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Mending bridges: the Unfinished Business of the US and Cuba

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BRICS Policy Center Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas - BRICS



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Mending bridges: the Unfinished Business of the US and Cuba^{*}

Isa Mendes

1. Introduction

The blatant disparity between Cuba and the United States - which ranges from their economic model to their political and ideological history; from their geographic features to their cultural origins - is notorious and constant, although it has evolved and transformed over the years. One's path has always been unequivocally connected to that of the other. Until December 17th of last year, it was possible to recognize two clear periods in US-Cuba relations - first, one of intense yet problematic closeness and, second, another of utter estrangement and dissonance. In between the two lies the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The asymmetry between the two neighboring countries fueled the inherent power dynamics that permeated these two broad periods during the 20th century and early 21st. More than fifty years of alienation later, and having the Cold War not been a reality for over two decades, the world is now witness of a transition towards a third period, triggered by a fruitful negotiation process and the reestablishment of diplomatic ties recently announced by Barack Obama and Raúl Castro.

The event gives way to a series of questions - what stood in the way of mending bridges before? What allowed for normalization now? What was the role of third parties in the negotiations? Moreover, what will the restoration of relations mean for Cuba and the United States individually, as well as for their future relationship? This Policy Brief aims at contemplating these inquiries

(*) This Policy Brief was concluded on 06/04/2015, as negotiations still unfolded. The author is grateful to Bert Hoffmann for his valuable advice.

(although not exhausting them) and will be distributed among four sections. The first one will consist of a historical background of the US-Cuba relations, in order to highlight the root causes of their antagonism and its persistence. The second section will analyze the circumstances that permitted the reversal of the status quo and the third will look at the recent negotiation process itself, with special emphasis on the actors involved and Pope Francis' mediation. The last section, finally, will concentrate on the perspectives and challenges posed by the thaw.

2. Historical Background

On January 1st, 1959, the Cuban Revolution struggle reached its triumphal closure and pinpointed a shift in international, regional and domestic politics that can hardly be overestimated. The literature of US-Cuban relations was similarly shaped by the event. Extensive research on the pre-1959 period may be found in the works of Louis A. Pérez Jr.¹, Elías Pavón Tamayo² and Hugh Thomas³. Carlos Alzugaray⁴ and Thomas G. Paterson⁵ ably portray the years immediately before 1959. In post-Batista years, however, investigations were compromised by the hermetic nature of Cuban archives - which forced many authors to rely exclusively on US official documents⁶. Still, different perspectives on the period are provided by authors such as Aviva Chomsky⁷, Jorge I. Domínguez⁸, Piero Gleijeses⁹ and Marifeli Pérez-Stable¹⁰. Among the many potential implications of the approximation, then, there is a possibility not only of looking ahead, but also of glancing back at the past and reinterpreting it.

Prior to the spectacular accomplishment of Fidel Castro and his fellow revolutionaries, the island had lived through exploitation and subjection by Spain and the United States¹¹. The rivalry between the two states (and America's ensuing predominance) had lasting effects over Cuba's national project - its war for independence, led by Jose Martí, was overlapped by US's decision to go to war with Spain in 1898 in order to protect its economic assets from the instability of the conflict. As the Spanish capitulated and granted Cuban independence that same year, the country was born as a virtual protectorate of the United States. The infamous Platt Amendment¹², forced upon Cuba's 1901 Constitution by the US, worked in practice until the Revolution despite having been officially revoked in 1934. The first half of the 20th century in Cuba, thus, is widely known for narratives of corruption by Washington-backed strongmen like Gerardo Machado and Fulgencio Batista - which, to some extent, explain the popular adherence to the cause of the Sierra Maestra fighters and their victory¹³.

Enwrapped by the Cold War atmosphere, the United States worried Fidel Castro would pursue radical routes of government. Even though Castro never mentioned communism at the time, some of his pronouncements gravely concerned US officials. Under vigilant observation by the Eisenhower administration, the Cuban leader accepted an invitation of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) in April, 1959, to visit the United States. In between encounters with cheering crowds, Castro attended meetings with US officials - including then Vice-President Richard Nixon and even the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). In an interesting passage of the trip, an American diplomatic official was introduced to Castro as the one "in charge of Cuban affairs", to which he promptly answered "and I thought I was in charge of Cuban affairs"¹⁴. His witty response says a lot about that specific moment in US-Cuba relations - the growing mutual distrust and forced adjustments between the two were reflections of Cuba's attempt to finally assert its independence.

The trip was the last chance to avoid the escalation of tensions that would follow. The US became puzzled that Castro did not ask for financial aid, which was part of an evident self-affirmation

strategy, and refrained from offering it as well. Communist or not, it soon became clear that Castro's socioeconomic project for Cuba and a good relationship with Washington were irreconcilable. When his first substantive measure was none other than an agrarian reform, it did not matter that it was not as extreme as it could have been - it just made him look that more radical and turned cautious American investors into angry and fearful ones. The American government was already certain the *barbudos*¹⁵ needed to go and gave the CIA a green light for devising covert operations to feed opposition movements.

The situation then spiraled out of control. When American refineries in Cuba refused to process the crude oil recently purchased from the Soviet Union, Castro nationalized them. The US responded by suspending Cuba's sugar quota, which triggered more nationalizations in Cuba. The American government, in turn, halted exports to Cuba except for food and medicine, which then led Castro to nationalize what remained of US's assets. The last spark for the break came in January 1961 - after Castro demanded the reduction of the US embassy's staff in Havana during a speech, Eisenhower officially broke diplomatic relations.

A major part of the quarrel, the embargo introduced by Eisenhower¹⁶ was made official by John F. Kennedy in February of 1962¹⁷. A few months later, the American government had the Organization of American States (OAS) approve Cuba's suspension. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson also succeeded in having the OAS establish regional economic sanctions against Cuba, as well as an agreement to a collective interruption of relations with the island. In the US, the policy emerged as a presidential prerogative that was far from monolithic - it involved choices on travel and trade restrictions, bans on investment, constraints on immigration, the control of journalistic and academic interactivity, caps on family remittances, etc¹⁸. Such choices depended not only on party politics and personal preferences, but also (and primarily) on the direction Cold War winds were blowing.

