SEIZING THE MOMENT

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By

Michael G. Holmes, B.A.

Georgetown University
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Michael G. Holmes, B.A.

Mentor: Dr. Eusebio Mujal-Leon, B.A., J.D., Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

In today’s interdependent global society, for any nation to turn away a potential ally or to close off a potential market is disadvantageous. For the past fifty years the United States and Cuba have let flawed foreign policy and fanatic ideological pride deprive both nations of the benefits a normalized relationship could provide.

Cuba has been in an economic decline for decades. A country that once prided itself on the social services it provided its citizens can now barely provide them with basic necessities. Cuba must find its way forward in order to thrive in the global market place and decide whether it is time for a new voice to lead it there.

The United States is at an impasse. It has been battered by an economic collapse and the impact of being engaged in two questionable wars. The United States must find a way to regain the confidence of its own citizens and work to regain its status as the preeminent global super power. What both nations have either neglected to
realize or either failed to act upon is the proposition that normalizing relations between the two may help to rectify the issues both face.

This paper explores the practical reasons that the United States should remove the embargo against Cuba. It assesses the conditions which make right now the ideal time to actively and aggressively change U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba. These conditions include the economic states of both countries, the state of the United States’ reputation in the world and the political vulnerability of Raul Castro. The paper also examines the benefits both stand to gain if the embargo were to be lifted. The United States has the potential to gain political leverage, new markets and access to natural resources. Cuba stands to gain a legitimate position in the global market place after fifty years of essentially being left in isolation. It also stands to gain social and economic stability.

After conducting the research for this paper it becomes painfully obvious that the advantages of changing course on policy and removing the embargo far outweigh the disadvantages of allowing it to remain stagnant.
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For more than four decades the relationship between the United States and Cuba has been defined by an “us versus them” ethos. Both the United States and Cuba appear complacent with the state of relations between the nations and more than willing to let the 50-year standoff continue. Globalization, for better or worse, has linked the economies of the worlds, so much so that in order for any country to thrive it has to be an active participant in the global economic system. This economic interconnectedness has also made it detrimental to exclude any nation from the economic circle.

Cuba, as a result of the combination of the U.S. embargo and the Cuban governments own policy initiatives, has been relatively excluded from the global market place. Why is this of any importance to the United States? With the United States facing a deficit well over $13 trillion, all options should be on the table as far as finding new markets to generate the revenue necessary to alleviate that deficit. Cuba holds the potential to be a new and vibrant economic market as well as a viable resource for the United States. The United States’ embargo on Cuba has
not only been a major impediment to Cuba joining the global market place, it has also served as the basis for the United States resistance to engage Cuba as a market. With that said, several questions beg to be asked:

1. Should the United States and Cuba normalize relations?

2. What has impeded the normalization of that relationship to date?

3. What incentive is there for the two nations to normalize relations?

The quick answer to the first question is an emphatic yes. The United States has gone through the administrations of nine different presidents since Eisenhower first enacted the sanctions in Cuba in 1960. Despite a persistent effort to undermine him, Fidel Castro managed to retain power for more than four decades. Upon falling ill Fidel ceded power to his brother Raul, thus the Castro regime still exists. The sanctions have been all but effective. U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba is a dinosaur. Cuba has presented no true direct threat to the United States since the Cuban missile crisis. It is true that Cuba and the United States have clashed over U.S. interest abroad for decades following the crisis. However none of those incidents represented a threat
directly targeted at U.S. soil like the Cuban Missile Crisis. Furthermore any threat Cuba held as a communist nation diminished with the fall of the Soviet Union. Both of these points touch upon the question as to why the relationship has not been normalized. The United States gains nothing by pursuing this policy. By the same note, the United States loses nothing if it were to repeal it.

The once fanatic state of political ideology begins to tell the story as to why the relationship has not been normalized. The embargo against Cuba certainly found some basis in the “red scare” that existed during the time it was enacted, propagated by individuals such as Senator Joseph McCarthy.\(^1\) Even today the notion of being a communist has been used in order to undermine the presidency of Barack Obama. Ideology is ensconced at the root of the “us versus them”; democracy versus communism ethos mentioned previously. The irony is that neither ideology holds the legitimacy it once had. Both have become threadbare over the decades. The United States has proven through its failed agenda in the Middle East that

democracy is not a fix-all. Although there are communist nations still in existence; Vietnam, Laos, North Korea, and China; most are a far cry from the Marxism-Leninism they were birthed from. They are now more of a capitalism influenced socialist hybrid. Furthermore the relationship between the United States and China clearly demonstrates that the difference in ideologies does not have to hinder a bilateral relationship between nations. So ideology alone does not explain the fifty-year stalemate between the United States and Cuba.

Despite its size, Cuba has proven to be one of the largest threats the United States has ever faced. In previous conflicts the United States has had the advantage of having a significant safety buffer, distance, between itself and its enemies. With Cuba just 90 miles from American soil, the Cuban Missile Crisis shattered that safety buffer.\textsuperscript{2} A modern parallel to this would be September 11\textsuperscript{th}. Beyond shattering the safety buffer these two events diminished the sense of invulnerability that Americans cling to.

This blow that Cuba delivered to the American way of life, the American sense of empowerment, outraged the nation. The American government supported by the will of the American people reacted in kind by doing everything in its power to punish Cuba. One can only speculate about the psyche of a nation, but perhaps the outrage felt was steeped in fear. If Cuba, this small island nation, had the gall to plan an attack on American soil, what would stop other hostile nations from bringing a fight to America’s doorstep?

The Eisenhower Administration grew increasingly skeptical of Fidel Castro’s intentions following the overthrow of the Batista regime. Eisenhower was concerned that Castro’s nationalist agenda was quickly leaning communist. It became increasingly clear that Castro had his own designs for Cuba and that he intended for the United States to play a very limited role. CIA Director, Allen Dulles had long been against Castro taking power and regularly expressed this opinion to President Eisenhower.3 Eisenhower in his attempt to undermine the Castro regime

cut the United States sugar purchases from Cuba, with the intent of severely damaging Cuba’s economy. Cuba never truly felt the sting from Eisenhower’s plan thanks to the actions and support of the Soviet Union.⁴

As the Soviet Union’s economic support of Cuba intensified U.S. concerns that there was a communist nation just off of its coasts, President Eisenhower and the CIA increased their efforts to subvert the Castro regime. Eisenhower expanded the arms embargo put in place during the Batista regime and implemented a partial trade embargo under the Export Control Act that excluded food and medicine.⁵ The CIA made a deliberate effort to disrupt and/or destroy Cuba’s energy resources, transportation infrastructure and trading ports.⁶ On September 4, 1961, Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which banned offering any assistance to Cuba


and also left the door open for successive presidents to expand the embargo as they deemed necessary.\textsuperscript{7}

When Eisenhower completed his term John F. Kennedy not only took over the presidency but also increased the effort to continue to inflict as much punishment as possible on Cuba. Kennedy exercised his rights as President under the Foreign Assistance Act. He expanded the partial ban on trade Eisenhower had implemented, to a ban on all trade; (excluding subsidized food and Medicine), with Cuba. He also banned imports of goods from other countries that utilized materials from Cuba. The Foreign Assistance Act, which granted Kennedy the power to expand the embargo, was amended to prohibit the United States from providing assistance or aid to any country that conducted business with Cuba. The United States also urged other nations to restrict their dealings with Cuba by both suggestion and action. The U.S. banned the shipping of American goods on the vessels owned by companies that continue to do business with Cuba. This is

still U.S. policy today.\textsuperscript{8} All of these activities were the concerted effort of the United States to punish Cuba for bringing a “potential” communist threat so close to its shores. It is important to note that the previously mentioned activities took place before the Cuban Missile Crisis even occurred. However, the regime was becoming increasingly more radical.

On October 15, 1962, U.S. spy planes captured images of Soviet missile bases being built in Cuba. This would ignite the almost two-week long standoff between the United States and Soviet Union, which was the Cuban Missile Crisis. Less than six months after averting a nuclear war, The Kennedy administration banned travel to Cuba for all United States citizens as well as made it illegal for U.S. citizens to engage in financial and commercial transactions with the nation. Three months after the travel ban, the punishment agenda continued with the U.S. Commerce Department placing an approval contingency on food and medicine, which was originally exempted from the trade embargo.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
Of course it certainly can be argued that the United State’s response was not simply one of spite, vengeance or punishment. In fact, many would argue that it was a true issue of national security. The United States was engaged in a Cold War with the Soviet Union. Having Cuba serve as a communist stronghold just 90 miles off the coast of North America jeopardized the lives of American citizens. The question is, for how long Cuba should remain a threat. The Department of Homeland Security did not even exist at that time. However would Cuba have qualified as an “orange” or a “red” on their color-tiered threat ratings system? Cuba was a party to what potentially could have been nuclear war. However it was not by their direct efforts, but rather the efforts of the Soviet Union. Castro did not possess the military technology to be a threat to the United States. As the Cold War intensified Cuba’s primary role was that of a Soviet proxy. In theory with the promise of billions in subsidies the Soviet Union could have negotiated a missile base with the Dominican Republic or any other unstable nation in close proximity to the United States. Castro shared philosophical common ground with the Soviet Union. However given Cuba’s role as a Soviet proxy during the missile crisis, to punish it
indefinitely seems harsh. President Kennedy appeared to be of this mind. A year after the Missile Crisis had been resolved, November 1963, Kennedy himself sought to normalize relations with Cuba. His efforts were unfortunately cut short by his untimely death. Kennedy was certainly not a lone voice in the call to normalize relations with Cuba. However he may have been a minority voice. Just a month after Kennedy’s assassination the Foreign Assistance Act was again amended to prohibit aid to countries that even traded with Cuba. This tends to discredit the notion that the United States actions against Cuba were simply an issue of National Security.

