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### Introduction

The European Union's relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific states are an example of the formation of new ties in international economic and political relations that date back to the genesis of the colonial era. The institutional framework of these relationships is constantly evolving to adapt to a greater or lesser degree to the economic and political realities. As a research subject it is, thus, both important and – owing to recent developments – relevant (Whiteman, 2017; Montoute, 2017; Kennes, 2018; Boidin, 2020).

Above all the chapter seeks to outline the potential scenarios for Cuba's inclusion in the Caribbean agenda following the agreements made to replace the Cotonou Agreement, which was signed on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2000 by the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) on the one hand and the European Union and its member states, on the other. With the Cotonou Agreement expiring in 2020, negotiations over a new agreement began in 2018 and concluded at the beginning of 2021. The final document, bearing the title "Partnership agreement between [the European Union/the European Union and its Member States], of the one party, and Members of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, of the other part" (EC, 2021a) was "published for information purposes only and may undergo further modifications" and "will be final upon Signature by the Parties". It is not, therefore, definitive. Nevertheless, the debate over Cuba's role in the Caribbean agenda should be addressed in terms of the context determined by the post-Cotonou agreement, of which Cuba will form part. The document officially published by the European Commission lists the following Caribbean countries as signatories: Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Republic of Cuba, the Commonwealth of Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, the Republic of Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Republic of Suriname and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Despite being the largest island state in the region, Cuba was not part of the ACP–EU agreement signed in Cotonou. The post-Cotonou document

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proposes a number of new solutions, among other things reformulating the problems to be faced and solved jointly, with the environment and climate change gaining importance. Meanwhile, recognising that each geographical region requires specific strategies, it includes Regional Protocols for that purpose. The new proposal thus has a regional and local perspective. It includes the cultural dimensions of the different topics and areas of work and recognises the contribution that first and indigenous peoples can make in building bridges for dialogue and problem-solving. Specifically, these subjects are addressed in article 37 on "Culture and sustainable development" and article 38 on "Cultural diversity and mutual understanding" (EC, 2021b: 29).

We are convinced that the socio-cultural and politico-geographical specificity of the parties to the agreement, their international relations and historical legacy are crucial factors in creating scenarios for Cuba's possible inclusion in the Caribbean agenda in post-Cotonou conditions. This chapter is therefore structured around the following themes:

1. The Caribbean: the difficulties "taming" its diversity within a regional integration process
2. Cuba and Caribbean integration: history and challenges
3. Lomé, Cotonou and the new post-Cotonou agreements
4. The Caribbean in the post-Cotonou landscape
5. SWOT analysis of Cuba's inclusion in the post-Cotonou Caribbean agenda
6. Possible scenarios for Cuba's insertion in the post-Cotonou Caribbean agenda.

We start from the assumption that contemporary critical thinking on traditional development and economic growth models was taken into consideration when formulating the proposed new agreement, making the vision set out in the document much better suited to the challenges of the environmental crisis and the UN's SDGs. Meanwhile, US – Cuba continuous political conflict makes the Island a special case and raises doubts about whether it can fully participate in the process of Caribbean integration and intergovernmental collaboration. First, we will examine regional integration and dialogue, which the Caribbean Regional Protocol emphasises as a key issue, and we will refer to the experiences of Cuba and Caribbean to date. We aim to show the possible scenarios for Cuba's inclusion in the Caribbean agenda and the challenges to be faced, paying attention to Cuba's historical relationship with the Caribbean region and the EU. A SWOT analysis will be used to consider the significant factors for Cuba's possible incorporation in post-Cotonou, showing the individual conditions behind any decision the country makes in the context of strengths and weaknesses as well potential opportunities and threats. This will help us construct possible scenarios.

## **1. The Caribbean: the difficulties "taming" its diversity within a regional integration process**

Latin America has a long tradition and great experience of regional integration, but the processes cannot be said to have been fruitful in terms of achieving their goals. Worthy of note among the most effective

and efficient agreements are the OECS (The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) and CARICOM and its CSME (CARICOM Single Market and Economy). These Caribbean regional organisations unite countries whose economies may be similar but which are in other ways less compatible. Yet, common problems and similar historical backgrounds have created favourable conditions for uniting the community, which hopes that building regional alliances will strengthen its international negotiating position. However, after more than 50 years experimenting with integration, the Caribbean countries have not been able to advance in the creation of a de facto union to encompass the entire insular Spanish-, French, English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. Geographical features, the island nature of most of the states and high levels of fragmentation all stand in the way of the effective movement of people and goods. Meanwhile, the idea of Caribbeanness<sup>1</sup> (*caribeidad*) – and the correspondence and identification with it – is an important factor to consider, just as identification with the idea of Europeanness is in the case of European integration.

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As with its predecessors, in the post-Cotonou agreement the term Caribbean describes the geographical location of the signatory countries in a region considered to be in development. Since Lomé, the perceptions of the regions that form part of the ACP Group and their relationship with the EU have changed. What was seen as a vertical North–South relationship has become much more horizontal, with greater emphasis on the individual characteristics of each side. Nevertheless, the post-Cotonou agreement's Caribbean Regional Protocol gives only a small degree of prominence to the Caribbean's complexity and its multifaceted character. The signatories to the protocol include Caribbean island and continental states that are often rivals, as Jean Casimir accurately describes in *La invención del Caribe*, presenting us with a vision of the Caribbean both as a Balkanised region and one that is self-centred. The Balkanised Caribbean is formed of disparate units, a kind of Babel (Mori, 2003: 69) in which Caribbean identity is reduced to geographical and perhaps geopolitical ties. The self-centred Caribbean, meanwhile, is self-defined and has its own characteristics (Mori, 2003: 69–70). For Casimir, this vision is oriented towards the full development of local potential and its internal dynamism. It is the postcolonial Caribbean that has managed to establish its own regional structures and is aware that, despite their differences, its components form part of a single nature or follow the same interests (Mori, 2003: 69–70).

To be able to talk about the Caribbean and the scenarios for Cuba's participation in regional integration processes, the term "Caribbean" must be defined. The starting assumption must be that the complexity of the Caribbean region and the multiple interpretations of "Caribbean" are important factors in constructing interstate relations. From a geographical perspective, we can confirm that the Caribbean is a space of small dimensions, extremely complex, and of historical and contemporary geostrategic importance. As Nuñez Jimenez (1995) points out, it is a region with a young identity that is in the process of construction and crystallisation, and where influx factors have played a paramount role.

As a subject of international relations the Caribbean was emancipated very late, with the process beginning in the 1960s. The creation in 1965

1. We will use this term following Andrzej Dembic (1979), rather than Caribbeanness.

The ACS is the essence of the self-centred Caribbean – it is the mature fruit of the ideas around constructing a regional identity.

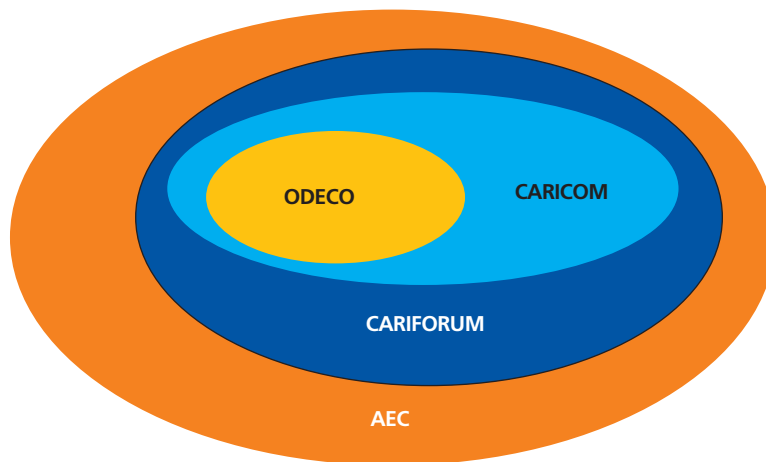
of CARIFTA (The Caribbean Free Trade Association), the subsequent founding of CARICOM - Caribbean Community in 1973, and finally the modification of the name of ECLAC in 1984 (according to resolution 1984/67), to include “Caribbean” in the UN body’s name (making it the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) were significant events that enabled the Caribbean as a region and community of states to become part of international relations. This process culminated in the creation in 1994 of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

The ACS has helped establish the term Greater Caribbean (*El Gran Caribe*) in the international nomenclature, with the continental states bordering the Caribbean Sea becoming part of the region’s collective imaginary. Although the ACS is an institution of a consultative nature and has in recent years been fairly passive, it aims to “identify and promote the implementation of policies and programmes designed to: (a) harness, utilise and develop the collective capabilities of the Caribbean Region; (b) develop the potential of the Caribbean Sea through interaction among Member States and with third parties; (c) promote an enhanced economic space for trade and investment ...; (d) establish, consolidate and augment, as appropriate, institutional structures and cooperative arrangements responsive to the various cultural identities ... within the region” (ACS, 1994). In Casimir’s terms, the ACS is the essence of the self-centred Caribbean – it is the mature fruit of the ideas around constructing a regional identity.

