

Assessing President Diaz-Canel's Commitment to the Ideals of the Cuban Revolution

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***Fidel Castro** was an unparalleled leader. Although some of his adversaries had hoped that the ideals and objectives of the Cuban Revolution would die with him, they have in fact persevered, thereby supporting Fidel's view that 'a combatant may die, but not his ideas'.*

Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez became President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers on April 19, 2018. While it might be a little too early to make a definitive statement on his ruling style, many of his remarks pertaining to domestic and international policies offer some insight into his beliefs and the possible direction of Cuban policy under his rule. Based on the contents of some of his speeches, interviews and social media posts, it would be reasonable to infer that president Díaz-Canel's domestic and foreign policy will be an extension of those implemented by Fidel and Raúl Castro before him.

On many occasions, Díaz-Canel has indicated that Venezuela can always count on Cuba's support, while strongly condemning the recent interventions and sanctions aimed at reversing its Bolivarian Revolution. On April 29, 2019, he issued a tweet in response to the Trump Administration's accusations that Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro is a 'Cuban puppet' and that 'the Venezuelan military are risking their lives, and Venezuela's future, for a man controlled by the Cuban military', stating that:

With nearly 800 bases and hundreds of thousands of troops around the world, US is accusing Cuba of having military personnel in Venezuela. A mockery of the world. An insult to two sovereign nations. Bolton lies again and his purpose is criminal. Hands off Venezuela.

Then, on April 30, 2019, president Díaz-Canel tweeted that Cubans:

strongly reject threat by Trump of full and complete embargo against Cuba. There are no Cuban military operations or troops in Venezuela. We call upon the international community to stop dangerous and aggressive escalation and to preserve Peace. No more lies.

On May 8, 2019, president Díaz-Canel referenced the Monroe Doctrine when addressing the hostile policies of the Trump administration with the following tweet:

The statements by members of the US Government against Cuba and Venezuela have the same purpose and are part of the perverse, arrogant and Monroeist plan of the empire of the North. The dignified peoples will defend independence and sovereignty.

Subsequently, on May 23, 2019, president Díaz-Canel further demonstrated his country's unwavering support for Venezuela by stating:

Fierce aggression against sister Venezuela continues. Cuba denounces and condemns approval by US Senate Foreign Relations Cmte. of a bill seeking more economic and commercial sanctions against the Bolivarian Republic.

Most recently, at the national commemoration of the 66th anniversary of the assaults on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Garrisons, which took place on July 26, 2019, president Díaz-Canel stated that:

Venezuela under siege, robbed, literally assaulted with the approval or complicit silence of other powerful nations, and what is worse, with the shameful collaboration of Latin American governments, is today the most dramatic scene of the cruelty of the decadent empire's policies that combine the work of the world's policeman with that of the supreme court of the global village.[i]

In that same speech, Díaz-Canel also praised the 'intelligent, heroic, exemplary resistance of Venezuela's civic-military alliance, its government, and people to the non-conventional war, with which new methods to subjugate us are being rehearsed every day.'[ii] He also reaffirmed Cuba's solidarity with Venezuela when he addressed the 73rd General Assembly of the United Nations on September 26, 2018, in addition to many other nations in South America, Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, and the Middle East:

The current U.S. administration has proclaimed the relevance of the Monroe Doctrine and, in a new deployment of its imperial policy in the region, is attacking Venezuela with special cruelty.

It is in this threatening context that we wish to reiterate our absolute support to the Bolivarian and Chavista Revolution, the civic-military union of the Venezuelan people and its legitimate and democratic government, led by the constitutional president Nicolas Maduro Moros. We reject the intervention attempts and sanctions against Venezuela, aimed at suffocating her economically and hurting Venezuelan families.

We likewise reject the attempts at destabilizing the Nicaraguan government, a country of peace that has made remarkable social, economic and public safety progress in favor of its people.

We denounce the politically-motivated imprisonment of former president Luiz Incio Lula da Silva, and the decision to prevent the people from voting and electing Brazil's most popular leader to the Presidency.

We stand in solidarity with the Caribbean nations who demand legitimate reparation for the horrible effects of slavery as well as the fair, special and differential treatment that they deserve.

We reaffirm our historic commitment with the self-determination and independence of our brother people of Puerto Rico.

We support Argentina's legitimate sovereignty claim over the Malvinas Islands, South Sandwich and South Georgia Islands.

We reaffirm our steadfast solidarity with the Saharan people, and support the search for a final solution to the question of Western Sahara, which will allow the exercise of self-determination and to live in peace in their territory.

We support the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation imposed in Syria, without foreign interference and with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reject any direct or indirect intervention, carried out without the legitimate authorities of the country[iii].