Although punitive in nature, the United States and its continued implementation and amendment of the sanctions and embargo may have been warranted. Cuba made efforts to disrupt U.S. interest abroad and aligned itself more and more with the Soviet Union. During the early 1970’s Angola, a colony of Portugal experienced a civil war. The United States sided with the Portuguese government and the two political parties it recognized, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, (FNLA). The United States feared if the
Portuguese government in Angola was to fall so would other colonized governments throughout Africa. The resulting conflicts and the establishment of new independent nations may deny Americans and the Europeans access to Africa’s abundant natural resources, namely oil.\(^\text{10}\) Cuba perhaps acting on prompting from the Soviet Union decided to support, militarily, the revolutionary government of Agostinho Neto.\(^\text{11}\) Castro sent more than 50,000 troops to Angola to back Neto’s government. With Cuba’s help Angola won its independence from Portugal.\(^\text{12}\)

Years later Cuba would again intervene with U.S. interests in Africa. During the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, Ethiopia had not only aligned itself with the United States, it was also receiving substantial economic support. In 1974 a military coup known as the Derg overthrew the Selassie government. Initially the Derg, under the leadership of Mengistu Haile Mariam, continued to maintain Ethiopia’s relationship with the United


\(^{11}\) Gerald J. Bender, "Angola, the Cubans, and American Anxieties," *Foreign Policy* Summer, No. 31 (1978): 3.

States. This was due mainly to the fact that the Soviet Union was supporting Somalia, which was the country’s biggest military threat. Despite his alignment with the United States, Mengistu had socialist ambitions for Ethiopia. This prompted him to shift his allegiance from the United States to the Soviet Union, even though the Soviets supported Somalia. Mengistu rationalized that, with the Soviets controlling the monetary strings and military support, it would be able to temper any threat Somalia may pose to Ethiopia. In 1978 Ethiopia severed ties with the United States, and signed a formal treaty with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{13} Cuba sent approximately 20,000 troops to Ethiopia to help ensure a smooth transition. In addition to interfering with the United States’ interest in Ethiopia, Cuba also allegedly incited a rebellion in Zaire.\textsuperscript{14} The Castro regime also supported revolutions in Central America during the late ’70’s, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua and the Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno in El Salvador.


During the 1980’s Fidel Castro helped arm and train troops in Grenada in order to support the Revolutionary government of Maurice Bishop. Castro had positioned members of his regime as advisers to the Bishop government. There were even more Cuban military members on the island than Grenadian military. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, (OECS), concerned, with Bishop’s rhetoric and the rapid militarization in Grenada, looked to the United States for support and protection. The United States agreed and eventually pushed the Cuban forces out of Grenada.15

These numerous examples of Fidel Castro’s continued willingness to antagonize the United States over decades, certainly supports the notion that Castro sought out punitive responses from the United States. However the two most punitive pieces of U.S. legislation against Cuba manifested during what was essentially a lull in Castro’s antagonistic behaviors following the end of the Cold War. The sole purpose of the Cuban Democracy Act/Torricelli Act

of 1992 and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act/Helms-Burton of 1996 was to increase the severity of the existing sanctions.

One particular section of the Cuban Democracy Act had severe consequences for foreign nations. Section 1706(a), previously known as the Mack Amendment, prohibited all foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies from conducting any trade with Cuba. The amendment also banned any ship from entering U.S. ports if they carry any goods, which are in Cuba’s national interest or had been to Cuba within 180 days upon trying to enter a U.S. port. Beyond feeling that the embargo was far more punitive than necessary toward Cuba, these nations felt that the actions of the United States were impinging on their national sovereignty. The prohibition on foreign subsidiaries impinged on the right of foreign nations to regulate businesses within their own country. The Helms-Burton Act, which followed shortly thereafter was arguably more restrictive, certainly more intrusive. However, the stark difference between the Cuba Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act is that Helms-Burton act was clearly prompted by a provocative act.
On February 24, 1996 two Cessna planes were shot down by two Cuban MiG fighter jets in the Florida Straits. The two Cessna planes were working on behalf of the humanitarian group, Brothers to the Rescue (BTTR). Killed in the incident were 3 United States citizens and a Cuban exile. The United States immediately condemned the act, despite speculation that it may have had some role in the incident. BTTR had run several of these propaganda missions where they would drop human rights literature leaflets over Havana. BTTR had also recently agreed to provide to support to Concilio Cubano, a collection of democracy/human rights advocacy groups located in Cuba.16 The Concilio Cubano made a formal request to the Castro government for the various groups to meet the same day the BTTR planes were shot down:

WE RESOLVE the following:

To request the Cuban government for official permission to hold the meeting of Concilio Cubano;

To set the date of that meeting for February 24, 25, 26, and 27, 1996, to be held in the city of Havana, at a facility that the government may decide to lease or lend to us; or otherwise on the premises

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of some non-government institution who agrees to provide the facilities for this purpose.

Formally to request the good offices and assistance of United Nations representatives as international monitors over the meeting, as well as the good offices of the conference of Catholic Bishops and of his Eminence, Cardinal Jaime Ortega y Alamino, as domestic monitor over the Concilio Cubano meeting.  

The fact that the dates of the Concilio Cubano meeting and the BTTR mission and subsequent shoot down coincide, has led to speculation. Questions have been raised as to whether the United States played a part in the incident or if Castro ordered the planes to be shot down in response to the proposed Concilio Cubano meeting. What is concrete is that the BTTR incident was the catalyst that pushed the embargo to a level of severity never seen before.

The Helms-Burton Act not only increased the scope of the sanctions it added a new dynamic. The act authorized the United States to penalize foreign corporations who engaged in any transactions that involved property that

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the Cuban government expropriated from the United States in 1961. The property of Cuban exiles who became U.S. citizens fell under section 206(6) of the Helms-Burton Act as well.\textsuperscript{19} Many nations, including Europe and Mexico opted to take legal action against the United States claiming the act violated NAFTA and WTO regulations.\textsuperscript{20}

The successive decades of punitive legislation enacted against Cuba cannot simply be a lingering result from the U.S. government’s knee jerk reaction to a perceived crisis, although there are examples of the United States doing just such a thing. The USA PATRIOT Act is a gleaming example upon a cursory glance. However upon further examination the PATRIOT Act is distinctly different from Cuba in that the perceived threat, terrorism, is still viable. Cuba has not been a viable threat in ages. Even the Cessna attack that prompted the enactment of the Helms-Burton act, was likely an attempt by the Castro regime to show the world Cuba is still


relevant. It certainly was not a direct threat to the United States.

Keeping Cuba relevant was Fidel Castro’s top priority. In many respects the security of his position as Cuba’s president depended on the nation’s relevancy. If Fidel Castro could not keep Cuba and its people at the forefront of global politics, it would be a struggle for him to keep the socialist revolution relevant to the people of Cuba. If the revolution lost its relevancy so would Castro. Castro’s revolution has always maintained a romanticized mystique about it, a David versus Goliath quality; the small island nation that would stand up against and overcome the offenses of the imperial juggernaut just off its shores. If the United States were to relent on their offensive unilateral “attacks,” who would be Castro’s antagonist? What would be the purpose of la revolucion? Castro needs the United States to play the villain, in order for him to be the hero.²²


The Helms-Burton Act had come to the attention of Fidel Castro almost a year before it was ever put into law. He mounted a public campaign expounding on the evils of Helms-Burton. One of his most virulent criticisms of the act was that it was the U.S. government’s attempts to take Cuba back to the Batista era. In many respects he was right. Beyond Helms-Burton being one of the most punitive pieces of legislation the United States had enacted against Cuba, it permanently pitted the United States at odds with the Castro regime.

Helms-Burton contained a provision stating that no President could repeal or loosen the embargo against Cuba as long as the Castro regime was in power. What this means is even when Raul Castro took power, (temporarily in July 2006 and then permanently in 2008), the United States or indeed the president of the United States was unable to lift the embargo against Cuba. The implications of this act are tremendous. Hypothetically, as the legislation currently stands, even if Raul Castro decided to implement any degree of diplomatic reform, the United States would

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not be able to repeal the embargo because a member of the Castro regime would still hold power. Given that Fidel Castro transferred power to Raul Castro, isn’t it likely that upon time for Raul Castro step to down that he will transfer power to yet another Castro?