The definition of the Caribbean has changed over time. Descriptions once focused mostly on cultural elements, while in other cases they were closely linked to the region’s experiences with slavery and plantations. Eric Williams, the historian and politician, was in the latter group, and tended to describe the Caribbean as the group of islands surrounded by continental countries where a plantation economy developed with the use of slave and cheap labour from Africa and other parts of the world (Williams, 1978). Meanwhile, Shirdath Ramphal helps us understand the current state of regional integration in the Caribbean. To paraphrase, the Caribbean should be understood in terms of ever-widening circles. The narrowest includes the ex-British and ex-Dutch territories and those still suffering from colonial domination. The second is wider and covers the islands of the “old” Caribbean, which shared the early experience of colonisation and freedom: the islands of Hispaniola (originally Haiti, which contains the states of Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and Cuba. Finally, in a wider circle, the margins of Caribbean identity become blurred or confused: this is where the states of Central and South America lie, stretching from Mexico to Venezuela and the Guianas. Inspired by Ramphal, Andrzej Dembiczy, one of the earliest scholars to address the issue at hand, made the visionary proposal in 1979 that this “wider Caribbean” was the circle of kinship that had in many ways been forging a real political economic future, as well as becoming a region of study (Gaztambide, 2006: 16).

This last description of the Caribbean is undoubtedly reflected in the integration and cooperation scheme proposed by Iván Ogando who, like Shirdath Ramphal and Andrzej Dembiczy, uses the concept of circles of influence, as shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Scheme of the Caribbean Integration and Cooperation**



Source: Iván Ogando Director of FLACSO - RD Caribbean integration and the EU in the Post-Cotonou context (online). (Accessed on 08.13.2021): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9bCF0bX4jQ&t=4121s>

The correlation between the size of the circles and the level of integration of the structures should be underlined: the broader the regional circle, the weaker the ties and integration progress. It is a process Joseph Nye (1964: 54–55) defined in the following terms: what constitute parts in a whole or create interdependence can be separated into economic integration (formation of a transnational economy), social integration (formation of a transnational society) and political integration (formation of transnational political interdependence).

We will analyse the three pillars of integration in an attempt to answer the question of whether it will be difficult to carry out an effective regional integration and cooperation process in the “wider Caribbean”, a region of antagonism, disparity and disharmony.

Transnationalism, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, is an economic, political and cultural process that extends beyond the boundaries of nation-states. Transnationalism can therefore be understood as the creation and maintenance of multiple ties across borders and boundaries. Political, economic and social transnationalism are associated with the loss of some national sovereignty, a very important factor for regions in the process of building their identity. As a region in the midst of political formation and identity crystallisation, the deep attachment to sovereignty and national sentiments in the Caribbean may hinder the creation of a close intergovernmental union. It should be noted that among the 25 members of the ACS (excluding associates) figure territories that obtained their independence both very early, such as Haiti in 1804, and very late – Belize in 1981. Political instability also affects the sense of sovereignty. Various governments in the region have experienced multiple coups and their societies have suffered dictatorships and political military interventions. Territorial conflicts undermine sovereignty, as several ACS members can attest. Belize is one example of a country involved in a territorial dispute (with Guatemala), but there have been others, and still more remain.

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In short, in the case of the Caribbean region, achieving transnational political interdependence that encompasses the Greater and Lesser Antilles or the Greater Caribbean will be difficult. This is because different political historical factors exist that affect the sovereignty-building process, create splits and resentments and cause colonial memories to resurface in Caribbean peoples' collective memory. The associate members of the ACS are the clearest evocation of this, as all are overseas territories of European Union member states.

European colonisation influenced the Caribbean's economic formation and gave it a common characteristic – the slave and plantation economy. The different administrative and trade formulas the empires applied carved out different development paths. Out of the great ethnic and cultural variety and the formation of local identities, it is possible to distinguish distinct routes towards socio-political and economic development: the paths of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, the English Caribbean, the French Caribbean and the Dutch Caribbean. Amid this diversity there are peoples who feel greater attachment to Europe and their island homeland than to the project of a Caribbean patria. This may be seen in the words of the Trinidadian writer V.S. Naipaul that “nothing was created in the West Indies ... and these small islands will never create”, and the way some Francophone Antilleans consider themselves “French people of colour” (Mori, 2003).

Creating a Caribbean transnational economy will be a difficult, but not impossible, process, as shown by the functioning of CARICOM and the OECS (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States), in which integration is advanced and monetary unification is in place. However, in both cases the member states belong to the narrowest circle, in Ramphal's terms, which includes former British, French and Dutch colonies and the territories that remain under domination. As well as co-creating a transnational economy, the member states of these two organisations are part of an extra-regional transnational policy, as Commonwealth members or overseas territories of European powers.

The social framework is the third space of change Nye (1964) identifies in an integration process. In general, it seems reasonable to call Caribbean societies transnational because they have experienced intense migration flows and because multiple ties have been formed and maintained across borders and boundaries. Intra- and inter-regional migratory movements, the creation of diasporas outside the islands and their strong socio-economic connection with island societies forge this process. As Jorge Duany (2010: 269) has written, transnationalism entails imagining communities beyond the nation-state, transforming social relations and generating practices that challenge the stationary models of physical and cultural space. The mass dispersal and resettlement of people beyond their places of birth disturbed the links established between territories, states and citizenships. Caribbean diasporas maintain a strong sociocultural bond with their places of birth and help support local economies in their country of origin. A good example is the Dominican Republic, which has a diaspora of over 2 million people in the US and which received remittances worth over \$8 billion in 2020 (Banco Central de la República Dominicana, 2021). Beyond the economic data, a society's transnationality can be analysed by looking at the place the country of origin occupies for its citizens



residing abroad. In his studies on Caribbean transnational corporations, Jorge Duany (2010) paints a rather complex picture, indicating the obstacles a society may face before achieving full convergence between the home population and those who have emigrated, and concludes that despite the pressures of globalisation, most people's daily lives continue to be framed by nation-states, even those who live outside their native country (Duany, 2010: 278). Thus, despite their increasing irrelevance to cultural practices and identities, in the contemporary world state demarcations retain importance and, in short, migrants transnationalism depends largely on the pre-existing political and economic links in place between states of origin and reception.

This brief regional overview of the three dimensions of integration explains the atomisation of this process in the Caribbean. The region's history shows that it is a space that is seeking out alliances, and that global dynamics and the globalisation process favour this process. As Serbín (2018b) points out, the global governance that has prevailed until now has been constructed around Western-promoted values. But the criticism it is now facing has prompted new proposals that involve different international actors and leaders. This is what lies behind the Dominican Republic's alliance with SICA, the Caribbean states' cooperation within the ALBA and PetroCaribe frameworks, and the changed view of the partnership with the EU. The Caribbean side remains mired in strong divisions between the Global North and South, which continues to endure the economic and political domination of the former colonial empires and the United States and is constantly seeking to crystallise an identity and original path of its own. All of this will make it a difficult counterpart for the EU. The need to respond to social demands, to look inside the states and finally find a strategy that allows advantage to be taken of the region's great diversity and the system it represents are major challenges. As long as the integration bodies – many of which include the same actors – remain numerous and increasingly fragmented, establishing a shared Caribbean agenda will be difficult. In an area formed of small nations, this is somewhat inevitable.