As Cuba fully migrated towards the Soviet sphere of influence, informal attempts to make amends were put forward by officials from both sides. It is important to emphasize, then, that no matter the state of official disgust and the public crossfire of choleric statements by heads of state then and thereafter, channels of communication were never completely closed - even at turning points such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, there were back-channel exchanges seeking settlements that were out of reach through official routes¹⁹.

During the presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson, exchanges were timid and happened informally, involving low-ranking officials and often counting on the personal commitment of third parties. As time went by and the Cold War winded down, semi-formal channels of negotiation were slowly set up. More notably from the détente and Henry Kissinger's period as Secretary of State on, the two countries started involving higher ranking officials in talks, and under the Carter administration, in 1977, Interests Sections were created inside the Czech embassy in Washington and the Swiss embassy in Havana to permanently accommodate Cuban and American officials despite the maintenance of the diplomatic rupture. Even as things reheated during Ronald Reagan's administration, such channels were preserved and proved valuable for the resolution of short-term diplomatic crises (e.g. the confrontation between Cuban workers and US military personnel during the American invasion of Grenada in 1982).

Whether performed by prominent private citizens²⁰, foreign diplomats, low-ranking officials or trusted political aides and Secretaries of State, and regardless of taking place at airport cafés, suburban homes or hotel rooms of several different cities, the fact is both sides' requirements for amelioration transformed through the years, but never matched. The main critical events that precipitated strategic reconceptions by the US and Cuba (and therefore also of their conditions

for approximation) are accordingly written into history books - the American reliance on CIA covert operations, particularly the Bay of Pigs fiasco under Kennedy; the already cited Cuban Missile Crisis; tensions over the incorporation of Third World countries into either of the superpower's spheres of influence; etc. In short, as highlighted by William Leogrande and Peter Kornbluh, "Cold War confrontations, Havana's revolutionary ideology, and Washington's hegemonic arrogance all conspired against attempts to bridge the deep divide between the two countries"²¹.

Dialogue did allow for a few agreements over accessory and/or pressing topics that interested both parts, such as the length of the maritime sea, fishing rights, hijacking, the release of political prisoners and, most importantly, migration. When it came to broader mutually agreed accords, on the other hand, the states reached a dead-end each time conditions for normalization were laid out. As one would figure, the total incompatibility of their objectives worked to disavow every peaceful gesture from the outset.

US's conditions for amelioration were mainly the end of Cuban meddling in internal affairs of other Latin American nations (e.g. its support for Puerto Rico's independence and revolutionary movements in Central and South America) and African countries (i.e. its military presence in Angola and Ethiopia²²), as well as its renouncement from being a Soviet satellite in the Western hemisphere, especially from hosting weapons or military personnel. The arrangements for compensation of nationalized American assets were also a key problem. For most part of attempted negotiations, Cuba supposed that before the two could talk on a leveled ground, the embargo would have to be lifted. The US correctly saw the embargo as its most powerful bargaining chip, but at the same time it underestimated Fidel's readiness to wait and decidedness not to give up on the sovereign rights of Cuba.

Grasping the relevance of the embargo for efforts of normalization, then, requires a brief observation of its evolution and management by the American government. Patrick Haney suggests that, in spite of the embargo's underlying consistency - it has been in place for over fifty years, after all -, the Reagan administration represented a critical and often unnoticed juncture for US's Cuba policy. The president's bolstering of (and symbiotic relationship with) private interest participation in foreign policy²³ - which aimed at attributing his aggressive stance in Central America to the danger posed by Cuba - unwittingly shifted power over the embargo from the Executive to domestic pressure groups and an increasingly active Congress²⁴. Such involvement is crucial to understand the roadblocks encountered in the 1990s, as well as the improvements and challenges currently shaping US-Cuba relations.

It certainly did not help that the fast-paced events of the Cold War repeatedly rearranged the negotiation scenario, the leaders' opinions, and thus troubled their attempts at peace with inconsistencies, changes of heart and a deep-rooted distrust that continued to feed on itself. Errors of interpretation caused by the preconceived view one held of the other hindered genuine, sincere offers made from both sides²⁵. Unilateral demonstrations of engagement by one - such as Castro's release of political prisoners or Jimmy Carter's suspension of reconnaissance flights that violated Cuban airspace - would almost always seem insufficient to the other part yet deemed unappreciated by the one who pulled it off. As Leogrande and Kornbluh demonstrate, over time the ambiguity between them became a tight catch-22²⁶ - if both were putting their foot down to keep distance, the divide would, of course, persist; if only one made gestures, the other would interpret them as signs of weakness and suppose its practicing policies were working; finally, if both simultaneously attempted to demonstrate willingness to advance in negotiations, they would see each other's steps as insufficient.

3. The Road for Approximation

While secret efforts for normalization of relations and qualified negotiators were anything but scarce²⁷ throughout their long period of predicament, achieving a far-reaching deal between the US and Cuba seemed like a chimera even in the post-Cold War world. Notwithstanding the prospective mutual benefits of an agreement, it seemed there was a consistent lack of cohesion between proposed solutions and a precise timing that could make them appealing. In this perspective, one should keep in mind Ira William Zartman's observation that "substantive answers are fruitless until the moment is ripe"²⁸ and also note that, in the meantime, negotiations may be a way of gaining more time, not a sincere pursuit of peace by either party. In fact, this was often the case in the US-Cuban situation. Ripeness, says Zartman, comes along when (i) the parties see themselves in a hurting stalemate and (ii) they see the chance of a negotiated solution²⁹.

Intrinsically a perceptual matter, ripeness was clearly missing from the equation - in a cost-benefit analysis, neither country saw a way out or took seriously the opponent's bids for reciprocity. For Cuba, negotiating approximation meant compromising its ideology and possibly its absolute priority - its independence from the northern neighbor. In the US, in turn, accusations of being "soft on communism" haunted anyone who tried settling the problem, with domestic (and electoral) consequences, as well as effects on delicate regional and international balances. Both sides felt accommodated keeping things as they were, then, with president after president believing Castro's regime was crumbling and Castro himself reconciled with the idea that the wait for a solution would be a long one.