Having the United States as a long-term archrival played directly into the desires of Fidel Castro, he needed an arch nemesis in order to maintain support for his brand of socialism, particularly during the 1990’s as he faced growing opposition from what he labeled a “new class” of Cubans.\textsuperscript{24} By shooting down the BTTR planes Castro ensured that the United States would continue to inflict punishment on Cuba. This was certainly not a novel concept for Fidel Castro. In fact Castro would routinely gloss over his poor economic and policy decisions by blaming their detrimental effects on the punitive tactics employed by the United States.

To say the embargo played no part in the Cuban economy and its overall downward trajectory, would be incorrect. However to infer that it is the main or sole reason for the current economic state of Cuba would also

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 212.
be incorrect. Currently the Cuban economy, much as it has been since the fall of the Soviet Union, is still in a state of recovery. In 2009 Cuba’s economy grew only 1.4 percent, exports fell by 22.9 percent, and imports were down 37.4 percent. Productivity declined 1.1 percent and investments dropped 16 percent.\textsuperscript{25} The country is in a tremendous amount of debt and is unable to meet its credit obligations. In 2008 Cuba renegotiated terms with several of its commercial debtors.\textsuperscript{26} As a result, its overall credit rating has suffered.\textsuperscript{27} According to Cuba’s Minister of Economy, Marino Murillo, these poor economic numbers are the result of the global recession, losses due to hurricanes and the lingering impact of the U.S. embargo.\textsuperscript{28} The idea that after close to 50 years the United States embargo would still bear the blame for the economic plight


\textsuperscript{26} U.S. Department of State, Background Note Cuba, \url{http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm} (accessed June 12, 2010).

\textsuperscript{27} Patricia Grogg, “What About the Changes?,” Inter Press Service News Agency, \url{http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=50867} (accessed April 12, 2010).

Cuba currently faces is powerful. Beyond its role as Cuba’s archenemy, the United States also assumed the role of Fidel’s Castro’s scapegoat. Castro’s main concern was protecting what was essentially his revolution. When policies he decided to pursue proved to be detrimental to Cubans, he quickly blamed the United States and the embargo for the failed initiatives.

Before its ultimate demise the Soviet Union provided an estimated 5 to 8 billion dollars annually in subsidies.29 This is almost 7 percent of Cuba’s current estimated gross domestic product. Cuba managed to maintain a strong trade and tourism relationship with Canada and other Latin American nations. The families of Cuban exiles who would send money home provided another unofficial, (unofficial because the possession of U.S. dollars was illegal until 1993) revenue stream for the nation producing almost a billion dollars annually for the country.30 With the various economic resources available to him, in theory Castro should have been able to keep the Cuban economy out of such dire circumstances. With that


said what led to the eventual collapse of the economy? It’s clear that the embargo did not close off all of Cuba’s financial resources. A variety of failed policy initiatives and, what can only be classified as get-rich-quick schemes may do more to explain Cuba’s economic situation more than the role of the embargo.

A stark of example of one of the Castro’s regimes missteps is Fidel’s attempt to go down in history as the man who “cured cancer.” He invested millions of the country’s money into developing a drug that he believed would indeed cure cancer. Needless to say the program was a failure and worst, a tremendous waste of the country’s financial resources. There are numerous examples of such wasteful investments, including an attempt to breed a line of cattle more tolerant to Cuba’s tropical climate.31

Although many of these examples of questionable decision making are comical to say the least, can they truly carry more of an impact than a punitive foreign policy established by a global super power? The answer may lie more in the flexibility of the decisions made by Castro. If the embargo was as detrimental and punitive

31 Ibid., 69.
as Castro pronounced it to be, then it would seem logical for him to have negotiated some middle ground with the U.S. government. If Castro could not, or more likely would not negotiate with the United States, why did he not design a model for Cuba that would adapt to the changes imposed by the embargo? There were other Latin American economic models he could have followed. More importantly there were other socialist economic models Castro could have followed, that would have had a more practical long-term benefit for Cuba’s economy.

A capitalist structure could have been the key to offsetting any perceived impact the embargo had on the country. Of course capitalism seems to go against the very core of establishing a socialist society. However several socialist theorists, such as Georgi Plekhanov, have hypothesized that capitalism is a necessary step to reach a true socialist society.\(^\text{32}\) As part of Lenin’s New Economic Policy he stated:

\begin{quote}
The proletarian state may, without changing its own nature, permit freedom to trade and the development of capitalism only within certain bounds, and only on
\end{quote}

the condition that the state regulates (supervises, controls, determines the forms and methods of, etc.) private trade and private capitalism.\textsuperscript{33}

In a misguided attempt to keep his revolution pure Castro instead opted to pursue an economic course that focused primarily on heavy industry. This policy simply did not fare well. Faced with this failure the Castro regime decided to regroup and refocus its energy on its main cash crop, sugar.\textsuperscript{34} Cash crop is almost an understatement. Sugar made up more than 75 percent Cuba’s total export revenues. Castro intended to make sugar production the country’s principal financial driver. Castro declared that it was his goal for Cuba to have the capacity to produce 10 million tons of sugar annually.\textsuperscript{35}

Certainly even a layman could see the potential flaws in Castro’s line of thinking. The regime’s initial foray into industrialization was a failure. To produce sugar at that capacity would take an extremely large scale and efficient technological infrastructure, which to that

\textsuperscript{33} Vladimir I. Lenin, "Role and Functions of the Trade Unions under the New Economic Policy." Lenin’s Collected Works 33 (1965).


\textsuperscript{35} Manuel Madrid-Aris, "Growth and Technological Change in Cuba." Association for the Study of Cuban Economy (1997): 217.
point; Cuba had not demonstrated it had the ability to do. Furthermore staking the bulk of country’s economy in one industry, sugar production, was a recipe for disaster. To utilize an admittedly abused cliché, Castro should not have put all of his eggs in one basket.

To dismiss this as a poorly calculated policy decision by a power blind ruler would be to not give Castro sufficient credit. This is a man who has managed to stay in power for nearly half a century. The Cold War presented Castro the opportunity to find in Cuba a virtual Petri dish. He was able to develop and craft his own form of socialism. More importantly he was able to experiment with whatever policy whims he could dream up with little repercussion.

The support of the Soviet Union may have emboldened Castro and provided him the free rein to do as he saw fit with Cuba. As previously mentioned the Soviet Union provided Cuba with billions in annual subsidies.\(^\text{36}\) The Soviet Union purchased sugar from Cuba at an above market premium. Cuba purchased crude oil from the Soviet Union

at below market premiums. The Soviet subsidies increased from year to year. In fact during the early 1980’s soviet subsidies were larger than Cuba’s gross domestic product. With that kind of support Castro could certainly proceed with any policy initiative with the confidence that he had the financial backing to support it. If the metric of an effective leader is the success of the economy of the nation that he or she presides over, then Fidel Castro was an effective leader. For more than 25 years (1960-1988) the Cuban economy grew annually at a rate of 4.4%.

Castro knew that with the amount of economical support that he received from the Soviet Union there was really no way for any of his policy initiatives to fail. This would explain why following the imposition of the U.S. embargo, Castro chose to pursue a more rigid socialist economic policy as opposed to other economic models. Of course to many this may appear to be extremely short sighted, because Cuba’s success as a nation was

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completely dependent on the future of the Soviet Union. However, at that point in time, there were very few people who envisioned that the end of the Cold War would also mean the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union did however fall and the Cuban economy toppled with it. Just prior to its collapse, the Soviet Union was the source of 75 percent of Cuba’s imports, including oil. As the collapse loomed the Soviet Union opted not to sign a long-term trade agreement with Cuba. All future trade agreements between the two countries would be established on an annual basis. The following year, 1991, former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the U.S.S.R would only make trade agreements with countries that could conduct transactions at market rates as well as pay in hard currency.\(^\text{40}\) The fall of the Soviet led to a 60 percent reduction in Cuba’s gross domestic product.\(^\text{41}\) This forced Fidel Castro to adjust the direction Cuba was headed. His country’s economy was failing. This was the second


instance, the first being when the embargo was initially enacted, that Castro could have designed policies to adapt to the changes in the economic landscape. As stated previously there were other economic models available to him. Faced with a situation that would clearly put Cuba and its people in jeopardy, why did Castro not pursue policies to help his country avoid economic ruin?

This scenario brings up some previous points; the idea that Castro may have been more insightful than many have given him credit, that Castro viewed Cuba as a Petri dish and finally that Castro sought to use the United States as a scapegoat. The point to be explored is Castro’s level of insight, or more accurately his level of foresight.

Perhaps Castro had the foresight to realize that there was a possibility, likely remote from his perspective that the Cold War could end with the Soviet Union falling. Despite how remote the possibility that the Soviet Union would fall, Castro appears to have had the wisdom to hedge his bets. Clearly if the Soviet Union did not collapse it may have been able to subsidize the Cuban economy indefinitely, thus making Castro’s rigid adherence to his policies a success. The fact is the
Soviet Union did collapse. However Castro did not allow its collapse to expose any weaknesses in his policies.

Castro utilized the presence of the United States and the embargo, using both as scapegoats for any shortcomings of his policy decision. This allowed him to continue to use Cuba as his personal Petri dish for whatever socialist policies he could dream up, while absolving him of any responsibility associated with any policy failures. In order for Castro to maintain his status quo, he needs the United States to continue to enact punitive legislations and policies. It is clear that he was prepared to use whatever tactics necessary, shooting down planes on humanitarian missions, (The BTTR incident), for example, in order to do so.

