

Cuban Foreign Policy. Main Potentialities and Threats in the Era of Covid-19

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Abstract

Cuban foreign policy since 2020 has faced a complex and unfavorable international scenario, especially in the region. Influenced by external factors that have a negative impact on its internal situation, it is necessary to mention the covid-19 pandemic; the intensification of unilateral measures and economic and political coercion imposed by the United States government during the Trump administration and maintained by President Biden against Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Also the backward shift to the right in countries like Brazil, during the Jair Bolsonaro period; Argentina, during the administration of Macri and recently of Javier Milei; Colombia, under the government of Iván Duque; the Ecuador of Lenín Moreno and Guillermo Lasso and in Bolivia, with the coup d'état that temporarily removed the Movement to Socialism from the government. Despite this situation, the foreign policy of the Cuban Revolution continues to be characterized by its anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, anti-neocolonial, third world and anti-imperialist projection towards the countries of the continent and the global South. For these reasons, this article aims to study the main threats to Cuban foreign policy since the arrival of covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Also its main potentialities in relation to its projection towards Latin America and the Caribbean.

Keywords: *Cuban foreign policy, covid-19 pandemic, potentialities, threats*

Introduction

Since the year 2020, the Revolution has faced and is currently facing one of the most difficult moments in the history of the country. Not only was there a notable setback in the national economy, but the Cuban population suffered the impact of covid-19, a pandemic with unprecedented characteristics in the history of mankind due to its high rate of infection and lethality.

The international environment has also been complex, marked mainly by adverse trends such as: the intensification of the unilateral coercive measures of the United States imposed on Cuba between 2017-2021, still not reversed as promised by President Joe Biden; the economic crisis suffered by Venezuela, Cuba's main trading partner and strategic ally in the region, conditioned by the commercial and financial blockade imposed by the US; and the shift to the right in countries of the region like: Brazil, during the period of Jair Bolsonaro; Argentina, during the administration of Macri and currently of Javier Milei; Colombia, under the government of Iván Duque; Ecuador, with Lenín Moreno and Guillermo Lasso; and Bolivia, with the coup d'état that temporarily removed the Movement Towards Socialism from government.

It is impossible to overlook that the Trump administration did not let up in a policy of maximum pressure since 2017, evidenced in more than 240 punitive presidential orders. This policy was maintained and increased with the utmost malice in the year 2020, when the pandemic unfolded all its danger of forcing the Cuban people to surrender by hunger and despair, raising the impact of the economic, commercial and financial blockade to 5.57 billion dollars in one year, although it has an accumulated cost of 144.413 billion in almost 60 years (Cuba's report on resolution 74/7 of the United Nations General Assembly, 2020).

Joe Biden's administration did not modify the restrictions of the coercive scheme against Cuba either. From its National Security Strategy, the approach it continued to promote towards Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua was to maintain an aggressive policy against these countries where, according to them, the will of the people is suppressed (ESN, 2022).

In the case of Cuba, this was evinced by the tightening of the blockade as a result of the continuation of the policy of maximum pressure and suffocation imposed by Trump. In the first 14 months of the Biden administration alone, the damages reported as a result of the blockade amounted to 6,364 million dollars, representing an impact of more than 454 million dollars a month and more than 15 million dollars a day (MINREX, October 19, 2022).

Goes without saying that it is in the daily life of Cubans where the true impact of these effects is most deeply reflected. In this sense, it is valid to recognize that more than 80% of the current Cuban population has only known a Cuba with a blockade. (MINREX, 2023).

However, despite the complex international situation, the foreign policy of the Cuban Revolution towards the countries of the continent and the global South, in general, continued to be characterized by its anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, anti-neocolonial, Third World oriented anti-imperialist projection; as can be seen in the program of the PCC, in the First Socialist Constitution of the Republic of Cuba—with its successive reforms—and in the current Constitution. Thus, thanks to its international projection it was able to successfully overcome the unfavorable situation generated by the covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to identify the main threats to Cuban foreign policy since the arrival of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Likewise, its main potentialities in relation to its projection towards Latin America and the Caribbean and to the application of scientific diplomacy as a tool that contributes to improve relations with the United States.

