U.S.-Cuba Non-Relations: An Analysis of the Embargo and the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program

Author: Christina Wentworth

Persistent link: http://hdl.handle.net/2345/3025

This work is posted on eScholarship@BC, Boston College University Libraries.

Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2013

Copyright is held by the author, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise noted.
U.S.-CUBA NON-RELATIONS:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE EMBARGO AND THE
CUBAN MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL PAROLE PROGRAM

by

Christina Wentworth

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of graduation requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

Boston College
International Studies Program
May 2013

Advisor: Professor Paul Gray

Signature: _______________________

IS Thesis Coordinator: Professor Hiroshi Nakazato

Signature: _____________________
Abstract

Since Fidel Castro rose to power in Cuba over fifty years ago, U.S.-Cuban relations have been defined by mutual hostility. Even though Castro is no longer the president of Cuba, the authoritarian and communist state remains in power in the hands of his brother, Raúl. As the hegemon of the Western Hemisphere, the United States has labored to combat this repressive force that threatens democracy only ninety miles from its shores. Nevertheless, U.S. efforts to destabilize the Castro regime in Cuba have not been effective. In this paper, I analyze the U.S. embargo against Cuba and the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program, both of which are U.S. government initiatives intended to weaken the Cuban government. Through a comparison of U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia, China, and Cuba I find that the United States’ foreign policy is guided more by domestic pressure, strategic decisions, and economics than human rights or ideology. In addition, a lack of follow-through and an absence of transparency have led the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program to be underutilized and poorly-developed. Ultimately, I find that neither of these initiatives has been effective and that the United States’ failure to reevaluate longstanding and unsuccessful policies is detrimental to the populations they are intended to serve. In order to create more effective policies, the United States government must consider human rights in its decisions, continuously follow through with and reevaluate its programs, and ensure that initiatives are in the best interest of all parties rather than those of special interest groups.
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Paul Gray. It was his support and patience that encouraged me to complete this project and I am grateful to have been able to work with such an intelligent and passionate professor. I truly enjoyed our conversations and hope that one day you will find yourself on the beaches of Havana!

I would also like to thank Dr. Hiroshi Nakazato for helping to guide me through the thesis process. He is always prompt, thorough, organized, and diligent in responding to my questions, no matter how frequent and repetitive they may be. The International Studies program is fortunate to have such a motivated and dedicated individual working in the department.

I would be remiss if I did not thank my family, friends and roommates, who have been caring and understanding as always during this process. To my parents, thank you for your unconditional support, love, and honesty. I am so grateful for your patience and encouragement and know that I would not be where I am today without you.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................................. 1

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................................................ ii

List of Acronyms ........................................................................................................................................ iii

Introduction ................................................................................................................................................... 1

I. Theories of International Relations ........................................................................................................... 3

II. Research Design .................................................................................................................................... 25

III. A History of Hostility: U.S.-Cuban Relations ..................................................................................... 28

IV. Fifty Years of the U.S. Embargo against Cuba .................................................................................... 50

V. The Politics of Health: The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program ............................................. 71

VI. Cuba, China, & Saudi Arabia: One of these Countries is not like the Other ....................................... 103

VII. Conclusion: Implications and Recommendations ............................................................................... 141

Bibliography .................................................................................................................................................. 157
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALBA</td>
<td>Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CACR</td>
<td>Cuban Assets Control Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANF</td>
<td>Cuban American National Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Cuban Democracy Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFR</td>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMPP</td>
<td>Cuban Medical Professional Parole (Program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECFMG</td>
<td>Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELAM</td>
<td>Latin American School of Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELN</td>
<td>Colombian Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETA</td>
<td>Euskadi Ta Askatasuna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARC</td>
<td>Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTAA</td>
<td>Free Trade Area of the Americas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMED</td>
<td>International Medical Education Directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMG</td>
<td>international medical graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INA</td>
<td>Immigration and Nationality Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBERTAD</td>
<td>Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, Helms-Burton Act of 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS</td>
<td>Organization of American States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFAC</td>
<td>Office of Foreign Assets Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>Political Action Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>Communist Party of Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSRA</td>
<td>Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCD-PAC</td>
<td>U.S.-Cuba Democracy Political Action Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
<td>United States Citizenship and Immigration Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USMLE</td>
<td>United States Medical Licensing Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1922-1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Ever since the Cuban Revolution brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959, relations between the United States and Cuba have been laden with tension and hostility. Due to its close proximity to the state of Florida, Cuba at one time was a strategic ally for the Soviet Union and a dangerous enemy of the United States. With its role as a Soviet stronghold in the Western hemisphere, this former U.S. ally became an important player in the Cold War as it allowed the Soviet Union to have a presence into the Western Hemisphere. In the early 1960s, hostilities soared as the U.S. designed a series of initiatives to oust the Castro regime and implemented a complete economic embargo against Cuba. During this time period, the United States exhausted multiple options for hastening the demise of the Castro regime and with it the presence of communism in the Western hemisphere.

Although the embargo has fluctuated in its severity over the past fifty years, it remains in place to this day and U.S.-Cuban relations continue to be defined by mutual hostility. Today, most Americans recognize that these sanctions have been ineffective and are in favor of normalizing relations. If this is the general sentiment in the United States, why is the embargo still in effect? Why has the United States normalized relations with other communist dictatorships while it continues to punish Cuba with policies that ultimately harm not the government itself but its people?

In this paper, I will examine both the U.S. embargo against Cuba as well as the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program, an initiative from the Bush era that targeted Cuba’s program of medical diplomacy. Despite the United States’ commitment to weakening the Castro regime, neither of these policies has impacted the strength of the
Cuban government. Instead, each has had a detrimental impact on the health of poor, vulnerable populations. In this analysis, my goal is to discover why the United States demonstrates inconsistencies in its foreign policy decisions toward different countries and why the U.S. government maintains policies toward Cuba that have proven to be ineffective. I will also use the answers to these questions to formulate predictions regarding the future of U.S.-Cuban relations and to make recommendations for U.S. foreign policy.
I. Theories of International Relations

Ever since the Cuban Revolution brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959, relations between the United States and Cuba have been laden with tension and hostility. With its close proximity to the state of Florida, Cuba at once became a strategic ally for the Soviet Union and a dangerous enemy for the United States. With its new role as a Soviet stronghold in the Western hemisphere, this former U.S. ally became an important player in the Cold War by bringing the Soviet presence into the Western Hemisphere. In the early 1960s, the U.S. first implemented an economic embargo against Cuba in an effort to hasten the demise of the Castro regime and with it the presence of communism in the Western hemisphere. Although the embargo has experienced fluctuations in its severity over the past fifty years, it remains, in some form, in place to this day. Had Fidel Castro not voluntarily stepped down from office and appointed his brother Raúl to replace him as president, it is likely that he would still be ruling in Cuba today.

Most Americans accept that the sanctions and restrictions against Cuba have not been effective and will likely not be successful in ousting the Castro regime. Nevertheless, these policies remain in place. Why has the United States continued such practices? Why has the U.S. normalized relations with other communist dictatorships while it continues to punish the Cuba with policies that ultimately harm not the government itself but its people? Why does the United States provide assistance to and maintain normal relations with other severely repressive authoritarian governments such as those of Saudi Arabia and China? While U.S. policies toward Cuba are intended to help the Cuban people, they are instead inhibiting efforts to promote basic human rights.
In order to understand the inefficiencies and double standards of U.S. foreign policy, it is first necessary to explore how scholars have historically approached U.S.-Cuban relations.

*An Introduction to Realism*

Hans Morgenthau is considered to be one of the founding fathers of modern realism. This theory is centered on the inevitability of conflict, rational decision-making, self-interest, and the international balance of power. States are the primary focus of this system, and according to Morgenthau they are unified, sovereign, and rational actors that make decisions with the ultimate goals of security and power in mind. Morgenthau’s interpretation of realism, which was first published in the beginning of the Cold War era, outlines six principles of political realism that I will take a moment to outline.

The first principle is that politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. According to Morgenthau, the fact that the theory of the balance of power was developed hundreds of years ago and is still in use is a testament to its durability and reliability. Second, he asserts that interest is defined in terms of power. This concept implies rationality on the part of the actors and removes variables such as motives or ideology from the process of decision-making. A rational foreign policy, he explains, will minimize risks and maximize benefits. Third, Morgenthau acknowledges that the meaning of interest defined as power is not necessarily fixed. In other words, the kind of interest that determines political action will vary depending on the period of history and the political and cultural interest in which the foreign policy is being made. Fourth, Morgenthau posits that the state does not have the right to decide what is moral
on behalf of its citizens. While individuals may choose to sacrifice themselves on behalf of a moral principle, successful political action—“inspired by the moral principle of national survival”¹—should take precedence. As his fifth point, Morgenthau suggests that it is impossible to determine a universal good or morality. As such, nations cannot accurately declare that their actions are for the sake of these two things. The moral aspirations of a nation and the moral laws that govern the universe must be maintained in separate spheres. Lastly, Morgenthau concludes that political realism maintains the autonomy of the political sphere. Because different facets of human nature exist—political, economic, moral, religious—it is necessary to deal with each aspect on its own rather than as a whole.²

_The Evolution of Realism_

Although political realism remains heavily studied in the field of international relations, it has become less applicable in modern society due to its inability to adapt to an ever-evolving international system and increasingly complex states. Several questions are left unanswered: Why is there such a high survival rate of states if politics is a zero-sum game? How does the theory apply to states that are deeply divided? How can it account for prolonged periods of peace?

David Skidmore and Valerie Hudson, professors at Drake University and Texas A&M University, respectively, highlight three fundamental difficulties of the systemic analysis of realist theory. First, it is unable to determine or predict state behavior. While a range of behaviors is permitted by the theory, this range varies depending on several

¹ Morgenthau, _Politics Among Nations_, 10.
² Ibid., 3–14.
factors, including the size and scope of the state. For example, powerful states have greater freedom in making decisions than weak states. Second, although systemic analyses can theoretically determine the end that states will seek, it is unable to predict the means that the state will use to achieve that end. Lastly, the international system of costs and benefits also applies to domestic politics. This means that cost-benefit analyses must be applied on both a domestic and an international level, and the results for each level rarely coincide. As such, policymakers must consider the rational choice for both international and domestic politics when formulating foreign policy.³

In 1994, Richard Lebow, an American political scientist and Cold War expert, described how the evolving international system negates the realist argument that anarchy dominates international relations and that it is a self-help world. While he admits that the world remains technically anarchical due to a lack of overarching authority, he counters that the “complex web of institutions that govern interstate relations and provide mechanisms for solving disputes…reflect and help sustain a consensus in favor of consultation and compromise that mute the consequences of power imbalances among states.”⁴ In other words, survival is no longer dependent on amassing power in order to eliminate competition. Rather, the integrated global society that emerged near the end of the Cold War precludes inevitable conflict through the realization that cooperation and coordination can lead to the betterment of multiple democratic nations’ national security and economic interests.⁵

---
⁴ Lebow, “The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism,” 269.
⁵ Ibid.
With the end of the Cold War, the shortcomings of the Realist theory came to light. After over forty years without direct military confrontation, the United States and the former Soviet Union arrived at a peaceful agreement. As realism could provide no viable explanation as to why this transition from war to peace occurred, it quickly lost ground in the study of international relations.

_A Realist Approach to U.S.-Cuban Relations_

Throughout the beginning of the Cold War, realism seemed fit to explain the United States’ policies towards Cuba. To be certain, Cuba’s increasingly intimate relationship with the Soviet Union in the 1960s made it an instant security threat to the United States and, as such, the United States had to take action in order to preserve its power. The survival of the United States’ position as the hegemon of the Western Hemisphere seemed to depend on the demise of the Castro regime in Cuba, which was the one Latin American country that had the international support and strategic location to potentially subvert the U.S.’s goal of containment. In efforts to remain the leader of the Western world, the United States implemented whatever methods possible short of war to oust the Castro regime. In addition to direct assassination attempts, these included an economic embargo that sought to involve the international community. These efforts by the U.S. were intended to decrease the power of the Castro regime and ultimately Cuba’s influence on the security of the United States and the ideologies of surrounding Latin American countries.

The status of the international system at the time also seemed to support the realist theory, which claims that the system is anarchical. The international response to
the embargo has indicated that the United States is acting immorally as an overwhelming majority of the UN General Assembly has voted to condemn the United States’ economic sanctions against Cuba not once, but twenty-one times in a row.\(^6\) Despite international calls for change, U.S. foreign policy has remained static. There is no legitimate body that has the ability to govern the United States and it is too risky for one nation alone to sanction the U.S. for its actions.

Despite circumstances that seemed to promote a realist approach to foreign policy on the part of the U.S., realism cannot fully account for U.S. foreign policy decisions towards Cuba. Why, for example, did the United States maintain such a strict and immobile policy towards the Castro regime after Cuba stopped supporting revolutionary movements militarily, pronounced itself as a nation without terrorism or drugs, suffered the loss of billions of dollars in trade revenue and the partnership of the Soviet bloc, and no longer benefitted from the presence of Soviet troops in the early 1990s?\(^7\) Although Jorge Domínguez, Antonio Madero Professor for the Study of Mexico and Vice Provost for International Affairs at Harvard University, acknowledges that the United States did exactly what realists would have predicted by “flexing its muscles to achieve fundamental objectives” in this post-war period, he continues by stating that realism cannot explain why the United States refused to lessen its hostility towards the Castro regime after the state of Cuba continued to deteriorate and ceased to pose a security threat to the United States.\(^8\) If the United States was truly acting with a realist foreign policy, it

\(^6\) Halkett, “What Is the Future of US-Cuban Relations?”.
\(^7\) Domínguez, “US-Cuban Relations,” 53–54.
\(^8\) Ibid., 55.
would seek to minimize risks and maximize benefits, which would include redirecting its time, energy, and resources toward a country that posed a more serious security threat than Cuba.

As early as the 1980s, scholars were putting forth this idea that Cuba did not present a threat to U.S. security interests. In his 1990 report “Cuba’s Military Power as a Threat to South Florida,” senior analyst at the University of Miami’s Info-South Program and retired United States Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Russo describes Cuba’s burgeoning military power. Through the use of statistics, Russo outlines the expansion of Cuba’s army and navy reserves, increased military capabilities, and advanced weaponry. With the support of the Soviet Union, Cuba’s armed active and reserve military personnel came to rival that of Brazil in Latin America, an expansion that the Cuban government believed was justified due to the threat of a U.S. invasion of the island.

During that time period, the lack of communication and negotiation between the United States and Cuba left Castro with little choice but to make assumptions regarding U.S. behavior. Based on a history of U.S. aggression, Castro prepared for a potential U.S. invasion of the island. Cuba’s build-up of weapons, Russo claims, would do little more than to fulfill this objective of protecting the island were it to be invaded. Despite Russo’s presentation of data revealing intense military expansion, he remains skeptical of the effectiveness of Cuba’s advancements. Even if increased training and advanced weaponry give Cuba the potential to attack South Florida, the Cuban army and navy both remain vulnerable due to their dependency on the Soviet Union for equipment, spare
parts, petroleum, oil, lubricants, and ammunition. In addition, the progressive changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe at this time made the sustainability of these forces questionable.

In all, Russo’s argument points to the idea that by itself Cuba does not and did not pose a significant security threat to the United States. Rather, most threats to U.S. national security were related to the Soviet influence and presence in the region as the Soviets installed nuclear weapons in Cuba in the 1960s and continued to build up Cuba’s military throughout the 1980s. While Russo admits that Fidel Castro has the potential to instigate action against the U.S., he writes that the consequence of such aggression would also be a Soviet-U.S. confrontation since the Soviet Union is responsible for providing Castro with the military capability to initiate an attack in the first place. At the time that Russo’s report was written, Castro had not demonstrated an ability to grow and act independently of the Soviet Union. The presence of the Soviets on the island led the U.S. to perceive the two communist nations as intertwined. As a result, the Cuban threat to American national security became inaccurately conflated with the more pressing threat from the Soviets.

In addition to his claims that the Cuban military would be relatively ineffective in a unilateral attack, Russo also argued that the probability of such an attack was very low. A range of other analysts at this time agreed with this sentiment, predicting that a Cuban-initiated confrontation was unlikely and that Cuba no longer presented a security threat. In 1987, Abraham Lowenthal, a foreign policy expert for Caribbean affairs, stated:

---

9 Russo Jr., Cuba’s Military Power as a Threat to South Florida, 8.
10 Ibid.
the essentially symbolic (3,000-man) Soviet presence in Cuba...poses no danger to the security of the United States. Nor is any significant military challenge presented by Cuba’s armed forces, which have been trained, deployed, and equipped—according to the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency—primarily for that island’s defense, not for invasion of the United States or of any other country.”

In addition to his assertion that the Cuban army had been trained for defensive purposes and that the Soviet presence in Cuba did not pose a threat, Lowenthal later notes that U.S. military was more than capable of handling any attack from Cuba. He also mentions the possibility that Cuba’s military buildup could have been a response to a perceived threat from the Reagan Administration. Even before the end of the Cold War, Lowenthal was presenting the idea that Cuba no longer presented a threat to U.S. national security and that Cuba’s primary concern was its own defense, not an attack against the United States.

In 1984, political scientist Margaret Daly Hayes echoed the argument laid out in Russo’s report in her book Latin America and the U.S. National Interest, namely that the Soviet Union’s presence in Cuba was the source of the security threat, not Cuba. She explicitly states that there are no countries in the Caribbean basin that present a military threat to the United States and notes that any threat from Cuba “is potential and derives from Soviet support for Cuba, not directly from Cuba itself.” In describing the U.S. concern for Cuba, Hayes mentions the following root causes: “Cuba’s support of revolution, its influence over the revolutionary Left, and its influence over other governments, as well as its close relationship with the Soviet Union.”

---

11 Lowenthal, Partners in Conflict: The United States and Latin America, 50–51.
12 Ibid.
13 Hayes, Latin America and the U.S. National Interest, 82.
14 Ibid., 104.
reality leads her to view some of these concerns as irrelevant. For example, many of Cuba’s aggressive attempts to encourage revolutionary change in other countries brought about only limited success. Furthermore, this unsuccessful support for revolutionary leftist movements actually served to sour Cuba’s relations with many of the countries.\textsuperscript{15}

Not only do these scholars argue that Cuba no longer presents a viable security threat to the United States, but they promote the idea that it was the presence of the Soviet Union in the region that presented a security threat in the first place. While Cuba, in whatever small way, may possess the desire to attack the United States, it lacks the ability to launch a successful initiative by itself. Even its Soviet-backed military buildup remains defensive in nature. The scholars note that Cuba’s influence in the region and its own ability to project outward is limited and doubt the probability of the expansion of Marxist-Leninist ideology to other Caribbean countries, which would require the express support of the Soviet Union. While the Soviet Union’s placement of nuclear weapons in Cuba in 1962 presented a very clear security threat to the United States and its continued presence and support in the region served as a source of anxiety for the U.S. government, these facts did not indicate that Cuba should be assumed to be a danger to the United States.

If these scholars were arguing that Cuba did not present a serious threat to U.S. national interest even during the Soviet-era, it stands to reason that the withdrawal of Soviet support in the early 1990s would have eradicated most possibilities of Cuba posing a serious threat to U.S. national security. This sentiment was largely echoed in a

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 110.
2010 report by the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR) analyzing Cuba’s status as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1982. The initial rationale for this label was Cuba’s support of insurgents and Foreign Terrorist Organizations abroad as well as Cuba’s practice of providing safe haven to American fugitives. Later tacked onto this reasoning was the fact that Cuba opposed the war on terror and made no attempt to “trade, block, or seize terrorist assets” and the idea that Cuba may have a limited biological weapons program. After outlining these supposed offenses, the CFR report negates the validity of each one, declaring that Cuba stopped actively supporting insurgents abroad in 1992, there was “no evidence of terrorist-related money laundering or financing activities in the Cuban banking system,” Cuba has not provided safe haven to any new U.S. fugitives wanted for terrorism since 2006, the Castro government likely stopped arming and training the National Liberation Army (ELN) in 1991 and never supported the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) militarily, and Cuba does not possess bioweapons. Although Cuba disapproves of the war on terror itself, its initial response to the 9/11 attacks demonstrated its sympathy for the U.S. and ability to cooperate on a limited basis. Cuba offered medical assistance to the victims, opened Cuban airports to U.S. commercial planes that were unable to reach their destination due to the crisis, signed all twelve UN-sanctioned international antiterrorism treaties, and Castro publicly condemned terrorism on the night of the attacks. Although this cooperation alone is not evidence that Cuba does not present a threat to the United States’ national security, combined with the fact
that the other bases for labeling Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism are invalid it makes a strong argument for removing Cuba from this list.\textsuperscript{16}

The analyses above, the majority of which were written prior to the end of the Cold War, appreciate the security threat once presented by the Soviet Union’s presence in the region, doubt the probability of a Cuban attack on U.S. soil, and conclude that Cuba in and of itself does not present a threat to U.S. national security. Although these analyses serve to dismiss the validity of protecting one’s national interest in the formation of the United States’ Cuba policy, these reports lack a comprehensive analysis of other factors that have contributed to the U.S.’s harsh approach toward Cuba.

\textit{Liberalism}

As realism has outlived its tenure as the dominant theory of international relations, it has become necessary to ask what factors besides survival and the quest for power are relevant in the formulation of foreign policy. Unlike realism, which concludes that conflict is inevitable, the theory of liberalism contends that there is incentive for cooperation among states despite anarchy and disagreements. As actors in the international system become increasingly interdependent, the propensity for war decreases. In liberal theory, states are not strictly power-seeking but are influenced by societal interests and values.\textsuperscript{17} Two major categories of liberal theory theories that are relevant to this case are commercial and republican. Richard Rosecrance, an American economist, historian and political scientist, describes commercial liberalism as an integrated world system driven by communication and trade allows for absolute gains and

\textsuperscript{16} Bailly, “State Sponsors.”

\textsuperscript{17} Moravesik, “Liberal Theories of International Relations,” 6.
raises the costs and risks of military conflict through economic interdependence.\textsuperscript{18} The other strain of thought mentioned, republican liberalism, contends that liberal states tend to be peaceful with one another but not necessarily with non-liberal states. Liberal states are characterized by the guarantee of negative freedoms such as freedom of speech, positive freedoms that promote opportunity such as the right to an education, and democratic participation and representation. These characteristics reduce uncertainties by ensuring government accountability and transparency. Michael Doyle, author of “Liberalism and World Politics,” explains how lasting liberal peace is a result of the nature of liberalism itself, which creates affinities at the international level.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite their effectiveness in explaining peaceful relations, neither of these theories can be clearly applied to the U.S.’s foreign policy decisions regarding Cuba. Although Cuba has recently proven to be a lucrative market for certain U.S. exports,\textsuperscript{20} the United States did not have any economic relationship with Cuba from 1959 until 2001 and Cuba stands to benefit more from a trading relationship with the United States than the United States does. As such, there exists no “economic interdependence” that would foster peace between these two nations. Republican liberalism is also irrelevant as it only applies to liberal countries, which Cuba is not.