As the Cold War came to an end and the fall of the Eastern bloc dragged Cuba into economic distress, the feeling that the country's regime would disintegrate by itself was invigorated and American conditions for negotiation became harsher³⁰. Empowered by US's victorious climb into sole superpower status, President George H. W. Bush upped the ante for Cuba - the price for normalization became regime change and multiparty electoral democracy, i.e. the abdication of the revolution itself³¹. The long-awaited collapse of the Cuban regime (and consequently its giving in to political opening), nevertheless, never came. Linda Robinson believes "[Castro] was able to resist because, unlike his Eastern European counterparts, his regime was not imposed from the outside or significantly challenged from within"³². According to Robinson, Castro's introduction of changes (that in reality aimed to keep the country unchanged) worked, likewise, as a stabilizing factor during the immediate post-Cold War years³³.

Bill Clinton, in turn, searched for a "constructive engagement", in which the US would actively engage with the Cuban people, but maintain pressure on the government"³⁴. At this point, however, the presidency did not concentrate decision-making on the embargo anymore - a direct result of the clout gained by multiple actors during the 1980s³⁵, especially lobby groups and congressmen. Patrick Haney emphasizes that now "a mix of executive, legislative, and domestic societal forces all combine to craft the embargo policy, and developments far away from the Florida straits add pressure as well"³⁶. Thus, Clinton spent both his presidencies under the tight grip of the Florida conservative exile community and had to stand behind the congressional tightening of the embargo by the Torricelli Bill (1992)³⁷ and the Helms-Burton Act (1996)³⁸. Despite the easing of a few restrictions benefiting Cuban people (e.g. the re-establishment of direct flights between the two countries) and a personal sympathy to the issue's resolution, by the end of Clinton's time in Washington, prospects for peace remained dim.

What, then, led the scenario from the 1990s icy prolongation of the Cold War into one ripe for negotiation? More than a decade later, an auspicious combination of domestic, regional and

international transformations allowed for a context in which talks had significant likelihood of succeeding³⁹. In Cuba's domestic arena, one can primarily recognize the impact of its economic and political survival strategies to Soviet disintegration - especially after Raúl Castro substituted his brother Fidel in 2006⁴⁰. Initial steps were taken during the "Special Period in Time of Peace", effective 1990-2005, which acquiesced in gradual economic reforms that sought to recover the country from its post-Cold War crisis⁴¹. These included an opening to private initiatives and the welcoming of foreign companies -, which contributed, in turn, for a boom in Cuban tourism and a drop in its agricultural output⁴². Such reforms have been expanded under the younger Castro's leadership, and a slow political opening, mostly guaranteed by the Armed Forces and encouraged by the Catholic Church, is also underway. Marifeli Pérez-Stable argued that, with Raúl Castro, "the Cuban government is set to be more predictable than it ever was under the larger-than-life Fidel Castro", and this was an indispensable aspect of last December's watershed.

As a reflection of its reforms, Cuba acquired some powerful new allies such as China, the European Union, Canada and the left-leaning portion of Latin America, with special emphasis on Hugo Chávez's Venezuela - with whom Fidel Castro had close ties and successfully established projects to exchange cheap oil for cooperation in health and military affairs. Mauricio Santoro believes that, in this context, an "American approximation can also be explained by the acknowledgment of the missed business opportunities and even by the desire to influence Cuban reforms"⁴³. Particularly for agricultural and telecom sectors, there are countless investment possibilities in Cuba being artificially blocked by the embargo.

Cuba's new network of allies helps explain its renewed acceptance as an indispensable part of Latin America's regional system. Two clear examples⁴⁴ of this are, first, Latin American countries' consensual position that Cuba cannot be absent from the 7th Summit of the Americas in Panama next April (2015) and, second, its contribution alongside Norway for the Colombian peace process⁴⁵. Also notable is the unanimous annulment of Cuba's OAS suspension in 2009⁴⁶. Considering Latin America's strategic value to the United States as part of its Western hemisphere "territory", one can see why a cohesive statement from the region might catch Washington's ear⁴⁷. There is actually a precedent for regional pressure exercising influence over US's stance on Cuba - in 1975, it joined the other members of the OAS and voted for the removal of collective sanctions against Cuba, and this concession had close connection with the fact Latin American countries were already individually (and impatiently) leaving the embargo⁴⁸.

A possible international explanation for America's repositioning is twofold. First, there was an increase in Cuban international prestige, mainly due to its engagement in South-South Cooperation projects and humanitarian initiatives, which adds to the feeling that keeping the embargo is both anachronistic and counterproductive⁴⁹. Secondly, as already mentioned, for years the US saw emerging and non-emerging states alike flocking to invest in its own "backyard" while running the risk of losing influence before other powers, and sticking to a policy widely known to be ineffective and hurtful to the Cuban people - in 2011, total losses attributed to the embargo since its introduction were estimated in nearly \$1 trillion⁵⁰. At the same time, the recent drop in international oil prices and the political crisis in Venezuela have made Cuba even more economically vulnerable and therefore hesitant to postpone serious negotiations with the US. Large development enterprises like the port of Mariel, furthermore, make no sense without open ports up North, regardless of having partners for their realization.

A couple of other internal aspects are worthy of notice. First, and most importantly, some very significant demographic transitions⁵¹ not only in the Cuban-American population, but also in Cuba, allowed for partial renovation of traditionally conservative voices. On the one hand, younger Cuban-Americans are more open for approximation than their parents and grandparents⁵²; on the other, as

the Castros reach an advanced age, a power transition in Cuba becomes imminent⁵³ - Raúl has, in fact, declared he will step down at the end of his presidential term in 2018⁵⁴. His exit, however, will most likely resemble his brother's and happen gradually, with an initial withdrawal from public office followed by a temporary permanence in the background.

Such generational shifts, as well as the other conditions discussed here, enabled Obama to make the case for a thaw and take attitudes previously considered unthinkable. Furthermore, as the Obama administration has been facing several domestic challenges in its second term, a foreign policy landmark like the one at hand had become a much-needed turnaround. For Carlos Frederico Pereira da Silva Gama, besides gaining credit for acknowledging the harmful nature of a decrepit strategy and demonstrating pragmatism for admitting there are valuable economic opportunities being wasted, Obama ultimately threw the embargo - presently a highly unjustifiable course - at Republican congressmen's laps⁵⁵.