Development

1.1 External factors that constitute threats to Cuban foreign policy in the complex scenario of covid-19

As noted above, two external factors have complicated Cuba's international situation: the Venezuelan economic crisis and the intensification of unilateral coercive measures applied by the Trump administration. It should be added that in recent years the regional environment has worsened for leftist forces in general with the electoral triumph of right-wing governments in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, the shift to the right in Ecuador and the coup d'état that temporarily removed the Movement Towards Socialism from government in Bolivia.

Although there were variations favorable to the left with the electoral triumphs of reformist governments such as: Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico; Alberto Fernández in Argentina and, recently, Gustavo Petro in Colombia and Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil.

Regarding Cuba's relations with the United States, it should be noted that the powerful machinery of U.S. foreign, defense and imperial security policy, as well as its economic, financial, cultural and ideological apparatus imposed against certain nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, has been one of the significant characteristics of Donald Trump's administration.

The main purpose of the actions undertaken by this administration from its debut until its demise in 2021 was to strengthen its hegemony over the Western Hemisphere.

On this matter, it must be noted that the power of the USA has not diminished in absolute terms, as it is still the first military superpower and the largest global financial economy, since it has the majority control of the distribution of wealth generated by the world market of capital and by transnational corporations. This is owing to the privileges of the dollar, which continues to be the main world currency (Fernandez, 2020).

The US uses the geo-economic approach as an indispensable mechanism of its foreign policy that allows it to maintain a hegemonic position vis-à-vis the different world powers and impose its system of domination.

Thus, with the use of economic instruments of power they intend to fulfill their geopolitical objectives in international relations, influence the balance of global power and recover their share of hegemony, which has been in relative decline in recent times in the face of the advance of China and Russia and the influence of left-wing countries in the region (Fernandez, 2020).

With this in mind, the US intends to recover a part of its hegemony in the continent threatened —they say— by the malicious influence of non-hemispheric forces like Iran, North Korea, China and Russia, as well as the outmoded, authoritarian left-wing governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. (ESN.2017)-

To this end, the US has designed a set of actions covered by their National Defense Strategy since 2017 and with the approval of the ruling sectors and classes, which seek to overthrow the leftist governments that exist in the region, fundamentally the governments of Cuba, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Nicaragua. And to break the Latin American unity evidenced in the foundation in the early years of this century, of organizations such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Then, as expected, under Trump's mandate an aggressive campaign was unleashed against the Cuban government —presided since 2018 by Miguel Díaz- Canel Bermúdez— financing dissident groups and interfering with the reestablishment of relations between the US and Cuba, carried out in the last years of Barack Obama's administration.

The Caribbean nation was placed on the list of Governments Violators of Human Rights and State Sponsors of Terrorism.

On the other hand, with the justification of the implausible sonic attacks carried out in Havana on some officials of the US Embassy in Cuba, the US government expelled 17 officials of the Cuban Embassy in the US and reduced to the indispensable minimum the consular services offered by the US Embassy in Havana to Cuban citizens who wanted to travel to the US. In addition, U.S. officials were banned from traveling to Cuba (Suarez, 2022).

One of the elements that justify the aggressiveness of the Trump administration against our country is that it wants to present Cuba as the foreign power that intervenes directly in the preservation of the Maduro government in Venezuela. This country has been described by the president as an extraordinary threat to US national security.

That is the policy towards Cuba that Joe Biden inherited from his predecessor and that —in essence— he has not modified. This was shown when, a few days before Donald Trump's departure from the White House, the U.S. State Department announced the reinsertion of Cuba in the List of State Sponsors of Terrorism becoming one of the most harmful measures that reinforces the financial persecution.

