

Cuba and the United States in the World: US and Latin America at the Dawn of the Century

WELCOMING REMARKS

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INTRODUCTION

Greetings and welcome to this reception cosponsored by the Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales (ISRI) and the Stanley Foundation. My name is Richard Stanley, and I am Chair and President of the Stanley Foundation, based in Muscatine, Iowa. I am very pleased and honored to be here among such a distinguished crowd.

This reception is the opening event of a discussion conference that ISRI and the Stanley Foundation have organized together as part of a project we call "Cuba and the United States in the World: A Dialogue Series between Cuban and US International Relations Specialists."

Let me give you a general overview of the project. The Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales and the Stanley Foundation have jointly sponsored a series of three small conferences to bring together Cuban and US scholars and foreign policy specialists in discussion of major topics facing both countries. Our objective is to facilitate dialogue and understanding between Cuban and US scholars and foreign policy specialists by discussing and exchanging approaches to major issues in current international relations.

The first meeting was held in St. Paul, Minnesota, in July 2000. It centered on Cuban and US perspectives on military intervention in the post-Cold War era. The second was held at Seabrook Island, South Carolina, in March 2001. It examined the use of economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool. This, the third and final meeting, focuses on the United States and Latin America at the dawn of the century.

Why is this project important? While people-to-people relations (including academic, economic, and political contacts) between Cuba and the United States have accelerated in recent years, the broader international relations communities in our two countries (other than the small groups focused on studies of each others' countries and on US-Cuba relations) have had very little contact. In the United States, this has limited the debate on US policy toward Cuba to a small community of activists and specialists. It has also isolated the US international relations community from new trends and research emanating from Cuba and provided little information about how Cuba views current international relations and its role in the world in the post-Cold War era. In Cuba, this has limited knowledge about US scholarly approaches on world affairs and has created the impression that official US government positions describe the thinking of all scholarly and policy communities working on international relations.

The Stanley Foundation has also been very involved this year in examining the domestic side of US-Cuba relations. Since last fall, the foundation has organized a series of events, including policy forums, off-the-record meetings, and congressional briefings to discuss the current state of US-Cuba policy. We have been working with former and current government officials, policy experts and think tanks around the country.

Many of these meetings have focused on moving the current policy forward through open and frank discussions about US national interests and hemispheric cooperation.

THE STANLEY FOUNDATION

Before I go on to address the theme of this conference, let me introduce you briefly to the Stanley Foundation. We are located in Muscatine, Iowa, about as far from Washington, DC, as Havana, which allows a broader perspective on US foreign policy issues. Our vision is “a secure peace with freedom and justice, built on world citizenship and effective global governance.” In addition to our work on US foreign policy, we carry out programming on global education, global governance, and media. Two of our core values are very relevant to this conference and our ongoing Cuba projects: (1) People worldwide have a shared interest in peace, justice, and an improved quality of life for all. They have the inherent ability to change themselves and their local and global communities. (2) In our work we will be balanced, pragmatic, and flexible in approaching the world’s problems. Our forums will be fair and open, offering a nonthreatening environment that respects all voices. As these two values suggest, we believe that open dialogue to build mutual understanding and respect is a productive strategy where differences exist.

GLOBAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Now let me turn to the theme of the conference, “US and Latin America at the Dawn of the Century.” First, let us begin with the conviction that the peoples and nations of this hemisphere are looking ahead, moving forward in this new century—that there is a genuine interest to see inter-American relationships grow, expand, and strengthen. Let us also begin with the understanding that the world of the twenty-first century is different from that of only a few decades ago.

In the closing years of the twentieth century we saw demonstration after demonstration of the fact that the world is increasingly interconnected. Peoples and states no longer live in isolation. They must craft their futures in the context of multiple relationships, loyalties, and connections.

Here are a few ways in which we can think about how the world is connected—and identify the many different levels where linkages exist. **Communications and Information:** The world is increasingly linked by multiple communications networks, including radio, television, telephone, and the Internet. People separated by borders and continents can readily talk and communicate. For better or worse and completely outside the control of governments, information and ideas flow freely across increasingly porous national boundaries. **Interstate Relations:** All countries have numerous relationships within the international community. They work with one another bilaterally, multilaterally, and through international organizations. They commit themselves to the growing body of international standards, values, and treaties. **Trade and Economics:** In recent decades, we have witnessed a significant increase in the flow of goods, technology, money, and investment. There have been both benefits and drawbacks from these exchanges, and we must strive toward national and international policies and practices that provide a fair and equitable environment as trade and commerce expand. **People and Culture:** Increasingly we see two-way movement of people, values, culture, and arts across national and regional boundaries. The interpenetration of cultures enriches our lives and experiences. **Survival Issues:** The survival issues of the future—including poverty, environment, climate change, health, population, and resource limitations—are global in nature. Dealing with them is beyond the competence of any one nation. They will be handled cooperatively or not at all.

A few recent examples demonstrate, for better and for worse, how this world is increasingly interconnected. (1) The WTO meeting in Seattle in late fall 1999 and the FTAA Summit in Quebec City last spring not only brought together heads of state to discuss economic integration but also showcased the concerns of numerous networks of people who oppose free trade and irresponsible business practices. (2) The international cooperation required for the arrest and trial of Slobodan Milošević involved many countries and international governance bodies. (3) Lastly, the September 11 attacks showed both the level of international organization

and coordination of Al Qaeda, a nonstate terrorist actor, and the collective world response of grief and commitment to stopping terrorism.