Despite the history between these two nations there are several factors that may set the tone for a change in the relationship between the two nations. The first and most obvious is the fact that Raul Castro has succeeded Fidel. This certainly is not a complete change of guard. However Raul Castro has shown signs that he is perhaps open to some degree of change. Both he and Fidel have made
public statements that they would be willing to open a dialogue with the Obama Administration.\footnote{Patrick Markey, "Fidel Castro Says Cuba Could Talk with Obama," \textit{Reuters}, 05 December 2008.}

This may have to do with a shift in the regime’s agenda and the perception that the Obama administration was far more amiable than any previous administration. However it likely has more to do with the current state of the Cuban economy, which has been on a downward spiral for decades. There are reports that the country is so destitute that it cannot provide its citizens with basic toiletry needs.\footnote{Nelson Acosta, "Cash-strapped Cuba Says Toilet Paper Running Short," \textit{Reuters}, \url{http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5792F420090810} (accessed August 18, 2009).} This perilous economic state is certainly incentive for the nation and the Castro’s to be open to change.

As far as the United States, economics may also provide incentive for them to be open to the prospect of change. The global recession has had a tremendous impact on the United States. One of the early contributing factors to the economic fall out was the skyrocketing price of fuel. A huge political bullet point for
politicians of all sorts is alternative fuel and fuel resources. Cuba could potentially be the answer for both.

Although currently stifled, Cuba could certainly revamp its sugar industry, mirror Brazil, and begin to produce ethanol. At its peak, 1970’s, Cuba was producing an estimated 8 million tons of sugar a year. That is 84 percent more that the volume it currently produces. Cuba could also be a resource for petroleum.

According to the United States Geological Survey offshore drilling in Cuba has the potential to produce more than 9 billion barrels of oil. Oil production could take Cuba out of its economic decline and even help it become a self-sufficient nation. However Cuba does not possess the infrastructure or technology to facilitate the drilling and has outsourced to several other companies, including Petrobras, which is the Brazilian company that also specializes in sugar ethanol production. This was certainly a missed opportunity for the United States.

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Clearly there is an economic incentive for both nations to let go of policies that have economically hampered one and tainted the reputation of another. The questions is, unlike his brother is Raul Castro willing to stray from rigid adherence to flawed socialist policies and after decades of the same are the Cuban people prepared for change? Finally is the United States willing to let go of its punitive policies and in order to make amends for the economic damage it has inflicted, take the lead in normalizing relations between the two countries?
CHAPTER 2
WHY NOW?

In 2006 Fidel Castro temporarily transferred power to his brother Raul due to complications from what was diagnosed as intestinal bleeding. Speculation quickly permeated throughout the world on whether this ailment was the end of the polarizing and aging leader. Speculation on who would lead a post-Fidel Cuba quickly spread as well. Would the old guard via Raul Castro simply assume the vacancy or would some other movement arrive to assume power and set Cuba on a different course?

In their book Cuba After Castro, authors, Edward Gonzalez and Kevin McCarthy hypothesized that Cuba would follow the model devised by Poland in the late 1980’s - early 1990’s. Poland constructed a bicameral parliamentary government, a power share between old and new. The first of the two parties established, the Sejm, consisted of members of the former communist regime. The Senate, the second party, was created through free


2 Edward Gonzalez and Kevin F. McCarthy, Cuba After Castro: Legacies, Challenges, and Impediments, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation 2004), XI.
elections. This system proved to be highly effective, with the Polish Parliament implementing close to 250 pieces of legislation in its first two years of existence.³

Perhaps the biggest impediment to this model working in Cuba is the lack of a prevalent opposition that could win in a free election or any reformist within the Castro regime. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Fidel Castro opted to loosen some of the economic restrictions he instituted in order to offset the loss of Soviet subsidies. However, upon the realization that these new reforms may highlight deficiencies in his original policies, he redacted those changes. In addition he removed from the party ranks any members who supported the economic reforms.⁴ In 1999 Cuba’s National Assembly passed the Law for the Protection of the National Independence and Economy of Cuba also known as Law 88. The law imposes prison sentences of up to 20 years for


violations that are deemed subversive to the Castro
Regime.\(^5\)

The new law was Castro’s counter legislation to the Helms-Burton Act. All of the articles contained in Law 88 were crafted to suppress and punish any individuals engaged in clandestine activities intended to aid the United States and its efforts to overthrow the Castro regime. Article 4 imposes a fifteen-year sentence for transferring any intelligence to the United States government or anyone acting on its behalf that disrupts the stability of the Cuban government. An additional five years was added to the sentence if the intelligence was obtained via a network of individuals or was obtained and sold for a profit. If Cuba incurred additional economic sanctions as a result of the intelligence that was passed, an even harsher prison sentence was imposed.

Article 5 of Law 88 imposes an eight-year sentence on individuals seeking to obtain intelligence to pass to the United States to aid in its efforts to topple the Castro regime. Article 6 imposes jail time and/or a fine for

individuals found in possession of or intending to distribute U.S. propaganda or literature encouraging the removal of the regime. Article 7 stipulates the penalties for utilizing broadcast or print media to further or assist the United States’ agenda in Cuba. Article 8 details the punishment for participating in public demonstrations that support the United States. For organizers of such events, the initial five year sentence is increased. Article 9 states that any individual involved in “any act intended to impede or prejudice the economic relations of the Cuban state” may receive a prison sentence of up to fifteen years. In all instances the length of the prison sentence for violating any article of law is increased if it is found that there was a profit motive for the violation.  

Utilizing this law, in March 2003, over the course of 72 hours, Fidel Castro ordered the arrest of 90 people. The sweep would go on to be known as the Black Spring.


All of the individuals arrested were charged as dissidents: "agents of the American Enemy." They all received sentences of at least twelve years, some close to thirty. He was certainly aware that such an egregious human rights violation would provoke the ire of the United States.\(^8\) This was particularly true in this instance because several of the "dissidents" arrested were participants in the Varela Project\(^9\), which Presidents George W. Bush and Jimmy Carter supported.

Some of the other Cubans who spoke out about the state of affairs in Havana found themselves on the receiving end of the more severe sentences were independent journalists. Some of these journalists were granted conditional releases. Others, such as Ricardo Gonzalez Alfonoso, Pedro Argelles Moran and Pablo Pancheo Avila, who all received twenty years in prison and Normando Herbandez who received a twenty-five year...


\(^9\) On May 10, 2002, Osvaldo Paya, a representative of the Cuban Christian Liberation Movement, submitted a petition containing more than 11,000 signatures to the National Assembly. The petition contained 20 points calling for a broader freedom of expression and association, amnesty for political prisoners, property rights, free enterprise and changes in the current electoral system.
sentence, are still incarcerated. These men did nothing more than write about the state of affairs in their country. With this swift and devastating maneuver, Fidel Castro was able to quell the prospect of any significant opposition movement forming. Furthermore he solidified and safeguarded his position and the position of any other Castro that was to succeed him.

On February 24, 2008, after nearly a half century in power, Fidel Castro transferred control of Cuba to his brother Raul. Law 88 helped ensure that this transfer marked the end of era only in part for Cuba. With no opposition, the installment of Raul Castro as Cuba’s President was primarily a change only in name, not of ideology. Raul had a reputation of being an even more dogmatic socialist than his older brother. Castro has said, “Behind me are others more radical than I,” an apparent reference to Raul. In addition to the prospect that Raul may be even more of a hardliner than Fidel, Fidel Castro is not dead. If he is physically in any

condition to voice ideas, his fingerprints will certainly be on any policy that comes out of Havana\textsuperscript{11} even if only in a limited capacity. Does this mean more of the same or possibly worse in the coming years for Cubans? There are numerous factors that may make that unlikely, the first Raul Castro himself.

Part of what made Fidel Castro such an influential leader was his charisma or what psychologists label “emotional intelligence.”\textsuperscript{12} This certainly is not a trivial factor. Personality, or in some cases a lack thereof, plays a significant role in the effectiveness of a leader. In a 2001 study, psychologists from Swinburne University of Technology found that the most effective leaders were those whose leadership style was transformational as opposed to transactional.

The study found that the individuals who utilized a transformational leadership style typically had higher functioning levels of emotional intelligence, which they


\textsuperscript{12} The ability to create novel and effective syndromes—John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey, "Emotional Intelligence and the Construction and Regulation of Feelings," \textit{Applied and Preventive Psychology} 4, No. 3 (1995): 197.
defined as the ability to effectively manage not only an individual’s own emotions but also the emotions of others. Transformational leaders are essentially good salesmen. They possess the ability to stir people to action or belief. People typically look up to transformational leaders and strive to be like the leader themselves. These individuals typically seek out the lime-light and will seize any opportunity to sell their agenda. The Achilles heel of these types of leaders is that they typically tend to see, “the big picture, but not the details.” This leadership style is embodied by Fidel Castro and sheds light as to why he was able to stay in power for so many years.