The general theory of liberalism, however, does apply to U.S.-Cuban relations to some extent. In the theory of domestic liberalism, state action in international affairs is

\textsuperscript{18} Rosecrance, \textit{The Rise of the Trading State}.
\textsuperscript{19} Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs.”
\textsuperscript{20} In 2006 the United States accounted for 32\% of Cuban imports of fish, agricultural goods, and forestry products. This made the United States the leading supplier for Cuban imports of these specific goods. This significant share in the market was achieved after just entering the market around 2001 when the Cubans faced critical shortages in goods due to the devastation of Hurricane Michelle. (Source: US International Trade Commission, \textit{US Agricultural Sales to Cuba}.)
explained by interactions in domestic politics. In contrast to realism, which considers states to be unified actors, this perspective recognizes that states’ policies and practices will be determined by domestic divisions. Coalitions and institutions tend to have different goals and objectives that are, ideally, translated into policy. It is the structure of the state that determines how these domestic actors’ preferences reach the government and how these preferences are, or are not, translated into policy.\(^{21}\) The answers to these questions are dictated by the strength of the state, which reflects the extent to which public opinion will influence foreign policy. In their discussion of the influence of domestic structures on foreign policy, Harald Müller and Thomas Risse-Kappen, Adjunct Professor of International Relations Director at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt and Berlin-based international relations scholar, respectively, note that the United States is what would be considered a “weak state” in which the government is dominated by society. The U.S.’s federalist structure, system of checks and balances, and extensive network of interest group representation allows public opinion and interest groups to have significant influence on foreign policy decisions.\(^{22}\)

Daniel Erikson, a senior associate with the Inter-American Dialogue think tank, writes on the present and future state of Cuba with regard to U.S. foreign policy. In the preface to his book *The Cuba Wars*, he discusses the tight grip that the Cuban American community has on the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government. Without other means to pursue democratic change in Cuba, the Cuban exile community must rely on the U.S. government. The passage of legislation and the decisions made by

---

\(^{21}\) Moravcsik, “Liberal Theories of International Relations.”

\(^{22}\) Skidmore and Hudson, *The Limits of State Autonomy*, 34.
presidential administrations tended to parallel the election cycle, and Erikson explicitly states that “Most American presidents kowtow to Cuban exiles in South Florida during an election year…” Nevertheless, this influence on presidential platforms and proposed and approved policies does not necessarily mean that positive change came about in Cuba. Although Erikson accepts that the influence of the Cuban exile community is a reality, he maintains that this domestic approach to international relations has failed and will continue to be ineffective as long as the legislative and executive branches simply cater to the desires of lobby groups.

Dr. Soraya Castro Mariño, Senior Researcher and Professor at the Center for the Study of the United States at the University of Havana, Cuba, also draws on the importance of domestic politics in U.S. policy toward Cuba in her report “The Possibility of Détente Before the Third Millenium.” She begins by describing how both ends of the political spectrum tended to conform to a common anti-Cuba position during the Cold War and continues by noting that the post-Cold War era provided a context in which the Cuban American community could rise to the forefront of American politics. The right-wing exile group viewed the vulnerability of a Soviet-less Cuba as the perfect opportunity to strengthen the blockade and bring about the collapse of the Cuban government. She states that special Cuban American interest groups “used the United States’ political process and the congressional electoral logic to serve their own interests.”

24 Ibid., xi.
process tended to agree on the idea that the U.S. policy toward Cuba should not change, these forces effectively encouraged the maintenance and expansion of the embargo.\textsuperscript{26} The extent of these groups’ influence on U.S. policy is epitomized in Castro Mariño’s statement that “the U.S. policy toward Cuba has been held hostage by domestic factors” for years.\textsuperscript{27} Even strategies and policies that academics deemed to be “politically unwise”\textsuperscript{28} were passed in order to placate the Cuban American lobby. She concludes that this group has monopolized and manipulated foreign policy towards Cuba and maintains that shifts in public opinion that rival the views of the hardline Cuban exile community will take time to come forward and translate into policy changes.\textsuperscript{29}

The theory of domestic liberalism can be applied to U.S. foreign policy to explain why domestic interest groups have been so successful in influencing state decision-making. In Chapter VI, I will look more specifically at the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), which has had an instrumental impact on the formulation of U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba. Despite the importance of this group and other domestic factors, the United States’ foreign policy has also been influenced by its own history, biases, and perceptions, human rights concerns, and security interests. For this reason, it is necessary to consider, but not rely on, domestic influences in an analysis of U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 29.
Ideology as a Basis for U.S. Foreign Policy

In his analysis of liberalism, Moravcsik explains how social identity can stem from a commitment to a particular form of political institution. This commitment to a political ideology, when placed in direct confrontation with another state’s incompatible worldview, can fuel international conflict. It is clear that in the case of the United States and Cuba, ideological differences are at the forefront of conflict as the democracy of the United States stands in stark contrast to the communist Castro regime. In his analysis of ideology as a source of conflict, Jorge Domínguez examines how the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary could be used to justify U.S. intervention in Cuba. The Monroe Doctrine declares that the extension of any part of Europe’s system into the Western hemisphere is dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States, while the Roosevelt Corollary expounds on this idea by claiming that the United States has the right in intervene in Latin American countries that are experiencing internal disorder or have suffered foreign invasion. Each of these documents seeks to avert the extension of European systems and ideas in Latin America in order to preserve the United States’ conception of democracy as the leading model in the Western Hemisphere.

The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, also known as the LIBERTAD or Helms-Burton Act, exemplifies the United States’ ideological conflict with Cuba. In order for the United States government normalize relations with Cuba, the Act declares that Cuba must first institute a transitional government, free all political prisoners, legalize all political activity, and make a public commitment to organize fair and free elections. Other requirements of the transitional government include excluding Fidel and
Raúl Castro from the government, “ceasing interference with Radio Martí or Television Martí, permitting the reinstatement of citizenship to Cuban-born persons returning to Cuba, and ‘taking appropriate steps’ to return expropriated property to U.S. citizens or compensate them accordingly.” Domínguez also notes that the conditions stipulated for a democratic government are far more extensive than any internationally recognized standards for a democratic or transitional democratizing government. This concern with the type of government in place in Cuba illustrates the ideological conflict between the United States and Cuba, which may in part explain why U.S.-Cuban relations were not normalized after the Cold War.

While the LIBERTAD Act clearly outlines the United States’ dissatisfaction with the communist system in Cuba and encourages a transition to democracy, the other listed requirements for the normalization of relations indicate that there are also other factors at play. The condition requiring the return of expropriated property to U.S. citizens or compensation for their losses is not an ideological battle for the United States, but rather an economic concern. On the other hand, the mandatory exclusion of Fidel and Raúl from the government, without any consideration of the fact that a democratic process may place either leader back at the forefront of Cuban politics, demonstrates the inflexibility of the United States and a history of long-standing personal hostility. It is apparent that rather than being seen as a purely ideological battle, the struggle between the United States and Cuba must be viewed from a perspective that considers domestic political pressures, ideological underpinnings, the history of relations, and economic concerns.

---

31 Ibid., 58.
Combining Domestic and International Politics

The concept of an international theory that incorporates both international and domestic factors is by no means novel and can be seen to some extent in domestic liberalism. In their volume *Limits of State Autonomy*, Skidmore and Hudson attempt to fill in the gaps in international relations theory that ignore the role of politically organized groups. They argue that theories that lie at the systemic level of analysis are insufficient due to their inability to consider domestic factors. In the same way, they criticize domestic-centered theories for their failure to attend to the causal role of societal groups.\(^{32}\) Economic interdependence, rising literacy, improved communication, and the spread of democracy have changed the structure of the international system. Although the assumed anarchic structure of the international system preserved the prevalence of the realist theory throughout the Cold War, the increasingly integrated nature of global society has led to the blurring of distinctions between domestic and international politics; it is no longer possible to consider just one of these levels of negotiation in the development of foreign policy. For this reason, it is necessary to employ a theory that acknowledges the demands of both domestic and international pressures.

International Bargaining as a Two-Level Game

The need for self-preservation in the international realm is not the only factor that is affecting U.S. foreign policy decisions. In the United States’ democratic society, politicians are not only responsible for pleasing their allies on the international front but they are also accountable to their constituents at home. With one poor choice or one

\(^{32}\) Skidmore and Hudson, *The Limits of State Autonomy*, 1.
wrong move, a politician could be voted out of office. While the nature of this system is what ensures that the population truly has a say in governmental decisions, it can also lead to immobility and poor decision-making with regard to foreign affairs.

Robert Putnam argues that international and domestic politics are irrevocably intertwined and developed a theory of international relations that incorporates both in a “two-level game.” While he was not the first scholar to develop a theory that considers both domestic and international influences, his approach is unique in that it focuses on politics itself rather than state strength. More specifically, the domestic factors he mentions are “parties, social classes, interest groups (both economic and noneconomic), legislators, and even public opinion and elections.”

Interest groups put pressure on the government or their local politicians to adopt positions that they find favorable. On the international level, governments negotiate with foreign actors in efforts to maintain balance in the international realm and avoid conflict. These negotiations are highly influenced by a need to satisfy the pressures they face domestically. Thus, when foreign policy issues arise the negotiators must work with each other on the international level to reach a tentative agreement (Level I) and then present this agreement to the different domestic actors, who influence the decision of whether it should be ratified, modified, or rejected (Level II). Until the same agreement has been ratified by all parties on both levels of negotiations, the process remains incomplete.

---

34 Ibid., 434.
35 Ibid., 437.
In Putnam’s theory, the “win-set”, which he defines as the “set of all possible Level I agreements that would…gain the necessary majority among the constituents,” plays an important role. The larger the win-set, or the greater the number of possible Level I agreements that constituents would vote in favor of, the more likely it is that there will be a Level I (or international) agreement. In order to determine the size of the nation’s Level II win-set, it is necessary to consider which groups are most affected by or are most interested in the issue being negotiated. In negotiations with Cuba, for example, the group that tends to be most affected is Cuban Americans. As such, this constituency tends to be the most influential group in determining the U.S.’s foreign policy towards Cuba. In general, Cuba is not high on the list of priorities for other American citizens. Nevertheless, when certain actions by Cuba or the U.S. directly impact the nation, such as the migration crises, politicians are forced to pay greater attention to foreign policy issues regarding Cuba. Due to the importance of the win-set in formulating foreign policy, the U.S. approach towards Cuba is often determined more by a desire to gain the approval of the population than on compromise, rationality, and an objective evaluation of the situation.

The reason this process of interaction and cooperation proves to be so difficult is that each international representative or negotiator has a different “win-set,” or set of agreements that the domestic parties deem acceptable. In order to arrive at an agreement, the win-sets of all sides must coincide. As a democratic society governed by elected
politicians that must respond to various interest groups, the “win-set” of the United States tends to be relatively small. This fact has made negotiations between Cuba and the U.S. even more difficult. Although U.S.-Cuban relations over the past fifty years have generally avoided direct diplomacy, negotiation between the two countries can be seen in the United States’ implementation of policies towards Cuba, such as the economic sanctions, that will only be removed if Cuba complies with the United States’ demand for regime change. For the United States, Level I negotiations have consisted of the implementation of policies that enforce a negative punishment. In other words, the United States has taken away certain privileges and rights, such as free trade, in efforts to stimulate regime change in Cuba. In this action-based negotiation, Cuba can choose to accept the United States’ offer by transitioning to a democratic government and a market-based economy or can reject it by maintaining their repressive political structure.

William LeoGrande, a professor of Government and a specialist in Latin American politics and U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America, has applied Putnam’s theory of international bargaining as a two-level game to U.S.-Cuban relations. He travels from the 1960s to the late 1990s, analyzing the impetus for most U.S. policy decisions regarding Cuba. His analysis demonstrates the cyclic nature of foreign policy as the focus shifts from a Level I to a Level II focus and back with the coming of election seasons and the response to actions by Cuba.39

39 LeoGrande, “From Havana to Miami.”
II. Research Design

I will be analyzing the motivation for the United States’ economic embargo of Cuba and the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program through the lens of human rights violations, ideology, and domestic factors such as interest groups. As this paper has already demonstrated, the national security threat from Cuba is not a valid justification for maintaining these programs. While I will be using Putnam’s two-level analysis to show that domestic factors such as interest groups and the political cycle have influenced U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba, I will also demonstrate that the hostility underlying relations between the U.S. government and the Castro regime has contributed to the United States’ static foreign policy.

Drawn-out, anti-Castro policies have been in place since the 1960s and have failed in their goal of ousting the communist regime. Nevertheless, they have been expanded throughout the years due in part to the lobbying efforts of Cuban Americans. The political pressure fomented by Cuban American interest groups and the cyclical nature of the political system add a significant domestic influence to the formation of U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba. In addition to the domestic pressure from this group of hard-liner Cuban Americans, the U.S. government remains fixed in its Cuba policy because of the relative insignificance of Cuba in the eyes of the rest of the American electorate. In general, it is only when major events occur that the public becomes interested in U.S.-Cuban relations. Because there is no strong opposition to the staunch anti-Castro voice of Cuban American interest groups, Congress has little incentive to adjust its policies. In addition, because the United States’ win-set is relatively small and
Cuba has demonstrated an unwillingness to negotiate on issues that are important to Cuban American voters, Level I negotiations have not yielded any successful results.

Although I will not be the first person to address U.S.-Cuban relations based on the interplay between international and domestic negotiations, my approach is different in that I will be comparing the government’s stated rationale for its decisions to my own analysis of the motivations underlying U.S. foreign policy decisions. I will find that the United States has employed a double standard in its foreign policies toward different countries and that this discrepancy is not based solely on national security concerns, ideological differences, or human rights violations but rather on the strategic importance of each country. I am not arguing that there are not grave human rights violations in Cuba or that the small but resilient country does not have the power to present any security threat to the United States. Rather, I am presenting the idea that the United States is using these issues to justify policies that are outdated, ineffective, and have had a negative impact on the well-being of the Cuban people and Cuba’s ability to develop into a democratic country with a market-oriented economy.

In Chapter III, I will briefly explore U.S.-Cuban relations in order to raise awareness of the history of hostility between the two nations. I will examine the origins and nature of the economic embargo, the unintended consequences of this policy, and domestic and international opinion of the extensive sanctions on Cuba in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, I will take a closer look at the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program. Because the program impacts both Cuban medical diplomacy and Venezuela’s healthcare system, this section will include information on these programs, Cuban-Venezuelan
relations, U.S.-Venezuelan relations, and the overall impact of the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program. In Chapter VI I will present my own analysis of the United States’ rationale for each of these programs by comparing U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba with its treatment of other authoritarian governments, such as those in Saudi Arabia and China. I will conclude this section with an analysis of the impact of domestic factors and interest groups. In the last chapter, I will make predictions for the future of U.S.-Cuban relations and the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program based on the current trajectory of relations and projected leadership changes. Lastly, I will set forth my own recommendations for U.S. foreign policy.
III. A History of Hostility: U.S.-Cuban Relations

In order to understand the nature of the U.S.-Cuban relations today, it is first necessary to explore the relationship between the two countries from the beginning of the 1800s. For nearly a century, the United States longed to possess Cuba for its potential economic and military value. From the early 1900s until 1959, the United States treated Cuba as a neocolony and used its dominance to ensure that any agreements would favor the U.S. It was this imperialist relationship that Fidel Castro shattered with the Cuban Revolution in 1959, leaving the United States without a key ally in its ideological battle with the Soviet Union. In the early 1960s, tensions soared, the embargo became an official component of U.S. foreign policy, and diplomatic relations between the two countries ceased to exist. Since that time, multiple clashes and crises have caused direct confrontation between United States and Cuba. Nevertheless, there has been a marked absence of armed conflict. Today, the countries do not maintain diplomatic relations and the U.S. has only an Interests Section in Havana rather than an embassy. Ideological differences, human rights concerns, national security interests, and domestic pressures have characterized the struggle between the nations. In Chapter VI I will examine which of these factors have had the greatest impact on U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba. For now, I will focus on the significant events that have defined U.S.-Cuban relations over the last two centuries.

U.S.-Cuban Relations: 1800-1959

Because of Cuba’s strategic geographic location, it has played an important role in United States policy since the end of the eighteenth century. In the early 1800s,
Thomas Jefferson recognized that Cuba’s location could make it a useful base for defending U.S. territory against European invasions. At the same time, policymakers came to appreciate the potential economic value of a relationship with Cuba. Its proximity and its position between the United States and the rest of the Caribbean and Central America had the potential to bolster U.S. economic interests in the region. Throughout the nineteenth century, the U.S. manipulated treaties and agreements with Cuba to serve its own economic interests.¹

This era marked the United States’ ascent to power and Cuba’s continued status as a Spanish colony. Because Cuba was a much weaker state than the U.S., U.S. leaders took for granted that the island would naturally fall under the control of the United States.² Nevertheless, despite U.S. efforts to buy Cuba from Spain during the nineteenth century, the colonial power held strong and refused to sell its territory. It was not until 1898 that the United States found a justification for intervening in Cuban affairs and was able to confront Spain directly.

At the height of the Cuban War for Independence, which began in 1895, the U.S. naval cruiser Maine exploded off the coast of Cuba. 276 U.S. sailors perished as a result of this incident and the American commission concluded that the cause of the deadly explosion was external.³ Two months later, this ‘attack’ provided the pretext under which President McKinley would ask for and receive Congressional authorization to “end

---
¹ Dominguez and Prevost, United States-Cuban Relations, 21–22.
² Ibid., 21.
³ Ibid., 28.
hostilities between the Spanish government and the Cuban people.”  

This agreement, titled the Joint Resolution of April 19, gave the president permission to engage in the Spanish-American War. In 1898, the military conflict ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. Even though the Spanish-American War was an extension of the Cuban War of Independence, the United States took charge of outlining the terms of Spanish surrender and Cubans were not even included in the peace talks. Despite rhetoric of Cuba becoming a free and independent nation, in practice Cuba became a neocolony of the United States. The inauguration of a U.S.-controlled Cuban government on January 1, 1899 signified the legal termination of the U.S. military occupation of Cuba but did not terminate the U.S. presence in Cuba.  

The best interests of Cuba were of little significance to the United States, which considered the island to be within its sphere of influence according to the concept of Manifest Destiny. The Cuban government was molded to conform to U.S. interests, the tariff system was reformed to accommodate U.S. imports, treaties were formulated to benefit trade with the United States, and policies were implemented that would encourage U.S. investments. Furthermore, the Platt Amendment was passed in 1902. This amendment, though abrogated in 1934, would define the course of U.S.-Cuban relations for the next half-century. In addition to allowing the United States access to Guantanamo Bay as a naval base, the amendment gave the United States the “right to intervene for the

---

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 21–29.
6 Pérez-Stable, The United States and Cuba, 1.
7 Domínguez and Prevost, United States-Cuban Relations, 29–30.
preservation of Cuban independence” and “the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty…”⁸

For about sixty years, the United States dominated Cuba both economically and politically. Leaders that supported the United States were rewarded with significant financial assistance. At the same time, the United States overlooked the island’s lack of democratic practices in favor of pro-American dictators that singlehandedly destroyed the party system or ignored elections altogether. Following a coup in 1952, Sergeant Fulgencio Batista cancelled the scheduled presidential elections and declared himself president. As his rule came about at the height of the Cold War, Batista sought favor with the United States by outlawing the Communist party and breaking diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that his rise to power and these new restrictions were an affront to democracy, the United States chose to reward his behavior with millions of dollars in financial assistance and by training his army.⁹ Despite U.S. support for the Batista regime, however, the Cuban people remained dissatisfied with the new government and rose in revolution through the 26th of July Movement, led by Fidel Castro.

The Revolutionary Government and U.S. Response

Despite U.S. efforts to preserve the capitalist system in Cuba, the 26th of July Movement and the Communist party ultimately prevailed on January 8, 1959. At this time, the Cuban economy was in a delicate state and did not seem prepared for long-term sustainability. Cuba’s industrial sector was dependent primarily on the production of

⁸ “Teller and Platt Amendments.”
⁹ Domínguez and Prevost, United States-Cuban Relations, 35–36.
sugar cane, elite financial interests took priority while farmers suffered from extreme poverty and miserable living conditions, the unemployed and underemployed populations constituted twenty-five percent of the labor force, and sixty percent of exports and upwards of eighty percent of imports were dependent on the U.S. market.\textsuperscript{10} It is apparent that the new government did not have a solid economic foundation to rely on. For this reason, Fidel Castro wasted no time in implementing reforms under the Moncada Program.

One of Fidel Castro’s objectives through this program was to reverse the corruption of the Batista era. The steps taken to accomplish this goal included enacting “the confiscation of all personal property misappropriated by previous government officials and from their heirs.”\textsuperscript{11} In early 1959, Castro began the process of confiscating property that Batista officials had acquired illegally and eradicated other practices that had contributed to the corruption of the regime. As a result of these transgressions, in March of that year the government began the nationalization of U.S. subsidiaries by placing the Cuban Telephone Company under the control of the Cuban government. Two months later, the communist government adopted the First Law of Agrarian Reform.\textsuperscript{12} This law adversely affected U.S. investments as it nationalized one-third of Cuba’s arable land and a number of U.S.-owned companies.\textsuperscript{13} In the summer of 1960, the revolutionary government continued its attack on U.S. companies by nationalizing Texaco, Shell, and Esso and subsequently passing Law 851 in July of 1960, which “provided for the

\begin{flushright}
\text{\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 42.}
\text{\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.}
\text{\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 46.}
\text{\textsuperscript{13} Hooks, National Security Policy Review.}
\end{flushright}
nationalization of all properties or enterprises owned by natural or legal U.S. nationals or enterprises in which those persons had any interest or participation, by means of forced expropriation.”  

By the end of 1960, all remaining U.S. property in Cuba had been nationalized. The confiscation of North American property not only impacted the United States, but left Cuban landowners and property owners without their assets and nearly 150,000 Cuban employees of North American enterprises without work. However, it is important to note that the Cuban government’s gradual nationalization of all U.S. property on the island was not unprovoked. Rather, it was a response to the United States’ implementation of an increasingly restrictive embargo on trade and travel with Cuba.