As part of the policy of aggressiveness and maximum pressure towards Cuba, the government of the United States suitably used the situation generated by the covid-19 as an ally for its hostile policy against Cuba. Thus, the intention to strengthen the blockade at this juncture revealed its particularly inhumane face. The economic recession derived from the pandemic at world level was used to promote social instability trying to make the Cuban people surrender by hunger and desperation. (MINREX, 2023)

Therefore, the scope of this policy in this period had a more perverse and harmful dimension from the humanitarian point of view.

The blockade causes extreme direct damage to all sectors of the country's economy. Between August 2021 and February 2022 alone, this policy caused losses to Cuba of approximately US\$3,806.5 million¹ (MINREX,

¹ This figure is 49% higher than that reported in the previous period.

October 19, 2022), and the damages caused between March 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023 are estimated to be in the order of US\$4,867 million. This represents an impact of more than 405 million dollars a month, more than 13 million dollars a day, and more than 555 thousand dollars for each hour of blockade (MINREX, 2023).

And from March 1, 2023 to February 29, 2024, the material damages caused by this system of unilateral coercive measures are valued in the order of US\$5, 56.8 million, which represents an increase of US\$189.8 million with respect to the 2023 report (MINREX, 2024).

On the other hand, the U.S. government has been deliberately willing to intimidate foreign investors and commercial entities through the application of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act. To this must be added the persecution of the country's financial and commercial transactions, the impossibility of processing non-immigrant visas in Havana, the constant threat to companies that send fuel supplies to the island, the attempts to frustrate the recovery of the tourism sector after the covid-19 pandemic and the demeaning campaign against Cuban medical cooperation programs (MINREX, 2023).

By depriving the country of financial income that is indispensable for acquiring food, medicines, fuel, equipment, parts and pieces, technologies and software, the impact of the blockade on the quality of life and the services provided to the population is undeniable. Therefore, the scope of this policy generates a situation of shortages, shortages, long lines and anxiety in the daily lives of Cubans and this situation motivates the increase in Cuban emigration.

To the above, we must add the media campaign that the U.S. communications and intelligence centers are waging against Cuba with the aim of creating a distorted reality in the virtual scenario, encouraging discontent, forming the perception of a situation of internal political crisis, demeaning government institutions and minimizing the enormous efforts that the country is making to overcome the challenges of a blockaded economy.

Despite the fact that these external factors constitute a threat to Cuban foreign policy, there are other external factors that facilitate it. For example:

- This context led the country to maintain and expand its collaborative health programs to regions where international medical cooperation² had never gone before. The example of Lombardy, in Italy, is case in point.
- The existence of a powerful program for the development of vaccine candidates, which contributed to uplift the prestige of Cuban medicine, a process that increasingly favors the application of scientific diplomacy to achieve certain foreign policy objectives.
- Strategic alliance relations with China and Vietnam. Also with Russia, whose geopolitical interests in the region make Cuba, due to its strategic position and its privileged relationship with the Venezuelan government, a partner of capital importance.
- The cooperative relationship with three key partners: Canada, the United Kingdom and the European Union.
- Norway has continued to support the role that Cuba has been playing as a facilitator of the peace dialogues in Colombia.
- Cuba continues to have a well-earned prestige and leadership in the countries of the Global South for its collaborative policies and its diplomatic capacity and maneuverability in multilateral environments.

1.2 Potentialities of Cuban foreign policy in its relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean after the arrival of the covid-19 pandemic

With the escalation of Donald Trump's imperial policy towards Cuba, the health crisis ensued forcing the closure of almost all activities between April and June. Thus, in the first quarter of the year the GDP decreased by -5.5%; but in the second quarter the fall was -24.8% before a slow recovery began in July. (Rodriguez, 2021).

² International medical cooperation programs are of great significance for our economy, since they are an important source of foreign currency income in freely convertible currency.

However, Cuba faced covid-19 with results far superior to those achieved by countries with more resources and possibilities. In this connection, it is worth noting that the country used resources of approximately 1.3 billion pesos and 100 million dollars.

This complex situation was reversed, among other things, by the provision of free health services, the mobilization of all the medical and paramedical forces necessary to care for the sick, the availability of sufficient medicines and hospital facilities, as well as the absolute priority given by the government to the fight against the pandemic and the contribution of Cuban science in that struggle. In addition, the majority support of the population for the measures adopted must be added.

