

The Coming Battle for the Liberation of Cuba

By [Ted Snider](#)

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The US loudly proclaims that large, belligerent powers should listen when the world is united against their hostility toward their smaller neighbors.

The world is united against the US.

In thirty consecutive votes since 1992, the UN General Assembly has overwhelmingly condemned the US embargo of Cuba. In the most recent vote, on November 3, 2022, the world delivered what William LeoGrande, Professor of Government at American University and a specialist in US foreign policy toward Latin America, told me was "the most complete repudiation of the US embargo by the world community since the annual resolution was first introduced 30 years ago."

The vote was 185-2. Only Israel voted with the US, and only Ukraine and Brazil abstained. The year before, Colombia abstained, but the election of Gustavo Petro as president of Colombia peeled that support away from the US. The recent election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil will see to it that one more anomalous Latin American abstention is lost in this year's vote.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador recently demanded that the US and the world start acting on the will of the General Assembly. He [said](#) that the world must become more "active" and "not only when it comes to voting in the UN, where it is always only one or two countries who vote in support of it, while the vast majority of the countries in the world abstain or vote for the blockade to be eliminated. But when the [General] Assembly is over, it is back to the same old."

Instead, López Obrador promised that "[w]e are going to continue demanding that the blockade against Cuba be lifted, that it be eliminated. It is inhumane."

Mexico "has the greatest leverage," LeoGrande told me, "because Washington needs its cooperation on two pre-eminent issues – migration and narcotics trafficking." But López Obrador, who has initiated a "new, very close relationship between Mexico and Cuba" and

who has signed documents that “formalize” and make the relationship between the two countries “institutional,” is not alone in opposing the blockade and calling it “inhumane.” Belize’s Prime Minister John Briceño, recently [condemned](#) the “illegal blockade against Cuba” and called it an “affront to humanity.”

Before López Obrador assumed the mantle of leader of Latin America’s struggle against America’s imposition of its will on the region, that mantle was worn by Lula DA Silva. On January 24, Lula DA Silva met with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel. It was their first meeting since DA Silva returned to the presidency of Brazil. Just prior to their meeting, he had [condemned](#) the US embargo.

DA Silva and Díaz-Canel held their talk during the meeting of the Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). In a press conference held with Argentine President Alberto Fernandez the day before the summit, DA Silva [asked](#) the members of CELAC to solve the problems of Cuba – and Venezuela – and treat them with “much affection.”

In November 2021, DA Silva [told](#) the European Parliament that the embargo is “unacceptable” and “not fair, normal or democratic.” He promised that “[a]s long as I live, I will say that the United States must end its blockade.”

Latin American opposition is swelling not only against the US embargo but also against the US inclusion of Cuba on the list of state sponsors of international terrorism.

In May 2015, the Obama administration took Cuba off the list. Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes said US policy on Cuba had become “an albatross” around the neck of the US, crippling their policy in the hemisphere. After reviewing Cuba’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, the State Department concluded that it should be removed from the list. The Trump administration put it back on.

López Obrador has promised “to lead a more active movement” against the inclusion of Cuba on the list of state sponsors of international terrorism that has continued under the Biden administration. He [said](#) that “all countries” must “unite and defend the independence and sovereignty of Cuba, and never, ever treat it as a ‘terrorist’ country, or put its profoundly humane people and government on a blacklist of supposed ‘terrorists’.”

And again, the Mexican president is not alone. On October 3, 2022, Colombia’s new president, Gustavo Petro, [asked](#) US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to remove Cuba from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.”

When asked by a reporter at a joint press conference “whether it is possible for the U.S. to remove Cuba . . . from the list of countries promoting terrorism,” Blinken [answered](#), “When it comes to Cuba and when it comes to the state sponsor of terrorism designation, we have clear laws, clear criteria, clear requirements, and we will continue as necessary to revisit those to see if Cuba continues to merit that designation.” Petro disagreed about the merit. “[W]hat has happened with Cuba is an injustice,” he said.

With the recent elections of Gustavo Petro in Colombia and Lula DA Silva in Brazil, López Obrador’s opposition to the US’s hostile Cuba policy has become a powerful front. “With Petro, López Obrador and Lula taking the lead,” LeoGrande told me, “Biden will [face] united opposition to his Cuba policy across Latin America.”

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Ted Snider is a regular columnist on US foreign policy and history at Antiwar.com and The Libertarian Institute. He is also a frequent contributor to Responsible Statecraft and The American Conservative as well as other outlets.

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