Even though anti-Cuba and anti-Castro measures in the United States had a detrimental impact on the United States’ trade relationship with Cuba, the revolutionary government was able to diversify its market by exporting to the Soviet bloc. In February of 1960, the Soviet Union and Cuba reestablished diplomatic relations and developed mutually beneficial contracts. As a result, Cuba’s economic ties with the USSR as well as other members of the Socialist community blossomed. By 1961, these countries had agreed to buy 4,860,000 tons of sugar annually from Cuba.

This new partnership between the Socialist community and Cuba simply fueled the United States’ determination to oust the Castro regime. In March of 1960, the United States approved a program of covert operations that would overthrow the revolutionary government.

---

14 Domínguez and Prevost, United States-Cuban Relations, 47.
15 Ibid., 49.
16 Pérez-Stable, The United States and Cuba, 244–245.
17 Domínguez and Prevost, United States-Cuban Relations, 48.
government. As soon as President Kennedy was elected in November of 1960, he was debriefed on the invasion plans for Cuba and encouraged to launch the attack that had been previously devised between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Eisenhower administration; Kennedy was persuaded. The U.S. government officially ended diplomatic relations with Cuba on January 3, 1961 and the attack took place shortly after. Without fully understanding the risks involved in the initiative, President Kennedy ignored his own doubts and pushed forward with the invasion of Girón, also known as the Bay of Pigs invasion, on April 17, 1961.

The Bay of Pigs Invasion was both poorly planned and poorly executed. Developed during the Eisenhower administration, the plan required Brigade 2506—a CIA-sponsored group of Cuban exiles—to invade Cuba, instigate an internal uprising on the island, and ultimately overthrow the revolutionary government. The attack itself hinged on the element of surprise, but when the troops landed in Playa Girón, Cuba, Castro was prepared. He immediately ordered the Cuban Air Force to attack the ships, and the exiles suffered greatly for his decisiveness. The U.S.’s plan, while well-developed in some aspects, required ideal conditions and did not account for any amendments in its execution. Thus, when the exiles experienced complications and President Kennedy did not intervene militarily on behalf of the CIA-backed brigade, the operation collapsed and the troops were forced to surrender.

---

18 Ibid., 47.  
19 Ibid., 56.  
20 Lindsay, “Lessons Learned.”  
21 Domínguez and Prevost, United States-Cuban Relations, 50.
After this devastating failure at Playa Girón, the United States decided to use its economic pull to put an end to the revolutionary government. On February 7, 1962 President Kennedy issued Presidential Proclamation No. 3447 and made the economic embargo of Cuba official. This law, among other provisions, declared that no assistance would be offered to the current Cuban government, that the president had the authority to maintain a complete commercial embargo, that no Cuban government would ever receive assistance or benefits from the United States until it had restored American property or compensated the citizens whose property had been nationalized, and that no country would receive U.S. assistance if it had not taken “proper measures” against Cuba. In addition to these stipulations, the United States amended Section 5(b) of the Trading with the Enemy Act to prohibit any product that had been manufactured using Cuban materials from entering the United States. The U.S. government also used its international influence to coerce other countries into conforming to a Cuba policy that mirrored its own. It threatened to “black-list” countries that imported Cuban products, which meant that these countries would not be allowed to enter American ports or receive U.S. economic assistance. In 1992 and 1996, the embargo was codified and expanded in the Cuban Democracy Act and the LIBERTAD Act, both of which will be examined in greater depth in Chapter IV.

The economic embargo of Cuba was supplemented by the development of Operation Mongoose, an operation that “had a singular objective to overthrow the

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
Revolutionary government using all the necessary means.”25 This covert program, also known as the Cuban Project, was developed by the CIA during the Kennedy administration with the objective of instigating an internal rebellion in Cuba. The operation planned to organize, support, and finance a counterrevolution that global public opinion would believe was legitimate. Ideally, after these groups had destabilized the region the U.S. army would be able to stage a large scale invasion of the island.26 At the same time, the United States sought to damage Cuba’s reputation on an international scale. One specific measure the United States took to accomplish this was to seek the expulsion of Cuba from the Organization of American States (OAS). Even though this measure violated the principles of the organization’s Constituent Charter, the group of nations ultimately agreed to suspend Cuba due to its ideological differences with the rest of the “interamerican system.”27

In the midst of the United States’ subversion efforts, the Soviet Union was setting the stage for the most precarious period of the Cold War: the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. By covertly placing Soviet missiles in Cuba, Khrushchev improved his own nuclear strategic power and provided Cuba with a potential deterrent to a seemingly inevitable U.S. invasion.28 What the Soviet Union did not foresee in making this decision was the U.S. government’s discovery of the missiles and its subsequent response. After learning about the missiles and much deliberation, President Kennedy decided to enforce a naval blockade of the island and demanded the removal of the missiles. On October 28, 1962,

25 Ibid., 61.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 62.
28 Ibid., 63–64.
the Soviet Union and the United States reached an understanding in which the Soviet
Union agreed to remove its missiles from the island provided that the United States
pledged not to invade Cuba. The United States also agreed to remove its missiles from
Turkey.\(^{29}\) It is important to note that while this event is crucial in the history of U.S.-
Cuban relations, in reality Cuba had very little say in the decision-making process and
actually “turned out to be the most damaged party” at the end of these negotiations.\(^{30}\)

From 1960 to 1962, in the midst of these negotiations and efforts to destabilize
the regime, thousands of children were fleeing Cuba and arriving on U.S. soil through
Operation Pedro Pan. This program, relatively unknown until recently, provided over
14,000 Cuban children with visa waivers over this two-year period. The initiative came to
fruition through the collaboration of Father Bryon Walsh, Director of the Catholic
Welfare Bureau, and James Baker, headmaster of an American school in Havana.\(^{31}\) The
program was ultimately authorized by the State Department, which permitted the
issuance of thousands of visa waivers. Parents fearing the indoctrination of their children
by the Cuban government took this opportunity to send their children to the United
States, expecting that they would be reunited after the seemingly imminent fall of the
Castro regime. However, when Castro barred everyone from leaving the island in the fall
of 1962, hopes of being reunited were postponed.\(^ {32}\) As a result, thousands of the children
that arrived in the United States unaccompanied were forced to live in temporary foster
care or in family or group homes. Due to the Cuban government’s severe travel

\(^{29}\) JFK Presidential Library & Museum, “Cuban Missile Crisis.”
\(^{30}\) Domínguez and Prevost, United States-Cuban Relations, 65.
\(^{31}\) “History: The Cuban Children’s Exodus.”
\(^{32}\) Ibid.
restrictions, some of the children were never reunited with either one or both or their parents.³³ This operation represents one of the United States’ many efforts to ‘rescue’ Cubans from the Castro’s communist regime.

Migration Issues: 1966-1994

In 1966, the U.S. government approved the Cuban Refugee Adjustment Act. This legislation allowed any native or citizen of Cuba who had been inspected and admitted or paroled into the United States after January 1, 1959 to become a permanent resident should they choose to apply for the adjustment. Cubans were still required to be physically present in the United States for at least one year prior to becoming a permanent resident, but this act facilitated the process of applying.³⁴

On April 20, 1980, the Castro regime tested the will of the United States and the Cuban Adjustment Act by proclaiming that Cubans desiring to go to the U.S. would be free leave the island from the port of Mariel. In what came to be known as the Mariel Boatlift, approximately 125,000 undocumented Cuban migrants, also known as Marielitos, reached the shores of Florida over a period of about six months.³⁵ These refugees were not readily welcomed in the U.S. for a variety of reasons, some of which include their status as lower class, the stereotype that they were criminals³⁶, and the high unemployment rate in Florida.³⁷ Nevertheless, in 1984 the Reagan administration

³³ Catholic Charities, “Our History.”
³⁴ State Department, “Cuba: The Cuban Adjustment Act.”
³⁵ History.com, “Castro Announces Mariel Boatlift.”
³⁶ Some of the Cuban exiles were released from Cuban jails and mental health facilities. This issue received much media attention, which exacerbated the issue and fomented the idea that the Mariel Boatlift had been a disaster for the United States. However, only 2% of the migrants were considered criminals under United States law and were not granted citizenship.
³⁷ Eckstein and Barberia, Cuban-American Cuba Visits, 5.
determined that the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 would also apply to the Marielitos, giving these exiles the same privileges as other Cuban refugees. In the same year, Cuba and the United States signed an agreement stating that the United States would accept up to 20,000 Cuban immigrants a year and that Cuba would repatriate the Marielitos that did not qualify for U.S. residency.³⁸

Despite the cooperation between the U.S. and Cuba in 1984, a similar migration crisis ensued ten years later. In mid-July of 1994, Castro lifted travel restrictions and ordered his Coast Guard to “let those attempting to leave illegally pass without incident.”³⁹ Consequently, thousands of Cubans fled the island in makeshift rafts, leading this incident to become known as the balsero, or rafter, crisis. Contrary to its response to the 1980 boatlift, on this occasion the United States declared that it would not automatically accept refugees found at sea. As a result, the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted over 30,000 of the balseros and delivered them to the Guantanamo Naval Base in Cuba.⁴⁰

This crisis ended with the Cuba-U.S. Migration Accords of 1994 and 1995, agreements between the United States and Cuba that were intended to encourage migration through safe, legal, and orderly channels. These accords changed the 20,000 annual limit for Cuban visas to an annual minimum number of Cuban immigrant visas and stated that Cubans redirected to the Guantanamo Naval Base could return to Cuba without any fear of consequences from the Cuban government. The most important aspect of this legislation was its effective establishment of the well-known “wet-foot,

---

³⁸ Ibid.
³⁹ Pérez-Stable, The United States and Cuba, 30.
⁴⁰ Ibid.
dry-foot” policy. Under this agreement, when Cubans arrive on U.S. soil they are allowed to remain in the United States. In short, because of this change in the law Cubans are no longer subject to the green card requirements in Section 245 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). Any Cuban who reaches America’s shores has the ability to apply to become a permanent resident after being in the United States for one year. To the contrary, those that are intercepted at sea are sent back to Cuba or, should they have a well-founded fear of persecution, are resettled in third countries.

Trouble Brews in the Late 1990s

In 1996, Cuba authorized the order to shoot down two planes driven by the Miami-based humanitarian organization Brothers to the Rescue. Just as it had been doing since 1991, this organization was using aircrafts to search for and aid Cuban refugees in the Straits of Florida on the day of this incident in late February of 1996. Despite a substantial lack of evidence, the Cuban government maintained that Brothers to the Rescue was a terrorist group that had engaged in covert operations and bombings against the government. Thus, even though the pilots remained well outside of the Cuban exclusion zone, Castro ordered Cuban MiGs to shoot down the unarmed, defenseless planes.

This tragedy occurred in the midst of a presidential election and the introduction of a new Cuba policy. The LIBERTAD Act, passed on March 12, 1996, was heavily influenced by the shooting down of the Brothers to the Rescues’ planes. The act tightened

---

41 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Green Card for a Cuban Native or Citizen.”
42 State Department, “Fact Sheet: Cuba-U.S. Migration Accord.”
43 One Hundred Fourth Congress, “LIBERTAD Act.”
restrictions on trade with Cuba, discouraged the international community from trading
with Cuba or providing Cuba with assistance, and added new requirements for what
constituted a transition government. For example, Section 205 (7) explicitly states that a
transition government “does not include Fidel or Raúl Castro.”44 Although the brothers’
history makes it unlikely that a government could function democratically with either of
them at its head, this provision makes it impossible for the embargo to be lifted even if
either Fidel or Raúl is elected through democratic means.

More than three years after the approval of this Act, the ideological battle between
the U.S. and Cuba continued with the conflict over a young child, Elián González. In
November of 1999, five-year-old Elián made the perilous journey via sea from Cuba to
the United States. Although his mother and the other Cubans making the journey perished
in a boat accident, Elián was found alive, clinging to an inner tube in waters sixty miles
north of Miami. After being treated in a U.S. hospital, the young boy was released into
the custody of his great-uncle Lázaro González, a Cuban American. While Lázaro fought
for Elián’s political asylum and for legal custody of the boy, the Cuban government and
Elián’s father, Juan Miguel González, unremittingly demanded Elián’s return to Cuba.45
The ensuing battle faced constant press coverage, intense demonstrations, and months of
legal proceedings.46 Ultimately, a raid ordered by U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and
supported by Bill Clinton reunited the boy and his father on April 22, 2000. The pair
would not return to Cuba until June 28, 2000, after the completion of the court

44 Ibid.
45 PBS, “A Chronology Of The Elian Gonzalez Saga.”
46 “Elián González.”
procedures and months of demonstrations in the streets of Miami. This decision by the Clinton administration very well could have cost the Democratic Party the 2000 election, as many Cuban Americans remained outraged by the outcome of this event. Nevertheless, the return of Elián still marks one of the only issues that both the Cuban and the United States governments would agree on in the Castro period.

The Cuban Five—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González—also roused controversy in the late 1990s. This group of Cuban men was arrested by the FBI on September 12, 1998 for, among other federal counts, committing espionage conspiracy against the United States. After their arrest, the men were held in isolation for seventeen months. During the subsequent Miami trial, the Cuban Five were convicted on all charges, sentenced, and moved to five separate prisons.

Notwithstanding the ruling in favor of the United States of America, the sentiment that the conviction of these men was unjust remains widespread. Since the early 1990s, the five men had been on a mission from Cuba to monitor terrorist organizations based in Miami in order to prevent attacks on the island. The International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five emphasizes the importance and relevance of this work, as 3,478 Cubans have died and another 2,099 have been injured at the hands of such terrorists. Anti-Cuba terrorist groups based in Miami have engaged in violent activities with no action from the U.S. government, and it was at great personal risk that the Cuban

---

47 PBS, “A Chronology Of The Elian Gonzalez Saga.”
48 “Who Are the Cuban Five?”.
49 “A Legal Update: The Case of the Cuban Five.”
Five engaged in their anti-terrorist work and tried to prevent the mass murder of innocent Cuban people. The fact that these men did not possess weapons and did not intend to harm anyone did not deter the anti-Cuban Miami court from convicting the five men on all counts. Even though they achieved a unanimous victory in the appeals process, their sentences were reinstated after an appeal by the Bush administration. Some progress has been made recently, as in 2009 the sentences of three of the men were reduced and in 2011 René González was released, although he will be required to serve three years of probation in the United States.\textsuperscript{50}

\textit{Trouble Continues to Brew in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century}

The Bush administration’s relations with the Castro regime experienced some improvement, but are primarily characterized by severe resentment. Tension steadily mounted as the case of the Cuban Five remained unresolved, Castro remained in power as an authoritarian dictator, and decades of hostility were compounded. Regardless of these obstacles, however, certain advancements were made with regard to trade.

After four decades without trade between the United States and Cuba, the devastation of Hurricane Michelle in 2001 provided an impetus for improved relations. This natural disaster caused millions of dollars of material losses in Cuba.\textsuperscript{51} Nevertheless, when the United States offered Cuba humanitarian aid to cope with the massive destruction, the Castro regime respectfully declined. However, Cuba did agree to pay cash for U.S. food products. With this small concession, shipments of food began to flow from the United States to Cuba for the first time in forty years. Although the process was

\textsuperscript{50} “Who Are the Cuban Five?”.
\textsuperscript{51} Domínguez and Prevost, \textit{United States-Cuban Relations}, 17.
flooded with obstacles and tedious paperwork, the countries had finally established limited trade relations. Between this landmark transformation starting in 2001 and 2004, the United States’ share of imports in Cuba grew to 42%.53

In 2002, President Bush announced the Initiative for a New Cuba. This effort was intended to nudge Cuba towards democracy and offered to ease the trade and travel ban should Cuba take concrete steps toward democracy. While the full normalization of relations would still require a new, fully democratic government, President Bush stated that he would still encourage small measures toward freedom. The initiative echoed much of what was already outlined in the Cuban Democracy Act and the LIBERTAD Act, namely simultaneously pressuring Cuba to undertake political and economic reforms while facilitating humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people.54

Despite the establishment of a limited economic relationship and the United States’ continued encouragement for a Cuban transition to democracy, tense relations between Castro and Bush led to increased regulation in the middle of his two-term presidency. It was in May of 2004 that the “Powell Commission” fell into President Bush’s hands, a 423-page report that not only created a strategy for hastening the end of the Castro regime but also affirmed controversial and unsubstantiated claims about Cuba. Among these accusations were that Cuba was a security threat to the United States, that it was a state sponsor of terrorism,55 and that it boasted “limited, developmental offensive

---

52 Ibid., 17–18.
54 Bush, “President Bush Announces Initiative for a New Cuba.”
55 To this day, the U.S. State Department names Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. Cuba has remained on this list since 1982. While it is a fact that the U.S. government perceives Cuba to be a state sponsor of terrorism, the phrasing of the sentence suggests that this designation is an accusation because there is
biological weapons research and development effort.\textsuperscript{56} As a result, in 2004 and 2005 the Bush administration placed further restrictions on remittances and U.S. citizen travel to the island. Furthermore, migration talks were suspended and the Bush administration introduced measures that were intended to reduce the recently opened agricultural trade.\textsuperscript{57}

In addition to these efforts to hinder relations between the U.S. and Cuba, President Bush revamped efforts to oust the longtime dictator, with one of his early initiatives being $100 million of financing of the internal opposition to the Cuban government.\textsuperscript{58}

One of the primary sources of tension for these two countries during the Bush administration was the September 11 terrorist attacks. Although Cuba initially expressed its condolences for the tragedy and offered the U.S. access to its intelligence and the use of its airspace and airports, this offer was rejected and relations continued to sour as President Bush split the world into countries that either supported the United States or supported terrorism.\textsuperscript{59} As Cuba was critical of the U.S. response to terrorism, it ultimately fell into the latter category. Cuba’s opposition to the United States’ war on terror became evident during Cuba’s public denunciation of the Bush administration’s decisions. At the UN General Assembly, the Cuban Foreign Minister accused the U.S. of intentionally targeting both Afghan children and Red Cross hospitals.\textsuperscript{60} As a result of these accusations, Cuba lost any hope of being removing its title as a “state sponsor of

\textsuperscript{56} Erikson, \textit{The Cuba Wars}, 87.
\textsuperscript{57} Domínguez and Prevost, \textit{United States-Cuban Relations}, 18.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{U.S. Trade Policy with Cuba}. 

sufficient evidence that suggests that Cuba should no longer be part of this list. For more information on why Cuba should not be listed as a state sponsor of terrorism, please refer to “A Realist Approach to U.S.-Cuban Relations” in Chapter II.
terrorism” and was once again considered by some officials to pose a security threat to the United States. Cuba’s public displays of disapproval of the war on terror and the U.S. response of maintaining its label as a state sponsor of terrorism each contributed to continued hostility throughout the Bush era.61

*Signs of Hope Hindered by History*

“We’ve been engaged in a failed policy with Cuba for 50 years, and we need to change it,” Obama declared at a political rally in Miami’s Little Havana in 2007.62 In his campaign for the presidency, Obama promised to loosen constraints on remittances and family travel and resume people-to-people contacts.63 Despite the overwhelming tendency of Cuban Americans to vote Republican and oppose travel and trade with Castro’s Cuba, Obama won 35% of the Cuban American vote in the election of 2008 and also took the state of Florida, which boasts a strong Cuban exile community.64 In the 2012 election, Obama received 48% of the Cuban American vote and again claimed the state of Florida.65 With the support of a relatively large percentage of the Cuban American population, Obama lifted some restrictions on Cuban American remittances and family travel in April of 2009.66 Sending money to Cuban government officials and Communist party members remains prohibited, but Cuban Americans are now able to send money to “make their families less dependent on the Castro regime.”67 In January of 2011, the president continued to lessen restrictions by permitting some people-to-people

---

62 LeoGrande, “Making-Up Is Hard to Do.”
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Allen, “Republican Lock On Florida’s Cuban-American Vote May Be Over.”
66 NPR, “Obama Eases Limits On Cuba Travel, Remittances.”
67 Ibid.
Despite efforts by the Obama administration to bring about a new era of engagement with the Republic of Cuba, Cuba’s detainment of Alan Gross has made significant future concessions unlikely. In late 2009, the American contractor was detained by the regime and accused of being a spy for the United States government. According to American officials, Gross had been in Cuba providing both encouragement and financial assistance to religious nonprofit groups as part of a United States government program. Even though it has been accepted that Gross did not have a proper visa to enter Cuba, the United States government maintains that his activities did not pose a violent threat to the Cuban government.69

Gross has dedicated his career to international development, and his work has taken him to at least fifty different countries. His own company, Joint Business Development Center, is dedicated to economic and business development and helps remote areas in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Armenia and Kuwait gain access to the internet.70 His trip to Cuba had been the culmination of a project with Development Alternatives Inc., a company contracted by USAID, which noted that Gross’s mission in Cuba was to facilitate communication between nonviolent and nondissident religious organizations.71 His labors included delivering and monitoring communications equipment that would allow these organizations to avoid the government’s controls in

---

69 Thompson and Lacey, “Contractor Jailed in Cuba Was Aiding Religious Groups, U.S. Says.”
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
order to access the Internet. The work he was completing was not inherently political, nor
was it intended to pose a violent security threat to the Cuban government.

Nevertheless, to this day he remains jailed in Cuba for what Cuban authorities call
“Acts against the Independence or Territorial Integrity of the Cuban State.” Although
Obama has advocated for Gross’s release, Cuba shows no signs of lessening his 15-year
prison sentence. It is even less likely to decrease this sentence as long as it remains
troubled by “legitimate humanitarian concern” for the Cuban Five. Even if Cuba’s
frustration with the treatment of the Cuban Five is legitimate, global support for Alan
Gross has placed the issue of human rights concerns in Cuba on the international agenda.

Gross faced ambiguous charges from a biased judicial system and was denied bail
for over a year while he waited for his trial. Even the United Nations Human Rights
Council published a report that highlighted the partiality of Cuba’s judicial system and
urged Cuba to release Alan Gross. The Cuban government responded to these accusations
by claiming that the report itself was biased towards Washington. It seems apparent that
the inflexibility of both the United States and the Republic of Cuba will make it
impossible for compromise or concessions in the near future. Even though the Obama
administration did take steps to ease travel and the sending of remittances to Cuba,
President of Cuba’s National Assembly Ricardo Alarcón dismissed these as minor

---

72 Parnass, “3 Years After Arrest, American Alan Gross Still Jailed in Cuba.”
73 Ibid.
74 Tamayo, “A U.N. Human Rights Group Has Urged Cuba to Free Alan Gross.”
75 Ibid.
changes and noted that he does not foresee any significant change in the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba.  

