

The martyrdom in Atlanta

written by José Ramón Cabañas Rodríguez

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Last night, the much-publicized debate between U.S. presidential candidates Joe Biden and Donald Trump finally took place. There will not be another one.

If there is one thing that most of the opinions that have begun to appear in the media and digital networks around the world agree on, it is that the outcome was predictable: an erratic, inconsistent, and confused incumbent president facing a former president who lies and attacks mercilessly to impose himself.

Virtually nothing of substance was said about the country's pressing problems. The Americans who today have no access to health insurance, those who live in hundreds of towns with no infrastructure and contaminated water, those who fear every morning that their children will walk to school and be shot dead on the way, those who pray that they will not be deported, the women who aspire to be able to decide about their pregnancy, none of them now have any better certainty of what their fate will be.

The vision of the future is slipping through the fingers of big businessmen who tremble in the face of formidable competition from China, of arms producers bent on confrontation with Russia, of those who wish to get there faster to exploit the natural resources of Africa or Latin America, of those who fear a change in the international order in which the United States will not determine the fate of all.

Certainly, the outcome was foreseeable, very foreseeable, and yet Democratic and Republican strategists made a great exercise of betting on the impossible. Or did they? A debate between the two oldest candidates ever to face each other in history, where on one side is a sitting president who is physically and mentally unfit to govern, and on the other is a former president who consistently and unabashedly misrepresents the truth and uses politics to avoid justice, could not end any other way.

Then, the underlying question is: if everything was pointing in the same direction and the outcome was almost inevitable, why are both political tribes (not parties) marching straight to the precipice? It is possible that at this moment, the most repeated phrase in English in North America is "I warned," "I said this was going to happen," or "Biden very weak, Trump very bullying."

The spectacle that has just taken place, with which many companies and consultants have lined their pockets with total disrespect for the real hope of the people in the streets, could have been avoided. Some leadership on the Democratic side should

have prevented the public confirmation of Biden's weakness and proposed alternative paths that will now be urgently sought. On the Republican side, it was a matter of not reaching the historical demoralization of trying to reach power through an individual (and his close entourage) totally corrupt and condemned by the law.

So, when politics in a country of such proportions marches totally with its back to reality and the ability to foresee events is lost, it can be affirmed that the coming crisis is of greater proportions than expected. Americans have flocked to the coast to passively watch a hurricane and now feel that a tsunami is coming their way as well.

One of the great ironies in the days leading up to the debate was that political figures of both tendencies were presented in different spaces with a coherent discourse for the local public, with proposed solutions (feasible or not) to the most pressing problems, with a veiled rejection of the state of affairs, which placed them in a position to aspire to be real candidates of their respective electoral formations. It is possible that now, at least from the Democratic side, this reflection is being made, and they are working tirelessly to fabricate the figure of a substitute.

This is the second strategic failure of the Democrats against the same Republican contender since they tried to remove Trump through *impeachment*, an objective that was clearly difficult to achieve. Those winds brought the storms of generational change, at least in the Democratic leadership of the House of Representatives.

The same will not happen on the Republican side, where Trump and his entourage will continue in their crusade to change the rules of the game, dismantle what remains of the state's regulatory apparatus, remove all limits that prevent the rise of figures who get rich by theft or fraud and not by the traditional exploitation of labor or intellect, and create every day a virtual reality different from the one out the window.

The transmission of the debate abroad would not have had so many followers, if it were not a country that does not affect third parties in its behavior. And an interesting phenomenon is taking place in this area: in the first hours, more concern is expressed among the traditional allies (or subordinates) of the United States than among those that Washington considers its strategic enemies.

Europe, having become more submissive and dependent, fears that the worst is yet to come, whether in the form of energy crises, unnecessary military expenditures, or the imminence of a local conflict unwanted by its populations.

In Beijing and Moscow, they could be appreciating that a team whose ways are already known to them, which functions almost like a cult and which has for them many vulnerabilities, is once again coming to power. There will be no creativity, only repetition of failed formulas.

There is only one certainty: the scenario of 2025 will be completely different from that of 2016 and even 2020. If both candidates were alive and healthy for the occasion, they would have to face new dynamics without diverting attention to re-election attempts, which would no longer be possible. So far, neither of them has seen generational change within their political structures as a priority, an objective on which other leaders should be working.

In the space of the next four years, new political phenomena will emerge within the United States, such as the increase of candidates at all levels who declare themselves independent, the potential emergence of other alternatives, the growing incorporation of technologists who will build supposedly apolitical platforms and the *in crescendo* consumption of information generated by algorithms and that does not reflect reality.

The states of American disunity will feel increasingly distant from Washington, D.C., and will try to solve the problems of their environment with limited means and,

possibly, with an external relationship that they have not attempted so far. The accumulation of domestic difficulties will be inversely proportional and will limit resources and time to try to influence the outside world. All ears will be alert to the sound of the steps with which the new cyclical economic crisis is approaching.

So far, the U.S. political system has shown signs of being able to pull itself together and recover from critical moments at a very high social cost by further fragmenting the domestic economic strata and printing dollars without productive backing. What resources will it appeal to this time?

José Ramón Cabañas Rodríguez is Director of the International Policy Research Center (CIP) in Havana, Cuba.

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