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## 2. Cuba and Caribbean integration: history and challenges

All integration processes – whether political, social or economic – require flexibility among the parties in the process and the capacity for consensus. Obviously, the wider the range of political objectives, historical experiences and cultural diversity, the greater the possibility of hostility breaking out and, as a result, the cooperation processes finding obstacles and gaps. The Caribbean region contains such heterogeneity. As Gérard Pierre-Charles notes, few of the world's regions have experienced a shock of the magnitude and duration of the European colonisation of the Caribbean. The rivalry between European empires made the Caribbean politically and linguistically fragmented, and almost without exception the islands evolved with scant contact with the others. This lack of connection with each other led them to be connected almost exclusively with the metropole. As time passed, the region evolved within the US's field of attraction (Pierre-Charles, 1981: 14, 20–21), remained politically and economically dependent on the West and functioned on the margins of international relations. It

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was in these historical circumstances that the Cuban Revolution broke out, which not only radically changed Cuban society, but drove change for the Caribbean region and Latin America as a whole. From 1959 onwards, Cuba's new foreign policy was based on a revolutionary and anti-imperialist nationalism. Through secessionist endeavours, Cuba sought autonomy and sovereignty in its relations with the US. This policy left the island isolated within the inter-American system and in 1962 its government was excluded from the OAS. As a result, in 1964 American countries agreed to sever diplomatic and consular relations with Cuba as well as suspending trade, except for food and medicines (Domínguez, 1989: 115–116). From 1959 to 1989, Cuba based its policy on three pillars: membership of the group of socialist countries (from 1972 it formed part of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, CMEA); active participation in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (founding member) and solidarity with the countries in what was then called the Third World; and strengthening ties with Latin America and the Caribbean. It was an extremely active policy and in the mid-1970s, the OAS sanctions against the island were lifted (Arrighi, 2009). In 1975, for the first time since 1959, Cuba joined a regional cooperation organisation – the Latin American Economic System (SELA).

The Soviet bloc's disintegration required the objectives and assumptions of Cuban foreign policy to be redefined. Even today, the political regime's survival is the main aim of any action taken, with economic and social issues secondary. Other important issues are: the lifting of the US trade blockade; sustainable economic development based on fair integration with the world economy, avoiding additional dependencies; deepening of South–South cooperation; development of unity and cooperation with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and solidarity with nations that oppose the US. Medical diplomacy and humanitarian aid are examples of the use of soft power that has helped Havana acquire a symbolic capital that earns it international support and extends its autonomy (Feinsilver, 2008: 273–285; Kruijt, 2019: 293).

Cuba has demonstrated its capacity for cooperation within regional international organisations (it forms part of ALADI, ACS, CELAC and the Summits of the Americas). While it also plays a key role in ALBA, which can be seen as an attempt to create its own regional structure (Preciado Coronado, 2011; Serbín, 2018a).

During the Cold War, Caribbean countries' policies towards Cuba reflected their stances on US domination of the region. In the early 1970s, the four largest countries in the region (Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados) established diplomatic relations with Cuba, and over time the Caribbean became the advocate for lifting the economic sanctions against the increasingly influential island. After the revolution in Grenada in 1979, Cuba became the country's main partner and when the US intervened militarily in Grenada in 1983 Cuba's relations with the region cooled (Martínez Reinosa, 2011: 206–215). The change in Cuban policy in the 1990s made relations with regions such as the European Union and the Caribbean more of a priority. This was the point at which Cuba ceased to be a regional threat and a "Trojan horse" for the USSR in the minds of the small Caribbean countries (Servín, 2004: 11–12). From that moment on, Cuba could count on greater support from Caribbean countries when engaging with



the EU and fighting the Helms–Burton Act, as well as gaining support for its denunciations of the US blockade.

To recap, beginning in the 1990s, Cuba undertook a full reactivation of its relations with the Caribbean and entered a stage of building collaboration towards new proposals and forms of integration. In 1994, it was one of the founders of the ACS and consolidated its bilateral ties with CARICOM. From 1990 onwards, CARICOM decided to cooperate with Cuba but did not grant it observer status. In 2000, the Protocol to the Trade and Economic Agreement between CARICOM and Cuba was signed, followed in 2017 by the Second Protocol as a way to strengthen existing trade links. Starting in 2002, every three years Summits of Heads of State and Government are held within the framework of the CARICOM–Cuba mechanism (Martínez Reinosa 2011: 216–221). The 7th CARICOM–Cuba Summit took place in 2020 in a context shaped by the acute global crisis. The meeting analysed the challenges facing the Caribbean due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures needed to contain it. Rogelio Sierra, Cuba's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, stressed that the ties that unite Cuba and the Caribbean are based on principles like mutual respect and independence, and values such as solidarity, friendship, fraternity, gratitude and full support for the Caribbean, all of which, he says, were proposed by the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution (Serna Duque, 2020).

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The ACP Group is not excluded from Cuba's international activism. Since 1997, Cuba has been emitting signs of interest in joining the organisation's work, as well as the Lomé Convention. The Caribbean and African countries that had maintained good relations with Cuba for years supported the idea. Another significant element in the maturing of Cuban relations with CARICOM is its participation since 1998 in CARIFORUM (Caribbean Forum), with the permission of the foreign ministers of the EU member states. CARIFORUM is where relations between CARICOM and the European Union are managed – including, since 2008, free trade agreements (FTAs) – and as a subgroup of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), it provides the basis for economic dialogue with the EU (Silva, 2014). In October 2008, the EU signed an Economic Partnership Agreement with CARIFORUM, with the inclusion of 15 Caribbean states. The agreement has been in provisional application since December 29<sup>th</sup> 2008. Cuba is an observer member of CARIFORUM but does not participate in the Cotonou Agreements (Trillard, 2012: 13–14). The stubborn insistence of countries like Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK made full membership conditional on advances in democratisation and human rights protection. Cuba has repeatedly declared its willingness to join the EU–ACP agreement and on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2000 asked to join the Cotonou Agreement, only for the request to be withdrawn on April 26<sup>th</sup> of the same year after the Netherlands, Sweden and Great Britain had proposed to use their veto in the Council of the EU. Cuba nevertheless became a member of the ACP Group on December 14<sup>th</sup> 2000, but without joining the Cotonou Agreement it is unable to benefit from it. However, since 2007 it has benefited from EU regional and thematic funding outside the EDF (Kennes, 2018: 5). In December 2002, when Fidel Castro again declared his willingness to join the Cotonou Agreement the CARICOM countries supported him and asked the EU to initiate a procedure to involve Cuba in the agreement without

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preconditions. However, the largescale repression against the opposition movement on the island in March and April 2003 led the European Commission to suspend the procedure on May 1<sup>st</sup> of the same year. The Cuban government once again withdrew its request to join the Cotonou Agreement, while also rejecting all aid from the EU, accusing European governments of complicity with the United States in the invasion of Iraq (Ojeda Revah, 2012).

Having closed its doors to Europe at the beginning of the new millennium the government in Havana needed to seek new alliances, including in the Caribbean. It thus became an enthusiastic participant in building new initiatives like CELAC and ALBA. Cuban researchers tend to write in highly apologetic tones about ALBA, calling it the epitome and model of new anti-liberal integration (García Lorenzo, 2012; Fernández Tabío, 2014). Several Caribbean countries have been members and have benefited from PetroCaribe, the energy cooperation agreement largely financed by Venezuela and aimed at Caribbean states, including those in Central America. Cuba was a very active participant in both initiatives.