*Looking Forward*

In Chapter VII, I will discuss the future of U.S.-Cuban relations and the prospects for normalization. In looking at the history of the relations between the two countries, it is clear that there has been a gradual escalation of hostilities mounting from both sides. The nationalization of U.S. property led to sanctions on Cuba, the tightening of sanctions led to migration crises instigated by Fidel Castro, the attack on Brothers to the Rescue instigated the passage of the LIBERTAD Act, the Elián González case renewed the U.S.’s interest in Cuba, and the arrest and detention of the Cuban Five has made negotiations for the release of Alan Gross futile. Relations have been characterized by action followed by reaction as each country uses its own influence to hit the other where it hurts most. This history of tension and hostility has played a significant role in the lack of serious communication and negotiation between the two countries. While domestic influences, ideological differences, and Cuba’s human rights violations have hindered any potential peace-making process, it is also this history void of negotiation and full of resentment that has kept the U.S. and Cuba from making any progress toward normalization.

---

76 Lacey, “In Cuba, Hopeful Tenor Toward Obama Is Ebbing.”
IV. Fifty Years of the U.S. Embargo against Cuba

Even before the Cuban revolutionary government was established, the United States was determined to remove it. U.S. government officials spent the duration of Cuba’s 26th of July Movement trying to bolster opposition to the revolution and devoted the two years after that to attacking the new regime. From 1959 to 1961, the U.S. government instigated a fierce anticommunist campaign, organized counterrevolutions through the work of the CIA, executed sabotage through the destruction of economic goods, implemented assassination attempts, raids, murders, and bombings, and physically attacked sugar cane crops and production in Cuba.¹ Esteban Morales Dominguez and Gary Prevost, authors of *United States-Cuban Relations: A Critical History*, note that “there is almost nothing new to invent in order to attack Cuba that was not already done by the Eisenhower administration…”² Thus, under President Kennedy the United States resorted to wide-reaching economic sanctions. At this time Cuba depended on the U.S. as an important partner in trade, and the U.S. government hoped that removing this form of support would devastate the new Cuban government.

The U.S. codified the economic sanctions against Cuba in 1962 and they still remain in effect today. Although this embargo has failed to oust the Castro regime, the United States has not only maintained the sanctions but has used coercive legislation to encourage other countries to restrict their trade with Cuba. The severity of the embargo has fluctuated with different presidential administrations, but it has never been removed. This stagnation is in spite of international pressure to eliminate the sanctions, the

¹ Domínguez and Prevost, *United States-Cuban Relations*, 55.
² Ibid.
economic opportunity of a relationship with Cuba, and evidence that the embargo has been ineffective in achieving its original goal.

A Brief History of the Embargo

Although Chapter III explored the origins of the embargo and how it has evolved under each administration, I will now take a closer look at some of the legislation that provided the legal justification for, codified, and expanded the embargo. In investigating the development of these sanctions, I will find that the sanctions have become more restrictive and expansive over the years despite their inability to produce concrete results. I will begin by exploring the origins of and justifications for the embargo.

In part, the embargo was first implemented because the Cuban government maintains possession of property that the revolutionary government confiscated by over fifty years ago. Even in the most recent codification of the embargo, the LIBERTAD Act of 1996, it is stated that the United States will only recognize a transition government in Cuba when it has taken “appropriate steps to return to United States citizens (and entities which are 50 percent or more beneficially owned by United States citizens) property taken by the Cuban government from such citizens and entities on or after January 1, 1959, or to provide equitable compensation to such citizens and entities for such property.”3 Because the embargo will not be lifted until Cuba transitions to a democratically elected government, it stands to reason that the embargo will remain in place until the Cuban government repays all of its debts to the Americans whose property was unlawfully nationalized by the Cuban government.

---

3 One Hundred Fourth Congress, “LIBERTAD Act.”
The Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 also contained provisions that allowed President Kennedy to institute an embargo. According to this document, the president holds the authority to impose embargoes on foreign countries during times of war. In 1933, this authority expanded to include times of national emergency. The act was amended again in 1977 by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to once again limit the president’s ability to impose an embargo to only times of war. Despite these restrictions, the embargo on Cuba was considered an exception and remained in effect.\(^4\)

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 also justifies the embargo on Cuba. This legislation bars any U.S. foreign assistance to the ‘present’ government of Cuba. In order to execute this prohibition, the act declares that the president can establish and maintain an embargo on trade with Cuba. With the support of the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, President John Kennedy issued Proclamation 3447 on February 3, 1962. With this proclamation, the total economic embargo against Cuba became official as the president authorized the Treasury to prohibit imports of Cuban goods and goods imported through Cuba.\(^5\)

In 1963, the Treasury issued the Cuban Assets Control Regulations (CACR) under the same authority that gave the president the power to establish the embargo: the Trading with the Enemy Act and the Foreign Assistance Act. These regulations place limitations on transactions that do not have a government license from the Treasury, including those relating to travel, trade, and remittances. It also asserts that anyone that is

\(^{4}\) Gootnick, “U.S. Embargo on Cuba.”
\(^{5}\) Ibid.
subject to U.S. jurisdiction is not permitted to participate in transactions that involve property in which Cuba or a Cuban national has an interest.\textsuperscript{6}

After the end of the Cold War, the United States strengthened the embargo with the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA). The CDA, also known as the Torricelli Act, was signed into law in 1992. The U.S. believed that the fall of communism provided the perfect context in which it could seek a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. In addition to the United States’ commitment to bringing democracy to Cuba, the other reasons for which the embargo was implemented are listed in the document’s findings. These include Castro’s disregard for internationally accepted standards of human rights, the Cuban peoples’ desire for freedom, the Cuban government’s tendency to focus on its military rather than on the well-being of its own people, and Castro’s unwillingness to dispose of his repressive dictatorship. In order to eradicate these issues and bring democracy to Cuba, the CDA not only states that the United States will oppose human rights violations in Cuba, maintain sanctions on the Castro regime until democratization occurs, and prepare to help Cuba with its transition to democracy, but Section 6002 and Section 6003 plead for international cooperation in these efforts.

The CDA states that the United States should “make clear to other countries that, in determining its relations with them, the United States will take into account their willingness to cooperate in such a policy” and “seek the speedy termination of any remaining military or technical assistance, subsidies, or other forms of assistance to the

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
Government of Cuba from any of the independent states of the former Soviet Union.”

While the language in section 6003(a) is not inherently threatening—“The President should encourage the governments of countries that conduct trade with Cuba to restrict their trade and credit relations with Cuba in a manner consistent with the purposes of this title”—section 6003(b) explicitly states that any country that provides assistance to Cuba will be subject to sanctions. These penalties range from terminating U.S. assistance to making a country ineligible for the forgiveness or reduction of debt owed to the U.S. government. The only exceptions to this rule are donating food to nongovernmental organizations or individuals in Cuba and exports of medicines or medicinal supplies to the island.

On a domestic level, the CDA allows for improved communication efforts and humanitarian assistance in Cuba. It authorizes telecommunications facilities to transfer information from the U.S. to Cuba and allows the United States to donate food to nongovernmental organizations or individuals and export medical supplies to Cuba. However, there are still exceptions to these rules and requirements which make the export of medicine complicated and unreliable. Medicines must be granted specific licenses by the U.S. government and are also subject to onsite verifications to ensure that the exported item is only being used for the benefit of the Cuban people. In addition, all goods must comply with the Export Administration Regulations and most exports to Cuba are required to have a special license.

---

7 “Cuban Democracy Act of 1992.”
8 Ibid.
9 Gootnick, “U.S. Embargo on Cuba.”
that they serve to improve the well-being of the Cuban people but not the Castro regime, they ultimately impede the process of getting medical supplies to Cuba in a timely and efficient manner.

The CDA also prohibits vessels that have entered a port or place in Cuba in the past 180 days from loading or unloading any freight at a United States port. In addition, it does not allow vessels carrying goods or passengers to or from Cuba to enter a United States port. Lastly, it forbids the use of any vessel carrying goods or passengers to or from Cuba for commodities that are exported under a general license. In addition, the CDA states that the president should establish strict limits on money that United States persons send to Cuba if these remittances have the purpose of financing the travel of Cubans to the United States.

Under the authority of the CDA, the president may lift the embargo should he/she determine that Cuba is experiencing democratization. A democratic government, as defined by the CDA, is one that holds free and fair elections conducted under internationally recognized observers, allows for opposition parties and ensures that these parties have time to organize a campaign for the elections, permits full access to the media to all candidates in an election, respects basic human rights, is moving toward a free market economic system, and is committed to constitutional change that ensures the stipulations listed above.10

In 1996, Congress and the Executive approved new legislation regarding U.S.-Cuba policy. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, also known as the

LIBERTAD Act or the Helms-Burton Act, tightened restrictions on trade and aimed to “seek international sanctions against the Castro government in Cuba, to plan for support of a transition government leading to a democratically elected government in Cuba, and for other purposes.” Like the CDA, the goal of the LIBERTAD Act was to instigate the demise of the Castro regime and guide Cuba towards a democratic government. This legislation, however, was unique in that its primary focus was to encourage international cooperation in this effort.

In its findings, the LIBERTAD Act notes that the economy of Cuba experienced a decline of at least 60 percent in the last five years. Despite the fact that the Cuban Democracy Act, which implemented coercive measures to discourage countries from trading with Cuba, was passed four years earlier, the LIBERTAD Act does not list the Cuban Democracy Act as one of the reasons for the economic decline in Cuba. Instead, it cites the end of subsidized trade with the Soviet Union, the communist structure of the Cuban government and economy, and the decline in trade between Cuba and the countries of the former Soviet bloc. While these are all valid reasons for the demise of the Cuban economy, the U.S. government is remiss in failing to mention the role that it played in the severe economic decline faced by Cuba in the 1990s. The last finding of the act states that “The consistent policy of the United States towards Cuba since the beginning of the Castro regime…has been effective in sanctioning the totalitarian Castro regime.” At this point in time, the embargo had been in effect for over thirty years and the Castro regime remained unchanged; the only visible difference in Cuba was the declining health and morale of its people.
Despite evidence that much of the international community opposed the embargo, the LIBERTAD Act sought to transform the unilateral sanctions into a multilateral effort. The act reinforced and expanded U.S. law that already existed regarding U.S.-Cuba policy—namely the CDA—and also laid out new provisions to coerce the international community into cooperating with the U.S. Domestically, the legislation prohibited loans, credit, or other financing to Cuba by U.S. nationals, permanent resident aliens, or agencies if the purpose of the transaction involved U.S. property that had been confiscated in the early 1960s. It also threatened U.S. nationals with civil penalties if they violated any provision of the act. Internationally, it renewed the U.S.’s commitment to keeping Cuba out of global institutions. The act threatened to withhold funds from international financial institutions that approved loans or other assistance to the Cuban government and threatened to withhold foreign assistance from countries supporting the Juragua Nuclear Plant in Cuba. In addition, it prohibited any good that was made in Cuba, located in Cuba at any point in time, or manufactured even in part by material that was grown, produced, or manufactured in Cuba from entering the U.S.\footnote{One Hundred Fourth Congress, “LIBERTAD Act.”} It also stipulated that U.S. nationals could sue individuals that trafficked in confiscated property.\footnote{Gootnick, “U.S. Embargo on Cuba.”} Nevertheless, even these threats ultimately failed to transform U.S. policy into a multilateral embargo.\footnote{One Hundred Fourth Congress, “LIBERTAD Act.”} It is likely that the act is not as effective as it was intended to be.
because the most controversial aspects of the legislation are frequently suspended by the United States.\textsuperscript{14}

In 2000, the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act terminated unilateral agricultural and medical sanctions against Cuba. Although restrictions still existed for the export of these products, this legislation represented a major step towards normalizing trade with Cuba.\textsuperscript{15} The Department of the Treasury argues that its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) labors to provide exporters with an efficient and expedited process for sending agricultural commodities, medicine, and medical devices to Cuba. However, restrictions such as the prohibition of U.S. government assistance for financing exports, the ban on U.S. private financing of exports, and the prevention of sales to Cuba that are not made with cash in advance or financing from third-country financial institutions still hinder the flow of trade.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{The Impact of the Embargo on the Health of the Cuban People}

Over the past fifty years, the embargo has been most effective in placating the Cuban American lobby. From most perspectives, however, it has not been successful. The embargo has resulted in scarcities of essential foods and medicines on the island, alienated the international community, and has not impacted the strength of the Castro regime. Upon a closer examination of the embargo, it becomes apparent that it is a policy in which the end product is expected to justify the means.

\textsuperscript{14} Dominguez and Prevost, \textit{United States-Cuban Relations}, 13.
\textsuperscript{15} Department of the Treasury, “Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 (TSRA) Program.”
\textsuperscript{16} Gootnick, “U.S. Embargo on Cuba.”
The goal of the sanctions was to initiate regime change in Cuba, an objective that the U.S. believed would benefit the Cuban people. With this long-term vision, the U.S. government was not apprehensive about implementing policies that would harm the Cuban population in the short-term; some officials even justified the embargo by placing the blame for the communist government on the whole of the Cuban populace. In 1960, Under Secretary of State Douglas Dillon made the following statement regarding the embargo: “We need not be so careful about actions of this kind, since the Cuban people are responsible for the regime.”

It was assumed that the shortages and scarcities caused by the sanctions would encourage discontent with the Castro regime. By making daily life in Cuba “as difficult and grim as possible,” the Cuban population would be inspired to unite in opposition and rise up against Castro. Not only did these sanctions have a detrimental impact on the standard of living for the Cuban people, but they were established with that exact intention.

Despite the shortages of food and medicine caused by the embargo, Cuba has been able to make astounding advances in the medical field. It remains dedicated to serving communities that do not have access to healthcare internationally through its program of medical diplomacy, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Domestically, the infant mortality rate declined from 65 per 1,000 live births in 1960 to 11 per 1,000 live births in 1991. The under-5 mortality rate also plummeted from 91 per

---

18 Ibid., 155.
19 Ibid., 150.
1,000 live births in 1960 to 14 per 1,000 live births in 1991.\textsuperscript{20} While these statistics are encouraging, the populations that require specific medicines for treatment still feel the impact of the embargo. Because products patented in the U.S. are prohibited by the embargo, new medicines tend to be unavailable in Cuba. This has a particularly detrimental effect on HIV/AIDS patients, who are forced to wait years for the patents to run out on treatments so that they can purchase generic versions from third-party suppliers.\textsuperscript{21}

In her report “The Politics of Suffering”, Diane Kuntz outlines some of the difficulties Cuba faced during the early 1990s. Immediately following the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union ceased to provide a support system for Cuba, totaling losses of $4-6 million annually in subsidized trade.\textsuperscript{22} In 1992, the United States passed the Cuban Democracy Act. One year later, Cuba had to cope with billion dollar damages left by the “Storm of the Century.” The island’s food supply diminished, basic goods were limited, the clean water supply decreased, and medicines were scarce.\textsuperscript{23} The embargo, as the American Public Health Association warned, contributed to a “decline in services, delays in diagnosis and treatment, decline in quality of hospital care, increased rates of water-borne disease, malnutrition, unnecessary suffering and premature death.”\textsuperscript{24} Kuntz’ fact-finding mission in 1993 led her to determine that almost everything was in short supply in Cuba: food, meat, cooking oil, milk, eggs, soaps, detergents, chlorine to purify water,}

\textsuperscript{20} Kuntz, “The Politics of Suffering,” 88.
\textsuperscript{21} Tutton, “Report: U.S. Sanctions Put Cubans’ Health at Risk.”
\textsuperscript{22} Barry, “Effect of the US Embargo and Economic Decline on Health in Cuba.”
\textsuperscript{23} Kuntz, “The Politics of Suffering,” 94.
\textsuperscript{24} Kirkpatrick, “The US Attack on Cuba’s Health,” 282.
medicines, medical supplies, and oil. She determined that these scarcities and a decreased standard of living would lead to an overall decline in the health status of the Cuban population. As long as the embargo remains in place, Cuba will continue to pay 30-40% more in transaction costs with other businesses than it would with U.S. firms, will overpay for basic needs such as medicine, will face the choice of devoting resources to medical diplomacy to benefit Third World countries or to local investment, and will experience delays and the premature deterioration of resources that result from the purchase of goods from far-away markets.

While the sanctions were successful in contributing to the devastation of Cuba’s economy, lowering of the standard of living for many Cubans, and isolating the nation as a whole from the United States, these consequences have only had the effect of making the Cuban people more dependent on the state, delaying Cuba’s political and economic transformation, alienating other international actors, and damaging the United States’ international image. It is widely accepted in America that the sanctions against Cuba have not had an effect on Castro’s influence, and even a majority of Cuban Americans are beginning to agree with this sentiment. Evidence of the failure of these sanctions can be found in the simple fact that Fidel Castro was able to step down from power voluntarily after almost fifty years of leadership in Cuba, only to hand the presidency to his brother Raúl. As Louis Peréz Jr., professor at the University of North Carolina and

26 Ibid., 96–103.
27 House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, National Security Implications of U.S. Policy Toward Cuba.
editor of the Cuban Journal, says, U.S. policy has “outlived its historical time and outlasted its political purpose.”

Domestic Opinion of the Embargo

Although the influence of domestic opinion will be discussed in further detail in Chapter VI, I will take a moment now to examine the views of domestic groups and actors regarding the embargo. While the general population tends to be preoccupied with other pressing domestic or foreign issues, farmers and Cuban American exiles and refugees are heavily invested in the foreign policy decisions of the United States towards Cuba.

The short time period in which the United States grew to have a significant economic influence in Cuba after Hurricane Michelle demonstrates what an important market Cuba can present in the future. As of February of 2012, total agricultural exports to Cuba have reached $3.5 billion. These gains have been made since 2001 despite strict conditions on trade that make the process cumbersome and restrict other economic sectors from accessing the Cuban market. For example, sales must be handled through third-party banks and Cuba cannot buy on credit from U.S. companies. For a country that tends to be short on cash, this is not an easy requirement to fulfill. Nevertheless, Cuba has become a viable export market for farmers that are willing to make the extra effort. Henry Chiles, a 77-year-old owner of two orchards in Virginia, understands the difficulty of overcoming the red tape and paperwork that can block exports to Cuba but remains

---

30 Hanson, “US-Cuba Relations.”
31 Ibid.
hopeful that Cuba will open up again in the future: “It’s a market that’s close to us. It makes sense for us to export as close to home as we can…You want to make something work, you can usually find a way.”32

These potential economic benefits, while important, have historically been overshadowed by the desires of hardline Cuban Americans to maintain the embargo. The interests of anti-Castro constituents are embodied in the work of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), one of most influential lobbying groups in the United States. In the past, this organization has lobbied for the maintenance of sanctions that diminish the regime’s access to hard currency.33 However, in line with a majority of Cuban Americans, it recognizes that the embargo has not been effective. While CANF remains concerned about the negative impact of a unilateral lifting of U.S. sanctions, it now encourages the United States to take specific measures that will bolster the will of the Cuban people. In its report “A New Course for U.S.-Cuba Policy: Advancing People Driven Change,” CANF argues for increased support for the development of Cuban civil society, more people-to-people exchanges, improved communication and freedom of information, and engagement in bilateral and multilateral efforts.34 It is possible that this focused recommendation from the CANF will encourage the U.S. government to gradually redirect its efforts toward empowering the Cuban people, but it remains questionable whether the embargo will be lifted as long as the organization remains committed to keeping it in place.

32 Vozzella, “Virginia Finds Trading Partner in Cuba.”
33 Mas Santos, “How to Win the Cuban American Vote.”
34 Cuban American National Foundation, A New Course for U.S.-Cuba Policy.
The termination of the embargo must occur within Congress, a legislative body that is directly accountable to its constituents and as such is greatly influenced by lobbying efforts such as those of the CANF. While there is an active dialogue in Congress on the issue, bipartisan divides make it unlikely that change will occur in the near future. As early as the 1970s, members of Congress introduced legislation to lift the embargo. The security issues that had been the impetus for the development of the sanctions in the first place had begun to fade and the State Department itself noted that much of Congress, the private sector, and the public favored normalization. Nevertheless, forty years later the embargo remains untouched.

On one side of the argument, Congressmen and Congresswomen argue for the termination of the embargo based on humanitarian and economic reasons. In a Senate hearing on U.S. trade policy in 2002, Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) declared “it is immoral to use food as a weapon,” “prohibiting the sale of food to a country such as Cuba doesn’t do anything to hurt those that we are trying to hurt,” the policy “only hurts the sick, hungry, and poor people around the world,” and the motivation for the embargo—to instigate regime change in Cuba—has not produced the intended results. In the same hearing, Senator Jean Carnahan of Missouri added that lifting the embargo would benefit U.S. farmers that are looking for a foreign home for their products. The prohibition on private financing of food sales to Cuba places limits on the amount of

---

35 LeoGrande, “From Havana to Miami,” 70.
36 *U.S. Trade Policy with Cuba.*
goods that Cuba is able to purchase, a restriction which hurts not only the Cuban people but American farmers in search of a market for their products.37

Other Congressmen and women, while recognizing the ineffectiveness of the embargo, do not believe it should be lifted. In 2009, Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) documented the futility of the current course of action in a report that called for changes in U.S. policy. In his statement, he noted the complexity of the relationship between the two countries but remained hopeful that leadership changes will bring about constructive change. Although he did not recommend lifting the embargo, he acknowledged that the sanctions had given the Cuban government an excuse to consolidate its power and provided a scapegoat for the country’s economic problems.38

To the other extreme, some government officials maintain the stance that the United States should not “make changes here when they have not made changes there.”39 They argue that until the repressive nature of the regime changes and the Cuban people no longer have to endure inhumane conditions, the U.S. should not falter in its strict Cuba policies. In 2002, Otto Reich, the former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, argued for the continuation of the embargo under the premise that Cuba presented a serious threat to the national security of the United States. He accused Cuba of spying, harboring fugitives, and demonstrating its hostility to the United States through its transfer of dual-use technology to countries around the world and its potential

37 Ibid.
38 Northam, “Republican Sen. Lugar Urges Rethinking Cuba Policy.”
39 Ibid.
to develop a biological weapons program. Because the American public tends to be disinterested in the issue, there is little pressure for public officials to transform Cuba policy.

*International Response to the Embargo*

The international opinion of the embargo indicates that it is time to reconsider U.S. policy toward Cuba. U.S. government officials noted in 1997 that “the United States has had to endure severe criticism of U.S. –Cuba policy, not exactly from its enemies but rather from its own allies.” An overwhelming majority of the UN General Assembly has voted to condemn the United States’ economic embargo of Cuba not once, but twenty-one times in a row. This began in the summer of 1991 when Resolution 47/19 passed, which “called on nations to refrain from infringing on the sovereignty of other member nations.” One year later, after the U.S. had taken no action, the UN General Assembly approved Resolution 48/16, which specifically identified the U.S. embargo in its title. While these rulings represented a moral victory for Cuba, they have had little impact on the United States’ foreign policy.

