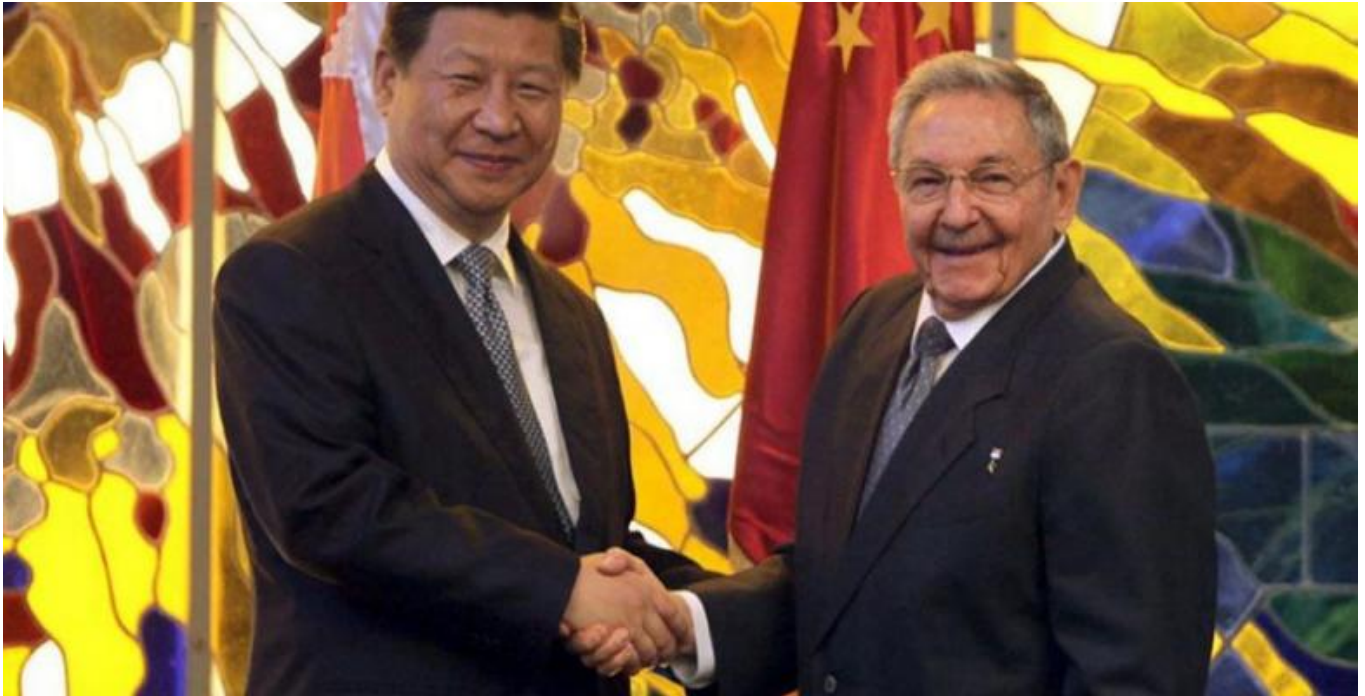

US Is Stepping on the Cuban Rake Again

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The relations with the Republic of Cuba have long been one of the most painful problems of the United States. Even after the withdrawal of its main ally – the USSR – from the global stage, all the US attempts to get Cuba under its influence have failed. Lately, Cuba has acquired a new strong ally – China.

The deterioration of the US-Cuban relations occurred in the middle of the 20th century due to a number of mistakes made by the US leadership. In the 19th century, America helped Cuba in its struggle for independence from Spain. Since that time, it has considered this small island state as a part of its area of influence ignoring construction of mutually beneficial cooperation. After the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the new leader of the Republic of Cuba Fidel Castro visited the USA. However, the American President of that time Dwight Eisenhower refused to meet. Such neglect on the part of the American leadership accelerated the downfall of the US-Cuban relations and promoted the strengthening of cooperation between Cuba and the USSR.

Soon, expulsion of the American capital from the Island of Freedom began. Many companies, banks, and factories owned by the US citizens were nationalized.

Instead of taking attempts on establishing friendly relations, America responded by strong economic and political pressure. In 1960, America stopped the oil supply to Cuba and imports of the Cuban sugar. It was a strong blow for the Cuban economy. However, the Soviet Union came for assistance. In 1961, Fidel Castro announced the socialist orientation of the Cuba, after which America ruptured diplomatic relations with it. In early 1962, Washington imposed a ban on trade with Cuba for all American companies.