This speech clearly articulated Cuba's opposition to foreign interference, pressure, retaliation, and militarisation, as well as the imposition of unilateral and unfair sanctions designed to destabilize national governments and impose the American political agenda in other countries. Instead, he calls for peaceful coexistence based on a mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and advocates for negotiated resolutions to restore peace and security in the event of a conflict.

President Díaz-Canel consistently condemns the American trade embargo[iv] against Cuba, denouncing 'the most lasting blockade in mankind history'[v] as inhumane and the most significant obstacle to the economic development of his country. He emphasized the point that the embargo represents the key mechanism by which Washington has been attempting overthrow the island's socialist government for almost six decades. World opinion is clearly on the side of Díaz-Canel, as evidenced by the fact that a UN General Assembly resolution[vi] condemning the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and calling for it to be lifted has passed with overwhelming support in each of the past 27 years. On May 14, 2019, he tweeted:

In face of US sanctions against Cuba, we have nearly unanimous support of the nations that every year demand the end of the blockade at the UN General Assembly and with their vote make evident the isolation of such cruel policy.

Washington's hostility towards Cuba has been ramped up during the Trump Presidency, which began enforcing Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act as of May 2, 2019. The Helms-Burton Act was enacted in 1996 to expand the U.S. commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, while Title III, which had previously not been enforced, allows for the 'protection of property rights of United States nationals.' More specifically, Title III permits Americans, 'including naturalized Cuban-Americans, to sue any foreign company conducting business that involves properties that were owned by American citizens before being confiscated by the Cuban socialist government after the 1959 Revolution.'[vii] On April 26, 2019, president Díaz-Canel tweeted that:

The Helms-Burton Act is not a law. Its articles run counter to international law. It's the blockade, condemned by 189 countries. It's interference, extraterritoriality and a colonial plan. Cuba is a socialist State under rule of law.

On May 3, 2019, president Díaz-Canel elaborated further, explaining that:

The purpose of the Helms-Burton Act is economic suffocation and preventing the economic development of Cuba, attacking the sovereignty of third

countries and destroying the Cuban Revolution. The implementation of the Helms-Burton Act will not put a stop on the march of Cubans.

President Díaz-Canel firmly believes that the Helms-Burton Act 'goes against peace, solidarity, peaceful coexistence and friendship. It's a law to neo-colonize and enslave.' To that effect, on May 25, 2019, he tweeted that:

Our foreign minister Bruno Rodriguez and EU High Representative Federica Mogherini ratified their rejection to the US activation of the Helms-Burton Act, and the need to suspend the arbitrary law.

Additionally, on June 4, 2019, the US government reinstated travel and trade restrictions that were previously lifted by the Obama^[viii] administration, including visits for educational trips and cultural exchanges, on the basis that these policies only benefited Cuba's 'despotic and oppressive' regime. That same day, president Díaz-Canel issued a defiant response via Twitter:

Cuba will not be frightened or distracted with new threats and restrictions. Work, creativity, efforts and resistance is our response. They haven't been able to suffocate us. They won't be able to stop us.^[ix]

The following day, commented further on the new travel restrictions:

The US Government keeps at its perverse efforts to crush Cuba. New measures intensify the blockade and violate International Law. We strongly condemn this policy. They won't be able to stop us: we'll survive and we shall overcome.

Then, on June 20, 2019, he tweeted that:

The unjust, genocidal and cruel blockade of US being tightened with the Helms-Burton Act, may affect financial flows and resources but it will never block the principles, convictions, patriotism, independence and sovereignty of the Cuban people.

On July 13, 2019, president Díaz-Canel issued a tweet expressing his feelings about the current US National Security Advisor, who is suspected of having played a significant role in the decision to activate Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act:

John Bolton is International Insecurity Advisor for interference and threats to those who don't yield to the empire.



John Bolton began 'his career as a cog in the machine of Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, helping his political action committees evade legal restrictions and federal fines. Helms, the most powerful reactionary in the Senate, sponsored Bolton's rise to Reagan's justice department.' [x] The *Helms-Burton Act* was named after Jesse Helms, one of its original sponsors, who sought to strengthen embargo against Cuba in 1995 by fortifying the 1992 *Torricelli Act* with new legislation. Bolton's ideological views were shaped by Helms' anti-Cuban policies, and it appears that he remains committed to achieving the objectives of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