The reasoning for the international condemnation of the embargo is at once moral, political, and economic. To begin, it is recognized globally that the Castro regime has successfully avoided the potentially crippling impact of an embargo. Although the sanctions have had a detrimental effect on the health of the Cuban people, the disgruntled population has not risen in revolution as the United States hoped. The sanctions are

---

40 *U.S. Trade Policy with Cuba.*
41 *Interfering with U.S. National Security Interests.*
described as a means of encouraging a transition to democracy within the Cuban government, but elite government officials remain the few members of the Cuban population that have not been adversely impacted by shortages of food and medicine.

Organizations such as Amnesty International also claim that the embargo violates human rights law. A study prepared by Marc Bossuyt for the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights states that “the fact that the United States is the major regional economic power and the main source of new medicines and technologies means that Cuba is subject to deprivations that impinge on its citizens’ human rights.” 44 In addition, the provisions in the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act extend the reach of the embargo by coercing other states to limit their trade with Cuba as well. 45 The fact that the embargo in and of itself is considered to be a violation human rights has raised international demand for the lifting of the embargo. In 1996, the Pope specifically condemned the use of embargoes that “cause hunger and suffering to innocent people” at the opening of the World Food Conference in Rome.46

The international community also rejects the embargo for its supposed infringement on the sovereignty of other nations. The European Union (EU) in particular has attacked the U.S. policy from a legal standpoint. Shortly after the enactment of the LIBERTAD Act, the European Commission (EC) used the 1995 Global Trade Agreement, which created the World Trade Organization (WTO), as a means for formally requesting the establishment of a dispute panel regarding the implications of the act.

---

45 Ibid.
46 The Lancet, “Sanctions on Health in Cuba.”
Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chair of the subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade, responded to the EU’s claims that the U.S.-Cuba policy interfered with the sovereignty of other nations by reaffirming that the law only protects U.S. citizens and the country’s national security interests. Her argument centered on the U.S. claims to confiscated property on the island and the fact that the LIBERTAD Act only forbids foreign investment in Cuba insofar as it includes investment on “property illegally confiscated from U.S. nationals.”47 This argument, however, has left the international community unconvinced. In November of 2012, Meutya Viada Hafid, a member of the Indonesian Parliament, addressed the UN General Assembly regarding the embargo. She maintained that “The continued imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba violates the principles of sovereignty equality of states and of non-intervention and non-interference in each other’s domestic affairs, international humanitarian law, the United Nations Charter, and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among states.”48 More than a decade after the passage of the LIBERTAD Act, the international opposition to U.S.-Cuba policy remains strong.

Despite international opposition to the embargo, it is important to note that the United States is not alone in its concern for human rights violations in Cuba. The European Union maintains its “Common Position” on Cuba, which was originally adopted in 1996 but has been renewed biannually since. This position allows EU members to invest in and trade with Cuba but maintains that full economic cooperation will not be possible until Cuba transitions to a democracy and demonstrates respect for

47 Interfering with U.S. National Security Interests.
48 “U.S. Embargo Against Cuba Encroaches on Sovereignty of Other States.”
human rights.⁴⁹ Even though the European Union recognizes the extent of the human rights violations that are occurring in Cuba, it strongly opposes the U.S. embargo and prefers to promote change in Cuba through economic and political openings as well as humanitarian assistance through nongovernmental organizations.⁵⁰

Conclusion

Overall, the embargo on Cuba has not been successful. It has contributed to shortages that harm the health of the Cuban population while leaving the Castro regime unscathed. Scarcities of food and medicine have not instigated the revolution that policymakers hoped and instead have given the Castro regime the ability to blame Cuba’s low standard of living on the United States. The ineffectiveness of the embargo is recognized on both a national and a global scale, and the international community has condemned this policy toward Cuba for over twenty-one years. Despite these realities, the embargo remains codified in U.S. law. Even policymakers that appreciate the futility of the embargo refuse to waver in their commitment to it. Where does this inflexibility come from? Why is the United States determined to maintain a policy that has failed for over fifty years?

In Chapter VI, I will look more closely at the different justifications for the embargo and will examine the United States’ unspoken motivation for maintaining this ineffective Cuba policy. Longstanding hostility, economic factors, strategic value, and domestic interest groups all play a role in explaining the preservation of the embargo. In Chapter VII, I will continue this discussion of the embargo by looking at the prospects for

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Country Summary: Cuba.*
⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Cuba’s Repressive Machinery.*
normalization according to changes that are occurring on the island and with regard to domestic opinion.
V. The Politics of Health: The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program

*Cuban Medical Diplomacy*

Dr. Julie Feinsilver, independent consultant and scholar for the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, defines medical diplomacy as the “collaboration between countries to improve relations and simultaneously produce health benefits.”\(^1\) While a clear benefit for the receiving country is free medical care for the nation’s underserved communities, the benefits for the sending country are a little more diverse and a lot more political. Health diplomacy can be used to “improve security, project power and influence, improve international image, or support other traditional foreign policy objectives.”\(^2\) It is a brand of soft power that gives resource-deficient sending countries the capacity to obtain bargaining power in the world sphere. For example, symbolic capital such as prestige and influence that a country gains from practicing medical diplomacy can ultimately be converted into material capital.\(^3\) In addition, the sending country can use its medical personnel as missionaries to spread their ideology throughout the globe.

Cuba, a small country in need of bargaining power, began practicing medical diplomacy in 1960. As a developing country with few material assets to offer, this mutually beneficial program has improved Cuba’s reputation on the world stage while allowing it to implement favorable trade agreements with countries such as Venezuela.\(^4\) One of the advantages of health diplomacy for the sending country is “winning the hearts

---

\(^1\) Feinsilver, “Cuba’s Medical Diplomacy,” 273.
\(^3\) Clem and Maingot, *Venezuela’s Petro-diplomacy*, 34–35.
\(^4\) Feinsilver, “Cuba’s Medical Diplomacy,” 273.
and minds of people in poor countries,” which has served to promote Castro’s reputation as generous rather than despotic. In addition to these benefits, medical diplomacy provides an outlet through which Cuba can spread communist ideas to the impoverished populations of developing countries. Some sources claim that Cuban personnel travel abroad on medical missions in order to “plant guerrillas, assist existing ones, support socialist dictatorships, or conduct the actual fighting on their behalf.” The veracity of this assertion remains uncertain, and Cuba itself considers medical diplomacy to be a manner of repaying its debts to countries that provided assistance during the revolution.

Cuba’s medical diplomacy first began in a time when Cuba was in no position to supply other countries with medical help. The nation was suffering from economic difficulties, a shortage of doctors, and a deteriorating relationship with the United States. Nevertheless, when an earthquake hit Chile in 1960, Cuba immediately sent a team of healthcare workers to provide disaster relief. This trend continued three years later when Cuba dispatched fifty-six doctors to Algeria to provide aid and has continued to expand ever since. For the past fifty years, Cuba has provided disaster relief to countries in need, delivered medical care to Third World countries as well as its own rural communities, and made training efforts in Havana and in host countries to promote the sustainability of healthcare systems. In 2008, over 30,000 Cuban medical personnel were serving in more than 70 countries around the world. Julie Feinsilver notes that “Cuba has not missed a single opportunity to offer and supply disaster relief assistance irrespective of whether

---

5 Feldbaum and Michaud, “Health Diplomacy and the Enduring Relevance of Foreign Policy Interests,” 1.
7 Feinsilver, “Oil-for-Doctors,” 216.
8 Feinsilver, “Cuba’s Medical Diplomacy,” 274–281.
Cuba had good relations with that government.” 9 From 1961 to 2009, Cuba sent 134,849 medical professionals abroad, saved over 1.97 million lives, and treated over 130 million patients in 107 countries. 10

Mission Barrio Adentro

Cuba’s most extensive program of medical diplomacy is with Venezuela. In 2003, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Republic of Cuba initiated Mission Barrio Adentro, a humanitarian medical and healthcare project. 11 At this time, Venezuela’s healthcare system was suffering from social underfunding, the deterioration of public infrastructure, the abandonment of diagnosis and treatment protocols, neglect for the first level of care, reduced wages, obsolete medical equipment, privatization, and an inability of the public network to match the growth of the population. 12 The flaws of the healthcare system led to “reduced quality, access, and timeliness of response.” 13 Rural communities lacked access to quality, or any, healthcare due to their distance from the service, the failure to attend to the population’s needs, the lack of a system for counter-referrals, the focus on curative rather than preventative care, and the fact that the care that was provided was from recent medical graduates with little experience. 14

The 1999 Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela affirms that the state, in conjunction with the participation of citizens and organized communities, is responsible for guaranteeing the fundamental right of health for its citizens. Thus, when

---

9 Ibid., 282.
10 Feinsilver, “Fifty Years of Cuba’s Medical Diplomacy,” 96–97.
11 Alvarado and et al., Mission Barrio Adentro, 1.
12 Ibid., 8.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 10.
the Venezuelan Medical Federation went on strike in 2002 in a push for wage-related benefits and consequently shut down a majority of the outpatient clinics and public hospitals, the government took action. The Caracas Municipal Institute of Endogenous Development surveyed the population and determined their most critical needs, based on which the mayor of Liberator created a new program—Mission Barrio Adentro—which focused on neighborhoods. The mayor gave Venezuelan physicians the chance to apply for the program, but only fifty people responded to the announcement of the vacancies. Of those who did apply, thirty refused to work in the neighborhoods the program catered to. Without the support of its own physicians, many of which were discouraged from applying by the Venezuelan Medical Federation, the Venezuelan government was compelled to seek assistance from Cuba.

Although Cuba had been sending medical professionals to Venezuela since 1999, the terms of the new agreement between the two countries greatly expanded the scope of collaboration and sent Cuban doctors deep into the neighborhoods of Venezuela in exchange for thousands of barrels of oil.15 Between its inception in March of 2003 and 2006, this program had provided almost 100% of the country with free primary healthcare services.16 By extending healthcare to the seventy percent of the population that previously did not have access to health services, the program has been able to reduce inequity in a country steeped in corruption and vast inequality.17

---

15 Ibid., 21–23.
16 Feinsilver, “Cuba’s Medical Diplomacy,” 278.
17 Alvarado and et al., Mission Barrio Adentro, 81–83.
Furthermore, the physicians’ work is not limited to providing direct healthcare services in an office setting. The doctors labor to expand programs that encourage healthcare promotion and the dissemination of health-related information. These include clubs for expectant mothers clubs, babies, teens, seniors, specific issues such as hypertension, diabetes, and asthma, as well as health talks, public health classes, face-to-face sessions, dance therapy, street events, public cleanup days, and sports. The Barrio Adentro program is improving the healthcare system, raising awareness of health issues, and using health to bring communities together.

Despite its successes, the exchange of Cuban healthcare for Venezuelan oil is not without criticism. The Venezuelan Medical Federation responded to the presence of the Cuban physicians by instigating a media campaign claiming the Cubans were not trained to practice medicine. This resistance by the Venezuelan health system led to a sense of detachment between hospitals and Cuban physicians, the former of which sometimes refuse to receive patients that are referred by Barrio Adentro doctors. Despite the fact that the allegations of the Venezuelan Medical Federation were ultimately overturned, they tainted the Cuban physicians’ reputation and made it more difficult for them to establish a trusting relationship with their patients. In reality, the Cuban physicians that participate in this program are minimally required to be specialized in comprehensive general medicine and must have three and a half years of graduate-level training in internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, and preventative medicine. Many of the doctors

---

18 Ibid., 88–92.
19 Ibid., 28.
20 Ibid.
even exceed these requirements and have had experience serving in other medical missions; they average ten years’ experience practicing medicine before joining the program.21

The fact that these doctors tend to be very experienced, while good for Venezuela and other receiving countries, has instigated criticism from Cubans who are losing their own primary care physicians. As more doctors are sent to Venezuela, Cubans are finding that primary care doctors are not as available or prevalent in Cuban neighborhoods, an issue that provides a source of tension within communities in Cuba.22

*History of the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program*

This Cuban model for healthcare and medical diplomacy is gaining steam internationally as more people recognize that the U.S. model of providing healthcare abroad is “impossible as well as immoral.”23 Even through fifty years of an embargo and various U.S. attempts to dismantle the regime, the Cuban government has found a way to remain intact and continues to engage in medical missions throughout the world free of charge. Created in 2006, the United States’ Cuban Medical Professional Parole (CMPP) program now attacks Cuba where it is strongest—its program of medical diplomacy.

The Department of Homeland Security announced the creation of the CMPP Program on August 11, 2006. It allows “Cuban medical personnel conscripted to study or work in a third country under the direction of the Cuban government to enter the United

---

21 Ibid., 23.
23 Ibid., 42.
States."\(^{24}\) In citing its authority for creating this program, the Department of Homeland Security refers to the “Humanitarian Parole” section of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which gives the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) the discretion to allow an alien to enter the United States if it is for “urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.”\(^{25}\) The Cuban medical personnel that take advantage of the CMPP initiative are free to apply for parole for their immediate relatives as well, but this does not mean that they and their families are guaranteed entrance to the United States. The process of applying for a visa still contains several obstacles that make it uncertain whether an applicant will receive a visa. In addition, applicants that are approved for a visa are still responsible for the cost and arrangement of travel to the United States, an expense that can take years to finance and may drain a Cuban doctor’s life savings.\(^{26}\)

This program applies to professionals that are working and studying in Third World countries under Castro’s program of medical diplomacy, which was described in detail earlier in this chapter. Because their training is paid for by the state, Cuban Resolution 54 has historically denied these medical personnel the right to exit the country even if they qualify to leave under other guidelines.\(^{27}\) This discrimination against Cuban doctors is a violation of the human right to freely leave one’s country, as outlined in Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\(^{28}\) The CMPP Program, which

\(^{24}\) State Department, “Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program.”
\(^{26}\) State Department, “Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program.”
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
\(^{28}\) “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”
gives doctors the option to come to the United States, was implemented in part in order to give medical professionals a way to overcome these discriminatory policies.\textsuperscript{29}

In examining the rationale for the implementation of this program it is important to examine the United States’ relationship with the two countries that it has the greatest effect on: Cuba and Venezuela. This paper has already thoroughly investigated the history of U.S.-Cuban relations, but it is now necessary to take a look at the relationship between the United States and Venezuela as well as that of Venezuela and Cuba.

\textit{U.S.-Venezuelan Relations since 1999}

Despite “relatively smooth”\textsuperscript{30} relations prior to Chávez’s rule, Washington and Caracas have remained at odds since he came to power in December 1998. The United States has been quick to criticize the human rights violations of the Chávez regime while Venezuela has designated the U.S. as its “main adversary.” The tense relationship between the two countries played out in an alleged U.S. effort to oust the Chávez regime and Venezuela’s simultaneous determination to undermine the foreign policy objectives of the United States in Latin America.\textsuperscript{31} Chávez’s glaring anti-US rhetoric was a defining characteristic of his regime and one of the foundations for mutual hostility between the two nations.

In a campaign statement in 2012, presidential candidate Mitt Romney outlined the following offenses by Chávez and the government of Venezuela: “Hugo Chávez has provided safe haven to drug kingpins, encouraged regional terrorist organizations that

\textsuperscript{29} Erisman, “Brain Drain Politics,” 279.
\textsuperscript{30} Crane, “U.S.-Venezuelan Relations.”
\textsuperscript{31} Clem and Maingot, \textit{Venezuela’s Petro-diplomacy}, 33.
threaten our allies like Colombia, has strengthened military ties with Iran and helped it evade sanctions, and has allowed a Hezbollah presence within his country's borders. And he is seeking to lead—together with the Castros—a destabilizing, anti-democratic, and anti-American 'Bolivarian Revolution' across Latin America.’’32 In this one statement, Romney touches upon several of the issues that create tension between the United States and Venezuela. What Romney does not mention, however, is the mutual economic dependency of the two countries and the fact that the U.S. will likely be forced to cooperate with Venezuela despite ideological differences.33

The Bolivarian revolution championed by Chávez is characterized by anti-U.S. rhetoric and anti-capitalist programs. Through the expansion of the role of the state, the implementation of wide-ranging social programs, and the consolidation of power in a biased executive, the rule of Chávez challenges both U.S. influence in the region and the institution of democracy itself.34 Chávez’s “Plan Bolivar 2000” was implemented to improve the standard of living for the poor by focusing on the health, education, security, and infrastructure of the nation as well as by targeting elites.35 Although this program has been successful in improving some living conditions for the nation’s poor, it has ultimately served as a reason for the government to consolidate its power and expand its access to resources.36 Chávez’s ultimate foreign policy goals were to increase Venezuela’s influence abroad, counter-balance the power of the United States, and foster

---

32 Romney, “Romney’s Statement on Hugo Chávez.”
34 Ibid.
35 Civitella, Decade of Venezuela’s President Hugo Chávez, Por Ahora, 7.
36 Ibid., 8.
the expansion of the Bolivarian Revolution to other Latin American countries.\textsuperscript{37} Despite the threat that Chávez’s worldview and corrupt practices could pose were they to spread to other Latin American countries, experts agree that Chávez did not present as serious of a threat as some claim.\textsuperscript{38} Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico act as counterweights in the region\textsuperscript{39} and Chávez’s international reputation was not necessarily favorable, as demonstrated by the fact that he never won a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council.\textsuperscript{40}

The United States’ detestation of the Chávez regime arose not only because it directly opposed the ideology of the United States, but also because of Chávez’s close relationship with nations with which the United States is at odds. While the most salient of these relationships is Venezuela’s veneration of Cuba, Chávez also considered Syria, Russia, and Belarus to be its allies—all of which are countries that the United States considers to be state sponsors of terrorism.\textsuperscript{41} Russia and Venezuela have cooperated through nuclear agreements, but since Venezuela is not violating any international treaties through this alliance the Obama administration publicly acknowledges Venezuela’s right to a nuclear program.\textsuperscript{42} On the other side of the world, Chávez was accused of supporting radical movements in some Latin American countries, specifically Colombia’s Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{38} Crane, “U.S.-Venezuelan Relations.”
\textsuperscript{39} Lapper, “Living with Hugo.”
\textsuperscript{40} “List of Countries Which Have Been Elected Members of the United Nations Security Council Since 1946.”
\textsuperscript{41} Clem and Maingot, \textit{Venezuela’s Petro-diplomacy}, 70.
\textsuperscript{42} “Obama Says Venezuela Has Right to Russian Nuclear Aid.”
guerilla organization. In 2006, the U.S. State Department concluded that Venezuela was not cooperating fully with anti-terror efforts and President Bush publicly stated that Chávez was a regional challenge that demanded the world’s attention.

Even more unnerving than these ties has been Venezuela’s developing relationship with Iran, which has become increasingly relevant as tensions continue to rise between the United States and the Middle East. Over the past few years, Venezuela and Iran became dangerously close as cooperation between Chávez and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad intensified. In 2010, Chávez visited Iran for the ninth time. At this meeting, Ahmadinejad and Chávez signed eleven different agreements that brought the total number of documents signed by these two countries to over two-hundred. Not only has Venezuela supported Iran in its goal of expanding its nuclear power generating capability, but it hopes that Iran, one of the world’s largest oil exporters, will agree to collaborate with Venezuela in an effort to raise oil prices. Within OPEC, Iran and Venezuela are in the top three countries with the most oil reserves; a partnership between them would have drastic implications. By jointly decreasing oil production, these powerful countries could cause the price of oil to soar. As oil is the livelihood of Venezuela’s economy and social programs and the backbone of the authoritarian regime, it would be beneficial for Venezuela for this partnership to come to fruition.

43 Crane, “U.S.-Venezuelan Relations.”
44 Civitella, Decade of Venezuela’s President Hugo Chávez, Por Ahora, 17.
45 Ibid., 11.
46 Hirst, “Venezuela’s Troubling Nuclear Ties.”
47 Wilpert, Changing Venezuela by Taking Power, 158.
48 Clem and Maingot, Venezuela’s Petro-diplomacy, 39.
Chávez also presents obstacles to U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. The Bush administration, which tightened economic sanctions on Cuba and implemented the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program in 2006, saw its interests in Latin America flouted by Chávez. Instead of partnering with the United States and promoting President Bush’s proposal for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), Venezuela chose to advocate for Latin American economic integration through the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas.49 Chávez openly criticized the FTAA at the April 2001 Summit of the Americas and canceled its fifty-year military cooperation agreement with the United States just three months later.50

In 2004 and 2005, relations between the U.S. and Venezuela further deteriorated as the joint counternarcotics operation between the two countries was compromised. Venezuela’s geographic and strategic location leads it to be an easy diversion for drug traffic from Colombia, and its refusal to cooperate with the United States in anti-drug trafficking efforts has provided a source of tension. In March of 2005, the Venezuelan National Guard eliminated its support of the U.S.-supported Prosecutor’s Drug Task Force by removing its highly experienced members from the operation.51 Venezuela stopped cooperating with the United States’ Drug Enforcement Administration and also made surveillance more difficult by banning overflights by U.S. planes.52

In addition to these actions that interfered with the United States’ foreign policy objectives, Chávez made verbal statements condemning the actions of President Bush. In

49 Wilpert, Changing Venezuela by Taking Power, 69.
50 Ibid., 170.
51 State Department, “Venezuela.”
52 Civitella, Decade of Venezuela’s President Hugo Chávez, Por Ahora, 18.
October of 2001, Chávez held up pictures of Afghani children who had been killed as he denounced the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan and declared that “Terror cannot be fought with more terror.”53 Almost three years later, he described President Bush as the “world’s most dangerous political leader.”54 Chávez has also been recorded referring to President Bush as the “devil,” accusing the United States of using cancer as a weapon against South American leaders, and comparing the United States’ foreign policy to a potential Alfred Hitchcock movie that he would call “The Devil’s Recipe.”55

This is not to say that America has not contributed to the hostile relationship between the two leaders. President Bush actively sought to oust the Chávez regime and supposedly supported a coup attempt against Chávez in 2002.56 When the opposition revolted and Chávez was forced to temporarily resign, the United States was quick to acknowledge the new leadership. The decisiveness of the U.S. reaction led Chávez to be even more suspicious of the United States and to accuse President Bush of being directly involved in the coup.57 President Bush has also been suspected of providing financing for Venezuela’s opposition groups.58

Despite all of these sources of tension, it is impossible for the United States to cut ties with Venezuela as the two countries remain deeply intertwined economically. As of April 2012, Venezuela remained the United States’ fifth-largest export market in Latin America. The United States is also a crucial trading partner for Venezuela as it accounts

54 Ibid.
55 Lendon, “Five Colorful Quotes from Hugo Chávez.”
56 Wilpert, Changing Venezuela by Taking Power, 168.
57 Civitella, Decade of Venezuela’s President Hugo Chávez, Por Ahora, 8.
58 Wilpert, Changing Venezuela by Taking Power, 168.
for 24% of Venezuela’s imports and receives 42% of Venezuela’s exports. The most significant economic tie between the United States and Venezuela, however, is the sale of oil. In 2007 alone, Venezuela sold 1.23 million barrels of crude oil per day to the United States; it is the United States’ fourth largest supplier. As Venezuela boasts the largest oil reserves in the world, it would be beneficial for the United States to maintain a favorable trade relationship with this country. Were this cooperation to end, there would be disastrous impacts for both countries. For Venezuelans, the end of trade with the United States would result in a decrease in imports by nearly one-quarter and the loss of a vital export market for oil. For the United States, ending trade with Venezuela could create an economic disaster in which the government places the blame for the economic failure of the country on the United States. This could have the consequence of giving the regime the freedom to consolidate power, declare a state of emergency, be harsher with its enemies, and receive sympathy on the world stage.