The situation of tourism was deemed unfavorable due to the fact that the country was forced to close this activity since the arrival of covid-19. As a result, in the first four months of 2020 there was a 49% decrease in international visitors.

Similarly, the income from the export of skilled labor force, from health services, decreased approximately 16 % in 2019. In 2020 this channel experimented further difficulties with the reception of liquid income from the Cuban collaboration in Venezuela and other countries as a result of the international economic crisis.

Although the covid-19 pandemic imposed a new dynamic in the way of conducting the relations between the States and the different actors of the international system, our country maintained what is stipulated in Article 16 paragraph d of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, which reaffirms the will of the country to integrate and collaborate with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Likewise, to perpetuate unity and solidarity with all Third World countries, to condemn imperialism, fascism, colonialism, neocolonialism or other forms of subjugation in any of its manifestations (Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, 2019).

The institutional capacity of the Cuban government and its diplomacy to face this adverse external scenario, aggravated by the health crisis, played a decisive role. In this regard, Cuba has maintained and continues to maintain an active participation in international forums. It maintains diplomatic relations with 195 states; it has deepened political and diplomatic ties with its main international partners, diplomatic and economic relations with Asia and the Middle East are progressing; it has increased its foreign medical cooperation actions in times of covid, despite the aggressive campaign of the United States against it. And it has a recognized leadership in several bodies and relevant issues of the global agenda.

For example, Cuba supported the fight against SARS-COV-2 in 42 countries and territories of the world, where 58 medical brigades arrived, in addition to the more than 27 thousand health professionals already working in 59 nations (MINREX, 2023).

Likewise, different medical cooperation brigades were sent to 29 countries in the region, as a clear demonstration of the principle of solidarity practiced by Cuba since the triumph of the Revolution.

In addition, Cuba's foreign policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean since January 1, 1959, has been characterized in its praxis by maintaining respect for and defense of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as well as upholding the principle of the "Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace", in addition to denouncing the aggressions orchestrated by the United States against Venezuela and Nicaragua (MINREX, 2020).

Relations with the Caribbean continued to deepen, a fact that materialized in the support given by the Heads of State of CARICOM and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Foreign Ministers of the Association of Caribbean States against the blockade and Title III of the Helms Burton Act.

Even under pandemic conditions, the country maintained its support and activism in the different regional organizations and forums. The Pro-Tempore Presidency of Mexico in CELAC was supported. The country participated in the ALBA-TCP High-Level Virtual Conferences on Economy, Finance and Trade; in the VII CARICOM- Cuba Summit and the XVIII ALBA-TCP Summit.

In a context of post-pandemic crisis of the world economy, of extreme reinforcement of the blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba, our country continued to make progress in the fulfillment of its foreign policy objectives. The country in 2022 maintained its traditional activism in international and regional organizations and forums.

It should be noted that at the IX Summit of the Americas, 17 countries of our region were against the exclusion of our country and 11 spoke out against the blockade. Meanwhile, the People's Summit was held in Los Angeles where the Cuban President participated virtually.

Díaz-Canel participated in a tour of the Caribbean and in the VIII CARICOM Summit held in Barbados, events where he signed agreements and strengthened cooperation with the States of the area. He attended the installation of the new presidential term of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua. Days later, Cuban Prime Minister Marrero Cruz participated in the 43rd Anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution and in an official visit to Venezuela. Vice President Valdés Mesa attended the presidential inauguration in Honduras.

Cuba received official visits by the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Prime Ministers Roosevelt Skerit, of the Commonwealth of Dominica John Briceño, of Belize, Ralph Gonsalves, of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Philip Davis, of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

The José Martí Order was conferred on López Obrador, Skerit and Gonsalves. Visits were received from Venezuela's Executive Vice President Delcy Rodríguez and from the foreign ministers of Colombia and Suriname, Álvaro Leyva and Albert Ramdin, respectively (MINREX, 2022).