In response to the hostile actions and destructive policies of the Trump administration towards Cuba, president Díaz-Canel stated that Cubans 'vigorously reject this new provocation, meddling, threatening and bullying, in violation of international law.' Like Fidel and Raúl Castro before him, president Díaz-Canel maintains that Cuba is open to establishing normal relations with the United States, provided that Washington respects the island's sovereignty as an independent nation on equal footing. President Díaz-Canel has often reaffirmed that the principles, policies and goals of the Cuban revolution are non-negotiable in any resolution that might be reached with Washington. Such positions expressed by Cuba's new president should dispel any notions that the island could possibly revert to its pre-revolution status as a US neo-colony under his leadership. President Díaz-Canel is very clear that there will be no regime change in Cuba, because the Cuban Revolution remains strong and Cubans are faithful to her principles. If he is correct, then Cuba will never voluntarily return to the social and economic slavery and exploitation that characterized it before the success of the revolution in 1959.

Based on his statements and policies [xi] since assuming the presidency of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel does not appear to represent a departure from the ideals of the Cuban Revolution. Instead, it seems that, under his presidency, Cuba will continue on its path of standing firm against 'the most powerful empire on earth that sought to destroy' its Revolution, while instituting reforms to improve its economic and social development, thereby allowing Cuba to remain a sovereign, independent, socialist, prosperous and sustainable state, free from 'all foreign tutelage'. Like the Castros before him, Díaz-Canel wants Cuba to remain a symbol of global anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movements by

demonstrating that the government exists for the revolution, and the revolution exists for the people. However, by not demonstrating any inclination to dismantle the Cuban Communist regime, Díaz-Canel has made himself a candidate for regime change by the neo-imperialist Trump administration, which would prefer to have a corrupt and brutal dictator that they could influence, perhaps in the mold of Fulgencio Batista (1901-1973).

On the 60th anniversary commemorating the independence of Cuba, which took place on January 1, 2019, Raul Castro indicated that the Cuban revolution was on the right track thanks to the efforts of president Díaz-Canel. In particular, he stated that:

The revolution has not aged, it remains young.

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Notes

[i] <http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2019-07-29/the-world-will-see-what-we-are-capable-of-doing-and-the-world-will-join-us-in-our-resistance?fbclid=IwAR2-HC-TEjAkvUxSzBL41vXicE0oLKvKiYtfrhr67ar0iSSkIxB99I2vTNw>

[ii] <http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2019-07-29/the-world-will-see-what-we-are-capable-of-doing-and-the-world-will-join-us-in-our-resistance?fbclid=IwAR2-HC-TEjAkvUxSzBL41vXicE0oLKvKiYtfrhr67ar0iSSkIxB99I2vTNw>

[iii] <https://www.globalresearch.ca/cubas-president-miguel-diaz-canel-at-the-un-general-assembly-global-capitalism-triggers-war-and-poverty/5656218>

[iv] Washington imposed a commercial, economic and financial embargo on Cuba in 1962, which 'blocked virtually all trade between the two countries and banned U.S. citizens from travelling to Cuba. The U.S. administration regarded the trade embargo as the best mechanism to achieve its objectives'

(<http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-cuban-revolution-the-u-s-imposed-economic-blockade-and-us-cuba-relations/5433797>).

[v] 'It is well-known that the U.S. embargo has had tremendous consequences on the development of the Cuban economy. According to Havana, the direct economic damages to Cuba attributable to the embargo would exceed \$1.1 trillion¹¹ since 1962, "taking into account the depreciation of dollar against gold", with specific damages including the loss of earnings, monetary and financial restrictions, and social damages with regards to health, education, culture, the availability of food, etc. Additionally, "the embargo penalizes the activities of the bank and finance, insurance, petrol, chemical products, construction, infrastructures and transports, shipyard, agriculture and fishing, electronics and computing.'" (2015,

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-cuban-revolution-the-u-s-imposed-economic-blockade-and-us-cuba-r>

elations/5433797).

[vi] On November 1, 2018, 189 UN Member States voted in favour of this resolution, while only the US and Israel opposed it.

[vii] <https://www.globalresearch.ca/enacting-title-iii-helms-burton-act-us-revisits-cold-war-era/5671648>

[viii] 'Under the Obama agreement, diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba were officially normalized on December 17, 2014. Additionally, a number of trade and travel agreements were signed between the two countries, including contracts for business deals between Havana and 60 American companies. These measures contributed a 60% increase in American tourism to the island between 2014 and 2016.'

(<https://www.globalresearch.ca/enacting-title-iii-helms-burton-act-us-revisits-cold-war-era/5671648>)

[ix] <https://twitter.com/DiazCanelB/status/1136031607041789952>

[x] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/mar/10/usa.comment>

[xi] President Díaz-Canel's first major reform was to update the 1976 Constitution last February in a manner that benefits the Cuban people.

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