The crisis in Venezuela and the political weakening of progressive left-wing governments in the region affected Cuba's position in the international arena and reduced Latin American investment on the island. Despite these obstacles, Cuba continued to collaborate with the ACP Group and the Caribbean countries. Indeed, many of these states have on several occasions expressed their gratitude to the island for its solidarity and contributions to the anti-apartheid movement, to work on reducing illiteracy and the fight against diseases within the framework of health cooperation, and in the fields of sport and natural disaster risk mitigation. Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of the ACP, said that the "eradication of poverty, the confrontation and adaptation to climate change and the promotion of social policies that generate equality, should be central axes to develop cooperation among our nations". As of 2019, over 190,000 Cuban aid workers have provided services in ACP Group countries and 30,000 young people from these countries have been trained (Prensa ACP, 2019).

Various obstacles and constraints stand in the way of Cuba's integration within the Caribbean. The Cuban scientist Jacqueline Laguardia Martínez (2018) has listed the key factors:

- Unstable regional economic climate;
- High indebtedness ratios of Caribbean SIDS, shortage of FDI, rising unemployment and low productivity;
- High intra-regional transport costs;
- Ignorance in the Caribbean about the business opportunities in Cuba and its economic, institutional and legal specificities;
- Cuban ignorance of the opportunities and attractive elements of stronger economic ties with the Caribbean;
- Dominance of "competition" over "complementation";
- Historically determined economic ties with other partners;
- Insufficient financing and credit mechanisms;
- Language barriers;
- US blockade on Cuba;
- Fear of Cuba's size and potential.

In her work on Cuban–Caribbean relations, Martínez (2018) also lists the crucial interventions to improve such a process:

- Identify spaces for complementation, rather than competition;
- Promote economic links between Cuba and the rest of the Caribbean;
- Promote trade in services and multi-destination tourism;
- Continue to increase transport options, especially maritime;
- Capitalise on positive experiences in joint cooperative economic relations (trust, ability to work together);
- Interest the business sector in exploring interregional markets;
- Deepen knowledge about the region;
- Think about “the Caribbean” from a socio-economic development perspective that looks beyond its historical and cultural significance.

### 3. Lomé, Cotonou and the new post-Cotonou agreements

The ACP was formed in 1975 as a result of the signing of the Georgetown Agreement, which established the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. In the same year these countries reach an agreement with the European Community and signed the first Lomé Convention. The signatories were nine members of the European Economic Community (EEC) and 46 of its former colonies in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions. The signatories from the Caribbean were: the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Over time, the ACP Group grew to 79 countries. The first five-year agreement (Lomé I) was followed by others: Lomé II (1980–1984), Lomé III (1985–1989), Lomé IV (1990–1994) and Lomé IV bis/revised (1995–1999). The Lomé Conventions were based on three pillars: trade, development cooperation and political dialogue. And while the instruments and procedures were modified in several ways, the basic configuration remained the same, despite the different agreements having different mechanisms and objectives. Among the hallmarks of the Lomé agreements were the unilateral trade preferences granted by Europe to the ACP countries and the European provision of development aid through the EDF. Both provided incentives for ACP countries to maintain and strengthen the relationship (Montoute, 2017; Whiteman, 2017). One point worth emphasising is that customs duties were abolished for almost all industrial products and lifted or reduced for agricultural products.

Certain difficulties emerge when evaluating the Lomé agreements. Despite the advantages ACP products obtained in the European market and the development aid granted, this preferential treatment did not significantly affect the socioeconomic development levels of the former European colonies. Indeed, ACP countries’ share of European trade fell significantly – from 6.7% to 3% – during the 1976 to 1998 period. Another problem that remained to be resolved was the low diversity of the export basket, with only ten products accounting for 60% of total exports from ACP countries. The Lomé Conventions reflected the whole framework of North–South cooperation, but over time they evolved into a very complicated instrument of relations, with too many objectives, instruments and procedures. Commonly, the outcomes of EU–ACP cooperation are seen as actions with long delays, high levels

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of bureaucracy, reduced efficiency and low impact on a somewhat questionable development (ECDPM, 2001: 3).

After 20 years of cooperation experience, the European Commission used Lomé as a heading beneath which to undertake a comprehensive review process that covered the agreement's three pillars: trade, political dialogue and development cooperation. The idea was to set up a renewed and improved cooperation structure for the 21st century (Kennes, 2018: 3). This process led to the writing of the so-called *Green Paper* (EC, 1996) and laid the groundwork for the negotiations over the successor agreement (1998–2000) signed on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2000 in Cotonou, the capital of Benin.

The Cotonou Agreement consists of a preamble, a substantive text divided into six parts, six annexes and protocols with annexes. The first part contains general provisions on the objectives, principles and parties in the agreement, with non-governmental institutions and organisations also invited (see article 4). The second part consists of institutional provisions and the third refers to economic cooperation and development strategies. The fourth part covers the provisions on financial cooperation. The fifth deals with the least developed countries, islands and enclaves, while the sixth and final section refers to the final provisions.

The Cotonou Agreement's main objectives are reducing poverty in order to eradicate it definitively, supporting the sustainable economic, cultural and social development of the partner countries and facilitating the progressive integration of their respective economies into the world economy (article 19). The tasks meant to contribute to implementing these goals must be carried out according to the following principles:

- the partners in the agreement are equal;
- ACP countries determine their own development policies;
- cooperation is not only between governments – parliaments, local authorities, civil society, the private sector and economic and social actors also play roles; and
- cooperation agreements and priorities vary according to certain factors, such as countries' levels of development.

The Cotonou Agreement was based on four pillars:

1. **A strengthened political dimension:** political dialogue, conflict prevention and resolution by peaceful means, respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. It is important to highlight that the violation of the democratic clause (article 9) allows consultation mechanisms to be activated (article 96) and the consequent potential suspension of cooperation. As early as the first year of the agreement, the article 96 procedure was applied to Zimbabwe, Haiti, Fiji and Côte d'Ivoire. Since 2000 this article has been used 15 times. It is likely that even if Cuba were part of the agreement it would struggle to obtain economic benefits from it, among other reasons due to civil liberties limitations and the persecution of the opposition in 2003, as a result of which the EU took measures against the Cuban government within the framework of the Common Position;

2. **Greater participation:** participation in cooperation between civil society and the private sector to use aid funds more effectively, via initiatives to aid the region's economic development, such as private sector development, investments, sectoral policy, reforms, social and cultural development and regional cooperation and integration;
3. **A more strategic cooperation approach** focused on reducing poverty; new economic and trade associations, new trade agreements and EPAs (article 36), protection of intellectual property (article 46), protection of the environment (article 49), compliance with labour standards (article 50);
4. **Improved financial cooperation:** suspension of Stabex (the export income stabilisation system) and SYSMIN (the mining sector support programme), the possibility of offsetting export income losses involving raw materials and agricultural goods; EDF project and programme financing.

Under the provisions of the Cotonou Agreement, development cooperation aims to implement and advance local economic, cultural, environmental and institution-building strategies.

Under the provisions of the Cotonou Agreement, development cooperation aims to implement and advance local economic, cultural, environmental and institution-building strategies. ACP–EC/EU cooperation development policy strategies will aim at:

- a) achieving rapid and sustained job-creating economic growth, developing the private sector, increasing employment, improving access to productive economic activities and resource [sic], and fostering regional cooperation and integration;
- b) promoting human and social development helping to ensure that the fruits of growth are widely and equitably shared and promoting gender equality;
- c) promoting [sic] cultural values of communities and specific interactions with economic, political and social elements;
- d) promoting institutional reforms and development, strengthening the institutions necessary for the consolidation of democracy, good governance and for efficient and competitive market economies; and building capacity for development and partnership; and
- e) promoting environmental sustainability, regeneration and best practices, and the preservation of natural resource base" (*Official Journal*, 2000: article 20).

