation with the United Stated, the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) or the IMF and World Bank Membership.

On the other hand, CARICOM relationships with Canada, Brazil and China also enjoy an engaging moment. Canada has signed Bilateral Foreign Investment Protection Agreements (FIPA) with Trinidad and Tobago in 1996 and Barbados in 1997, and in 2008 was established the Canada-CARICOM Business Forum. In 1998 was agreed the CARICOM-Canada Protocol on Rum and since 1985 has been implemented the Caribbean-Canada Trade Agreement (CARIBCAN). Currently, a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is negotiated between Canada and CARICOM. The discussions towards a CARICOM-Canada FTA were announced at the Canada-CARICOM Summit in 2001.

Brazil’s efforts in becoming a fundamental regional player have certainly benefited Cuba, but also the rest of the Caribbean region. Several programs that include postgraduate scholarships, investment in infrastructure, technology transfers, natural disasters impact’s management and military cooperation have being implemented. In the first summit Brazil-CARICOM, more than 40 agreements in health, education, culture, agriculture, energy, tourism, defense and

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10 Edmunds, Anton E. “Cuba — A growing threat to the Caribbean?”, Jamaica Observer, February 17, 2014
http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/Cuba---A-growing-threat-to-the-Caribbean_16037419 (access May 1, 2014)

11 Ibídem

12 Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries. CARICOM-Canada Free Trade Agreement,

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environmental sectors were adopted. Bilateral Technical Cooperation Agreements with the CARICOM Secretariat and the Governments of Dominica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were also signed, commitments that supplement the already existing agreements with the governments of Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Brazil has gradually opened embassies in the CARICOM Members States.\(^\text{13}\)

China’s policy in the Caribbean has also being very fast forward recently. In spite of the difficulties associated to the recognition by some Caribbean States of the legitimacy of Taiwan and Tibet –specifically St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines–, the “One China Policy” has proved to be highly favorable to the countries that maintain diplomatic relations with the Asian giant –that is the case of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Bahamas, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, the last being the first country that established diplomatic relations with China in 1971\(^\text{14}\). China has helped financing several infrastructure projects in the region as the Montego Bay Convention Centre, National Academy of the Performing Arts in Port of Spain, Widley Gymnasium in Barbados, Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium and an airport terminal in Antigua, St. Paul’s Sports, Cultural and Development Organization in Grenada, the Foreign Ministry building in Grenade, among many others.\(^\text{15}\)

Even if China’s economic relations with the Caribbean are largely bilateral due to the “One China Policy”, multilateral efforts can also be recognized. An example is the biennial China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Cooperation fora. At the Third Trade and Economic Forum, in September 2011, China promised US$1 billion in preferential loans for Caribbean economic development; US$1 billion from the China Development Bank for special commercial loans towards infrastructural development; a donation of US$1 million to the CARICOM Development Fund; approximately 2,500 training opportunities and 30 opportunities for studies

\(^{13}\) Caribbean Community Secretariat. Brasilia Declaration issued by the First CARICOM-Brazil Summit, April 26, 2010, \url{http://www.caricom.org/jsp/communications/meetings_statements/brasilia_declaration.jsp} (access May 1, 2014)

\(^{14}\) Primera, Maye. “La diplomacia china suma votos en el Caribe”, \textit{El País}, June 3, 2013 \url{http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/06/03/actualidad/1370221951_875328.html} (access May 1, 2014)

for master’s degrees in China; support and training for natural disaster mitigation and prevention and support for increasing and diversification of export\textsuperscript{16}. China is a member of the Caribbean Development Bank as well as the Inter-American Development Bank, and has also contributed to the Caribbean Development Fund (CDF).

In spite all these advantages that clearly allow CARICOM Member States to count on substantial funding and loans sources, Cuba has always preferred to practice a solidarity policy towards the Caribbean, to cooperate rather than to compete. Cuba has never pointed out the benefits enjoyed by the Caribbean countries as collateral effects of the isolation endured by Cuba due to its historical confrontation with the United States. Let us remember, as few examples, how the Dominican Republic acquired the Cuban sugar quota in the USA markets after Eisenhower eliminated it in the early 60’s or how the Caribbean islands developed its tourist sector thanks to the arrival of American tourists banned from the Cuban beaches.

David Jessop, Director of the Caribbean Council, regarding the reasons behind the recent comments about the possible negative effects of Cuba’s emergence, recognized on his column of April 6, 2014:

“The comments, while understandable, perhaps say more about much of the region’s continuing failure to understand that competition is not a zero sum game; that the rest of the region has had more than fifty years to prepare while Cuba has been economically isolated; the lamentable failure of CARICOM to create a viable single economy or to address the economic imbalances between its smaller and larger members; and many nations’ continuing failure to recognise that to succeed it is first necessary to identify where future competitive advantage might lie.

Cuba’s unusual process of trying to adapt the reality of market economics to the needs of its unique social model should therefore be a moment not for hand

\textsuperscript{16} Ibídem

\url{www.lirds.org}
wringing in the Caribbean, but a change to be welcomed if as seems likely it portends further gradual and stable change.”

In the unlikely scenario of a normalization of the Cuba-United States relation in the short or medium term, Cuba will be no more threat than Mexico, or Costa Rica, or Panama to the CARICOM countries. It is worth remind that a global economy possess challenges to every country, these accentuated for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) forced to rapidly adapted to the impacts of climate change in order to guarantee its territorial integrity and population survival. Maybe it could be more useful to think in terms of allies instead of threats. That has been the Cuban choice so far, and it seems it will in the renewed socioeconomic model Cuba is trying to build.