As tense as relations were under Chávez, they have deteriorated even further since President Chávez’s death on March 5, 2013. Shortly after interim president and now president Nicolás Maduro was sworn in, he expelled two American military attachés based on the claim that they had been working to foment a coup. The government has accused the United States of financing the opposition party’s presidential candidate and also of planning an assassination of this candidate in order to instigate mass chaos and a

---

59 State Department, “Venezuela.”
60 Clem and Maingot, Venezuela’s Petro-diplomacy, 39.
61 Wilpert, Changing Venezuela by Taking Power, 168.
62 “OPEC Share of World Crude Oil Reserves 2011.”
63 Clem and Maingot, Venezuela’s Petro-diplomacy, 41.
64 P.G., “Battling It Out.”
revolt.\textsuperscript{65} Maduro also suggested that Chávez’s cancer was introduced by enemy forces,\textsuperscript{66} which stands in line with Hugo Chávez’s own claim that the United States uses cancer as a weapon against South American leaders. On March 20, Venezuela’s foreign minister Elias Jaua postponed any contact with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson.\textsuperscript{67}

In mid-April, Chávez’s handpicked successor Nicolas Maduro defeated opposition candidate Henrique Capriles in Venezuela’s presidential elections. Maduro won the election with a slight majority of 50.7 percent of the vote, while Capriles received 49.1 percent of the vote. Despite the opposition party’s complaint that there were irregularities in the election, Venezuela’s National Electoral discounted this claim in late April and confirmed Maduro’s presidency.\textsuperscript{68} Although President Obama recognizes that there were some essential freedoms and rights were not observed during the election, he has refused to publicize whether the United States recognizes Venezuela’s new president. Maduro, unpleased with this, referred to Obama as “the grand chief of devils.”\textsuperscript{69} In addition to this conflict, tensions escalated in late April when Maduro detained a 35-year-old filmmaker from California named Tim Tracey. The authorities in Venezuela have accused Tracey of encouraging postelection violence in Venezuela on behalf of the U.S. government. The United States has refuted this claim, noting that Tracey has been filming a documentary in Venezuela for the past year.\textsuperscript{70} It is clear that as

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Rueda, “Venezuelan Government Suggests Chávez Was Killed by ‘Enemies’.”
\textsuperscript{67} Shoicet, “Venezuela Cutting Off Contact with U.S. Diplomat, Foreign Minister Says.”
\textsuperscript{68} “Venezuela Opposition Wants New Election.”
\textsuperscript{69} Associated Press, “Obama Won’t Say Whether US Recognizes Venezuela’s Maduro as President.”
\textsuperscript{70} Associated Press, “Venezuela Detains U.S. Filmmaker.”
tense as relations were between the U.S. and Hugo Chávez, they have not improved under President Maduro.

*Cuban-Venezuelan Relations since 1999*

Unlike the relationship between the United States and Venezuela, relations between Cuba and Venezuela are characterized by cooperation and understanding. For Chávez, Castro was a “mentor, strategic advisor, and spiritual inspiration.” From June 2011 to May 2012 and from November 2012 to February 2013, Chávez even traveled to Cuba for medical treatment for cancer. In addition to a shared ideology and a close personal friendship between their leaders, the governments find camaraderie in a mutual hostility toward the United States. Both Cuba and Venezuela have been subjected to intervention by the United States and are fighting an ideological battle against democracy in the Western hemisphere; it is only natural that Cuba and Venezuela should come together against a shared enemy.

In 2000, Cuba and Venezuela signed the “Energy Accords of Caracas”, an agreement that would prove to be one of the defining features of Cuban-Venezuelan cooperation. This arrangement stipulated that Venezuela would export 53,000 barrels of oil per day to Cuba, while Cuba would send specialists and goods in the medical, agricultural, and educational sectors to Venezuela. These accords also permitted Venezuelans to travel to Cuba for free medical treatment or to become trained as doctors.

---

71 Walser, “What to Do About Hugo Chávez.”
72 Peralta, “Venezuela’s Chávez Will Return To Cuba For Medical Treatment.”
In just five years, the number of Cubans participating in this program soared to 20,000.74 In 2004 and 2005, the program was expanded even further. The 2004 agreement eased the flow of trade by eliminating tariff barriers for Cuban imports and also stated that Venezuela would provide Cuba with technical assistance in its efforts to search for oil near the Cuban coast. In exchange, Cuba agreed to provide two thousand grants annually to Venezuelans that wanted to study in Cuban universities.75 In the healthcare sector, the 2003 program of Mission Barrio Adentro transformed Venezuela’s healthcare system by extending medical care to underserved populations.

In 2005, the number of Cuban doctors and support staff sent to Venezuela increased to 30,000.76 This agreement also called for six hundred comprehensive health clinics, six hundred rehabilitation and physical therapy centers, thirty-five high technology diagnostic centers, 100,000 ophthalmologic surgeries, and the training of 40,000 doctors and 5,000 healthcare workers in Venezuela.77 At the same time, the amount of oil exports to Cuba almost doubled, hitting 90,000 barrels a day.78 Venezuela and Cuba signed a total of forty-nine agreements in 2005 alone.79 In 2010, Venezuela was both the leading supplier of goods to Cuba and the leading market for Cuban goods.80

The most concrete example of Latin American resistance to the United States and Cuban-Venezuelan cooperation is the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), a nine-member organization that was signed into law on December 14, 2004 by Hugo

74 Ibid., 163.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Feinsilver, “Oil-for-Doctors,” 216.
78 Wilpert, Changing Venezuela by Taking Power, 163.
79 Ibid., 164.
80 Country Forecast Cuba July 2012.
Chávez and Fidel Castro. The alliance is based on Simón Bolívar’s dream of a united Latin American nation dominated by one caudillo, a nation that would stand in opposition to the imperialism of the United States. The members include Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Ecuador, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines while the observer countries include Haiti, Iran, and Syria.\(^{81}\) In its mission and its activities, the ALBA promotes socialism, rejects the capitalism of the United States, encourages the establishment of a multi-polar world, and promotes radical revolutions within member countries. Through its commitment to supporting revolutionary processes, the ALBA has cooperated with groups in Iran, Hezbollah, FARC, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), and the Colombian Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (ELN).\(^{82}\) The ideology and activities of this group are in direct contrast with those of the United States and the proposed Free Trade of the Americas Agreement.

While the relationship between Cuba and Venezuela has blossomed over the past decade due to ideological congruencies, shared hostility toward the United States, and mutually beneficial economic agreements, the death of Hugo Chávez had the potential to contribute to the end of this cooperation. The opposition in Venezuela is not supportive of the Cuban government or of policies that help prop up the Castro regime, such as the “oil-for-doctors” agreement. While the opposition party did not prevail in the elections of April 2013, President Maduro won by less than 2 percent. Should the opposition take power in future elections, the nature of Cuban-Venezuelan relations could face drastic changes.

\(^{81}\) Hirst, “A Guide to ALBA.”
\(^{82}\) Ibid.
The Impact of the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program

Despite the fact that the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program was founded on the premise that it would address an urgent humanitarian need or create a significant public benefit, it has not completed either of these goals. It seems true that, in many cases, the conditions endured by Cuban medical personnel in both Cuba and in the Third World countries they serve are unacceptable and violate the basic human rights of fair pay and adequate working conditions. John M. Kirk, a professor of Latin American studies and author of multiple books on Cuba, speaks of the large number of Cuban medical staff that endured harsh working conditions during medical missions.\textsuperscript{83} As beneficial as medical diplomacy is for the poor populations of receiving countries, it can also be detrimental for the doctors that participate in the program.

In 2012, Cuba was designated as a Tier 3 country in the Trafficking in Persons Report, partly due to allegations of coerced labor with regard to Cuban work missions abroad. The report notes that some victims of these missions were restrained from moving freely within the country and also had their passports withheld.\textsuperscript{84} In 2010, a group of Cuban medical professionals took their grievances to court upon arrival in Miami. They equated their work in Venezuela to servitude, where they encountered dangerous and violent situations, insufficient resources, poor living and working conditions, and strict surveillance.\textsuperscript{85} Other accounts document six-day work weeks, fifty to seventy patients a day, meager salaries of as little as $400 per month, and mandatory

\textsuperscript{83} Kirk, “Cuban Medical Internationalism and Its Role in Cuban Foreign Policy,” 283.
\textsuperscript{84} “Trafficking in Persons Report 2012.”
\textsuperscript{85} Mend, “Docs Say Cuba & Venezuela ‘Enslaved’ Them.”
political work. The medical missions are often referred to as a “modern form of slavery.”

The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program can be beneficial for doctors that desire to escape the injustice of a corrupt system. However, it does not necessarily have an overall positive impact on human rights issues. It leaves communities in Third World countries without the medical care they desperately need and neglects to provide the Cuban doctors with assistance upon their arrival to the United States. With regard to the rationale of providing “significant public benefit,” the program has failed to contribute substantial gain to the U.S. healthcare system due to the lack of support that the Cuban medical professionals receive upon arrival. Despite the fact that the Cuban doctors could potentially decrease the physician shortage in the United States, this impact has yet to be realized.

Populations in rural Venezuela quickly become dependent on the Cuban doctors in their communities and a great increase in defections could cause these communities to once again be left without accessible healthcare. Instead of recognizing the detrimental impact this would have on the healthcare system of Venezuela, the U.S. government chooses to focus on the benefits of the resulting unrest. As the impoverished populations of Venezuela are stripped of their medical care, their dissatisfaction and frustration could lead to the de-legitimization of the state. With regard to Cuba, the CMPP Program was intended to instigate an exodus of doctors that were trained for free by the state. The

---

86 Kozloff, “Venezuela’s Cuban Health Programme Fraying at the Edges.”
87 Werlau, “Cuba’s Medical Diplomacy.”
88 Feinsilver, “Cuba’s Medical Diplomacy,” 284.
flight of these medical professionals, in which the state has invested a great amount of its resources, harms the Cuban medical diplomacy program and Cuba’s reputation internationally. It is also damaging to the future of the Cuban health system, which cannot afford to educate doctors for free if they will likely defect at the first given opportunity.

For all its flaws, this policy has the potential to address that growing need for physicians in the United States. In 2010, the United States was experiencing a critical shortage of nearly 17,000 doctors and a primary-care physician shortage of about 30,000. The fact that primary-care physicians are paid the least of all doctors in the United States, combined with the sheer cost of medical school, leads to the conclusion that the shortage of primary-care physicians in the United States may have to be filled with foreign medics. For that reason, the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program provides the perfect opportunity for the United States to fill in its physician shortage with doctors that were trained abroad. Nevertheless, the program faces many obstacles in this regard and is ineffective in that it does not consider the interests of the individuals or countries it affects.

The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program and Human Rights

The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program presents an interesting paradox with regard to human rights. While it provides Cuban medical personnel that are serving in semi-servitude to escape the destitution of their medical expeditions, it removes qualified medical professionals from Third World countries that are in desperate need of

---

89 Ceaser, “Cuban Doctors Abroad Helped to Defect by New U.S. Visa Policy.”
assistance in their healthcare system. Countries that depend on Cuban doctors could be left without treatment for serious diseases such as HIV/AIDS should the exodus of Cuban doctors continue.91

In Cuba, doctors are paid a wage that is equivalent to $25 per month—a meager salary for medical professionals that have undergone years of schooling training.92 As such, there is little incentive for doctors to stay in Cuba when they can work abroad and earn convertible currency instead. As a result, in 2010 over 35,000 of the 73,000 total physicians that were licensed to practice in Cuba were practicing medicine abroad in medical missions.93 In addition to the pull to go overseas to earn more competitive wages, many Cuban medical professionals leave with the hope of escaping the economic and political repression they face in Cuba. However, doctors that work abroad in medical missions through Cuba’s program of medical diplomacy do not necessarily experience better conditions. In Venezuela, the Mission Barrio Adentro program can be both dangerous and exhausting. Doctors desert the program due to the increasing rate of violence in the country, poor working conditions, and the fatigue of not being able to go home for three or four days at a time.94 As the doctors participate in what some would consider state-sponsored human trafficking, the Cuban government reaps the benefit of their services through subsidized oil prices and international prestige.95

Despite the injustice of these harsh working conditions, it is important to recognize that encouraging the defection of Cuban doctors to the United States harms the

93 Ibid.
94 Ceaser, “Cuban Doctors Abroad Helped to Defect by New U.S. Visa Policy.”
95 Erisman, “Brain Drain Politics,” 279.
human rights interests of the underprivileged and impoverished communities that they are supposed to be serving. In 2007, one year after the CMPPP program was implemented, Venezuela had already lost over 100 Cuban medical professionals to defection.96 Laurie Garrett, author of “Castrocare in Crisis,” states that Cuba’s “public health network could be devastated by an exodus of thousands of well-trained Cuban physicians and nurses.”97 Both congressmen and health specialists alike in the United States have condemned the United States’ decision to undermine Cuban medical diplomacy and take doctors from areas that have a great need for them.98 Without the support of the Cuban doctors, these countries will be unable to meet the pressing medical needs that threaten their nations’ livelihoods.99

Unwritten Rules: The Ethics of the Recruitment of Healthcare Workers

While there is no international law regarding the recruitment of healthcare workers, the Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers attempts to provide governments with guidelines for recruiting healthcare workers from other nations. This consensus approach is not a binding legal document but instead presents a framework that Commonwealth governments are encouraged to adopt in order to ensure that certain communities are not adversely affected by the international recruitment of healthcare workers. Although the United States is not required to adhere to the provisions of this document, the purpose of the code is directly applicable to the United States’ international recruitment of Cuban medical professionals.

96 Ceaser, “Cuban Doctors Abroad Helped to Defect by New U.S. Visa Policy.”
98 Ceaser, “Cuban Doctors Abroad Helped to Defect by New U.S. Visa Policy.”
99 Mullan, “The Metrics of the Physician Brain Drain.”
The document begins by warning that the practice of recruitment deprives source countries of knowledge, skills, and expertise. In addition, it notes that in many cases the source country has allocated a substantial amount of its resources to training these professionals. In the case of the CMPP Program, Cuba provided the healthcare workers with free medical education and Venezuela paid Cuba in subsidized oil for their services. By stripping these and other Third World countries of adequate medical care, the CMPP Program has the potential to deprive nations that invested their scarce resources in the development of its healthcare system of their own doctors.

Along the same lines, the code discourages receiving countries from recruiting healthcare workers “who have an outstanding obligation to their own country, for example, contract of service agreed to as a condition of training.” Medical students at the Latin American Medical School, “ELAM,” receive a completely free medical education in exchange for their commitment to practice medicine in underserved communities. While this is more a moral obligation than a legally-binding contract, the CMPP Program would be in violation of the code because it gives medical professionals the incentive and ability to default on their pledge.

According to the guidelines of the code, transparency is a crucial aspect of any healthcare worker recruitment program. In this case, transparency means that the receiving countries and the sending countries would come to an agreement on the provisions of the process of medical recruitment. Again, the CMPP Program does not

100 Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers.
101 Wise, “Cuba Offers Poor Medical Students a Free Ride.”
meet this requirement. It is not common for Cuba and the United States to negotiate on U.S. foreign policy, and this program was no exception. It was implemented without the input or approval of the Cuban government or the Third World countries that would be affected by an exodus of the Cuban doctors. As such, it disregards the interests of all the countries involved besides that of the United States.  

The well-being of the source countries is in direct conflict with the CMPP Program, and the lack of transparency with which the program was established defies the expectations laid out in the Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers. The code states that the governments of the recruiting countries should consider compensating the source countries for the services they gain through recruitment. Examples of reciprocation could be the implementation of programs that facilitate the transfer of technology, skills, and technical and financial assistance to the source country, the creation of training programs that increase the value of medical professionals that ultimately return to the country of origin, and the arrangement of the return of the recruited healthcare workers. The fact that the CMPP Program was not developed with the consideration of the countries that would be affected leaves the source countries with no recourse for the hardship they face as the result of the emigration of healthcare workers.

---

102 Commonwealth Secretariat, *Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers.*
103 Ibid.
Shortcomings of the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program

For all of its potential, the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program has failed in a number of ways. Although it was supposedly implemented for humanitarian reasons and significant public benefit, it has failed to add significant value to any given population. In great part, these failings have resulted from the lack of support from the United States during the doctors’ journey to America and in the subsequent process of accreditation. The shortage of U.S. assistance has left some Cuban medical personnel stranded in their host country after deserting their medical missions or with difficulties in achieving accreditation through the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) once in the United States.

For Cuban doctors practicing medicine in Third World countries, applying for a visa at the American embassy of their host country is just the first step in a long and complex process. In the end, it is in no way guaranteed that an applicant will arrive in the United States. All travel costs and arrangements are the responsibility of the applicant, which generally involves an expensive flight and a risky journey. In 2010, a group of medics abandoned their medical mission under the cover of darkness only to be stopped by Venezuelan border guards. As their visas only allowed them to travel within the country, the border guards forced the defectors to surrender all of their valuable possessions in order to pass.104 That same year, another group of Cuban doctors that received American visas under the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program was not as lucky; their passports were seized by Venezuelan authorities and they were prevented

---

104 Ceaser, “Cuban Doctors Abroad Helped to Defect by New U.S. Visa Policy.”
from boarding their flight to the United States. In other cases, Cubans are either denied approval for an American visa or simply do not have the money to get to the United States.

The *South Journal* reported that in a four-and-a-half year period between 2006 and 2011, 1,574 Cuban doctors utilized the CMPP Program. As significant as this statistic seems at first glance, the journal calculated that this number represented less than 2% of the 83,000 doctors that were estimated to be sent abroad during this time period. It remains unclear whether this low percentage is a result of the complexity of the process of coming to the United States, a shortage of funds to purchase airfare, the rejection of visas, the detainment of medical personnel by their host countries, or a simple lack of interest. Nevertheless, it seems clear that if the U.S. government is interested in recruiting doctors that are experiencing human rights violations or that could serve to fill the physician gap in the United States, it should invest more effort into making the program accessible and feasible for Cuban doctors.

For the healthcare workers that do arrive in the United States, the accreditation process is expensive, lengthy, and often remains unfinished. In order to practice medicine in the United States, an international medical graduate (IMG) must first be certified by the ECFMG. In addition to sending in a final diploma from a medical school that is listed in the International Medical Education Directory (IMED), applicants must pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination Step 1 and Step 2, receive a satisfactory

---

105 Szabo, “Cuban Doctors Bound For US Detained In Venezuela.”
106 Feinsilver, “Cuba’s Medical Diplomacy,” 283.
107 “Scandal: US Program Against Cuban Medical Assistance.”
score on the ECFMG English test, and pass the ECFMG Clinical Skills Assessment. Once an IMG is certified, they may apply for residency programs. Finally, they must complete the United States Medical Licensing Examination Step 3, which is used to determine whether a physician is qualified to practice medicine unsupervised.\textsuperscript{108} This process is not only lengthy and exhausting for foreign applicants that are still learning to speak English, but it is expensive; the process of ECFMG certification will cost an applicant at least $3000.\textsuperscript{109}

The price alone is enough to delay certification for Cuban entrants that have spent their life savings on an airplane ticket to come to the United States, but there are also further deterrents to accreditation. For example, language barriers and the differences between U.S. and Cuban medical training present obstacles to certification.\textsuperscript{110} Despite the fact that there are fourteen medical schools in Cuba listed in the IMED, meaning that they meet the medical education credential requirements for ECFMG Certification, the training in these schools differs from a U.S. medical education.\textsuperscript{111} Cuban doctors still have difficulties with the ECFMG examinations because they are administered in English and the Cuban medical education system focuses on preventative rather than curative medicine.

In addition to these impediments to certification, applicants are required to send primary-source verification with their application in order to be certified by the ECFMG. This includes their final medical diploma, final medical school transcript, and transcripts.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[108] Johnson et al., \textit{How International Medical Graduates Enter US Graduate Medical Education or Employment}, 6–9.
\item[109] ECFMG, “Fees and Payment.”
\item[110] Garrett, “Castrocare in Crisis.”
\item[111] “Search Results: Central America/Caribbean.”
\end{footnotes}
to document transferred academic credit.\textsuperscript{112} However, the Cuban government forbids this verification for health professionals that deserted Cuba or their host country without permission. For this reason, it is often problematic for Cubans that have utilized the CMPP Program to come to the United States to acquire these documents. Because the ECFMG recognizes this difficulty, they have established a complex process through which a Cuban applicant can replace this requirement with other information. In lieu of a transcript, applicants may provide the organization with “sworn attestations from three physicians who have direct personal knowledge of an applicant’s graduation from medical schools in Cuba.” These physicians can be students or faculty members that were at the medical school at the time of the graduation, but “must hold active, unrestricted licenses to practice medicine in a state in the US.”\textsuperscript{113} Although it appears that the ECFMG is making efforts to accommodate the unique circumstances faced by the Cuban doctors, it remains difficult to complete this requirement and many Cuban doctors are still unaccredited in the United States.

These barriers to accreditation are detrimental to both the well-being of the Cuban doctors and that of the U.S. healthcare system. The fact that Cuban medical professionals face such formidable barriers to accreditation robs the U.S. of an potential solution to its physician shortage. Were the government to invest in English education and appropriate training for the USMLE exams for the doctors, it might be able to utilize this educated population to its advantage. Shari Welch, an American College of Emergency Physicians Fellow, noted in a 2012 publication that “graduate medical

\textsuperscript{112} ECFMG, “How the Certification Process Works.”
\textsuperscript{113} Sulit, “SSF - Help Membership - ECFMG Regulation.”
education has not kept pace with physician demand.\textsuperscript{114} These shortages are affecting the nation’s vulnerable populations, namely trauma centers, emergency departments, and rural health facilities.\textsuperscript{115} IMGs already play a significant role in the healthcare system of the United States as 40% of primary care programs depend on immigrant physicians and two-thirds of IMGs are working in hospitals that cater to the healthcare needs of the poor.\textsuperscript{116} Cuban medical professionals, who have already received their medical education in Cuba, have the potential to help meet these needs with some assistance with training and English education from the U.S. government.