Unfortunately for Raul Castro, emotional intelligence is a characteristic he may not possess. Without this trait, it will be particularly difficult for him to

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persuade a nation of people to continue to subscribe to policies that have proven to be ineffective. The lack of this trait also means that Raul is vulnerable to a more challenge from a charismatic reformist, which could lead to his unseating. Although Raul is taking the helm of a dictatorship, it is at its core a political office. There is a degree of campaigning involved. It has been shown that the majority of successful campaigns have been won based largely on the “who” more than any other factor, personality is important.

For Raul the problem lies in convincing people to buy what he is selling. His almost two years as the head of Cuba surely have not been marked by any milestones. It also doesn’t appear that Raul is as popular as his brother. In a recent visit to Cuba political psychologist Martha Burk observed the following:

*Images of Fidel are everywhere -- fences, building facades, barroom walls -- you name it. Posters touting "52 years of the Revolution" are plentiful. Che Guevara is a god -- memorialized in a giant open-air complex in central Cuba (where the decisive battle of the revolution was won) along with a museum and an eternal flame to mark his remains.*

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Likenesses of Raul Castro -- Fidel's brother who fought beside him to take Cuba in 1959 and who now serves as president -- are considerably less in evidence.  

Whatever support Raul may have had coming in as Cuba’s new leader undoubtedly finds its roots in his brother’s legacy. The Castro name is a brand and Raul is simply carrying on the family business. Given the current state of affairs in Cuba it will not be long before Raul will have to either sell his version of where Cuba is headed or step aside for someone who can.

The Castro’s ineffective policies will likely be another factor in inhibiting the continuation of the status quo in Cuba. During what may be best classified as Cuba’s glory days, it is clear why Fidel Castro had no problem maintaining popular support. Socially, the majority of Cubans were placed on a level playing field, including previously marginalized groups such Afro-Cubans. Employment was high. Families were given substantial food rations. Health care was free and of excellent quality.

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Housing was cheap and higher education was free. Of course all of these wonderful social amenities were the result of the subsidies provided by the Soviet Union. It would seem logical then that when the Soviet subsidies ceased, and the well of prosperity dried up, Cuban citizens would have turned against Castro and his policies, but that was not the case.

Fidel, perhaps again displaying his tremendous level of insight or emotional intelligence devised another means of continuing to buy support. Cuba’s sugar industry boomed during the Soviet era. It quickly declined following the collapse of the Soviet Union. By 2002 more than 40 percent of Cuba’s sugar mills closed. Although the mills closed, the mill workers continued receiving their salaries. Seeing the financial benefit of standing behind Castro, Cubans continued to join the PCC, (Partido Comunista de Cuba/Communist Party of Cuba) in order to gain financial security, access to scarce resources and professional opportunity. More recently media outlets

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19 Ibid., xxi.

20 Ibid., 21.
have reported that Cuba has over 1 million of what are deemed “excess” government workers on state payrolls.\textsuperscript{21} Who would not support a government that rewards people in this manner? The problem that Raul Castro faces is that as the economic situation in Cuba continues to deteriorate, so do incentives for Cuban citizens to continue to support the Castro regime. Raul’s personality in the absence of the work-free salaries will certainly not be enough to sway opinion or carry support for the regime.

The Castro’s have mastered the art of spinning any scenario into a victory for the communist party. They are experts at self-promotion and propaganda. To let them tell it, every policy they have implemented has been a success. More than a decade ago Elian Gonzalez became the face of U.S.-Cuba relations. Brought to the United States after his mother died trying to flee Cuba, young Elian was later returned to his father in Cuba despite protests from Cuban exiles. The Castro regime quickly turned this

relatively small victory against the United States into a larger claim about supporting the regime. His father who once worked in a restaurant is now a member of the Cuban parliament. Elian Gonzalez, who is now sixteen and a member of the Young Communist Union, has a parade thrown in his honor every December on his birthday.\(^{22}\)

Although a parade may be an extreme example it does illustrate the Castro’s practice of rewarding those that continue to support the regime, whether that reward be a parade or simply a steady paycheck. This also provides insight as to why the United States has not been able to unseat the regime, despite supporting and even instituting subversive techniques. The United States government has spent close to $25 million to support activities or initiatives that could lead to the fall of Castro regime. Vicki Huddleston, Chief of the United States Interests Section in Havana, (1999-2002), and her successor James Cason, (2002-2005) both blatantly made efforts to rouse

opposition movements in order to remove Castro from power. Huddleston handed out free radios in order for Cubans to receive pro-democracy broadcasts. Cason utilized his diplomatic immunity status to publicly criticize Castro in the Cuban media.

Despite the United States investing a significant amount of time, resources and money the Castro regime remains in power. Ironically Vicki Huddleston, as part of a study she conducted for the Brookings Institute, recently stated that the United States should avoid trying to control or influence democratic change in Cuba. The report went on to say, "Legitimate changes in Cuba will only come from the actions of Cubans." Several Cuban interest groups have taken this stance as well. Part of the mission statement of the Cuban American National Foundation says that, "Change must come from within the island, not forcibly imposed from abroad."

The Castro regime continues to credit the United States government as the source of any of Cuba’s social and economic woes. To make matters worse, legislation such as Law 88, have all but decimated the prospect of a significant opposition movement developing enough momentum to remove Raul Castro, despite apparent weaknesses in his role as leader. In order to implement a change in guard in Cuba, a radical catalyst must be implemented. That catalyst is obviously to remove the embargo. Part of what has allowed the Castro regime to have such a hold on Cuba is that Castro has been able to deflect the blame. The United States and the embargo has, for decades, been the bad guy inflicting hardship on the citizens of Cuba, not the Castro regime.

In order to highlight the flaws in the Castro regime’s decision making and policies, Cuba must be placed in a situation that is as close to ideal as possible, no impediments. The embargo is a huge impediment. Removing it places Cuba in as ideal a situation as possible. If Cuba continues on its economic decline after removing the embargo, the Castro regime will have no scapegoat to pass the blame on to.
Cuba’s previously renowned health care system is in disarray. Beyond the lack of basic medical supplies, several public health epidemics have also been attributed directly to the U.S. embargo. Several thousand of these health scares were said to be the result of nutrition deficiencies resulting from food shortages caused by the embargo. Children have been reportedly poisoned after ingesting lye, which was used as a soap substitute, the lack of soap being the result of the embargo.\(^{24}\) The lack of potable drinking water and the country’s crumbling infrastructure, both are said to be the result of the embargo. The declining standard of living of Cuban citizens and the growing income inequality have been attributed to the embargo. Law 88 and the almost 100 people who were incarcerated, some for the next decade, was crafted in reaction to the Helms-Burton Act which made the embargo more punitive. All of these actions were taken by the regime with the idea in mind, that it could be sold and justified to the people of Cuba simply by

making the United States the scapegoat. The United States needs to remove the embargo in its entirety and let the cards fall where they may.

Why should the United States continue to play its ascribed role as the bad guy in the dynamic that defines the relationship between it and Cuba? Why should the U.S. be perpetually culpable for the declining quality of life of over 11 million Cubans? By removing the embargo, the United States removes the crutch the Castro regime has relied on for nearly fifty years. Removing the embargo forces Raul Castro to be 100 percent accountable for the state of his country and its people. An Amnesty International report echoed this sentiment:

The US embargo has helped to undermine the enjoyment of key civil and political rights in Cuba by fueling a climate in which such fundamental rights as freedom of association, expression and assembly are routinely denied. The embargo provides the Cuban government with an excuse for its repressive policies, while the widespread sympathy the country has garnered for resisting US pressure has left third countries reluctant to push Cuba to resolve its human rights crisis. Specific embargo provisions have also undermined the development of a human rights movement
on the island, which in turn weakens prospects for the emergence of an independent civil society.\textsuperscript{25}

It is particularly critical that the United States take this hands-off approach now. At present Raul Castro is enacting policies to expand government control over business and economic activities.\textsuperscript{26} With no embargo in place the people of Cuba will be able to clearly determine if the overall decline of the country is truly the result of the embargo or the result of poor policies crafted by the Castro regime. If Raul Castro’s new economic policies were to fail in the absence of the embargo, it would shatter the infallible façade the regime has attempted to project for decades. It may instill doubt in long-time supporters of the regime causing them to lose confidence in its ability to lead. This may be the incentive for a grass roots effort similar to the Varela Project to swell in number, from tens-of-thousands to hundreds-of thousands of Cubans seeking an alternative. This would finally


\textsuperscript{26} U.S. Department of State, Background Notes on Countries of the World: The Republic of Cuba, Bureau of Public Affairs, 2008: 7.
create a significant opposition, which has always been the primary goal of the United States and has yet to come to fruition with the embargo in place.

Despite the suggestion that Raul Castro is more radical than his infamous brother, the United States may find a pragmatic ear in Raul. He was supposedly a co-architect of Cuban economic policy since the regime has been in power. 27 He is also aware of the impact that present global economic conditions have on Cuba. This is evidenced in his decision to postpone the application of certain economic policies until conditions in the global markets improved. 28 Without the embargo Raul’s actions will define what kind of leader he really is. In order to keep the Castro regime in power he will have to create jobs, improve the quality of life for Cuban citizens, improve health care, etc. There is no conceivable means for him to do this without engaging the United States. It is through this scenario that the United States may obtain true leverage over the regime. Despite both the United


States and Cuba having significant financial incentive to normalize relations, the power dynamic that they hold as far as bringing this to fruition is certainly skewed toward the United States. By removing the embargo the United States could eliminate a huge point of contention with the literal stroke of a pen. For the people of the United States such a move would have minimal impact. For many U.S. citizens the embargo itself is a relic left over from the Cold War. Particularly with the present economic crisis, the lifting of the Cuban embargo would likely not even make front-page news. Aside from Cuban Americans who have a financial stake and/or family in Cuba, the majority of Americans are removed from the issue.