The importance of the Caribbean region for Cuba is recognized in the “Lineamientos” document. It establishes as a guideline:

115. Keep an active participation in the economic integration process with Latin America and the Caribbean as a strategic objective, and maintain Cuba’s involvement in the regional trade economic arrangements to which Cuba has adhered, including but not limited to the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and PETROCARIBE, and continue to strengthen the unity among the members of these arrangements.

For Cuba, to participate in regional economic integration process is a key element within the ongoing reform. But the nature of its contribution has to be reassessed to Cuba’s economic reality and current possibilities. Besides looking for more economic integration with the

Caribbean, Cuba needs to adjust its traditional cooperation approach if wanting to maintain its solidarity foreign policy towards the region.

Cuba’s cooperation understanding usually has being summarized by the island authorities as follow: “Cuba does not give what it is left, but shares what little it has”\textsuperscript{19}. Cuban cooperation projects do not focus merely on technical assistance but rather in professional training and preferably act on healthcare, education, environment protection, sports and cultural sectors. The participation of Cuban doctors and nurses in all the Caribbean is one of the most recognized and appreciated cooperation program.

Table 2. Cuban health sector professionals in the Caribbean, September 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By territories</th>
<th>Cuban professionals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antigua</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aruba*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonaire*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curaçao *</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenade</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadalupe</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{19} “Cuba no da lo que le sobra, sino que comparte lo poco que tiene”, \url{http://www.radiorebelde.cu/noticia/califica-primer-ministro-haitiano-historica-desinteresada-cooperacion-cubana-20130715/} (access May 3, 2014)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Kitts and Nevis</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Lucia</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Vincent</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,377</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Special territories of the Netherlands

In the current context, Cuba has included economic rationality as strategic criteria to evaluate the cooperation programs. The resources constraint has propelled the search of substitute patterns to continue the South-South cooperation. The triangular cooperation has proved to be a successful alternative response. Cuban joint actions in Haiti with Venezuela, Brazil and Norway are a good example.

To Cuba, Haiti is object of special attention not only for being the poorest country in the hemisphere, but also for having fought the first independence Revolution in the Americas and endured the same aggressive and isolation policy from imperialist powers. Add the Haitian migration to Cuba in the first half of the XX century that resulted in a Haitian community living in Cuba. As former President of Haiti René Preval recognized in 2010: “You (the Cubans) did
not wait for the earth wake to be at our side” (“Ustedes no esperaron el terremoto para estar con nosotros”). Cuban professionals still are in Haiti.

Table 3. Comparative figures of healthcare provision in Haiti. March 23, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Patients treated</th>
<th>Surgical Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)</td>
<td>3.408</td>
<td>54.000</td>
<td>3.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21.000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1.504</td>
<td>227.143</td>
<td>6.499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The triangular cooperation Cuba-Venezuela-Haiti has being particularly intense in the healthcare sector. Some results are the extension of the “Milagros” Operation in Haiti and the establishment of Integral Diagnostic Centers in different Haitian territories. The Cuba-Venezuela assistance has also being channeled through the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - Peoples’ Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP in Spanish), regional institution created in 2004 by both countries. Until May 2014, ALBA had 9 Members: Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica Honduras, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Ecuador, Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Lucia. Caribbean presence is evident majority.

Conclusions

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21 http://alba-tcp.org/content/alba-tcp
Even if Cuba is not a State Member of CARICOM, the relationship between the island and the regional integration scheme has deepened in the last decades. Biannual summits, together with a sustained cooperation in health and education among other sectors, illustrate the positive relations between Cuba and its Caribbean neighbors. As Small Island Developing States, they share similar challenges and promote their common interests in international fora. CARICOM has denounced the U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba and has voted repeatedly in the United Nations General Assembly to end the long lasting U.S. embargo.

However, there is room to enhance Cuba-CARICOM relationship. The relations today are concentrated in foreign policy and cooperation activities while economic links are not substantial. The high cost of air and sea transportation, alongside with legal and institutional differences and insufficient finance and credit mechanisms block trade and investment. The U.S. blockade is also a key obstacle in this effort.

In spite of difficulties, it is our opinion that some possibilities to intensify the Cuba-CARICOM relations remain only partially employed. The existence of Cuba-CARICOM Agreements and Cuba’s participation in the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery and –as occasional invited State– in certain organizations as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD) and Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) will allow a more dynamic relationship. Cuba should evaluate becoming Observer within these organizations as well as in some of the CARICOM Ministerial Committees as the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED).

The updating of the Cuban economic model draws criticism and controversy. For some, Cuba abandons the path of socialism. To others, the reform will result in a prosperous socialist model. But the majority accept that changing is mandatory in order to survive in the current globalised economy.
Even if the Cuban updating has just begun, some modifications are already visible. Regarding Cuba’s foreign policy, a swift in cooperation practices is happening. In the future, it is expected the increasing of triangular projects to support the South-South cooperation programs. The rise of Brazil as a strong regional actor and the emergence of regional fora focused on cooperation and social development goals could benefit Cuba’s will of continuing its solidary policy in the Caribbean. Other changes could include gradually moving some of the capacity building programs from Cuba to the recipient countries and developing compensation mechanisms to support Cuba’s economic cooperation efforts.

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