A Western vision of civilisation prevails in the Cotonou Agreement, when it comes to understanding development, economic growth and, above all, the correlation between civil society and the market economy (article 1). Cotonou installed a European vision of development as a universal standard. Gerrit W. Gong, the US International Relations researcher of Chinese origin, has written about these "standards of civilisation" non-European countries were required to meet to join the family of civilised nations (Gong 1984: 92–93; cf. Rudowski, 2018). Article 20 promotes a traditional "top-down" development model, which contrasts with today's alternative proposals. Then, in the guise of promoting sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals, article 10 of the Cotonou Agreement stresses the importance of market economies, industrialisation and competitiveness in the fight against poverty, at a time when the majority of these countries are feeling the effects of a climate catastrophe. Another oddity lies in article 24, which deals with tourism's importance and major role in the sustainable development of the ACP states. Suffice to say that the present global pandemic

The post-Cotonou agreement manages EU–ACP relations in a more horizontal and reciprocal manner, giving greater emphasis to the strengthening of multilateral spaces and alliances.

has demonstrated the profound economic and social dependence of various ACP countries on the tourism sector and confirmed that services need to be diversified in order to combat poverty and technological backwardness – with Cuba a clear example.

Foreign investment and private sector development were an important issue in the Cotonou Agreement. At national and/or regional level EU–ACP cooperation should support the necessary economic and institutional reforms and policies. But, at the same time, in order to create an environment that is conducive to private investment and the development of a dynamic, viable and competitive private sector, it was required that cooperation should include:

- a) the promotion of public–private sector dialogue and cooperation;
- b) the development of entrepreneurial skills and business culture;
- c) privatisation and enterprise reform; and
- d) development and modernisation of mediation and arbitration systems” (*Official Journal*, 2000: article 21).

When the Cotonou Agreement was revised in 2005 new elements were introduced, such as the political dimension, development strategies, investment mechanism and management procedures (Serrano Caballero, 2012: 178). In 2007 a focus was also placed on issues such as: climate change, food security, HIV/AIDS, sustainable fishing, strengthening security in fragile regions and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (replaced in 2016 by 17 Sustainable Development Goals) (EC, 2020a).

On December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, the EU and the OACPS reached a political agreement on the Cotonou Agreement’s replacement, which was signed on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2021. The post-Cotonou agreement establishes common values and principles for the EU and OACPS in the following priority areas: democracy and human rights, peace and security, human and social development, sustainable economic development and growth, climate change, and migration and mobility (article 1, paragraph 3) (EC, 2020b). It may be said to represent a major philosophical change in EU–ACP relations. In the “old” agreement, the goals focused on the economic and social development of the ACP Group and cooperation was constructed within the North–South relations paradigm. The post-Cotonou agreement manages EU–ACP relations in a more horizontal and reciprocal manner, giving greater emphasis to the strengthening of multilateral spaces and alliances. The new “3+1” structure that characterises the post-Cotonou treaty serves to strengthen the EU’s relations with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, while retaining all the benefits of the OACPS–EU association. The new structure of the post-Cotonou Agreement is thus formed of two parts:

1. the foundation agreement (for all parties) establishes common values and principles, defines priority areas and strategies for joint work; and
2. the complementary regional protocols determine the specific approach for joint actions based on the needs of each region.

The “new” agreement changes the funding mechanism for cooperation – which has no specific fund in place. The EDF has been integrated into the EU budget and there will be programmable funds



within the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework. EU-ACP cooperation will be financed through the EU budget and the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).<sup>2</sup> The NDICI promotes the strongest initiatives that encourage development and intra-regional projects and is formed around three key pillars: geographical, thematic and rapid response. Other components of this instrument are monetary aid; external action and common security; and cooperation with overseas territories. EU external development aid is valued at €79.5 billion (Morgan, 2021). The advantages of the new financing mechanism include the multiannual financial cycle, the possibility of transferring interannual funds, including various mechanisms within the same instrument, ease of disbursement procedures (simplification), greater coherence in cooperation, less fragmentation of cooperation and greater complementarity. There has also been criticism of the changes, with several weaknesses raised, such as the lack of co-management of programming, less predictability of available funds, lack of intra-ACP allocation, and competition for funds with least developed countries (LDCs) (Ogando, 2020).

According to the European Commission, one of the main advantages of the new agreement is that it undoubtedly helps form a more modern association in which to seek solutions to global issues, such as the environment and climate, migration and mobility, and peace and security, as the new agreement may be a tool for implementing the Paris Agreement and promoting the UN's 2030 Agenda and SDGs. Another important point the EC highlights is the specific focus on sustainable growth – including job creation – and private sector investments and development (EC, 2021a). Among the most difficult topics for negotiators to reach agreement on were health, gender, sexual and reproductive rights and migration (EP, 2021).

The trade provisions of the post-Cotonou agreement are strikingly asymmetric. According to Iana Dreyer, founder editor of Borderlex.eu: "the asymmetry in terms of whose interests and whose discourse has prevailed in this negotiation is glaring. We all know the background of the Cotonou framework is a legacy from the colonial era. But it's high time we all move into the 21st century" (Dreyer, 2021). Unfortunately, the colonial legacy is evident in the language of the agreement, which at times takes a moralising tone, as is notable in article 41 on "Mobilisation of sustainable and responsible investment". In article 42, paragraph 3 on "Investment facilitation and protection" it is easy to see whose interests are the more protected: "The Parties, in line with their respective strategies, agree on the importance of providing legal certainty and adequate protection to established investments the treatment of which shall be non-discriminatory in nature and shall include effective dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms. In that regard, they reaffirm the importance of concluding international investment agreements that fully preserve their sovereign right to regulate investment for legitimate public policy purposes." The negotiating process was fraught with obstacles and difficulties, which have impacted the final text, as the chief OACPS negotiator and Togolese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Dussey, admitted, saying that if more solidarity had been shown a better outcome could have been achieved: "We did not agree with each other. But the EU knew very well what it wanted" (Wilhelm, 2021).

The trade provisions of the post-Cotonou agreement are strikingly asymmetric. The colonial legacy is evident in the language of the agreement.

2. The instrument is intended for all countries, not just the ACP.

The basis of the new agreement between the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States appears much more general than its predecessor.

#### 4. The Caribbean in the post-Cotonou world scenario

The work on the replacement for the Cotonou Agreement took place in far from ordinary circumstances, with the global health situation not the only conditioning factor. First and foremost, the European Union was facing new internal challenges, such as Brexit and the new appointments in the European Council, as well as the growing number of global problems and the increasing multipolarity of the international arena. The text of the new post-Cotonou agreement contains traces of all of them.

The basis of the new agreement between the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, which represents the shared values and principles of all the signatory countries, appears much more general than its predecessor. The specific issues on which each of the ACP regions should take action can be found in the regional protocols, a novel element in the ACP–EU agreements. The regional protocols are a product of the parties’ geographical diversity and highlight the specific challenges for each area. The Caribbean Regional Protocol includes the following:

- a) strengthen their [regional] political partnership;
- b) deepen economic relations, promote transformation and diversification, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development through trade, investment, private sector development and sustainable industrialisation;
- c) improve environmental sustainability and climate resilience, pursue the sustainable management of natural resources and strengthen disaster management;
- d) build inclusive, peaceful and secure societies, with a special focus on advancing human rights, gender equality, justice and governance, including financial governance, and citizen security;
- e) invest in human and social development, addressing poverty and growing inequalities, manage migration, leveraging the diaspora’s ... investment, and ensuring that no one is left behind (EC, 2021b: 119).

While the first two points – calling for greater integration, including economic – repeat the goals of the “old” partnership, those that follow set out contemporary concerns, focusing on the human being, its economic activity and legal conditions, well-being and relationship with nature. The human rights mentioned include third and fourth generation rights, meaning the document reflects the changing times and responds to the expectations of the Caribbean’s new generations, several of whose states have young demographic structures (e.g. Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica), or are ageing (e.g. Cuba and Barbados). Part of article 32 of the Caribbean Regional Protocol is relevant in this regard (EC, 2021b: 139):

The Parties shall contribute to the protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights in compliance with international law. They shall promote and contribute to the universal ratification and implementation of international human rights instruments, implement those instruments which they subscribe to, and consider accession to those to which they are not yet party. They shall apply in full the non-discrimination principle as set out in Article 9 of the General Part

of the Agreement placing a priority on adopting and implementing comprehensive equality and anti-discrimination laws.