Very soon America paid a heavy price for underestimation of the new Cuban leadership and for its habit of solving issues by force. In autumn 1962, the Soviet missiles with nuclear warheads were located on the Island of Freedom, after which the Cuban missile crisis broke out putting the USA on the verge of a nuclear war with the USSR. Perhaps, it was the time when the USA felt sorry for its policy towards Republic of Cuba. The isle of Cuba is located 180 km away from the US coast, and missiles located there could easily reach Washington and many other strategic facilities in America.

Fortunately, military clash was prevented. Nonetheless, the opposition between the USA and Cuba continued even after the USSR breakup.

Some thaw in relations was reached during the presidency of Barack Obama (2008-2016). The weakening of the US economic sanctions against Cuba started in early 2015. The diplomatic relations between the two countries were resumed in July 2015. A number of trade barriers were lifted in 2015-2016. Certain categories of the US citizens were allowed to visit Cuba. The air service between the countries was also resumed.

However, these insignificant achievements were brought to naught after the acting US President Donald J. Trump moved to the Office. Prior to his election in November 2016, Trump stated that America made too many concessions for the Republic of Cuba to the detriment of its own interests. Donald Trump also announced his intention to cancel the decision of Barack Obama if the Cuban leadership failed to meet a number of US requirements.

In June 2017, Donald Trump announced cancellation of the US-Cuban agreement on normalization of relations due to the violation of the human rights in the Republic of Cuba. He demanded the Cuban government to elaborate a new agreement that meets the US interests. The Republic of Cuba flatly refused.

In November 2017, the US Treasury Department announced new sanctions against Cuba. The American citizens are prohibited to carry out financial transactions with institutions related to the Cuban security agencies and make private educational visits to Cuba.

The story of the 1960s, when the rough US policy pushed Cuba away and contributed to the development of relations with the USSR, is apparently repeating. The difference is that now the leader of the communist world is the People's Republic of China.

China has long been a reliable partner for Cuba. Cuba was the first Latin American country to recognize China as a country in 1960 and established diplomatic relations with it.

In 2008, China's leader Hu Jintao declared that the Communist Party of China intended to keep friendship with Cuba and support it in building socialism and confronting the United States.

Now the economic and political interaction between Cuba and China is experiencing a period of the rapid development. In 2015, the Chinese imports to Cuba reached a record level of \$1.9 billion. Cuba buys Chinese automobile and agricultural equipment, household appliances, PCs, and many other goods. China's business is rapidly developing on the Island of Freedom. In early 2017, the media reported China's intention to invest about \$500 million in the new resort close to Havana. The Chinese Haier factory producing computer hardware launched its work in Cuba in 2017. In early 2018, the Chinese-Cuban projects in the sphere of renewable energy resources have started, and China is planning to give a loan worth \$120 million to Cuba for this purpose. China has already become Cuba's main creditor.

The growing presence of China in close proximity to the US territory causes anxiety of many American politicians, but Trump's administration stubbornly continues its policy. As it was a half the century ago, it results in a number of unpleasant consequences for America.

As mentioned above, the isles of the Republic of Cuba are in close proximity to the USA. Therefore, the deployment of the nuclear weapon in Cuba was important for the USSR under its project of containment their possible enemy – the USA.

In addition, the importance of Cuba's location is not only in the proximity to the USA but to the Panama Canal as well. This Canal that separates the two American continents and unites the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans has huge importance for the global trade. About 5% of the cargo shipping on the planet passes through it.

As you know, the main task for the Chinese foreign policy now is the implementation of the project the One Belt – One Road (OBOR), under which China and its partners intend to create a global transport system. While speaking about the OBOR, they usually mean the merger of the Eurasian and African

countries in one transport network. In fact, this project does not have restrictions, and the Latin American states also perfectly fit into it. Cuba is not the only country where China expands its presence. China is working actively with all the states and pushing out America from them at the same time. Even now China is the main trade partner of Brazil, Peru, and Chile – the most economically developed countries of South America. It also develops cooperation with Mexico. Every year, China's influence is also growing in Panama, through which territory the Panama Canal flows.

However, Cuba has particular importance as a possible stronghold of China in the Caribbean Sea. If China, as the USSR back in the day receives permission from the Cuban authorities to deploy its armed forces on the island, it will be able to ensure the safety of navigation through the Panama Canal and control all shipping in the Caribbean Sea. This fact will finally turn China in the prime force in Latin America and put an end to the US domination in this region.