\textit{Conclusion}

After examining U.S.-Cuban relations, U.S.-Venezuelan relations, and Cuban-Venezuelan relations, it becomes apparent that the United States has a motive to use its own soft power against both Cuba and Venezuela. In these developing countries, the oil-for-doctors exchange represents a crucial healthcare resource for Venezuela and provides an important economic benefit for Cuba. For fifty years, the Castro regime and the United States have maintained a hostile and tense relationship as the U.S. continues its efforts to destabilize the Castro regime and the Cuban government makes efforts to impede U.S. hegemony in the Western hemisphere. In addition, the tense relationship between the U.S. government and Venezuela has only deteriorated since the death of former President Hugo Chávez.

\textsuperscript{114} Welch, “When There Is No Doctor in the House.”
\textsuperscript{115} Kaafarani et al., “Addressing Workforce Issues with Foreign Medical Graduates,” 27.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 28.
Despite these strained relations, however, in 2006 the United States was not in a position to tighten restrictions on trade with either country. Since agricultural trade with Cuba resumed in 2001, Cuba has proven to be a profitable market for some U.S. farmers. Tightening restrictions on trade would not only alienate this sector of the economy and would likely have little to no impact on the Cuban government. In its relations with Venezuela, the U.S. government ignores Chávez’s anti-American rhetoric and questionable foreign policy decisions for the sake of its economic needs. The potential political implications of ending trade with Venezuela and the loss of such a valuable supplier of oil makes it necessary for the U.S. to approach Venezuela in a way that will not threaten their economic relationship.

In light of these relations, the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program is a plan designed to hurt both Cuba and Venezuela without jeopardizing the U.S. economy. The U.S. planned to attack each country where it would hurt most: their healthcare systems. In 2008, U.S. health secretary Michael Leavitt publicly recognized Cuba’s program of medical diplomacy as a successful form of soft power and a legitimizer of socialism. In the same way, providing the poor with healthcare gave strength to Chávez’s socialist regime. By targeting Cuban doctors, the CMPP Program sought to destabilize one of Cuba and Venezuela’s main sources of power without threatening economic ties with either country. Nevertheless, in all the program has been unsuccessful in recruiting doctors and lacks follow-through with the medical professionals it does bring to the United States. Chapter VII will investigate the outlook for this program based

117 Increased Role of Health Diplomacy in U.S. Foreign Policy.
on Cuba’s new migration policies and will prescribe recommendations for future policies and programs.
VI. Cuba, China, & Saudi Arabia: One of these Countries is not like the Other

The purpose of this paper is not to show that the Cuban government does not commit human rights violations or that the Cuban people have not suffered from over fifty years of communism. Rather, the aim is to examine the rationale and effectiveness of the United States’ foreign policy decisions regarding Cuba. It is clear that the embargo has not affected Castro’s dictatorship, nor has it eradicated the suffering of the Cuban people. Similarly, the CMPP Program has not posed a serious threat to Cuba’s program of medical diplomacy or, as a consequence, damaged Cuba’s international bargaining ability. In the regions that the CMPP Program has successfully recruited Cuban doctors to come to the United States, the only effect has been to leave vulnerable populations without sufficient healthcare and to place Cuban doctors in America without a suitable support system.

As these facts are not unknown to government officials, why are these programs being maintained? Why is the U.S. harsher towards Cuba than other countries that commit grave human rights violations or have authoritarian dictatorships? In order to answer these questions, I will look at the cases of Saudi Arabia and China. Through my analysis, it will become apparent that government oppression and national ideology are not the United States’ main considerations in determining foreign policy. Rather, these factors serve as a justification for keeping Cuba policies in place that serve the best interest of politicians that are seeking to maintain the support of their constituents. In the midst of pressing issues including an array of domestic concerns, a global financial crisis, two U.S. wars, and a tumultuous environment in the Middle East, the majority of
Americans are unconcerned with U.S. policy towards Cuba. This lack of interest has allowed a few concentrated Cuban American special interest groups to sway the opinion of Congressmen and Congresswomen in their favor, leaving the United States with the same policies it created more than fifty years ago.

*Human Rights in Cuba*

Cuba consistently ranks as one of the world’s most repressive governments based on a number of indicators. Economically, it is the least free of the twenty-nine countries in the South and Central America/Caribbean region and it scores far below the world average. Cuban courts lack an independent and fair judicial system, the economy is plagued by corruption, the state maintains heavy controls on most aspects of economic activity, and property rights are severely restricted.¹ In addition, the international community recognizes that the Cuban government routinely represses the civil liberties and political rights of its citizens. The Castro regime is known for “restricting freedoms of expression, association, assembly, movement, and other basic rights. It has cracked down on dissent, arrested human rights activists and independent journalists, and staged demonstrations against critics.”² Political prisoners are not guaranteed and are often not granted due process, and the number of dissidents that remained arbitrarily imprisoned is unknown due to the fact that Cuba does not allow human rights groups access to its

In addition, the prisons themselves are “overcrowded, unhygienic, and unhealthy, leading to extensive malnutrition and illness.”

In 2012, Freedom House compiled “The Worst of the Worst: The World’s Most Repressive Societies,” a report that takes a closer look at countries that have the lowest ratings concerning political rights and civil liberties. The countries that are covered in the report have committed “widespread, systemic violations of fundamental freedoms.” Cuba, while not the ‘Worst of the Worst,’ was included in a list of eight countries or territories that are considered to be ‘On the Threshold.’ The governments in these areas are all similar in that they “severely suppress opposition political activity, impede independent organizations, and censor or punish criticism of the state.” They do not provide a means for independent political discussion and score poorly in the areas of political rights and civil liberties—7 and 6, respectively.

Cuba is governed by a one-party political system that considers any form of dissent to be a punishable offense. Cuban dissidents are detained for minor infractions, and the number of arrests per year grew from 2010 to 2011. Moreover, the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) controls all government institutions, most of which are laden with corruption. Given the nature of the government, it is not surprising that news sources are owned and controlled by the state and that independent journalists face harassment from state security agents. The fact that access to the Internet is severely restricted and that

---

4 Ibid., 4.
6 Ibid.
education is infused with ideological content makes it even more difficult for Cubans to freely obtain information that has not been tampered with by the state.

In addition to infringing on the right to free speech, the Cuban government does not guarantee the rights to religious freedom and freedom of assembly. Churches are restricted in their ability to conduct educational activities and their publications are subject to censorship by the state. Private religious services are also required to abide by the same restrictions of assembly that apply to other groups: “the unauthorized assembly of more than three people…is punishable with up to three months in prison and a fine.”7

This rule governing the peoples’ right to gather freely is often enforced on a selective basis that tends to target human rights activists.8

The neglect for human rights is also evident in the low standard of living of the Cuban people. In 2007, even Raúl Castro recognized that the basic needs of the population could not be met with their meager salaries.9 In addition to low wages, it has been estimated that up to 25 percent of the population is not employed. In such dire circumstances, even the smallest of remittances from friends or relatives in the United States can allow a family to live a “tolerable lifestyle” rather than to struggle to survive in destitution.10

Even though it provides the poor populations of receiving countries with significant benefits, many of the participants in Cuba’s program of medical diplomacy perceive it as a form of servitude or human trafficking. While Cuban medical personnel

---

7 Ibid., 13.
8 Ibid.
9 Sullivan, Cuba: Issues for the 110th Congress.
10 Garrett, “Castrocare in Crisis.”
are serving abroad, they are forced to work in areas of the country that are impoverished and potentially dangerous; even the doctors native to the host country refuse to work in these regions. However, these injustices do not begin and end on foreign soil. After they serve in these Third World countries, physicians are obligated to return to Cuba and to serve the government in whatever position or location the regime deems necessary.\textsuperscript{11}

Despite these abuses of power and grave human rights violations, it is important to note that the Castro regime has made some progress with regard to human rights. To begin, women are considered equal to men under the Cuban constitution. They participate in most professions and about 40 percent of all women are active in the workforce.\textsuperscript{12} In addition to these gains regarding gender equality, the Cuban government has made significant improvements in its own healthcare system and in those of third world countries through the expansion of its program of medical diplomacy.

According to the 2011 Human Development Index, Cuba comes in at 51\textsuperscript{st} out of 187 ranked countries. This index is a composite of three dimensions of development: life expectancy, education, and standard of living, which is marked by the gross national income per capita.\textsuperscript{13} 99.8\% of all adults are literate in Cuba\textsuperscript{14} and the average life expectancy has improved from 58 years in 1950 to 77 years in 2009. In 2012, it jumped even higher to 79.3 years. This increase gives Cuba the 55\textsuperscript{th} highest life expectancy ranking in the world, placing it only six spots behind the United States. In addition, with the second-lowest level of child mortality in the Americas Cuba ranks higher than the

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Human Development Report 2011}, 131–134.
\textsuperscript{14} “International Human Development Indicators: Cuba.”
United States according to the World Health Organization. Cuba also boasts the lowest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Americas.\textsuperscript{15} Despite the severe repression of political and civil liberties in Cuba, it is apparent that the government has made significant advancements with regard to the physical health of its people.

\textit{Human Rights in Saudi Arabia}

While the Human Development Index also designated Saudi Arabia as a country with high human development, it still ranked five spots lower than Cuba as 56\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{16} In 2011, life expectancy was 74.1 years, the under-five mortality per 1000 live births was 18—triple that of Cuba—and the adult literacy rate was 86.6\%.\textsuperscript{17} Further, the \textit{Worst of the Worst} Freedom House Report that defined Cuba as being ‘On the Threshold’ placed Saudi Arabia in the category ‘Worst of the Worst.’ Saudi Arabia’s absolute monarchy is built upon the repression of the freedoms of speech, assembly, association, and religion. There is no organized political opposition within the country as political parties are forbidden, domestic media outlets are tightly regulated, and journalists or editors that publish articles deemed to be offensive either to the rulers or the religious establishment may be banned. The internet is not exempt from government regulation either as over 400,000 websites are blocked due to content that is considered immoral or potentially damaging to the government.\textsuperscript{18}

With respect to economic freedom, Saudi Arabia ranked 8\textsuperscript{th} freest in its region and 82\textsuperscript{nd} in the world. Overall, its score remains above the world average due to large

\textsuperscript{15} Garrett, “Castrocare in Crisis.”
\textsuperscript{17} “International Human Development Indicators: Saudi Arabia.”
amounts of government spending, low tax rates for businesses, fairly open markets, and a relatively simple process for business formation. However, despite its ranking as a mostly free state economically, its score has steadily declined from a high of 66 in 2011 to 60.6 in 2013. This downward trend reflects corruption and a lack of transparency, inadequate property rights, the absence of structural and institutional reform, and an inability to keep up with the open-market policies of other nations.\(^\text{19}\)

Saudi Arabia is also defined by a lack of religious freedom. By law, all Saudis must be Muslims. The public practice of any other religion is strictly prohibited, and even the Shiite and Sufi sects of Islam face certain restrictions. These strict laws also affect education as it is prohibited to teach both secular philosophy or religions other than Islam in the classroom. While not caused exclusively by a strict adherence to Sunni Islam, women are discriminated against both in law and in practice. It is illegal for women to drive cars, they face restrictions in using public facilities when men are present, they must be accompanied by a male relative when traveling within or outside of the country, daughters tend to be awarded a smaller inheritance than their brothers, and “the court testimony of one man is equal to that of two women.”\(^\text{20}\) It is clear that the religious restrictions of Saudi society have a negative impact on the freedom of religion, access to a quality and comprehensive education, and women’s rights.

Despite the fact that Saudi Arabia’s civil liberties rating worsened from 6 to 7 in 2011, it must be noted that the government did make some efforts to protect these rights in that same year. King Abdullah promised women the right to vote in municipal

elections in 2015 and also stated that they would be able to hold seats in the country’s Consultative Council. In order to promote the protection of free speech, the King implemented legal changes that made it illegal to criticize religious scholars. Lastly, in an effort to combat immoral practices, the King established an anticorruption commission. Nevertheless, due to administrative barriers this commission was ultimately unsuccessful.21

In addition to the grave human rights violations and repression that currently plague Saudi Arabia, the country was listed as a Tier I threat in the Council on Foreign Relations’ 2012 Preventative Priorities Survey. This report is a compilation of the opinions of government officials, academics, and experts regarding the urgency of conflict prevention demands. Tier I threats are those that “directly threaten the U.S. homeland, are likely to trigger U.S. military involvement because of treaty commitments, or threaten supplies of critical U.S. strategic resources.”22 According to this survey, Saudi Arabia is a threat because of the potential endangerment of global oil supplies due to political instability. However, even though the Saudi Arabian government commits grave human rights violations and the instability of this system presents a potential threat to the security of the U.S. economic system, the United States has neglected to employ an economic embargo against the country.

---

21 Ibid.
22 Center for Preventive Action, “Preventive Priorities Survey.”
**Human Rights in China**

Despite its success economically, China is ranked 101st on the Human Development Index$^{23}$ and 136th on the 2013 Index of Economic Freedom.$^{24}$ It is governed by the Communist Party of China, which maintains a monopoly on political power. Local Communist party branches control even local elections and any expression of discontent with the one-party system leaves activists subject to imprisonment. Even as China’s GDP grows at impressive levels, environmental degradation and low birth rates reflecting China’s “one-child policy” create social unrest in the nation.

As with the Cuban and Saudi Arabian governments, the communist regime infiltrates all aspects of the society. Land is state-owned, corruption is rampant in the judicial system, firms and individuals are subject to severe restrictions and regulations, intellectual property rights lack adequate protection, corruption is prevalent in the banking industry, and contracts and laws are subject to the Communist party’s authority.$^{25}$ In part due to these infringements on justice and freedoms, the Freedom House’s report on the world’s most repressive societies labeled China as a country that was ‘On the Threshold,’ the same designation it gave Cuba. The report details China’s arrest, harassment, and punishment of uncooperative journalists and also its strict censorship of the media, Internet, and mobile-telephone communications. As a result of these restrictions and the fact that more journalists, bloggers and cyber-dissidents are in

---

$^{25}$ Ibid.
prison in China than in any other country, Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index ranked China 174th out of 179 countries for its lack of press freedom.\(^{26}\)

Where religion is concerned, practices are both monitored and suppressed. Religious groups must register with the government, which subsequently regulates their activity as well as their teachings. Some faith groups are forbidden entirely while others face harassment or imprisonment. Like Cuba and Saudi Arabia, the freedom to assemble and associate is restricted by the government. In addition, China continues to ignore violations of women’s rights. Women are subjected to domestic violence, human trafficking, and have been coerced to abide by the one-child policy.\(^{27}\) Despite these severe violations of human rights, U.S. trade with China has continued to expand over the years.

In the 2012 Preventative Priorities Report, China was listed as a Tier I threat due to the possibility of a major military incident with China involving U.S. or allied forces. As was noted in the section on Saudi Arabia, Tier I threats may present a direct danger to the U.S. homeland, require U.S. military involvement due to treaty commitments, or threaten the supplies of critical U.S. strategic resources. Despite the risk of potential military involvement in China, the United States increased its dependence on China in 2012 by expanding trade by billions of dollars. In the same way the U.S. government overlooks China’s repressive Communist regime and severe human rights violations, it has ignored this potential threat for the sake of trade.

\(^{26}\) World Press Freedom Index 2011-2012.
\(^{27}\) Freedom House, Worst of the Worst 2012, 12.
**Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy**

As a “great power” on the UN Commission of Human Rights, the United States government has a deep understanding of what human rights are and why they should be preserved.28 What the Declaration does not outline, however, is a guide for how human rights should be defended and whose responsibility it is to ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to lead a dignified life. While it is generally a government’s own responsibility to protect its people,29 in Cuba, Saudi Arabia, and China dictatorial and monarchical regimes choose to ignore the rights of its populace. In considering the vulnerable populations of other countries, the United States has the choice to either disregard human rights violations or intervene and address them. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., an American historian, notes that “Americans have agreed since 1776 that the United States must be a beacon of human rights to an unregenerate world.”30 As a world superpower, the United States has the responsibility to at least be aware of human rights violations in other countries.

Despite the centrality of human rights to the U.S. Constitution and the potential benefits of integrating human rights into its foreign policy,31 the U.S. has not fulfilled its duty as a “beacon of human rights.” For this reason, the United States is often perceived to be a hypocritical and self-interested nation. Author Jack Donnelly notes that “human rights have not been integrated into foreign policy, but sacrificed in the name of foreign

---

28 Glendon, “Knowing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” 1157.
30 Ibid., 236.
31 Schulz, *In Our Own Best Interest*. 
Similarly, in *Fifty Years of Revolution: Perspectives on Cuba, the United States, and the World*, professor of Political Science Lars Schoultz points out that the United States’ approach to Latin America focuses only on U.S. interests: “on protecting its own security, on promoting its economy, or on addressing domestic political issues.” He continues by noting how the goals of U.S. policies, as numerous and wide-ranging as they may be, tend to stem from a common foundation of security interests. This focus often trumps concerns for human rights, even though efforts are often made to reverse harm that has been done through the allocation of humanitarian aid. Nevertheless, for all its seemingly good intentions, the United States often caters to its economic interests over its stated commitment to human rights. This tendency is an important factor in understanding why the United States has maintained an embargo on Cuba for over fifty years while other repressive dictatorships or communist regimes remain some of the United States’ most important partners in trade.

*Value to the U.S. Government: Strategy, Economy, Domestic Opinion*

It is clear that human rights violations are an issue in Cuba, Saudi Arabia, and China. In addition, all three countries are governed by an overly repressive regime. Nevertheless, Cuba is the only one of these countries that is subject to an embargo—and has been for fifty years. Furthermore, the United States does not have a program designed to actively recruit Saudi Arabian or Chinese refugees, as the CMPP Program does. While the initial justification for the embargo was the national security threat presented by

---

Cuba, this rationale has long since become outdated and irrelevant. Throughout the years, the stipulations for lifting the embargo have been expanded to include a transition to a democratic government and a demonstrated respect for human rights. While the CMPP Program does not list any requirements for terminating the initiative, it was implemented for urgent humanitarian reasons and significant public benefit.

The reason for this disparity in treatment lies in part with the economic value of each country to the United States. Even with the embargo on Cuba in place, the United States has been able to diversify its markets and has maintained a GDP per capita of over $49,000.35 The U.S. economy is highly diversified, has the second largest industrial output in the world, and is the third largest global exporter.36 Cuba, on the other hand, has been devastated by both the loss of trading partners in the Soviet bloc and by natural disasters. It remains dependent on Venezuela for over 37 percent of its imports and had a GDP per capita of $9,900 in 2010.37 Cuba, which primarily imports its goods, received 3.29 percent of its imports from the United States in 2012. For the U.S., the percentage of its exports that went to Cuba in 2012 was only 0.02 percent.38 While the amount of imports and exports is not significant on either end, it is clear that the percentage of U.S. exports to Cuba is less significant. The United States is in no way dependent on Cuba as an export market, and Table 6.2 shows that the United States has not imported more than $600,000 worth of Cuban goods in any given year since 1993. In 2012, the $100,000

35 “Country Comparison: GDP Per Capita (PPP).”
36 CIA, “The United States.”
37 CIA, “Cuba.”
38 Ibid.
worth of Cuban goods imported by the U.S. constituted less than 0.005% of all imports.\textsuperscript{39} While lifting the embargo might serve to make Cuba a more viable export market for the United States, the United States has not experienced any great suffering as a result of the embargo. Thus, without pressure from domestic lobby groups or without significant efforts on the part of Cuba to cooperate with U.S. demands and resume Level I negotiations, the U.S. government has little incentive to unilaterally lift the embargo.

Geographically, Cuba is in a very strategic location. However, the impact its location has on the United States depends on the state of U.S.-Cuban relations. When Cuba was in the good favor of the U.S., the government viewed it as a gateway to Latin America and as a useful base for defending its interests. On the other hand, at only ninety miles from the Florida coast Cuba proved to be a useful ally for the Soviet Union during the Cold War. With the support of such a powerful nation, the sheer proximity of Cuba proved to be dangerous for the United States. With normalized trade and diplomatic relations, Cuba could potentially prove to be a valuable asset to the United States. However, without cooperation from the Cuban government this will not be possible.

Unlike Cuba, Saudi Arabia represents a crucial trading partner for the U.S. It is the United States’ third largest supplier of crude oil and most important supplier within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).\textsuperscript{40} The strong economic and strategic relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia tends to take precedence over other conflicts or differences. The two countries work closely in efforts to stabilize the region, moderate oil imports and exports, and pursue sustainable

\textsuperscript{39} “Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods with Cuba.”
\textsuperscript{40} “U.S. Imports by Country of Origin.”
development. Geographically, Saudi Arabia represents an important ally in an unstable and unpredictable Middle East. In *Saudi Arabia on the Edge: The Uncertain Future of an American Ally*, Thomas Lippman argues that Saudi Arabia is “a central player—sometimes in accord with U.S. policy, sometimes not—in Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, in the quest for stability in Iraq, in Persian Gulf regional security issues focusing on Iran, and in the global struggle to promote a peaceful vision of Islam over jihadist violence.”

Despite these important ties, domestic opinion of Saudi Arabia demonstrates a lack of trust for the country and dissatisfaction with its human rights record. At the same time, many Americans acknowledge the necessity of maintaining positive relations with the Saudi Arabian government. In a 2011 survey asking participants how important keeping oil prices low should be with regard to the U.S. policies toward the Middle East, 67 percent responded that this was a very important goal, while 23 percent deemed it somewhat important. Based on these results, it is clear that oil prices are a priority for a majority of U.S. citizens. Other surveys have revealed that 90 percent of adults find energy-related issues to be at least somewhat important in deciding who they vote for in an election, and in 2006 26% of Americans felt that high oil prices were a bigger threat to the U.S. economy than unfair foreign competition, the budget deficit, terrorism, falling housing prices, and high taxes. Keeping oil prices low is important to Americans,

---

43 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “How Important Is It to Keep Oil Prices Low?”.
45 Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg, “What Is the Biggest Threat to the U.S. Economy Today?”.
especially as a vast majority reports being personally affected by rising energy costs.\textsuperscript{46} In 2009, Americans were asked whether they worried that problems abroad would hurt the U.S. oil supply and consequently raise prices for customers. Only 15 percent claimed to not worry at all about it, while 84 percent worried somewhat or worried a lot about rising oil prices.\textsuperscript{47}

While it is apparent that most Americans feel strongly about keeping oil prices low for both personal reasons and for the well-being of the nation’s economy, there is also a feeling of distrust towards Saudi Arabia. In 2003, 67 percent of registered voters did not believe Saudi Arabia to be an ally of the United States in the war on terror.\textsuperscript{48} A 2012 survey revealed that these opinions had not changed much in the past decade as 67 percent of participants stated that the U.S. could not place much trust in Saudi Arabia or trust it at all.\textsuperscript{49} When given the option of calling Saudi Arabia a friend, an enemy, or recognizing that it plays both sides, only 3 percent chose to label Saudi Arabia a friend.\textsuperscript{50} Nevertheless, despite this overwhelming sense of distrust Americans recognize the value of maintaining a relationship with Saudi Arabia. Repressive, authoritarian, manipulative government aside, 77 percent of Americans perceive Saudi Arabia as being at least

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
somewhat important to the United States and most Americans oppose putting pressure on Saudi Arabia to become more democratic.