Like the entire first chapter of the protocol, this aligns with the values presented in the main part of the agreement and should have implications for the expansion of the rights of minorities, including LGBT+ people, who face discrimination in various countries across the region and where homosexual practices may even incur prison sentences. This is the case in Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica and Saint Kitts and Nevis, all of which have laws in force that criminalise sexual relations between people of the same sex as crimes of “sodomy” or “gross indecency”, while Grenada’s legislation uses the category of “unnatural crime” (Pascali, 2021). Interestingly, Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Lucia only consider homosexual relations between men illegal (Pascali, 2021).

The text’s level of generality gives Caribbean countries significant flexibility.

The Caribbean Regional Protocol calls for economic activities in Caribbean countries to be transformed and rebuilt in line with the SDGs and the green and blue economies. The text’s level of generality gives Caribbean countries significant flexibility. And it should be recalled that this is a region that depends on oil supplies and bases its economy on tourism and income from favourable tax laws for non-resident individuals and companies. It is an area where major needs exist for new technologies to be applied in the energy sector, for economic diversification and to fight the effects of natural disasters. These issues are acquiring vital importance, as article 30 of the protocol mentions (EC, 2021b: 137).

For decades, Caribbean countries have been working together within the frameworks of international organisations such as CARICOM, the FAO and UN to mitigate natural disasters and epidemics that affect local agriculture. Climate change, environmental collapse and health security are now “hot” issues, and the successful experiences and best practices in formulating migration policies, international cooperation and human development can make the Caribbean a leader among ACP countries. The coming years will be crucial for the Caribbean region to prevent, anticipate and adapt to the effects of climate change, which has a severe effect on its lands and peoples. Equally important is to reap the benefits of the sustainable use of marine resources, also known as the “blue economy”, to harness the region’s growth potential and reduce inequalities.

The “new” agreement takes the Caribbean’s socio-economic heterogeneity into account and gives special treatment to Haiti, the region’s poorest country. It also underlines the need to strengthen relations with the EU’s overseas territories. Politically, economically and financially linked to Europe, they are detached from CARICOM and other regional organisations – although not from Caribbean reality. As a clear trace of the colonial legacy, their presence may be said to cast a permanent shadow over the establishment of a sincere and frank dialogue between Europe and the Caribbean, but they also produce conflicting interests that create divisions within the region.

In summary, as well as the mentioned subjects, the Caribbean Regional Protocol proposes several areas of joint work to respond to the pending challenges of achieving greater regional integration and cooperation.

It will be very difficult to reconcile the economic and environmental objectives.

They may be arranged into three groups: economic, such as the development of the private sector, investment, agriculture, tourism and the extractive and cultural industries; legal, by strengthening justice and institutions, decreasing crime and improving citizen security; and human development, through improved social services, education, health and housing.

Analysing the text of the protocol, we believe that it will be very difficult to reconcile the economic and environmental objectives. Caribbean countries' economies are highly dependent on mass tourism and on extractive agricultural, maritime and mining activities. All of these economic activities present environmental risks and make island societies vulnerable – the text of the agreement itself mentions this challenge. The pandemic and global lockdown laid bare the severely dependent position of the Caribbean states, and yet the post-Cotonou agreement seems to give no answer to these problems. The paths of development and action it emphasises for the Caribbean region list environment concerns alongside extractivism, tourism and economic growth. And while it includes a level of concern for the human being, the same is not true for nature – the good without which no human being can exist. This dissonance may turn out to be the main topic of discussion as the agreement awaits ratification – all the more so when its form of financing changes. Until now CARICOM and its members have been the programmes' main beneficiaries, but the incorporation of Haiti and the Dominican Republic altered the gravity within the system, something Cuba's inclusion will undoubtedly deepen. As well as being the largest territory in the Caribbean, Cuba is a leading actor in Latin American relations, with extensive experience of multilateral work and South–South dialogue. But that will not be the only factor that weakens the role of CARICOM. CARIFORUM's loss of purpose will be another factor, as will the United Kingdom's exit from the EU. The UK was a conservative influence, which opposed Cuba joining the Cotonou Agreements and safeguarded the interests of its former colonies. Its absence will create new opportunities for the Spanish-speaking territories and possibly increase CARICOM countries' independence of decision-making, as they will no longer feel obliged to support London's interests over those of the EU. This new international setting presents a major opportunity for Cuba to forge Caribbean alliances and ensure its entry to the post-Cotonou agreements is effective. The possible scenarios in which this kind of partnership could take place and the effects of it will be addressed below.

## 5. SWOT analysis of Cuba's inclusion in the post-Cotonou Caribbean agenda

With the precondition that it joins the EU–ACP partnership under the post-Cotonou agreement, various possible scenarios may be constructed for Cuba's incorporation into the Caribbean agenda. In order to do so various factors must be considered. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis will allow us to do this in a way that is both detailed and summarised. This methodological tool allows information to be organised and framed in a very strict categorisation structure, in which the first two factors – strengths and weaknesses –

correspond to the internal situation, while the other two – opportunities and threats – relate to the external environment (Matusiak, 2011). The SWOT analysis is also used to detect the possibilities for change in a region that is considered to be innovative or to possess the qualities to become so. With all this in mind, the crucial factors for and against the inclusion of Cuba in the post-Cotonou Caribbean agenda are set out below, accompanied by a brief comment.

## **A. Strengths of Cuba (endogenous)**

- **Active Cuban foreign policy, especially in the Latin American region**

Cuba is sometimes described as a small country with a great power's foreign policy. The main objective of this policy is to guarantee the island's sovereignty. Closer relations with the countries of the Global South and the Latin American and Caribbean region form a key part of the current survival strategy, along with active engagement in international forums to develop multilateralism. Cuba's policy of solidarity has earned it prestige among the countries of the Global South, which gives it greater room for manoeuvre in international forums.

- **Cuba as a bridge to Latin America**

The situation whereby Cuba is the interlocutor between Latin America and the Anglo-Caribbean countries increases the island's regional importance. Cuban activism and its linguistic and cultural unity with Latin America bring the Caribbean islands closer to the American continent.

- **Well-trained, experienced diplomats**

Cuba has a good school of diplomacy, which assists in its active foreign policy to combat its international isolation and protect its interests. Cuba's diplomatic corps is skilled and well-trained, has experience of dialogue with authoritarian, military and liberal regimes and success in international dialogue forums.

- **Cuba's smart/soft power**

Multiple researchers have described how effectively Cuba uses its soft power, including in combined strategies with hard power (the advantage/predominance of the former is more apparent).<sup>3</sup> Medical internationalism, literacy programmes and disaster relief bring positive results for the island on many levels, gaining it prestige and helping build international alliances (Feinsilver, 2008; Kruijt, 2019; Kruijt, 2020; Werlau, 2013).

- **The Caribbean's largest economy**

Cuba has both the Caribbean's highest economic potential (2020 GDP of \$103 bn at current prices; income level: upper middle) and population (over 11 million inhabitants) (World Bank, 2021). The Cuban regime updated the country's economic model to permit private property, real estate sales and the development of the private sector. Local SME entrepreneurs are ready and willing to develop their economic activity, as demonstrated by the boom in activities in the 2012–2018 period. Local entrepreneurs have connections to the

**3.** Cuban hard power mainly consists of providing military support to states engaged in revolutionary struggle.

Caribbean market, as shown by the private trips to Panama, Guyana and other destinations to acquire products that are then sold in Cuba. The agro-industry sector has great potential, but requires investment, as does the biomedical sector, which is competitive and open to collaboration.

- **A country with social freedoms and rights to a dignified life**  
Cubans enjoy a spectrum of individual freedoms that are limited in other Caribbean states, where homosexual relations and abortion remain criminalised, while the rights of women and of older adults in Cuba also have greater importance. The Cuban Constitution also guarantees the rights to: water, a healthy environment, healthy food and the consumption of high quality goods.