It is clear, then, that both sides are sufficiently compelled by prospective gains and confident that losses can be minimized. Hence, having evaluated the conditions that helped cultivate ripeness for negotiations, we now turn to the actors that recognized and seized the right timing to advance them, and how they went about it.

4. The Negotiation and its Agents

Once a conflict is regarded as ripe, it takes the right people from both sides - and, at times, qualified third parties - to not only mutually agree on such perception, but also successfully strive for peace. Recognizing the pointless nature of a then 48-year-old strategy, Barack Obama was determined on renewing Cuba policy from the very beginning of his first presidency, and demonstrated it through measures like the loosening of travel restrictions and the facilitation of remittances to the island⁵⁶. Raúl Castro, for his part, somewhat signaled pragmatism through the deepening of economic reforms and a moderate demeanor - it seems representative of his readiness, for example, that while talking to Democrat congressman (and normalization supporter) Jim McGovern in February, 2014, he prudently declared "we have to talk about the present and the future, because if we talk about the past, we will never resolve it"⁵⁷. Little did McGovern know, extensive negotiations had been happening in utmost secrecy since June, 2013, under the cover of mere prisoner release talks.

4.1 The Prisoner Release: a Prerequisite

The prisoner release issue, however, was indeed a major obstacle between the initial willingness of the countries' leaders and the reestablishment of diplomatic ties. In December, 2009, the arrest of Alan Gross - an American contractor in Cuba who was accused of spying⁵⁸ - created yet another diplomatic standstill among the two neighbors. For years, Havana had similarly argued for the release of five Cuban intelligence officials (Los Cinco) who were incarcerated in America after being caught and convicted for espionage by Florida courts in 2001⁵⁹. While René González Sehwerert and Fernando González were released respectively in 2011 and early 2014, three spies - Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero and Ramón Labaniño - remained to be released by the end of negotiations last December.

The US had the release of Gross as an indispensable prerequisite for approximation, and secrecy was indeed imperative for the sake of the negotiations' actual intentions - knowledge of the endeavor would surely become a political red flag, particularly for conservative Cuban-Americans, which could have disrupted, if not halted, the process. It is remarkable, then, how the content of conversations was kept completely secret for over eighteen months⁶⁰, as well as the fact the announcement later came as an absolute shock for most people⁶¹. Although not participating directly, Canada provided the venue for meetings in Toronto and Ottawa, and both sides' negotiators set out to untie the knot that could, at last, end the Cold War in the Caribbean. Prisoner releases had obviously happened before, but this specific one had a pressing timeframe and a lot riding on it - there was a fear that Gross, who is 65 and was given a 15-year penalty in 2011, would pass away in jail and the window of opportunity would be lost⁶².

As talks for normalization still unfold, most negotiation details remain to be revealed. It is known, nonetheless, that the two main enlisted American negotiators were the young and inconspicuous, albeit skilled and reassuring, Ricardo Zuñiga, 44, and Benjamin Rhodes, 37. Their individual fortes meshed and complemented each other, working in favor of a positive outcome. Zuñiga, a Honduras-born Latin America expert with fluent Spanish⁶³ and extensive experience in Cuba, accumulated solid knowledge on policy idiosyncrasies and Cuban behavior throughout his career⁶⁴. On the other hand, as a close political aide to Barack Obama since the 2008 campaign, going "from former aspiring fiction writer to speechwriter to one of Obama's most trusted advisers"⁶⁵, Rhodes brought a certain trustworthiness to the table, as well as an assurance the President would stand behind their effort's outcomes. It comes as no coincidence, then, that the pair was referred to as "two halves of the same person"⁶⁶ - a very fitting one for the job, no less.

4.2 The Pope

The final push towards an agreement came from Pope Francis' intervention. Nevertheless, there was a long road between the traditionally poor Cuba-Vatican relationship and the possibility of a Pope helping handle a 50-year-old seemingly unsolvable problem. This, too, became attainable due to a series of recent transformations that need to be taken into consideration in explaining the mediation's success.

In order to understand such transformations, a few historical aspects are worth mentioning. Since "the Church [originally] played only a minor role in Cuban society"⁶⁷, Pope Leo XIII did not hesitate in seeking negotiations to "deliver" Cuba for American annexation in 1898, in exchange for the preservation of a Catholic majority in the Philippines⁶⁸. After the Revolution, Castro persecuted and expelled the clergymen who had opposed it. It is also true, however, that Cuba is the one communist country with which the Holy See was able to maintain uninterrupted diplomatic relations⁶⁹, and Pope John XXIII's attempted mediation to the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, though unofficial and solitary, partly contributed to its resolution⁷⁰. For Anna Carletti, "regardless of the problems between the Castro government and the Cuban Church, especially during the 1960s and 70s, the Holy See did everything to mitigate misunderstandings and keep dialogue channels open"⁷¹.

Therefore, refreshed by recent changes, the ambiguous Church-government relationship in Cuba actually turned into a powerful facilitator of US-Cuba normalization. A rare locus of nongovernmental strength in the island, the Church has become a key ally in social policy under Raúl Castro's government while remaining an outspoken critic of some governmental measures. Most important, still, is that a balanced connection between the two was achieved within the broader context of moderation sponsored by the incumbent president⁷².

The embryo of such dynamic lies in Fidel Castro's visit to Vatican City in 1996⁷³ and, most notably,

in Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba in 1998. On this last occasion, John Paul stressed Cuban people's right to "a kind of freedom connected to social justice and *grounded on the values of spirit before the values of politics*"⁷⁴ (our emphasis). Interestingly enough, not only was Jorge Mario Bergoglio present at the event, but he also wrote a booklet about it, entitled "Dialogues between John Paul II and Fidel Castro", in which the future Pope defended dialogue as the only path for peace⁷⁵. Cuba subsequently alleviated restrictions on the Catholic Church and released almost two hundred prisoners⁷⁶. Other visits would follow – Benedict XVI visited the island in 2012, as did Pope Francis himself in 2013⁷⁷.