Our country continued to actively participate in CELAC activities. Three meetings of foreign ministers were held, in which our Foreign Minister participated. Also, the III CELAC-European Union (EU) Meeting, which made it possible to resume the bi-regional dialogue in an inclusive format.

In addition, several meetings of ministers from other sectors were held in which Cuba intervened in defense of regional integration. The XXI and XXII ALBA-TCP Summits were held in Havana, as well as the official visit to our country of ALBA Secretary General Sacha Llorenti. In turn, a Cuban delegation headed by the First Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Trade (MINCEX) participated in the ALBA-TCP Economic Complementation Council, organized in Bolivia.

Cuba hosted the VI International Cooperation Conference of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) on November 10, where transformation and innovation in the region were discussed. It was attended by the foreign ministers of Guatemala, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In August, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero headed the Cuban delegation to the first meeting of Caribbean countries on change.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel greeted the participants of the General Assembly of the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) by means of a pre-recorded video. He also received in Havana the Ibero-American Secretary General, Andrés Allamand, and the Secretary General of the OEI, Mariano Jabonero. Both meetings contributed to consolidate Cuba's ties with these Ibero-American cooperation mechanisms (MINREX, 2022).

Cuba's contribution as guarantor and alternative venue for the peace processes in Colombia was also recognized. Accordingly, the Peace Delegation of the National Liberation Army (ELN) that was in Cuba, returned to their country in compliance with the agreed safe return protocol, and the Government-ELN talks table was reinstalled. For this reason, both President Gustavo Petro and Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva rejected the inclusion of Cuba in the List of State Sponsors of Terrorism imposed by the US.

Cuban medical collaboration was maintained with around 13 Caribbean nations, in addition to Argentina, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay. In response to the damage caused by the fire in Matanzas and hurricane Ian, solidarity aid was received from several governments in the region, especially Mexico and Venezuela. Other important donations were made by Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic and Uruguay (MINREX, 2022).

The year 2023 witnessed important activities in the field of foreign policy. Cuba took up the high responsibility of leading the largest and most diverse group in the multilateral sphere, with 134 member states representing two thirds of the United Nations and 80% of the world's population: the Group of 77 and China (G77 and China).

The pro tempore presidency of the G77 and China demanded a great effort from our institutions and the country in general, reflecting the historical commitment of the largest of the Antilles in defense of the causes of the countries of the Global South.

In the many multilateral events that took place during the year and in which it participated on behalf of the G77 and China, Cuba's revolutionary diplomacy demonstrated authority and leadership, its adherence to principles and respect for the norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations (UN), the promotion of dialogue and cooperation and its ability to build consensus and defend the unity of developing countries.

The Summit of Heads of State and Government of the G77 and China, held in Havana in September, reinforced the voice of the South as a key player in international discussions, when the "Current challenges of development: the role of science, technology and innovation" was the central theme of the gathering.

This was followed by the recent G77 and China Leaders' Summit, which took place within the framework of the COP28 Conference of the Parties on Climate Change in Dubai; an unprecedented event in the history of this mechanism that contributed to strengthening the role of the bloc in the climate negotiations.

Cuba also attended -at the highest level- the Summit meeting held in Paris to analyze monetary-financial problems, the BRICS Summit, as well as various other meetings held in the context of the High-Level Segment of the United Nations General Assembly.

Despite the efforts of the United States to prevent it, joined by several anti-Cuban elements in Europe and in the United States itself, Cuba was re-elected, with broad support, to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.

The election of Cuba to the Executive Council of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with a very large vote, was a source of great satisfaction.

This year, our country hosted the Fourth Conference "The Nation and Emigration", which ratified the permanent commitment to move towards an increasingly close, natural and integral relationship with Cubans living in other countries.

1.3 The application of science diplomacy as an alternative that contributes to improving relations between Cuba and the United States

In spite of the complicated political relations, the cooperation between Cuba and the United States in the scientific field shows that science is an adequate diplomatic channel that allows transcending the adversity that these countries face in the political sphere (Pastrana, 2023).