This certainly is not the case for the citizens of Cuba, many of whom have lived under the specter of the embargo for the majority if not all of their lives. Removing it, unilaterally, truly presents the people of Cuba with a complete change in life as they know it. As mentioned previously Raul has stated he is indeed open to talks with the United States. Despite indicating that he may be open to some degree of dialogue, it is highly unlikely that Raul will ever lobby the United States to remove the embargo. It is not in his interest to do so.
However Raul doesn’t actually have to lobby for the removal of the embargo, he simply has to not provoke ire of the United States providing a reason for it to not remove the embargo. Raul Castro is aware that Cuba cannot continue down the road it is currently on. The United States removing the embargo unilaterally gives Raul the freedom to reap the benefits of its removal without offering any type of reciprocal action, allowing him and the regime to save face. The tense history between the United States and Cuba makes it necessary to provide a neutral means to initiate any change in policy. By allowing Cuba to save face the United States extends an olive branch to Cuba. This may make Cuba more receptive to future changes.

At present more than two million non-Americans visit Cuba a year proving more than $2 billion in revenues for the country.\(^\text{29}\) However Cuba holds less than 10 percent of the Caribbean tourism market share, (the Dominican Republic currently holds the largest share). 45 percent of the tourists that patronize the Caribbean market hail

from North America. 33 percent of those North Americans hail from the United States. Cuba will never be able to increase its market share without the United States. Tourism is one the largest industries in the world. Cuba generates more than $2 billion a year from tourism. It constitutes over 10 percent of the global gross domestic product. It created more than 230 million jobs in 2009. By 2020, tourism is expected to contribute more than $11 billion dollars to global gross domestic product. One of the most immediate effects of removing the embargo would be the influx of American tourists and U.S. dollars into Cuba. The impact this would have on the people of Cuba would be tremendous.

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Tourism can have a pervasive effect on other sectors of a nation’s economy.

Tourism-induced “backward linkages,” particularly with industry and other services of greater technological complexity such as air transportation, telecommunications, information technology, and technical projects, might facilitate an improvement of the country’s economic structure and its labor force. Thus tourism, a service of low technological complexity in some of its main activities (i.e., lodging and catering) that is based on the intensive use of natural resources, might trigger the development of industrial activities and services technologically more advanced and more remunerative for the country.\(^{34}\)

Obviously in the immediate future and the in the long term Cuba can benefit from improvements in all of these areas. The flood of U.S. dollars into Cuba will allow all Cubans

access to American currency. This can eliminate the secondary market and disparity that currently creates a gap between the Cubans who have access to U.S. dollars and those that do not. More jobs, such as taxi drivers will become immediately available. Long-term the influx of revenue can be put toward improving the country’s infrastructure and standard of living. There is also the potential of restoring the quality of the health-care and education systems to levels seen before the fall of the Soviet Union.

The United States benefits from all of these changes because again it forces the Castro regime to be accountable. With the spike in revenue generated by the influx of American tourists, and the United States no longer positioned to be the scapegoat, Raul Castro must devise a clear path, to resolve the immediate food shortages, the failing economy, staggering employment, and the deteriorating health and education systems. If Raul Castro were not able to capitalize on all of the benefits removing the embargo will provide, he and the regime would lose all legitimacy. This would open the door for a larger segment of the Cuban population to question his leadership and even the leadership of the Castro regime.
over the past fifty years. This questioning of leadership can provide the impetus for a legitimate opposition movement.

Economic improvement and global relevancy are the incentives for Cuba to support, (even if the regime did not advocate for it), the removal of the embargo. The United States also stands to benefit economically from the removal of the embargo. However the United States also stands to benefit in ways that are distinctly more qualitative.
CHAPTER 3

MOVING FORWARD

With all of the issues the United States presently faces, rising health care costs, unemployment, a dying real-estate market and two wars, why should it be concerned with Cuba? The answer to that question is rather simple; in the long-term it is good business. It will also help set the tone for future relations between the United States and Latin America. Additionally it would take minimal effort for the United States government to change its relationship with Cuba.

U.S. foreign policy over the past seven years has been defined by its activities in the Middle East, namely Iraq and Afghanistan. The question is what will define the next seven years. The War on Terror has been a public relations nightmare for the United States, overwrought with poor policy decisions, misinformation and sky rocketing cost. The war is now stretching into the back half of a decade. As opposed to truly coming to a conclusion, resources are merely being reallocated from one theatre to another. It is difficult to conceive by what metric the War on Terror could ever be considered a success. In spite of not being able to provide tangible
results, the War on Terror may have served another purpose. It has provided the United States richly in the way of actionable concepts. It highlighted areas in which the United States was lax and forced it to reevaluate how it should address these areas. This is particularly true in the area of natural resources, primarily fuel and energy.

Another area the war highlighted is the United States position as a diplomatic entity. There is a looming cloud of skepticism and distrust of the United States shared by many emerging nations and even some of its peer nations, and rightfully so. What was sold to the world as a mission to bring to justice the people responsible for killing thousands of innocent American citizens, has evolved into an agenda that most U.S. officials and politicians have a hard time articulating. In short the United States’ reputation is tarnished.
If the United States is ever to regain the esteem it once held, it must address the state of its global image.

The United States has a unique opportunity to address the issue of alternative fuel and repair its damaged image by altering its current policies toward Cuba. Cuba, as a policy issue, has likely been off the foreign policy radar for quite sometime. However the history between Cuba and the United States encompasses many of the issues affecting foreign policy concerns today.

It goes without saying that the U.S. will have to take the lead in order to accomplish this new movement. The embargo and all of the successive legislation aimed at toppling the Castro regime, even if created out of provocation, has exacerbated the situation in Cuba. The Castro regime has been able to exploit the existence of...
the embargo to legitimize the relevancy of its rule. There is no incentive for Raul Castro to seek change.
Secretary of State Hilary Clinton recently acknowledged this fact.

_It is my personal belief that the Castros do not want to see an end to the embargo and do no want to see normalization with the United States, because they would lose all of their excuses for what hasn't happened in Cuba in the last 50 years_.

The Castro regime’s reluctance to relinquish its embrace of the embargo has been highlighted in the numerous quid-pro-quo approaches that have failed in the past. President George W. Bush’s 2002 Initiative for a New Cuba is an example of the failure of this type approach. The President proclaimed that the purpose of the initiative was to “accelerate freedom’s progress in Cuba in everyway possible.” In his speech given on the centennial of Cuba’s independence President Bush stated that all the things Cuba and its people need; good jobs, free trade, open investment, an improved standard of living, a stable

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currency and a plethora of other social remedies, could all be obtained if the Castro regime would adhere to the United States calls for democratic reforms.

If Cuba's government takes all the necessary steps to ensure that the 2003 elections are certifiably free and fair -- certifiably free and fair -- and if Cuba also begins to adopt meaningful market-based reforms, then -- and only then -- I will work with the United States Congress to ease the ban on trade and travel between our two countries.

Meaningful reform on Cuba's part will be answered with a meaningful American response. The goal of the United States policy toward Cuba is not a permanent embargo on Cuba's economy. The goal is freedom for Cuba's people. This will in fact be seen by the American public and other nations as America's effort to bring all nations into the global community.²

Eight months later in January 2003, the Cuban National Assembly essentially laughed in the face of President Bush and the U.S. government by electing regime approved candidates to each of the 609 available seats.³


As stated previously, the sanctions imposed by the United States caused Cuba severe economic hardship. This hardship was later exacerbated with the fall of the Soviet Union, which had provided subsidies to the country after the U.S. cut ties. Any attempt to remedy Cuba's economic situation can only perceived as a good faith effort. Americans and the global public alike can only interpret removing the embargo sans conditions, as the United States government acting for the greater good.

With the exception perhaps of the Cuban American Lobby, there will be little to no backlash from the American public resulting from the removal of the embargo. However even within the large Cuban-exile community, which has traditionally been pro-embargo, many have changed course and begun to see the benefit of lifting the embargo. A 2009 poll of 400 Cuban-Americans conducted by the Miami Herald, found that 41 percent of those polled were against the United States maintaining the embargo. 40 percent felt the embargo should remain and 19 percent were undecided.4 Although 41 percent is not a super

majority, it is a majority. Furthermore when presented with sound data highlighting the benefits of removing the embargo versus keeping it, the undecided 19 percent could be persuaded to see the long-term benefits of this policy change. Those Cuban-Americans and lobbyist who continue to support the embargo, such as the Center for A Free Cuba will tend to argue that removing it simply rewards the Castro regime. Furthermore by rewarding the regime in this way the United States encourages it to continue to behave in the manner in which it has for so many decades. The flaw in this argument is clearly that leaving the embargo in place has produced the very result pro-embargo Cuban-Americans are trying to discourage.