The potential forged by the above described process rendered a precedent for what was yet to come - in 2010, a prisoner release in Havana was settled following negotiations mediated by the Catholic Church and the Spanish government⁷⁸. There are two important aspects to notice here - first, the Cuban government's willingness to negotiate the release instead of unilaterally making a decision that could assert its sovereignty; and second, the surfacing of the Church as a viable mediator for Cuba's unresolved issues⁷⁹. Two years later, Cuba "celebrated a Good Friday for the first time in 50 years"⁸⁰.

Over at the American side, a collaboration between congressmen and the Vatican was being drawn since March, 2012, when a meeting was held at the Vatican Embassy in Washington to boost Holy See mediation activities. In November, 2013, with negotiations already happening for a few months in Canada, Obama publicly reinforced his idea that an update of US policies towards Cuba was much needed and long overdue⁸¹. One month later, he and Castro surprisingly shook hands during Nelson Mandela's funeral in South Africa. In a visit to the Vatican in March, 2014, Obama finally asked for the direct intervention of Pope Francis in ongoing negotiations⁸².

The current Pope's charisma, besides the fact he is unafraid of controversial issues and the first ever Latin American pontiff, added to the inherent credibility religious leaders normally count upon. Jacob Bercovitch and S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana ponder that "faith-based actors have a different form of leverage in mediation; theirs is a unique moral and spiritual leverage"⁸³ - which is why very few people are as effective as religious authorities in advocating for value-driven bargains. Thus, depending on individual characteristics of disputants and their particular view of a given faith-based mediator, an argument for looking beyond politics can be favorably put forward. Also, the Holy See accumulates great tradition and experience in conflict resolution⁸⁴, which works as another legitimizing factor. It continues actively attempting to mediate a series of international conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian situation⁸⁵.

Moreover, Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana argue religious agents may have significant backing from regional and/or global networks that provide different kinds of resources for mediation⁸⁶. Such was certainly the case for Pope Francis. Not only is the Catholic Church an international entity of wide reach, Anna Carletti notes that Francis worked with trusted, highly qualified and experienced collaborators, among which are his Secretary of State Pietro Parolin and high-ranking official Giovanni Angelo Becciu⁸⁷. Havana's Archbishop Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino and Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, both close friends to the Pope, also assisted him⁸⁸.

4.3 The Settlement

While the Pope's influence remained behind-the-scenes for the first months of negotiations, he later went on to become an effective catalyst. After Obama's request for intervention, conversations reached Secretaries of State⁸⁹ - John Kerry and Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla spoke on the phone at four different occasions - and the Pope wrote letters to both presidents urging them to work on the prisoner question so that they could at once "initiate a new phase in relations"⁹⁰. Meetings

moved to Vatican City in October, 2014, and a deal was reached on December 15, 2014, after a 45-minute phone call between Barack Obama and Raúl Castro⁹¹. Two days later, simultaneous announcements of the breakthrough were made by the presidents. Both sent messages of peace and specifically mentioned and thanked the Pope for his contribution. Fidel Castro, on the other hand, remains skeptical - in a message addressed to the Federación Estudiantil Universitaria over a month after the revelation, he declared not having spoken with the United States and reaffirmed his distrust of them.

Upon US's insistence, Alan Gross was released on humanitarian grounds, not as part of a prisoner exchange. In addition to Gross, Cuba also conceded on releasing Rolando Sarraf Trujillo, a Cuban double-agent who had been arrested for almost twenty years, and pledged to afterwards release 53 other prisoners, a promise it has been keeping. The three remaining Cuban spies were freed and received as heroes in Havana. Beyond the prisoner issue resolution, the reestablishment of diplomatic relations was a triumph of moderation and an acknowledgment that all parts, even the Vatican, stood to win from a settlement.

5. Prospects and Challenges

As most historical landmarks, the accomplishment described throughout this Policy Brief has already become a date for posterity - as there is a "9/11" in the US, for example, there is now, as suggested by *Temas* magazine, a "17D" in Cuba⁹³. Albeit a major progress, the rapprochement announced last December is actually where the hard work begins, not the end of it. Divergences between the two countries still abound, and at the moment it is fundamental that they find a midpoint in which they can both change what is perceived as changeable and respect what isn't. This is no easy task, especially considering the burden of their past disagreements and misunderstandings. Three specific topics may raise difficulties in ongoing conversations, resumed in late January - the embargo, human rights and terrorism⁹⁴.

Since the embargo is codified into law, its lifting is a responsibility of the American Congress. Needless to say, most conservatives were not happy about the achievement and will undoubtedly drag their feet until the end of the embargo becomes inevitable⁹⁵. Many in the US argued Obama went for a deal that rewarded Cuba and demanded nothing in return. Still, the President is pursuing every policy option in his power to neutralize the embargo and has a point when he says that, if sanctions will not lure Cuba into a spotless human rights record, dialogue and cooperation might. Human rights, in turn, are and will most definitely go on being an issue of contention during the normalization process. Although Raúl Castro built a solid, reliable image running Cuba over the last years, he still intends to dodge abrupt changes and favor a more stable, controlled political transition.

In regard to terrorism, the parties will have to manage the fact Cuba is on the American government's list of terrorism sponsors, as it has been for over thirty years. Even though Obama did order a review of this designation, a report on the subject will take six months (counting from the announcement date) before reaching the Oval Office⁹⁶, which may, at the least, bring additional discomfort to the negotiating table until then. A series of other prickly topics, such as the future of Guantánamo Bay and TV/Radio Martí⁹⁷, will test out negotiators' eagerness to make further progress.

The impact of the decision in each country will be asymmetrical, like everything concerning their relationship. Despite the complaints that Obama left pre-17D negotiations empty-handed, the US will be able to get significant immediate economic benefits at a very low cost and with no need of adaptation in its everyday life or culture. A package of liberalizing measures was advanced by the Obama administration last December⁹⁸ and transformed into Departments of Commerce and Treasury regulations⁹⁹ less than a month later. The swift incentive is very important for telecom companies¹⁰⁰ and representative of American economic motivations for the settlement. Cuba, on the other hand, also stands for economic gains but will be hit by an unprecedented wave of newness and have to deal with transformations that can very quickly dissolve its “frozen in 1959”¹⁰¹ status.