## **B. Cuba's weaknesses (endogenous)**

- **Political system**  
As a one-party state dominated by the PCC, Cuba's lack of political pluralism is clear. It has little experience of local self-management and a stagnant bureaucracy (in almost all the country's sectors). Introducing reforms and innovation to this "fossilised" system will be no easy task, as shown by the slow pace with which domestic institutions and laws change. The new Constitution's archaic language also reflects this, with article 5 a good example: "The Communist Party of Cuba, unique, Martiano, Fidelista, and Marxist-Leninist, the organized vanguard of the Cuban nation, sustained in its democratic character as well as its permanent linkage to the people, is the superior driving force of the society and the State. It organizes and orients the communal forces towards the construction of socialism and its progress toward a communist society" (Constitución de la República de Cuba, 2019).
- **Lack of political freedoms**  
Freedom of expression, including freedoms of the press and assembly, are limited.
- **Economic system**  
Cuba's economic system is incompatible with the free market and capitalist system that dominate the world stage, as the 2019 Constitution states: "Cuba [is committed to] never returning to capitalism as a regime sustained by the exploitation of man by man, and that it is only in socialism and communism that a human being can achieve his or her full dignity" (Constitución de la República de Cuba, 2019). The Vietnamese experience suggests that this need not be a hindrance, but the technological backwardness and ideological subjugation of the economy certainly are. Cuba's is an extremely politicised economy.
- **Monolingual, fearful entrepreneurs**  
Cuba's entrepreneurial world is notably monolingual, which does not facilitate international cooperation. Meanwhile, Omar Everleny Pérez (González, 2020) says that Cuban institutions should change their attitude towards international cooperation, which is often seen as a dangerous concession that opens the door to subversion.



- **Exports**  
Without an asymmetric transitory fix, the post-Cotonou agreement currently has questionable value for Cuba, as the weak performance of Cuban exports and the imbalance in the trade in goods with the EU demonstrate.
- **Lack of experience as a financial beneficiary of the Cotonou Agreement**  
Cuba has no background as a financial beneficiary of the Cotonou Agreement (EDF, EPAs), but it does have experience of cooperation with EU countries and has received assistance from European programmes and national development agencies – especially French and German.

### **C. Opportunities (from external factors)**

- **Advances in innovation**  
Fulfilling the UN's recommendations on sustainable development will contribute to developing a regional innovation strategy that will have a positive impact on technological innovation in Cuba.
- **Deeper international cooperation with Caribbean partners and the EU**  
The multidimensional nature of the activity in the agreement and the fact that the EU is Cuba's main trading partner will undoubtedly help strengthen Cuba's ties with the EU and the Caribbean, and it can probably consolidate a position as a regional leader. Meanwhile, the incorporation of the Caribbean's largest territory can help revitalise the process.
- **Support for Cuba's international demands**  
All the signatory countries of the post-Cotonou agreement have so far voted in favour of ending the US blockade. There is, thus, support for Cuba's international position and activity, not only with regard to the embargo/blockade but also in terms of international solidarity in fields such as education and health.
- **Financial benefits**  
European Union programmes focused on constructing a stable regional cooperation system undoubtedly represent a source of funding that will bring economic benefits to both Cuba and the entire Caribbean region. All the more so when the funds are allocated to specific issues in order to achieve the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.
- **Economic development and inclusion in the international market**  
If progress is made in the mentioned areas, Cuba will have the opportunity to enact an economic transformation, activating sectors of the agro-industry, revitalising the pharmaceutical and biochemical sectors, and thereby diversifying its economy. At the same time, there will be more joint participation of foreign institutions in its territory, just like in the rest of the Caribbean.
- **Effective achievement of the UN's SDGs**  
Joint action by Caribbean countries, the funding of environmentally friendly projects and the possibility of technological change will all be

factors in Cuba joining the countries working effectively to achieve the SDGs. All the more so now, when, due to its economic situation, Cuba is developing local investments in solar and wind energy in cooperation with China and the EU.

- **Greater regional and global importance**

At this stage of Caribbean–EU relations, Cuba could be like the Dominican Republic in Lomé IV or it could be much more. Its diplomatic capacities and relations with China, Russia, Venezuela, Mexico and Anglo-Caribbean countries would broaden both its own interests and South–South and South–North relations.

- **Decreased US presence**

Greater cooperation with the ACP and the EU can reduce the effects of the US sanctions imposed on Cuba.

#### **D. Threats (from external factors)**

- **US sanctions imposed on Cuba**

The political, economic and financial framework of the US sanctions can be considered a set of barriers that limit Cuba's effective inclusion in the Caribbean Agenda, cooperation with the EU and the other ACP countries.

- **Mutual distrust within the countries of the region**

Distrust of the Dominican Republic grew among CARIFORUM countries when it became part of ACP–EU cooperation. Cuba's entry may also create suspicion, on the one hand for being the largest territory and having the profile of a leader, but also because it maintains relations with countries that some Caribbean states see as political economic adversaries.

- **Potential limiting of the Cuban state's sovereignty and autonomy**

The agreement alludes to the sovereignty and autonomy of the signatory parties, but every integration process requires some degree of sovereignty and decision-making autonomy to be delegated. With Cuba firmly committed to defending both values, it may become passive within the organisation, while at the same time separating the Cuban state from the main currents of change.

- **Decline in international acceptance of the Cuban model**

Article 1 of the Constitution tells us: "Cuba is a democratic, independent and sovereign socialist State of law and social justice, organized by all and for the good of all, as an indivisible and unitary republic, founded by the labor, dignity, humanism, and ethic of its citizens for the enjoyment of liberty, equity, justice, and equality, solidarity, and individual and collective well-being and prosperity", but many organisations and institutions question its political system and define it as an "authoritarian regime". A report by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), which measures the state of liberal democracy using an index of 0 to 10, ranks Cuba second-bottom in Latin America, with its score of 2.84 placing it 140th of the 167 countries studied. Regionally, only Venezuela ranks lower (2.76; 143rd place)

(EIU, 2021). Its failed economy and fossilised political system makes Cuba less and less attractive to foreign investors.

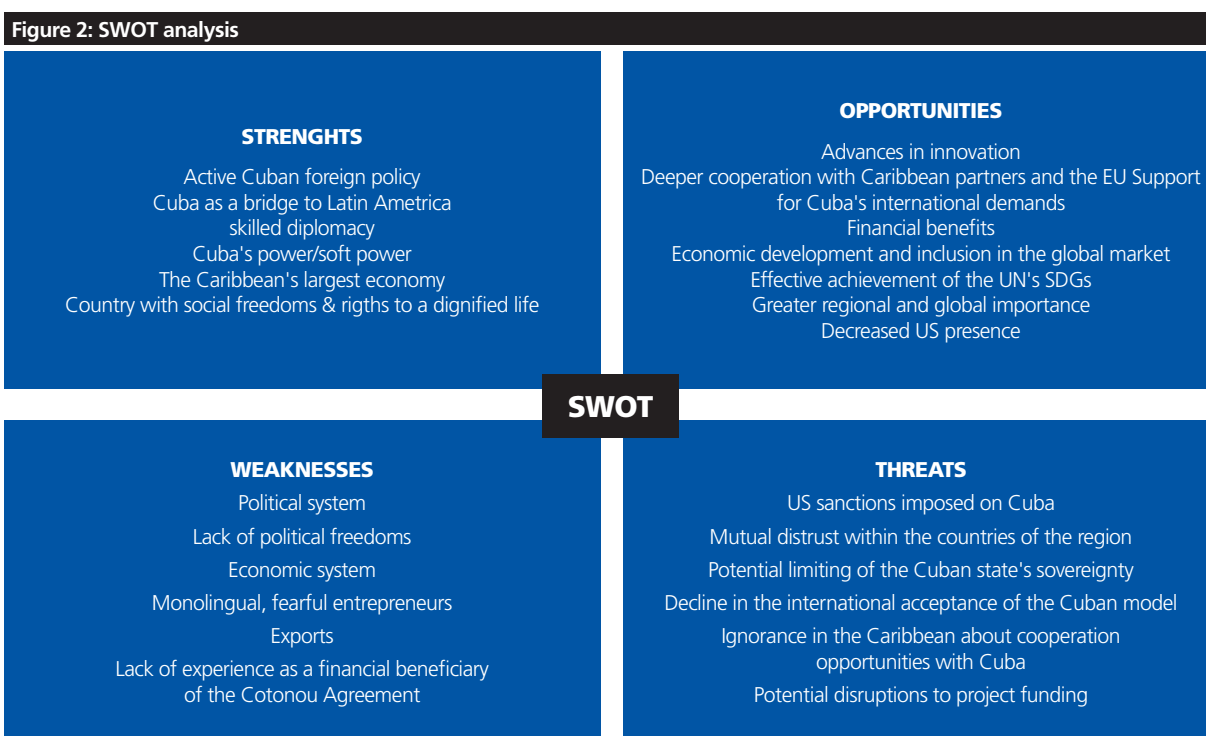
- **Ignorance in the Caribbean about cooperation opportunities with Cuba**

Caribbean businesspeople and officials have little knowledge of Cuban business opportunities and institutional and legal specificities, which may negatively affect the development of cooperation and weaken Cuba's position in the region.