Removing the embargo removes the restrictions on all U.S. citizens, most notably Cuban exiles who wish to travel freely between both countries and have access to friends and family that they left behind in Cuba. Their travels to and from Cuba will also serve another purpose. In the same way Cuba will see the immediate benefits of removing the embargo via an increase in travel and tourism, so can the United States. By bringing the
values, ideas, and financial aid of the U.S. back to Cuba, these Cuban refugees will in fact aid in the dissemination of democratic ideas and principals. This may prove to be a key factor in inciting a regime change. It is clear after close to fifty years that the United States cannot impose democratic reforms in Cuba. However, the support and influence of American citizens and the Cuban-exile community if allowed to travel freely back and forth to the island may be able to develop a significant opposition movement. A strong opposition movement is the only way to bring about any substantial democratic reforms. The benefits of removing the travel ban far out weigh any gains from continuing to enforce it. Although removing the travel ban will not immediately result in Cuba becoming a beacon of free speech, democratic ideals can permeate Cuban society as a result of free-flowing American travel. This small but critical step can help nurture a reformist movement. As it stands right now, the travel ban does nothing more than penalize American citizens. Under the Cuban Assets Control Regulations, 31 CFR Part 515, Americans caught traveling in and out of Cuba face up to 10 years in prison, up to $250,000 in
individual fines and civil penalties up to $65,000 per violation.\(^5\)

By allowing Americans free access to Cuba, this demonstrates and projects a sense of transparency in U.S. defense and intelligence policies. This idea of transparency is very necessary to combat the air of secrecy and hypocritical behaviors that surrounds the United States and its foreign policy in the eyes of many around the world. Taking action to be as transparent as possible in Cuba will translate well beyond the borders of the small nation. The face of the U.S. intelligence apparatus has been marred with tales of secret prisons and unscrupulous tactics, not only in Cuba, but also in Europe and other nations around the world.\(^6\) The U.S. Naval base in Guantánamo Bay is the epitome of these sorts of tactics. The base which houses, “enemy combatants” has led to the U.S. military being repeatedly accused of


“infringing human rights in ways that are wholly disproportionate to the crisis.”

The base has been such a source of controversy that President Obama made closing the base one of his top priorities upon taking Office. On January 22, 2009 President Obama issued an executive order dictating how the enemy combatants detained at the base should be prosecuted. In Section 3 of the order he spelled out the timeline in which the base should be closed.

Section. 3. Closure of Detention Facilities at Guantánamo: The detention facilities at Guantánamo for individuals covered by this order shall be closed as soon as practicable, and no later than 1 year from the date of this order. If any individuals covered by this order remain in detention at Guantánamo at the time of closure of those detention facilities, they shall be returned to their home country, released, transferred to a third country, or transferred to another United States detention facility in a manner consistent with law and the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States.®

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8 Executive Order. Review and Disposition of Individuals Detained at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base and Closure Of Detention Facilities. (January 22, 2009).
However, to-date the prison is still open and there are currently 193 prisoners housed there.\(^9\) Guantánamo Bay also touches upon another issue, a contributing factor to the tarnished image of the United States, the idea of respecting sovereignty. It has been argued that part of the reason the U.S. government chose to use Guantánamo Bay naval base as opposed to others, is that the base represents a legal “black whole.”

From an image stand point repealing the sanctions and removing the embargo is symbolic. It shows Cuba and the world that although the United States is pro democracy, it does not wish to impose its values on other nations. The Cuba Democracy Act was an attempt to force democratic changes in Cuba.\(^10\) By repealing the act the United States, illustrates that it respects the sovereignty of nations. Considering that this Act did allow for the application of

\(^9\) Spiegel Online. “U.S. Surrenders Three Guantánamo Detainees to Slovakia.”
U.S. law in a foreign country\textsuperscript{11}, repealing it not only sends the message about U.S. views on sovereignty but also shows that the administration is taking steps to ensure that sovereignty is actually respected.

Repealing the Helms-Burton Law will certainly stimulate foreign investment in Cuba as well. Many foreign countries were leery of investing in Cuba out of fear of being sued or losing property under the provisions established by the Helms-Burton Act.\textsuperscript{12} This return of foreign investment will further secure Cuba's place in the global marketplace. It also will help to silence skeptics who will question U.S. intentions. Since the sanctions against Cuba were unilateral U.S. actions, an unsolicited change in course will undoubtedly spark speculation.
Allowing all countries to invest in Cuba again underscores the United States' position of desiring for all countries to participate in the global market place. It is difficult to imagine that the benefits of lifting the embargo will


not be immediate and substantial in regards to the United States reputation in the world. Looking at the long-term benefits of removing the sanctions, the two benefits that stand out the most are trade and fuel.

It is a common misconception that because of the embargo there is absolutely no trade relationship between the United States and Cuba. The United States has actually been an exporter of basic food commodities to Cuba for quite some time. On October 28, 2000 Congress passed the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act. The purpose of the Act was to exclude, medicine and agricultural commodities from sanctions the United States had imposed on other nations.\(^\text{13}\)

The impact of this Act was small during the first year of its inception. However in 2001 there was a significant jump in Cuban food imports from the United States following the aftermath of Hurricane Michelle. Natural disasters would continue to be an impetus for trade between the two countries. In 2004 The United States

was exporting more than $390 million worth of agricultural goods to Cuba\textsuperscript{14}. The year before Cuba began to experience what developed into the worst drought the country has experienced since 1901.\textsuperscript{15} The severe drought spurred the 2004 jump in U.S. exports to Cuba. In 2008 agricultural trade had increased to $707 million in U.S exports to Cuba. This was the result of the successive tropical storms and hurricanes the country experienced that year.

\begin{table}
  \centering
  \begin{tabular}{lcccccccc}
    \hline
    Grains & 0 & 2 & 52 & 63 & 150 & 146 & 128 & 204 & 346 \\
    Wheat & flour & 0 & 0 & 23 & 37 & 56 & 52 & 47 & 71 & 137 \\
    Corn & 0 & 0 & 0 & 36 & 56 & 55 & 40 & 109 & 196 \\
    Rice & (\(\dagger\)) & 2 & 6 & 11 & 64 & 39 & 39 & 24 & 7 \\
    Other grains & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
    Animal feed & 0 & 0 & 19 & 26 & 36 & 24 & 42 & 72 & 81 \\
    Soybeans & 0 & 0 & 21 & 34 & 26 & 33 & 32 & 41 & 67 \\
    Fats and oils & 0 & 0 & 22 & 52 & 24 & 28 & 22 & 22 & 26 \\
    Dry beans & 0 & 0 & (\(\dagger\)) & 4 & 8 & 12 & 23 & 2 & 0 \\
    Meats & 0 & 2 & (\(\dagger\)) & 38 & 64 & 66 & 59 & 85 & 153 \\
    Poultry & 0 & 2 & 0 & 37 & 61 & 58 & 45 & 78 & 136 \\
    Beef & 0 & 0 & (\(\dagger\)) & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 \\
    Pork & 0 & 0 & (\(\dagger\)) & 0 & 2 & 0 & 14 & 6 & 13 \\
    Other meat & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 3 \\
    Eggs & 0 & 0 & (\(\dagger\)) & 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
    Dairy products & 0 & 0 & (\(\dagger\)) & 0 & 27 & 30 & 13 & 0 & 15 \\
    Sugar, cane or beet & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
    Processed food & 0 & 0 & (\(\dagger\)) & 12 & 10 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 2 \\
    Fish and seafood & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
    Paper and wood & 0 & 0 & (\(\dagger\)) & 5 & 10 & 6 & 10 & 0 & 16 \\
    Other & 0 & 0 & (\(\dagger\)) & 3 & 5 & 5 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\
    \hline
    Total & (\(\dagger\)) & 4 & 140 & 254 & 392 & 352 & 330 & 438 & 707 \\
  \end{tabular}
  \caption{Cuban agricultural, fish, and forestry imports from the United States, by commodity, 2000–2008 (million US$)}
  \end{table}

Source: Compiled from Global Trade Atlas (Mirror data), accessed April 29, 2009.

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add to total.

\textsuperscript{\(\dagger\)}Less than $1 million.


FIGURE 3: CUBAN AGRICULTURAL FISH AND FORESTRY IMPORTS FROM THE U.S.

This level of trade, (just shy of $1 billion), took place under restricted market conditions. In the absence of the sanctions and the inclusion of U.S. products outside of agricultural products, these numbers will undoubtedly increase. There are estimates that without the restrictions, U.S. exports to Cuba could equal $1.2 billion. This increase in trade would grow the United States’ market share in Cuba to more than 60 percent.\(^{16}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All products</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>924 - 1,186</td>
<td>49 - 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>172 - 209</td>
<td>54 - 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20 - 51</td>
<td>15 - 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>188 - 194</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal feed</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>97 - 109</td>
<td>65 - 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>64 - 86</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats and oils</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43 - 70</td>
<td>30 - 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry beans</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14 - 39</td>
<td>13 - 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>145 - 152</td>
<td>86 - 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>8 - 13</td>
<td>25 - 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18 - 22</td>
<td>59 - 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk powder</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39 - 87</td>
<td>18 - 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed foods</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31 - 37</td>
<td>32 - 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish products</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11 - 22</td>
<td>32 - 54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Global Trade Atlas and author’s estimates.