Ultimately, with the Cold War out of the way, the two must take all of these aspects into account to find a cautious balance between US’s alleged hegemonic arrogance and Cuba’s so-called ideological stubbornness. As the Summit of the Americas approaches, they have the opportunity to embrace their past and accept their unique family/foe relationship, like President Obama himself defined it in his official statement¹⁰², to finally contemplate a friendlier future. Such common ground will most likely be found on a mutually-benefiting economic partnership. More than ever, a joke American negotiator James Donovan told Fidel Castro in 1963 to illustrate the Cuban-American relationship perfectly describes both its past and present. Donovan, the first American to gain Fidel’s trust during the whirlwind of the early 1960s, asked him “now do you know how porcupines make love?”, to which Fidel replied negatively. “Very carefully”, he said¹⁰³.

(1) PÉREZ, Louis A. Jr. *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.

(2) TAMAYO, Elías Pavón. *Dos siglos de agresiones: reportaje histórico-cultural*. Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1981.

(3) THOMAS, Hugh. *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998.

(4) ALZUGARAY, Carlos. *Crónica de un Fracaso Imperial: La administración de Eisenhower y el derrocamiento de la dictadura Batista*. La Habana: Editorial Ciencias Sociales, 2000.

(5) PATERSON, Thomas G. *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

(6) GLEIJESES, Piero. *The United States and Castro’s Cuba in the Cold War*. Oxford Bibliographies. Available at < <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766581/obo-9780199766581-0073.xml?rskey=XjDY6O&result=3&q=cuba+cold+war#firstMatch>>. Accessed in April, 2015.

(7) CHOMSKY, Aviva. *A History of the Cuban Revolution*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

(8) DOMÍNGUEZ, Jorge I. *Cuba: Order and Revolution*. Belknap Press, 1978.

(9) GLEIJESES, Piero. *The Cuban Drumbeat*. Seagull Books, 2009.

(10) PÉREZ-STABLE, Marifeli. *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

(11) Somewhat doomed by its own strategic location, Cuba became a coveted outpost from the moment Christopher Columbus set foot in it during his first voyage to America. Thanks to its strategic location, Havana became a key port for the Spanish colonial empire. Later, its thriving sugar enterprise, developed and strengthened from the 18th century forward, increasingly attracted American economic interests and investments to a point in which they outweighed Spanish presence in Cuba. Thomas Skidmore emphasizes the initial colonizers’ resistance to make these closer ties official - US’s insistent offers to buy the island were repeatedly refused by Spain. See more in SKIDMORE, Thomas; SMITH, Peter. *Modern Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

(12) The Platt Amendment “gave the United States the right to intervene in domestic politics at will”. See more in SKIDMORE, Thomas; SMITH, Peter. *Ibid*, p. 298.

(13) However, the resentment caused by American domination and wrongdoings was but one of the ingredients of Cuba’s successful social revolution – the volatile social structure created by the sugar-centered economy allowed for communication between rural and urban members of the working class, while the upper classes were either foreign or predominantly urban and the middle classes were substantial yet disarticulated. The viciousness of Batista’s regime was also crucial. See more in SKIDMORE, Thomas; SMITH, Peter. *Ibid*.

(14) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.p.7.

- (15) Spanish for *bearded men*.
- (16) A few days after breaking relations, Eisenhower “suspended trade with the island, invoking the Trading with the Enemy Act”. See HANEY, Patrick J. (ed.) and VANDERBUSH, Walt. *The Cuban Embargo: Domestic Politics of American Foreign Policy*. Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005. Chapter 2.
- (17) President Kennedy’s *Embargo on all trade with Cuba* was established on February 3rd, 1962, through Proclamation 3347. U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE. *Proclamation 3447*. Available at <<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-76/pdf/STATUTE-76-Pg1446.pdf>>. Accessed in March, 2015.
- (18) HANEY, Patrick J. (ed.) and VANDERBUSH, Walt. *Ibid*, Chapter 1.
- (19) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*.
- (20) They go from ABC reporter Lisa Howard to Coca-Cola CEO J. Paul Austin and even, during Clinton, Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez. See more at LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*.
- (21) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*, p. 38.
- (22) For more on Cuban involvement in African conflicts and its relationship with the US, see GLEIJESES, Piero. *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-1976*. Berkeley: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- (23) The author mentions the government’s pivotal role in the creation and growth of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), for example. See HANEY, Patrick J. (ed.) and VANDERBUSH, Walt. *Ibid*. Chapter 3.
- (24) HANEY, Patrick J. (ed.) and VANDERBUSH, Walt. *Ibid*. Chapters 1 and 4.
- (25) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*.
- (26) A popular expression of the English language, “catch-22” translates as a vicious circle, a situation from which one cannot escape. It comes from Joseph Heller’s homonymous novel, an antiwar classic (1961). For more information on the concept, see HELLER, Joseph. *Catch-22*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011.
- (27) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*.
- (28) Zartman is Professor Emeritus at the John Hopkins University and contributed extensively to the fields of African Studies and Negotiation Analysis. See ZARTMAN, I. William. “Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond” in STERN, Paul; DRUCKMAN, Daniel. *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War*. Washington: National Academy Press, 2000. p. 225.
- (29) ZARTMAN, I. William. *Ibid*, p. 229.
- (30) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*, p. 266
- (31) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Idem*. For more on the embargo and democratic exigencies, see ALZUGARAY, Carlos. “De Bush a Bush: balance y perspectivas de la política externa de los Estados Unidos hacia Cuba y el Gran Caribe” in GÓMEZ, José María (ed). *América Latina y el (des)orden global neoliberal: Hegemonía, contrahegemonía, perspectivas*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2004. pp. 224-5.
- (32) ROBINSON, Linda. “Towards a Realistic Cuba Policy”. *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 42:1, p. 116
- (33) ROBINSON, Linda. *Ibid*, p. 117.
- (34) AL JAZEERA. “*The Generational Change in US-Cuba relations*”. 27/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/12/generational-change-us-cuba-2014122773423746770.html>> .Accessed in February, 2015.
- (35) See HANEY, Patrick J. (ed.) and VANDERBUSH, Walt. *Idem*.
- (36) HANEY, Patrick J. (ed.) and VANDERBUSH, Walt. *Ibid*. p.7.
- (37) The Bill “banned trade with Cuba by the foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies”. See more at SKIDMORE, Thomas; SMITH, Peter. *Ibid*, p. 324.
- (38) Also known as the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, the Helms-Burton Act made the embargo permanent in response to Cuba’s shooting down of two US aircraft operated by Miami-based Cuban exiles”. See more at ALZUGARAY, Carlos. *Ibid*.
- (39) HIRST, Monica. “Análise: Fatores regionais e globais permitiram reatamento de Cuba e EUA”. Folha de São Paulo. 19/12//2014. Available at<<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2014/12/1564757-analise-fatores-regionais-e-globais-permitiram-reatamento-de-cuba-e-eua.shtml>>. Accessed in February, 2015.
- (40) Raúl Castro took power due to Fidel’s illness in 2006, but was made a permanent leader in 2008. For more on Raúl Castro’s reforms, see PÉREZ-STABLE, Marifeli. “Cuba in Transition: The Role of External Actors” in LOWENTHAL, Abraham (ed.) et al. *The Obama Administration and the Americas: Agenda for Change*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2009.
- (41) SANTORO, Mauricio. “Cuba após a Guerra Fria: mudanças econômicas, nova agenda diplomática e o limitado diálogo com os EUA”. *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*. 53 (1): 130-140 [2010].
- (42) Tourism surpassed sugar as the country’s most important economic activity. Also, the US actually became one of the island’s main suppliers of food, due to an Act approved in 2000 recognizing exceptions to the embargo, based mostly on humanitarian emergencies. See more in SANTORO, Mauricio. *Idem*. By 2000, foreign ventures in Cuba had entered a series of other economic sectors, including nickel and other ores, oil extraction, telecommunications, tobacco and citrus. For more information on foreign investment in Cuba, see ROBINSON, Linda. *Ibid*.
- (43) SANTORO, Mauricio. *Ibid*, p. 133.

