

has been dragging on for years. Therefore, obtaining significant debt relief for Puerto Rico appears to be a necessary condition to restore economic growth on the island.

On the other hand, it should be obvious that obtaining debt relief is not sufficient in and of itself to jump-start economic growth. The important point in the case of Puerto Rico is that any savings derived from a reduction in debt service be used exclusively to advance and implement a renewed industrial policy, broadly defined, based on horizontal policies such as the ones described above; discovering new sectorial opportunities through a process of dialogue and consultation with key stakeholders in the island, both in the private and civic spheres; and identifying spillovers, externalities, and other areas where society could learn more.

This new learning, in turn, will lead to new investment in research and development, increased productivity, identifying new areas of comparative advantage for Puerto Rican firms, higher economic growth, and the creation of high-quality jobs which, at the end of the day, is what will categorically end Puerto Rico's economic stagnation. We at the Center for a New Economy are currently working with experts from Columbia, Brown, MIT, and Brookings, among other institutions, to develop this medium- and long-term industrial policy for Puerto Rico.

Finally, I would be negligent if I did not raise the question of whether Puerto Rico has reached the limits of what it can do to improve the quality of life of its people within the constraints imposed by its subordinate political status. Neither a sovereign country nor a State of the Union, Puerto Rico has no authority to negotiate international treaties, no access to emergency financing from multilateral institutions, no monetary policy instruments, limited fiscal policy tools, nominal representation in Congress, and the U.S. Supreme Court has determined that it is constitutionally permissible for Congress to discriminate against Puerto Rico in the application of Federal programs as long as there exists a rational basis for doing so.

Thus, Puerto Rico lives in a state of permanent limbo, a status that is both humiliating to Puerto Ricans and unworthy of the United States. Simply stating that it is up to Puerto Ricans to decide their political status, while true, is insufficient, because the U.S. Congress has longstanding legal and moral obligations with respect to Puerto Rico that it has failed to honor.

Congressional failure to act not only highlights a shameful lack of political will, it also weakens the United States' moral standing and jeopardizes its ability to effectively utilize its soft power in the international arena when it argues, for example, for better treatment for Hong Kong by China, for the Palestinians by Israel, or for Greece by members of the Eurozone. In this context, I would like to quote from the remarks made just a few days ago by an extraordinary man who came to this magnificent building to address a rare joint session of Congress.

Drawing from a deep well of wisdom that has accumulated for over 20 centuries, he stated, and I quote, "Your own responsibility as members of Congress is to enable this country, by your legislative activity, to grow as a Nation. You are the face of its people, their representatives. You are called to defend and preserve the