Thus, the bilateral relationship in the technological field serves as a tool to achieve certain policy objectives and as an instrument to solve international challenges related to issues such as health and the environment. (Gutiérrez, 2024).

There is no doubt that there are records of fruitful actions in the field of science and technology. They have occurred especially through the links that exist between the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Academy of Sciences of Cuba (ACC).

Indeed, the strengthening of relations between the two institutions took place in 2009 when a group of scientific leaders led by AAAS President Peter Agre visited Cuba with the aim of promoting cooperation projects in areas such as meteorology, marine sciences, infectious diseases and science education.

Later in 2014, AAAS and ACC signed an agreement linked to the development of research in the fields of oncology, neurosciences and infectious diseases.

In 2017 scientists from the AAAS, the ACC and the Pedro Kourí Tropical Medicine Institute (IPK), met in Havana during a symposium where they pledged to work together to combat mosquito-transmitted diseases: dengue, chikungunya and zika viruses.

During the pandemic, exchanges also took place between actors in the U.S. and Cuban scientific community. For example, in 2020 the first virtual meeting was held between the IPK and the MEDICC Review magazine. In this instance topics related to the protocols and epidemiological control strategies adopted in Cuba with covid-19 patients were addressed (Gonzalez and Perez, 2023).

Another significant example of scientific exchange was the invitation of prestigious academic and university centers in the United States to the Cuban scientific community to participate in the event entitled: "Vaccine Development and Deployment: The Cuban Case", organized by the Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University in 2021.

In June 2022 MEDICC organized a trip to Havana with a delegation of scientists from the United States, the Caribbean and Africa to study the development of Cuban vaccines against covid. (González and Pérez, 2023).

The continuity of cooperation between AAAS and ACC is guaranteed after the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between these institutions in March 2023. This shows that the values of science, such as transparency, research and respectful debate, can help to overcome the obstacles that prevent a new type of relationship between the two nations.

Conclusions

As stated, Cuban foreign policy recorded important successes in recent times. However, since 2017 a notable deterioration in the external scenario began to occur which had a negative impact on the country's situation. This has been exacerbated since 2019.

Thus, the adverse international conditions for Cuba's foreign policy are: a) the strengthening of sanctions and hostility of the United States government; b) the acute economic and financial crisis in Venezuela, Cuba's main trade and cooperation partner; c) the change in the correlation of dominant political forces in Latin America and the Caribbean, d) the far-reaching changes imposed by the covid-19 pandemic on the organization of production and trade worldwide; e) the worsening of the international economic situation and the crisis of multilateralism; f) the crisis of the mechanisms of coordination, cooperation and integration in our region, .

On the other hand, although these external factors constitute serious threats to the foreign policy of the Cuban Revolution, this situation did not deter the country's will to integrate and collaborate with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Likewise, to perpetuate unity and solidarity with all the countries of the Global South and to condemn and denounce imperialism. It was precisely its solidarity and its anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, anti-neocolonial, Third World and anti-imperialist projection which allowed it to collaborate with these countries in the areas of health, education and trade. This allowed Cuba to successfully overcome the unfavorable situation in the international scenario.

However, given the challenges imposed by the current complex international juncture on the Cuban economy, affected by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States and its aggressive policies against our country. In addition to the world economic crisis and the consequences of the health crisis, it is opportune to think about how Cuba could become more involved in the processes of coordination, cooperation and integration in the region in order to boost the economy.

In this sense, it is suggested that Cuba continue to use scientific diplomacy as a tool that contributes to the improvement of relations between Cuba and the United States.

In terms of trade and investment, it is recommended that Cuba be inserted into global value chains. For example, Cuba's sugar agro-industry could develop competitive potential and external insertion, as could the agricultural sector in general. Other potentialities could be identified from the external insertion in the service sector, information technology and communications, as well as in scientific and technological services, taking advantage of the abundant skilled labor force that exists in the country, considering that the covid-19 scenario has enabled the accelerated development of the biotechnology industry.

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