(44) HIRST, Monica. *Idem*.

(45) To know more about the Colombian peace process, please see GSUM *Policy Brief* in DARIO, Diogo M. "Peace talks between the FARC and Santos government in Colombia". Global South Unit for Mediation (GSUM). Rio de Janeiro, Feb/Mar 2014. Available in <<http://bricspolicycenter.org/homolog/uploads/trabalhos/6577/doc/1592668518.pdf>>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(46) Cuba did not return to the regional system, however, due to its refusal to initiate the required dialogues. DOMÍNGUEZ, Jorge I. "La Política Exterior del Presidente Barack Obama hacia América Latina". *Foro Internacional*, 200, 2010 (2), p. 261. See also INFOLATAM. "La OEA y el Retorno de Cuba". 22/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.infolatam.com/2014/12/23/la-oea-evalua-el-nuevo-rumbo-de-las-relaciones-entre-ee-uu-y-cuba/>>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(47) For more information on Washington's Latin America foreign policy, see DOMÍNGUEZ, Jorge I., *Ibid*. See also DOMÍNGUEZ, Jorge I. and CASTRO, Rafael F., *Contemporary U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cooperation or Conflict in the 21st Century?*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

(48) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*, p. 127.

(49) The international community has recognized this in countless UN General Assembly resolutions urging the United States to end the embargo. See more in PÉREZ-STABLE, Marifeli. *Ibid*.

(50) CBS. "Cuba: U.S. Embargo Causes \$1 Trillion in Losses". 14/09/2011. Available at <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/cuba-us-embargo-causes-1-trillion-in-losses/>>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(51) WASHINGTON POST. "The Political Demography of US-Cuba Relations". 18/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/12/18/the-political-demography-of-u-s-cuba-relations/>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(52) For information on the impact of the generational transition on electoral patterns of the Cuban American community, see PÉREZ-STABLE, Marifeli, *Ibid*.

(53) As early as 2000, Linda Robinson pointed out that "a large number of younger Cubans have been moved into leadership positions at the provincial and national level, and very few of the original generation of revolutionary leaders now occupy positions of any significance in the party or government". ROBINSON, Linda. *Ibid*.

(54) WASHINGTON POST. *Idem*.

(55) GAMA, Carlos F. "A reaproximação Estados Unidos-Cuba e a Política Externa Brasileira". Available at <<http://mundorama.net/2014/12/23/a-reaproximacao-estados-unidos-cuba-e-a-politica-externa-brasileira-por-carlos-frederico-pereira-da-silva-gama/>>. 23/12/2014. Accessed in February, 2015.

(56) WASHINGTON POST. "Obama Loosens Travel Restrictions to Cuba". 15/01/2011. Available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/14/AR2011011406748.html>>. Accessed in February, 2015. The restrictions lifted by President Obama had been imposed by the Bush administration in 2004. PÉREZ-STABLE, Marifeli. *Ibid*.

(57) POLITICO. "We Have to Talk': How Obama and Castro Came Together". 17/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.politico.com/story/2014/12/obama-castro-cuba-talk-113657.html>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(58) Gross was accused of knowingly working to provide prohibited forms of communication technology in Cuba. See more at HUFFINGTON POST. "Here's the part of Alan Gross' Story that Obama Hasn't Been Talking About". 24/12/2014. Available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/24/alan-gross-cuba_n_6377774.html>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(59) INFOLATAM. "Biografía de los tres espías cubanos liberados por EE.UU.". 17/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.infolatam.com/2014/12/17/biografia-de-los-tres-espias-cubanos-liberados-por-eeuu/>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(60) GUARDIAN. "Obama and Raúl Castro thank pope for breakthrough in US-Cuba relations". 17/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/17/us-cuba-diplomatic-relations-obama-raul-castro>>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(61) POLITICO. *Idem*.

(62) Reports showed that, after five years in jail, Gross was becoming depressed, and his condition deteriorated further after his mother's death. For more on Alan Gross, see MIAMI HERALD. "Alan Gross losing hope after 5 years in Cuban prison". 30/11/2014. Available at <<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article4189840.html>>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(63) ABC. "Cuba-EE.UU.: Más de dos años de negociación secreta". 21/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.abc.es/internacional/20141221/abci-cuba-eeuu-negociaciones-secretas-201412202042.html>>. Accessed in January, 2015.