- **Potential disruptions to project funding**

The elimination of the EDF and financing for programmes through the "Global Europe" Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) mean that fluctuations may occur in the levels of financing, alongside the decreasing predictability of the funds allocated to Cuba and the Caribbean – despite the Economic Partnership Agreement the EU signed with CARIFORUM in October 2008.

The summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is presented below:



Source: Compiled by the Authors.

## 6. Possible scenarios for Cuba's inclusion in the post-Cotonou Caribbean agenda

Taking the strengths and weaknesses to be internal conditioning factors and the opportunities and threats to be exogenous (from the external environment), the literature proposes four strategies for

action depending on the correlation of these factors. In other words: Will the strengths allow the opportunities to be taken advantage of? Will the strengths allow the threats to be balanced or reduced? Will the weaknesses reduce the chance of taking advantage of the opportunities? And will the weaknesses increase the risk of the threats?:

**Aggressive:** strengths predominate and are positively correlated with the opportunities emerging from the environment.

**Conservative:** the subject of analysis operates in an unfavourable (hostile) environment but its strengths are correlated with any threats, allowing it to respond decisively to them. However, there is no prospect for development as the strengths do not match the opportunities.

**Competitive:** weaknesses prevail over strengths but the subject of analysis operates in a friendly (favourable) environment, enabling it to maintain its position. However, endogenous weakness prevents it from taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the environment, leading it to focus on eliminating internal weaknesses.

**Defensive:** weaknesses are closely linked to external threats and there is a consequent high possibility of collapse. This strategy focusses on the entity's survival.

We have based the SWOT analysis on the answers to the questions above, correlating each of the factors and elements defined and mentioned and evaluating their level of influence on a scale from 0 to 2, where "0" means no influence and "2" is the maximum correlation of the factors. By doing this, we obtain the score within the framework for the four areas of values, from which it is clear that the competitive strategy is the most likely:

**Figure 3. Results of the SWOT analysis**

	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
STRENGTHS	50 POINTS (Aggressive strategy)	31 POINTS (Conservative strategy)
WEAKNESSES	53 POINTS (Competitive strategy- most likely)	38 POINTS (Defensive strategy)

Source: compiled by Authors.

Cuba's formal incorporation into the European Union-ACP cooperation structures will have multiple repercussions. At international level it undoubtedly represents a step towards recognition and acceptance of Cuba's current policy and the changes that have taken place on the island over the last decade. At the same time, it will be a clear signal to the world that certain global problems require the abandonment of singular foreign policies that aim to punish and isolate countries whose visions of political and economic development differ from those of the EU. The direct effects of Cuba's entry into the post-Cotonou system will first be felt at national level, followed by the effects on the Caribbean area and its integration system. The region thus receives a new member

that has been isolated until now, but whose demographic, territorial, military and political weight exceed those of its counterparts. Cuba's post-1959 international activity may be characterised as both open and aiming to fully preserve its national sovereignty. We may wonder then, what positions Cuba is likely to take within the framework of the Caribbean agenda, without giving up the fundamental principles of its socioeconomic and political regime.

The SWOT analysis shows that Cuba is operating in a favourable environment that provides it with support and the possibility of acting aggressively or opting for a competitive strategy.

Cuba undoubtedly possesses internal strengths that are correlated with opportunities, especially within the framework of the new agreement. Its incorporation seems likely to be successful, as long as its neighbours are able to act without distrust and without fear of the stances of third countries (like the United States), and as long as Cuba is able to overcome or limit the effects of its greatest weakness (its current political system). In this happens, Cuba can become a regional leader and a key Caribbean partner for the European Union. It is, however, possible that its internal weaknesses may acquire great significance and make it impossible for Cuba to take full advantage of the opportunities that emerge from the post-Cotonou partnership and the Caribbean region that will take shape.

The competitive strategy, potentially the most likely scenario for Cuba in its Caribbean relations, requires internal obstacles to be removed in order to fully take advantage of the internal strengths and opportunities offered by the environment. The analysis clearly indicates that internal factors (considered to be weaknesses), such as the current political system, the lack of political freedoms, the economic system in place and the timidity of entrepreneurs are threats to the possible financing of projects resulting from the post-Cotonou agreement. This helps explain Cuba's extremely cautious approach to the association: in short, this type of change could cause the dismantling of the domestic political economic system. At the same time, Cuba faces certain internal issues that favour its inclusion in the Caribbean agenda. If the projects in these fields do not receive funding the consequences could be grave, and a two-speed Caribbean could emerge: one that benefits from EU funds and a second that is denied these advantages. This would widen the divide that already exists, which Casimir (1996) describes in terms of antagonisms. It is a pessimistic scenario that can be avoided if Cuba broadens and deepens its strategic relations with the countries of the Global South, either within the post-Cotonou framework or outside it.

In our opinion, the most likely scenario is that, after taking some time to understand the possible benefits and threats and having been able to negotiate some important issues, Cuba will eventually sign the post-Cotonou agreement. It is worth recalling, in this regard, that above all the Cuban authorities seek to ensure the survival of the political regime. The EU is aware of this, which is why the EU ambassador to Cuba, Alberto Navarro, has said that to safeguard the bilateral relationship Cuba could use a protocol to ensure that where contradictions, confusion and differences arise between post-Cotonou and the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement, the PDCA

The most likely scenario is that, after taking some time to understand the possible benefits and threats and having been able to negotiate some important issues, Cuba will eventually sign the post-Cotonou agreement.

Cuba's strategy will thus probably focus on eliminating internal weaknesses in order to take better advantage of opportunities in the environment in the future.

always prevails (González, 2020). This would give rise to possible negotiations and suggests that the EU takes Cuba to be the main actor in its relations with the Caribbean.

Cuba is actively working towards regional integration and will certainly not want a two-speed Caribbean to emerge. It should also be mentioned that the island has for many years had a strategic patron: first it was the US, and then following the Cuban Revolution came the USSR and Venezuela. But the situation in Venezuela means that Cuba will be forced to seek a new partner, such as the European Union. Closer relations with the EU may help limit the negative effects of the US embargo and make better use of relations with China and Latin American and Caribbean countries. Meanwhile, the potential for political change in Brazil in the next presidential elections means future cooperation between the two countries should not be ruled out.

Acceding to the post-Cotonou agreement will be no easy decision for the Cuban government, but as Carlos Alzugaray, a former Cuban diplomat, says, Cuba should take advantage of this new situation (González, 2020). He believes that enough experience and critical mass have already been accumulated to be able to take better advantage of the economic advantages of Cotonou. Meanwhile, US aggressiveness forces Cuba to be more proactive in seeking out alternatives that reduce the harm done by the blockade. Alzugaray adds that it would also be beneficial to both parties for Cuba to play a full part in the negotiation processes alongside its Caribbean, African and Pacific friends. The conditions are propitious, given that the European Council and Commission generally look favourably on the development of cooperation without restrictions of a political nature. On the new ACP–EU agreement Alzugaray has said that the experience of many ACP Group governments shows that, while certain political conditions exist, there is capacity to negotiate with European counterparts without making concessions that limit sovereignty (González, 2020). Cuba's strategy will thus probably focus on eliminating internal weaknesses in order to take better advantage of opportunities in the environment in the future, with political factors likely to play the key role in the Cuban government's position on post-Cotonou.

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