We are seeing demonstrated a point made in some of our earlier foundation work: *“The crucial issues of the future will require collaborative solutions within our own country as well as with other nations and regional and global organizations. Foreign policy requires discourse, tolerance, persistence, and a sense of community.”* (36th Strategy for Peace, US Foreign Policy Conference Report, 1995)

INTERCONNECTEDNESS IN THE HEMISPHERE

As the world is becoming more interconnected and interdependent, so, too, is our hemisphere. Many factors connect us in this hemisphere. **People:** This is a major link throughout the Americas. We can look at migration patterns across the region, the changing demographics of the United States, the increasing number of educational exchanges, and tourism. Miami, for example, has been called the capital of Latin America. Miami is not just home to Cuban Americans, but to Americans from all countries. **Money:** This includes foreign direct investment, currency exchanges, the drug trade, debt payments and remittances. **Culture:** We all enjoy art, music, language, literature, film, and food from all parts of the hemisphere. **Technology:** Information technology and improved telecommunications have made it possible for indigenous people in the Amazon to communicate with the Inuit in the Arctic.

When I talk about connections, I mean to imply that these exchanges are a two-way street. Much attention is paid to how much the US “exports” its culture and values throughout the world and, indeed, ideas from Mickey Mouse to human rights come to mind. However, it is important to note that the United States increasingly *imports* Latin American and other cultures and values as well. This includes works of literature, dialogues on racism and diversity, social norms, and music. One can describe this phenomenon as “interpenetration,” in which the pull and push of these values and cultures is becoming more and more symmetrical.

We also share many common concerns and values in the hemisphere. **Economic Security:** We all would like to see a reduction in poverty in all countries, in all villages. We need to work toward alleviating that poverty and ensuring that all people of the region have access to basic human needs and the resources to do so. However, we should be mindful that the gap between rich and poor has increased these past twenty years and continues to grow. Latin America has the most unequal distribution of wealth in the world. All nations in the hemisphere, including the United States, should support initiatives that address this fact and seek to change policies that perpetuate or even exacerbate these differences. **Physical Security:** We need to work together to protect ourselves from common threats of violence including drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crime and corruption. **Environmental Preservation and Health:** The well-being of all inhabitants in the hemisphere and the protection of the environment are common concerns. In this connection, Cuba’s medical education and support has made a significant contribution. **Regional Peace and Stability:** Everyone has an interest in seeing peace in Colombia and Haiti (despite differences on how that is best achieved) and financial stability in Argentina. **Population Movements:** We need to cooperate to stop the smuggling of people—between Mexico and Guatemala, between Haiti and the Bahamas, between Cuba and the United States. Also, there are thousands of internally displaced people in Colombia, Brazil, and Central America that need help. We need to negotiate comprehensive and fair immigration practices and agreements.

All of the above shared concerns and values could translate into future policy initiatives. Given the extent of interconnectedness and the identified common concerns and values within the hemisphere, it is in the interest of the United States, Cuba, and all of Latin America to engage in a collaborative, open, constructive, and peaceful dialogue that addresses these matters.

If we talk about the “global village,” then we can refer to this region of the world as “*nuestro barrio*”—defined geographically but linked in so many other ways. This *barrio*, or neighborhood, hosts a multitude of cultures, languages, peoples, and landscapes. *Somos todos habitantes del nuevo mundo, de las Americas*. Despite our differences, we share interconnectedness and common needs and goals that should form a foundation for cooperative action.

US FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

Today, we must acknowledge the impact of the September 11 attacks on US foreign policy priorities and focus. How and to what extent have these attacks, and their aftermath, affected US relations with Latin America? Have we seen a greater solidarity within the Americas? Or, has the opposite effect taken place?

There was cautious optimism that Latin America would be a US priority in the twenty-first century, even if no real initiatives had taken place. However, in the post-September 11 environment, expected priorities have been trumped by the war on terrorism. This current preoccupation may lead the United States to give lower priority to hemisphere problems and opportunities for cooperation.

If this happens, it would be unfortunate. At a recent foundation workshop on US-Cuba policy, Sir Shridath Ramphal, former chief negotiator for CARICOM and former Secretary-General of the British Commonwealth, gave the keynote speech. He stated that, “At the start of the twenty-first century, US strategy formulation must have among its aims, the fostering of a hemisphere at peace with itself and in a state of healthy cooperation throughout its entirety.” Clearly, it is in the interest of the United States and all other hemisphere countries to care about the hemisphere and the well-being of all its inhabitants, to engage peacefully and fairly with one another, and to work toward an inclusive and revitalized inter-American system.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This is an opportune time to address hemisphere needs and priorities and to assure that *nuestro barrio es uno de paz, seguridad, y justicia*—a neighborhood of peace, security, and justice.

Global and hemispheric interconnectedness are here to stay and will only expand and deepen. They complement and supplement, but do not replace, the sovereignty and identity of nations. Our hemisphere has common values and concerns that should be addressed through fair and open dialogue. The United States, Cuba, and other countries can and should collaborate and develop policy initiatives. Multilateral organizations can play a lead role in this process, and we should work toward a strengthened inter-American system. As we do this, we must affirm and build upon our common interests, overcoming mutual discomforts with and objections to the political, cultural, and economic differences we may have with other *vecinos* in the *barrio*. The “soft power” influence of the growing links between our peoples, cultures, and the arts will be helpful. Where there are differences and misunderstandings, engagement has, time and time again, proven to be much more fruitful than ostracism. *Es mejor construir puentes que paredes*.

Both the United States and Cuba have very important roles to play at the dawn of the new century in achieving a hemisphere of peace, security, and justice—and so do all the other neighbors in the *barrio*. We all must work together to succeed. It is my hope that our discussions at this conference will advance mutual understanding and thinking, and will be a small contribution toward the achievement of this goal.

Bienvenidos y gracias.