FIGURE 4: ESTIMATED EFFECTS OF REMOVING ALL U.S. TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ON U.S. AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS TO CUBA

Creating a new market for U.S. goods and services creates a strong financial incentive for the United States to remove the embargo. Another benefit of removing the embargo presents an economic benefit for Cuba but also addresses U.S. concerns over alternative fuels. The push for alternative fuel production as a means of reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil from hostile nations has taken a toll on global markets. The strain on corn crops caused by ethanol production has caused the price of corn to nearly double. This in turn has caused the price of all corn related commodities to increase, resulting in a public outcry.\(^\text{17}\) Business Week recently reported that the current rise in gasoline prices has pushed the price of corn futures to the highest they have been in almost two years. This is based on the idea that as gas prices rise, the demand for alternative fuels will rise as well.\(^\text{18}\)


Fidel Castro and Venezuela President Hugo Chavez, (a protégé of Fidel) both have claimed that U.S. production of corn based ethanol will inevitably contribute to world hunger.\textsuperscript{19} Ironically, Cuba may be the answer to address many of Castro’s criticisms.

U.S. consumption of corn-based ethanol production has forced corn demand to outpace supply. In 2005 the U.S. Department of agriculture concluded that corn-based ethanol is, “not a renewable energy resource, is not an economical fuel and its production and use contribute to air, water and soil pollution and global warming.” It takes just under 6 pounds of corn to produce 1 liter, (a little over a quarter gallon), of ethanol. It cost approximately six times as much to produce a liter of ethanol versus a liter of gasoline. The increased production of ethanol has driven up the price of corn, which has inevitably driven up the price of other food products. Corn is the principal feed for various livestock. Demand for corn for fuel, increases demand for

corn and the cost of feed for livestock. It is estimated that corn-based ethanol production has increased the cost of beef production by over a $1 billion dollars. Ethanol production is also overtaking land resources. To produce a little more than 300 gallons of ethanol a year, .06 hectare, (64, 583 sq ft), of corn must be planted and harvested. It takes .05 hectare, (5,382 sq ft), to feed every American each year. To fill up a car with a fuel mixture that is only one-third ethanol every year would utilize more land than it would take to feed every American citizen in a year.20 Corn-base ethanol is an unsustainable fuel source.

This obvious drawback to the move to corn-based ethanol prompted former President George W. Bush to meet with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. Over the past thirty years Brazil has successfully managed to create an alternative to gasoline by refining sugar into ethanol. Sugar-based ethanol production is far more efficient than corn-based ethanol and does not affect the

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global food market to such a severe degree.\textsuperscript{21} Although the United States will be able to develop and apply the technology to produce the ethanol, it is unlikely it will able to cultivate the volume of sugar necessary to meet fuel demands. Historically the United States has only contributed less than 10 percent to the global sugar market.\textsuperscript{22} Cuba can play a key role in U.S. fuel production and national security.

As a result of the U.S. embargo and the fall of the Soviet Union Cuba has had to actually reduce its sugar production. In 2002 the Cuban government closed more than 70 sugar mills and reduced the amount of land allocated to sugarcane cultivation.\textsuperscript{23} Those mills alone had the capacity to process nearly 15 million tons of sugar. This sugar could have potentially been processed into tens of thousands of gallons of ethanol. Although Cuba has scaled back sugar production, it has reconfigured several of the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{22}Jose Alvarez, "Domestic and International Competition in Sugar Markets," University of Florida, \url{http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/sc021} (accessed April 12, 2010).
\end{flushright}
remaining mills to not only process sugar but to use the sugar cane residue to actually generate electricity to power the mills. In Remedios, Cuba the Heriberto Duquesne Mill has already utilized Brazilian ethanol production technology. It is currently producing more than 13,000 gallons of ethanol a day.\(^{24}\)

Removing the embargo will revive a once bustling Cuban sugar market. The increased production will cause the Cuban government to reopen sugar production facilities, which will create jobs and reinvigorate the Cuban economy. The increase in trade and investment will stimulate Cuba's technology sector and potentially increase the ease and volume of ethanol production.

50 years of hard-line tactics has produced a stagnant situation that has been detrimental to both countries. This begs the question – why continue? The United States and Cuba both experience a degree of economic handicap under the current relationship, with Cuba obviously far more crippled than the U.S. Both countries have needs

that the other could quickly satisfy. This is why the U.S. government must be the “bigger man” of sorts, take the lead and cease with its current foreign policy agenda. After decades of inflicting punishment on the Castro regime the United States must now court it. It must show Raul Castro that a change in course will be economically beneficial for both countries. After more than forty years, the embargo has proven to do nothing more than create economic hardship for the citizens of Cuba. Any leader would certainly be obliged to seize any opportunity to restore his country's economic viability.

The United States dealings with China have proven that democracy does not have to be a conditional mandate in order to do business. Cuba's proximity and potential make it an ideal nation to be aligned with. In Cuba we find any number of opportunities for the United States:

- By changing course on what is viewed by the world at large as a historic "enemy" of the United States, the U.S. government will demonstrate that it is receptive and more than willing to adapt to a changing global landscape.

- Repealing legislation such as the 1996 Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity Act/Helms-Burton Act will show that this current administration and the United States do indeed respect the sovereignty of nations. This is a characteristic that many have questioned post the U.S. invasion of Iraq.
• Permitting United States citizens and Cuban refugees to travel freely to and from Cuba lends an air of transparency to U.S. military activities at Guantánamo Bay Naval Base. It goes to support the notion that U.S. intelligence activities are in line with international standards and completely above-board.

• Assisting in the restoration of Cuba's economy gives the United States ground in future negotiations with Cuba and other Latin American countries.

• By instituting bilateral trade agreements with Cuba, the United States opens new markets for an expanded range of U.S. services and products.

• Removing existing embargoes will permit more foreign investment and contribute to an overall improvement in Cuba's infrastructure and social welfare.

• Cuba's manufacturing and production sectors will improve which will spur international interest and investment in essential commodities, namely sugar.

• Facilitating sugar production in Cuba ensures that the United States has access to needed resources such as ethanol.

• U.S. and foreign investment will facilitate production increases and technological advancements. This not only ensures that America's energy needs are met but improves national security by reducing America's dependence on oil from countries hostile toward the United States.

The U.S. government would be doing itself and the American people a severe disservice if it opted to continue to support a fruitless and dated policy over an
opportunity that has an overwhelming number of benefits. Continuing to keep the embargo and sanctions in place makes it painfully obvious that the U.S. is blatantly reluctant to relinquish the pseudo-control it has held over Cuba for decades. Perhaps this reluctance is rooted in a belief that the world stage would see the United States as "weak" or caving to Cuba, much in the way the "we will not negotiate with terrorists" rhetoric has defined the wars in the Middle East. However if the United States is to rectify its image, it must show a willingness to change its approach. The reluctance to act and change a policy that could have such a significant impact lends to a willingness of the U.S. to embody the strongman persona.

The "David and Goliath" relationship that Cuba romanticizes and relishes in has not produced the same victorious outcome that David experienced in defeating Goliath. Additionally, the symbolic "us versus them" relationship has not produce much in the way of reward for either nation. U.S.-Cuba relations have been a "flop" of sorts, one failed attempt after another, both parties unsatisfied and unfulfilled.

It is time for a new relationship and a healthier bond between Cuba and the U.S. Conditions in both
countries make this the perfect opportunity for change. It is very true that the United States could remove the embargo only to see little to no change in Cuba. However would that be so bad? If nothing happened as far as bringing about democratic changes in Cuba, would that be any different or worse than the nothing that has happened over the past fifty years of the sanctions being in place?

Despite pledging at the beginning of his campaign to address the issue of the embargo, President Obama has recently backed away from that objective citing concerns over human rights abuses in Cuba.25 However it is important to keep in mind that the United States currently maintains diplomatic ties with China who has repeatedly received criticism for its human rights abuses. Amnesty International recently made a call for China to be more transparent about the number of death sentences it issues per year, which is estimated to be more than 700 people.26


Despite this fact, China is currently the United States’ second largest trading partner with exports totaling close to $80 billion and imports totaling well over $300 billion.\textsuperscript{27} It could be argued due to the sheer volume of trade between the United States and China a certain level of tolerance is afforded to China that should not be afforded to Cuba. Obviously even in the circumstance that the embargo is lifted Cuba will not be as large a trading partner as China, put its proximity and potential for alternative fuels make it a significant trading partner. It serves the United States in no way to manufacture a point of contention with Cuba. Both the United States and Cuba are primed for a change. Again, circumstances in both countries and the world make right now the most opportune time to implement a radical change. The embargo is the responsibility of the United States and as such it must seize this moment, lift the sanctions and allow itself and Cuba to benefit from what each has to offer.

\textsuperscript{27}Office of the United States Trade Representative, \textit{China}, \url{http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/china} (accessed April 11, 2010).
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