(64) DAILY MAIL. "Low-Profile US diplomat helped negotiate with Cuba". 30/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2890913/Low-profile-US-diplomat-helped-negotiate-Cuba.html>>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(65) WASHINGTON POST. "Who is Ricardo Zúñiga, the man who helped broker the White House deal with Cuba?". 22/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/12/22/who-is-ricardo-zuniga-the-man-who-helped-broker-the-white-house-deal-with-cuba/>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(66) WASHINGTON POST. *Idem*.

(67) SKIDMORE, Thomas; SMITH, Peter. *Ibid*, p. 300.

(68) CARLETTI, Anna. *O Internacionalismo Vaticano e a Nova Ordem Mundial: A Diplomacia Pontifícia da Guerra Fria*

aos *Nossos Dias*. Brasília, FUNAG: 2012. p. 92. For more on the Cuba-Church relationship see also KIRK, John M. *Between God and the Party: Religion and Politics in Revolutionary Cuba*. University Press of Florida, 1998.

(69) CORREIO BRAZILIENSE. “Especialista explica a influência do Papa na reaproximação entre EUA e Cuba”. 19/12/2014. Available at <http://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/mundo/2014/12/19/interna_mundo,462756/especialista-explica-a-influencia-do-papa-na-reaproximacao-entre-eua-e.shtml>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(70) CARLETTI, Anna. *Ibid*, p. 130-31.

(71) CORREIO BRAZILIENSE. *Idem*.

(72) ASSOCIATED PRESS. “Cuba Relations with Catholic Church at High Point”. 25/12/2014. Available at <<http://news.yahoo.com/cubas-relations-catholic-church-hit-high-point-211412653.html>>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(73) HAVANA TIMES. “The Pope: A Key Actor in the Re-Establishment of Cuba-US Relations”. 18/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.havanatimes.org/?p=108013>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(74) CARLETTI, Anna. *Ibid*, p. 174.

(75) HUFFINGTON POST. “Pope Francis Wrote Cuban Book In 1998 ‘Dialogues between John Paul II and Fidel Castro’”. 20/12/2014. Available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/20/pope-francis-cuban-book-_n_6360274.html>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(76) PÉREZ-STABLE, Marifeli. *Ibid*, p. 126.

(77) CORREIO BRAZILIENSE. “Toque de Francisco”. 19/12/2014.

(78) For more detail, see OXFORD ANALYTICA. “CUBA: Talks bring prisoner breakthrough”. 13/07/2010. Available at <<https://www.oxan.com/display.aspx?ItemID=DB161214>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(79) OXFORD ANALYTICA. *Idem*.

(80) HAVANA TIMES. *Idem*.

(81) REUTERS. “Obama says U.S. needs to update policies on Cuba”. 08/11/2013. Available at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/09/us-usa-obama-cuba-idUSBRE9A802620131109>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(82) ABC. *Idem*.

(83) BERCOVITCH, Jacob; KADAYIFCI-ORELLANA; S. Ayse. “Religion and Mediation: The Role of Faith-Based Actors in International Conflict Resolution”. *International Negotiation*, 14 (2009) 175–204;p.187.

(84) It worked as a mediator to the Beagle Canal impasse between Chile and Argentina in the 1980s, for example. For more information, see CORREIO BRAZILIENSE. “Especialista explica a influência do Papa na reaproximação entre EUA e Cuba”. 19/12/2014. Available at <http://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/mundo/2014/12/19/interna_mundo,462756/especialista-explica-a-influencia-do-papa-na-reaproximacao-entre-eua-e.shtml>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(85) EL PAÍS. “Francisco, el gran mediador”. 17/12/2014. Available at <http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/12/17/actualidad/1418837510_239458.html>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(86) BERCOVITCH, Jacob; KADAYIFCI-ORELLANA; S. Ayse. *Ibid*, p. 188.

(87) CORREIO BRAZILIENSE. *Idem*.

(88) ABC. *Idem*.

(89) ABC. *Idem*.

(90) VATICAN. “Pope expresses joy for historic decision of United States and Cuba to establish diplomatic relations”. 18/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-expresses-joy-for-historic-decision-of-united>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(91) ABC. *Idem*.

(92) Aside from spiritual motivations, the Church has been working hard to come back from pedophilia and financial scandals. It was also reported that the Catholic Church is currently preparing to build its first church in Cuba since 1959, which is very symbolic. For more, see CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, *Idem* and CNN, “Cuba to build first new Catholic Church since Castro”, 30/01/2015. Available at <<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/30/living/cuba-catholic-church/>>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(93) HOFFMANN, Bert. “Cuba en la era pos-17D”. *Iberoamericana*, XV, 57 (2015), 159-161.

(94) BBC. “Os 3 temas espinhosos que ainda bloqueiam a normalização EUA-Cuba”. 18/12/2014. Available at <<http://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/bbc/2014/12/18/os-3-temas-espinhosos-que-ainda-bloqueiam-a-normalizacao-eua-cuba.htm?mobile>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(95) HOFFMANN, Bert. *Idem*.

(96) WHITE HOUSE. “FACT SHEET: Charting a New Course on Cuba”. 17/12/2014. Available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/17/fact-sheet-charting-new-course-cuba>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(97) For more on TV and Radio Martí, see LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*. Also see HANEY, Patrick J. (ed.) and VANDERBUSH, Walt. *Ibid*.

(98) WHITE HOUSE. *Idem*.

(99) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE. “Fact Sheet: U.S. Department Of Commerce and U.S. Department Of The Treasury Announcement Of Regulatory Amendments To The Cuba Sanctions”. 15/01/2015. Available at <<http://www.commerce.gov/news/fact-sheets/2015/01/15/fact-sheet-us-department-commerce-and-us>>.

department-treasury-announcemen>. Accessed in March, 2015.

(100) As one would expect, numerous reports on the breakthroughs of giant telecom and entertainment companies in Cuba are surfacing. Direct telephone lines between the two countries were set up early in March, and recently a cultural center became the first public place in Havana allowed by the government to offer wi-fi. Giants like Amazon and Netflix have started acting to reach the island as well.

(101) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*, p. 197.

(102) WHITE HOUSE. “*Statement by the President on Cuba Policy Changes*”. 17/12/2015. Available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/17/statement-president-cuba-policy-changes>>. Accessed in February, 2015.

(103) LEOGRANDE, William; KORNBLUH, Peter. *Ibid*, p. 1.

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