The economic and strategic value of keeping Saudi Arabia as an ally is recognized and appreciated by most Americans. Because question of the embargo and of normalizing relations with Cuba does not affect the entire population and the economy in the same way that energy-related issues do, Americans are not as invested in restoring relations with Cuba as they are in maintaining friendly relations with Saudi Arabia. In considering Level I negotiations, the United States and Saudi Arabia are able to reach agreements on issues because their cooperation in and of itself satisfies the Level II domestic pressure faced by U.S. officials, namely to keep the price of oil as low as possible.

The case of China is similar in that its importance to the United States arises due to economic reasons. The United States’ trade balance with China for the year 2012 was negative $315,053.5 million because the United States imports more goods from China than it exports to China. It is still the United States’ largest trading partners and exports to China support more than half a million U.S. jobs. In addition to its relationship to the development of the U.S. economy, China itself has experienced remarkable development and continues to boast unprecedented growth rates. In 2011, its population was over 1.34 billion people, accounting for about 19% of the world total. With such a large

---

51 Attitudes Toward China, “Is the United States an Important Ally of the United States?”.
52 Global Views, “Should the United States Pressure Saudi Arabia to Be More Democratic?”.
54 Office of the Press Secretary, “Fact Sheet: U.S.-China Economic Issues.”
55 “Data: Population.”
populace and a continually expanding economy, it is essential that the United States maintains positive relations with China. In his report “The Benefit of U.S.-China Trade in Services,” Dr. Craig VanGrasstek writes that U.S. trade sanctions targeted at China would likely damage U.S. economic interests. Trade between the U.S. and China has benefitted exporters of services and also U.S. exporters of goods: “It would be self-defeating for the United States to take precipitous, unilateral action that jeopardizes this relationship at the very time that it is coming to economic fruition.”

A 2012 survey demonstrated the most Americans agree with this idea; 76 percent of participants believed that trade with China was more beneficial to the United States than not. This widespread understanding of the benefits of trade with China is despite the fact that over half of Americans feel that China practices unfair trade with the United States and that 69 percent believe that China’s access to U.S. markets should be linked to its human rights record. In 1985, the United States’ trade balance with China was negative $6 million and the U.S. only imported $3,861.7 million dollars’ worth of Chinese goods. Since that time, the United States’ trade deficit has grown to be over 50,000 times that amount and the amount of imports is over 110 times larger than it was in 1985. In just twenty-seven years, U.S. trade with China has grown exponentially. Thus, even though a majority of Americans have consistently felt that it is more important to take a strong stand on human rights than to maintain favorable diplomatic

55 “U.S. and World Population Clock.”
57 Committee of 100 US China Public Perceptions, “Is Trade with China Beneficial to the U.S. Economy?”.
58 Global Views, “Do You Think China Practices Unfair Trade with the United States?”.
59 Attitudes Toward China, “Should China’s Access to U.S. Markets Be Linked to Its Human Rights Record?”. 
and trade relations with China,\textsuperscript{60} the United States has not implemented the same coercive measures that it did with Cuba nor has it pressured the international community to stop trade with China. China represents a crucial import and export market for the United States, and decreasing trade with China or taking any action that would harm U.S.-China relations could ultimately have a grave impact on the U.S. economy. Unlike the case of Cuba, which is a priority for only a minority of Americans and is not significant economically, any fluctuation in relations with China would likely impact a majority of the population of the United States.

It is clear that the strategic and economic value of maintaining relations with Saudi Arabia and China greatly outweighs the benefit of relations with Cuba. Although Cuba was a threat when it was an appendage of the Soviet Union, this danger dissipated with the disbanding of the Soviet bloc. Without the support of a more powerful nation, Cuba does not have the capacity to present an offensive threat. While an economic relationship with Cuba would likely provide some benefit to the United States, the value of this change is not effectively balanced by the cost of alienating a hardline Cuban American lobby that does not want to reestablish diplomatic or trade relations with Cuba. In the United States’ system of representative democracy, jeopardizing trade with Saudi Arabia and China may have an even greater political cost than challenging the Cuban American voting population.

\textsuperscript{60} Time/CNN/Yankelovich Partners, “What Should Be the United States’ Approach to China?”. 
\textsuperscript{59} Time/CNN/Yankelovich Partners, “What Should the U.S. Policy Toward China Be?".
Figure 6.1: U.S. Exports 1992-2012

Note: All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars on a nominal basis, not seasonally adjusted unless otherwise specified.

Statistics from the United States Census Bureau

This graph shows the amount of U.S. exports to Saudi Arabia, China, and Cuba in millions of dollars over a twenty year period. It is clear that China receives the vast majority of U.S. exports and is a valuable trading partner for the United States. At the same time, U.S. exports to Cuba are marginal.

Table 6.1: U.S. Exports 1992-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Cuba</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Cuba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>7166.90</td>
<td>7418.50</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4595.70</td>
<td>28367.90</td>
<td>259.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>6661.20</td>
<td>8762.90</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5256.70</td>
<td>34427.80</td>
<td>404.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6013.50</td>
<td>9281.70</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>6805.40</td>
<td>41192.00</td>
<td>369.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6155.00</td>
<td>11753.70</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>7639.50</td>
<td>53673.00</td>
<td>340.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>7311.30</td>
<td>11992.60</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>10395.90</td>
<td>62936.90</td>
<td>447.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8437.90</td>
<td>12862.20</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>12484.20</td>
<td>69732.80</td>
<td>711.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>10520.10</td>
<td>14241.20</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10792.20</td>
<td>69496.70</td>
<td>532.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>7911.90</td>
<td>13111.10</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11556.30</td>
<td>91880.60</td>
<td>367.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>6234.20</td>
<td>16185.20</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>13829.50</td>
<td>103939.40</td>
<td>363.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5957.60</td>
<td>19182.30</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>18118.10</td>
<td>110590.10</td>
<td>465.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4780.80</td>
<td>22127.70</td>
<td>145.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars on a nominal basis, not seasonally adjusted unless otherwise specified.

62 Statistics from the United States Census Bureau

This table presents the same data as Figure 6.1, the amount of U.S. exports to Saudi Arabia, China, and Cuba in millions of dollars over a twenty year period. Even though it is clear from the information given that U.S. exports to Cuba have grown exponentially since 2001, the amount of exports to Cuba is negligible when compared with goods sent to Saudi Arabia or China.

This graph illustrates annual U.S. imports over a twenty year period to Saudi Arabia, China, and Cuba. China remains the United States’ largest trading partner and imports from Cuba remain near zero.

Note: All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars on a nominal basis, not seasonally adjusted unless otherwise specified.

Statistics from the United States Census Bureau

63 “Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods with Cuba.”; “Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods with China.”; “Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods with Saudi Arabia.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Cuba</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Cuba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>10371.40</td>
<td>25727.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>18068.60</td>
<td>152436.10</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>7707.80</td>
<td>31539.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>20958.70</td>
<td>196682.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>7688.10</td>
<td>38786.80</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>27192.60</td>
<td>243470.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>8376.60</td>
<td>45543.20</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>31689.00</td>
<td>287774.40</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>10467.30</td>
<td>51512.80</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>35626.00</td>
<td>321442.90</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>9365.00</td>
<td>62557.70</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>54747.40</td>
<td>337772.60</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6241.30</td>
<td>71168.60</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>22053.10</td>
<td>296373.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>8253.50</td>
<td>81788.20</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>31412.80</td>
<td>364943.90</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14364.80</td>
<td>100018.20</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>47476.30</td>
<td>399361.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>13272.20</td>
<td>102278.40</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>55667.00</td>
<td>425643.60</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>13149.90</td>
<td>125192.60</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars on a nominal basis, not seasonally adjusted unless otherwise specified.

64 Statistics from the United States Census Bureau

This table presents the same information as Figure 6.2, annual U.S. imports over a twenty year period to Saudi Arabia, China, and Cuba. China remains the United States’ largest trading partner and imports from Cuba did not exceed $600,000 from 1992 to 2012.

64 “Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods with Cuba.”; “Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods with China.”; “Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods with Saudi Arabia.”
This graph shows annual U.S. oil imports from Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, China, and Cuba from 1993 to 2012 as well as the total amount of U.S. oil imported annually. Saudi Arabia and Venezuela are valuable sources of oil for the United States, while oil imports from China and Cuba are less significant.

Note: amount listed in thousands of barrels

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

65 “U.S. Imports by Country of Origin.”
While the economic and geographic value of China and Saudi Arabia has the power to influence U.S. foreign policy in and of itself, the importance the voting population places on these issues is even more instrumental in the formation of U.S. foreign policy. As a representative democracy, officials elected to the United States government are accountable to the population that voted for them. Every four years, the Electoral College elects the president and vice president. In this system, each state is allotted a certain number of votes based on their population. In most states, a candidate will be awarded the entirety of that state’s electoral votes if they receive the most votes by the population of that state. It is only Maine and Nebraska that employ the congressional district method, which allows the state to be split between candidates.

While most states have historically voted either Democratic or Republican, there is a minority of states that are considered “swing states.” These states are important due to both the number of electoral votes they have and their capacity to vote either Democratic or Republican in any given race. Who wins a swing state, or battleground state, can determine who becomes the next president. Florida, which claims twenty-nine electoral votes, is particularly salient to the discussion of the Cuban American vote. Even though Cubans only represent 0.5 percent of the population of the United States, the electoral system and the congressional structure allow them to have a voice on the national agenda. Over 65 percent of all Cuban Americans claim Florida as their residence, which gives Cubans a disproportionate say in this one state.66 While the

---

Executive branch must respond to the nation as a whole, Congressmen and Congresswomen tend to focus on their respective districts. Their primary role in Congress is to lobby for the interests of their own constituents, and in doing so they increase their chances of being reelected. Thus, in areas such as Miami-Dade County, Florida where over 30% of the population is Cuban, policy toward Cuba matters.

While there is no lack of discussion on Cuba within the Cuban American population, U.S.-Cuban relations over the past fifty years have been marked by an absence of actual Level I negotiations, or discussions in which countries consider how they can reconcile the interests of their respective populations. While the Cuban government is not interested in the opinions of its people, the U.S. government must respond to only a small section of its population. This led to a lack of pushback from the American population when the U.S. first ended diplomatic ties with Cuba and implemented the embargo. Both actions were considered measures of national security and were intended to terminate the safety threat posed by Cuba. Nevertheless, as early as 1979 an opinion poll by NBC News/Associated Press showed that 39 percent of adults favored restoring diplomatic relations with Cuba while only 44 percent remained opposed. Even in the midst of the Cold War, the population that approved of the current state of U.S.-Cuba relations, or lack thereof, did not maintain a significant margin over those favoring the restoration of diplomatic relations.

While the majority of Americans favored the restoration of relations at the turn of the century, this percentage has increased since the year 2000 (Figure 6.4). In a 2009

---

67 NBC News/Associated Press, “Should the United States Reestablish Diplomatic Relations with Cuba?”. 
survey by PIPA/Knowledge Networks, most adults felt that the embargo had neither strengthened nor weakened Castro’s government.\textsuperscript{68} It is this recognition of the ineffectiveness of the embargo that may be causing Americans to favor the normalization of relations with Cuba. However, despite these trends in public opinion the embargo remains in place and diplomatic relations have not been restored. In order for domestic opinion to matter and to impact policy, voters must make it apparent that certain issues are important to them. Because Cuba is not high on the list of priorities for a majority of Americans, Cuba tends to slip through the cracks.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{figure6.4.png}
\caption{Do you approve or disapprove of reestablishing diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba?}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{69} Data compiled from multiple sources.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{68} PIPA/Knowledge Networks, “What Effect Do You Think the Embargo Has Had on the Castro Government?”.
\end{flushleft}
In September of 1994, only 8 percent of adults polled nationally felt that U.S. relations with Cuba were the most serious foreign policy issue facing the United States. Three months later, this number fell to 5 percent. The participants were more concerned with the war between Bosnia and Syria, instability in Russia, the situation in Haiti, North Korea’s development of a nuclear weapon, and relations between Israel and the Arab nations. In the same way, in 1997 64 percent of adults surveyed felt that pressuring Fidel Castro to bring democracy to Cuba was either a low priority or not a priority at all. It is clear that the majority of Americans were not overly concerned or concerned at all with U.S.-Cuban relations or the state of affairs in Cuba. In 1988, a time when the Cold War still posed a threat to U.S. security, the Gallup Organization conducted over 1,000 personal interviews and asked whether the interviewees would be more or less likely to vote for a candidate that expressed a readiness to try to improve relations with Cuba. Only 14 percent responded that they would be less likely to vote for such a candidate, while 51 percent stated that it would not make much of a difference. In a political environment where half the population is uninterested in the state of U.S.-Cuban affairs, it is logical that candidates will cater to the desires of the constituents that are invested in the issue.

In January of 2009, Fox News conducted a national survey to see what registered voters felt President Obama’s single biggest policy change would be in his first year.

---

70 NBC News/Wall Street Journal, “What Is the Most Serious Foreign Policy Issue the United States Must Deal with Today?”.
72 Time/CNN/Yankelovich Partners, “Should It Be a Priority for the United States to Pressure Fidel Castro to Bring Democracy to Cuba?”.
Only 2 percent selected normalizing relations with Cuba, which can either indicate that participants did not see such a change as significant or that they simply did not feel that this change would occur. In either case, the focus of the electorate was not on Cuba. Ultimately, President Obama did make concessions toward Cuba during his first year in office. However, this progress has not led to any signs of normalization. While the Executive was able to make small changes, it was unnecessary for President Obama or Congress to strain relations with the hardline Cuban American populace by unilaterally lifting the embargo or normalizing relations. The majority of voting Americans have not expressed an interest in Cuba or lobbied for the restoration of diplomatic relations, giving Cuban Americans a great amount of sway in the political process. The government feels little pressure domestically to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba and also is not accountable to any negotiations with Cuba. In the absence of meaningful domestic opposition to the current Cuba policy and a lack of international negotiation with Cuba, the Cuban American lobby is able to exercise its power and manipulate U.S. foreign policy.

The Cuban American Lobby

The Cuban American lobby has been instrumental in determining the course of U.S.-Cuban relations. As the majority of Americans remain indifferent towards the Cuba policy and tend not to base who they vote for on candidates’ perception of U.S.-Cuba relations, members of Congress and the Executive are free to cater to the interests of the

74 FOX News/Opinion Dynamics, “What Do You Think Will Be the Single Biggest Policy Change the Obama Administration Makes in Its First Year?”.
Cuban American lobby. This demographic of Cuban exiles tend to be both driven and educated, which contributes to their ability to exert their influence on U.S. foreign policy.

Just as these domestic factors have contributed to the continuation of the embargo, they also played a role in the formation of the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program and have determined where it is most heavily publicized. Solidaridad Sin Fronteras, a Miami-based organization that provides support and guidance for IMGs, pushed for the initiation of this program.\(^{75}\) It is unlikely that this program is heavily advertised by Congressmen and Congresswoman in the Midwest where there is not a large Cuban American population, but it remains a pertinent issue for areas that have experienced an influx of Cuban Americans. In cities like Miami, Congressman and Congresswomen openly broadcast this policy that not only helps Cuban medical professionals escape the unjustness of working conditions in Third World countries but allows them to apply for parole for their family members as well.\(^{76}\)

In addition to general advocacy, Cuban Americans also influence Congress financially. The U.S.-Cuba Democracy Political Action Committee (USCD-PAC), formed in 2003, encourages Cuban Americans and concerned citizens to influence policy by donating funds that will finance the campaigns of Congressional candidates. By doing so, USCD-PAC becomes a “significant factor in the Washington debate about the importance of a free and democratic Cuba to American interests and values.”\(^{77}\) While PACs can direct their efforts toward candidates, initiatives, or legislation on a state or

\(^{75}\) Almeida, “Julio Cesar Alfonso, Executive Director and President of Solidarity Without Frontiers.”

\(^{76}\) Schoultz, “U.S. Policy Toward Latin America Since 1959,” 20.

\(^{77}\) U.S.-Cuba Democracy PAC, “What Is a PAC?”.
federal level, USCD-PAC chooses to focus its contributions on federal candidates that are key lawmakers in Congress.

According to USCD-PAC, the best way to promote a free and democratic Cuba is to keep hard currency out of the hands of Cuba's repressive state police and military, oppose the regulations that segregate Cubans and tourists, protect U.S. security interests by keeping Cuba on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, maintain sanctions to demonstrate solidarity with the opposition leaders, solicit international support for these goals, continue to unequivocally pursue democracy in Cuba, and prepare the next generation of Cuban leaders.\(^78\) In efforts to encourage leaders of Congress to pursue and promote these goals, the USCD-PAC has contributed $2,332,124 to federal candidates since 2004.\(^79\) In the 2012 election cycle, the US-Cuba Democracy PAC made more contributions to federal candidates than any other Foreign and Defense Policy PAC.\(^80\)

In 2008, official USCD-PAC contributions reached a high of over $760,000.\(^81\) The next year, NPR correspondent Peter Overby presented a report on the politics of Cuban American relations and the impact of the USCD-PAC. He points out that despite recognition of the hardship the embargo has imposed on the Cuban people, pleas from human rights groups to bring an end to the embargo, and the desire for more commerce with Cuba, the USCD-PAC continues to insist that the embargo is the only way to bring down the Castro regime. Overby explains how contributions from the USCD-PAC encourage politicians to change their opinion on Cuba and reinforce decisions that favor

\(^78\) U.S.-Cuba Democracy PAC, “Statement of Purpose.”
\(^79\) OpenSecrets.org, “U.S.-Cuba Democracy PAC.”
\(^80\) OpenSecrets.org, “Foreign & Defense Policy.”
\(^81\) OpenSecrets.org, “U.S.-Cuba Democracy PAC.”
the PAC’s anti-Castro interests. Congressmen and Congresswomen that modify their stance on the issue to conform to the views of the USCD-PAC may consequently receive a contribution to promote their behavior.82 A report by Associated Press Hispanic affairs writer Laura Wides-Munoz identified a number of lawmakers—at least 18—that changed their stance on Cuba subsequent to the receipt of donations from USCD-PAC.83

In addition to the contributions from the USCD-PAC, ethnic interest groups have manipulated the trajectory of U.S.-Cuban relations. In particular, the Cuban American National Foundation has been extremely influential in this respect. Founded in 1981 by Jorge Mas Canosa and Dr. Francisco Hernandez, the organization operates with the intention of seeking an end of Castro’s repressive rule. Over the years, it has united much of the Cuban exile community in the United States and has worked to promote Cuban interests through advocacy efforts and programming.84 The foundation of the organization itself may be political, as is argued by Political Science professors Patrick Haney and Walt Vanderbush in their discussion of the role of ethnic interest groups in U.S. foreign policy. They argue that the CANF may not have arose spontaneously but rather was proposed and encouraged by the Reagan administration, which shared similar interests to the Cuban exile community.85

In collaboration with the Reagan administration, Jorge Mas Canosa helped develop Radio Martí in 1985 and a few years later did the same with TV Marti.86 Each of

---

82 Overby, “U.S.-Cuba PAC Money May Have Changed Votes.”
84 Cuban American National Foundation, “About Us.”
86 Ibid., 350–351.
these efforts was intended to offer a source of objective information for the Cuban people, who otherwise have limited access to information not tainted or censored by the government. In addition to its goal of bringing freedom and democracy to Cuba through initiatives on the island, the CANF labors to instigate change domestically and to influence U.S. foreign policy. In analyzing the impact of the CANF, William LeoGrande cites the thousands of dollars the organization donated to sympathetic members of Congress up until 1996 and contends that “No countervailing group, either within the Cuban American community or beyond it, could begin to match CANF's influence.”

The CANF has had a direct impact on U.S. legislation. As an example, consider the 1992 legislation formerly referred to in this paper as the Cuban Democracy Act. This act is also known as the Torricelli Bill, named after Representative Torricelli, a Democrat from New Jersey. Torricelli had previously favored easing the sanctions against Cuba, but changed his mind after developing a relationship with the CANF and Canosa himself. Once Torricelli realized the full impact of the Cuban American vote in New Jersey, he drafted legislation that codified and expanded the embargo. Consequently, he received thousands of dollars in campaign funds from conservative Cuban Americans. Because this bill was composed in the midst of a presidential election season, it became a crucial issue for candidate Bill Clinton and incumbent President Bush. The importance of Florida in the presidential election led Clinton to endorse the bill while campaigning in that state, and President Bush was subsequently pressured to respond by endorsing the bill as well.

---

87 LeoGrande, “From Havana to Miami,” 74.
88 Ibid.
With both Republicans and Democrats pledging support, the Torricelli bill was passed.\textsuperscript{89} In this way, the CANF had a significant impact on the passage of legislation.

The Cuban American vote and the Cuban American lobby have often been deciding factors in the passage or rejection of legislation regarding Cuba. The LIBERTAD Act, or Helms-Burton Act, was approved in the wake of a Cuban attack on two Brothers to the Rescue planes and in the midst of another presidential election. By endorsing this legislation, President Clinton hoped to appear tough on communism and win the decisive Cuban American vote in Florida and New Jersey.\textsuperscript{90} Cuba became particularly important once again near the end of Clinton’s term in office with the controversy surrounding Elián González. As was mentioned briefly in Chapter III, President Clinton’s reaction to this affair in 1999—agreeing that the young boy should be sent back to Cuba—may have contributed to Al Gore’s close defeat in the 2000 presidential election since Cuban Americans felt betrayed by Clinton’s decision. The Cuban American electorate has been influential in and of itself, and even more so when consolidated into one powerful interest group—the CANF.

Until recently, the CANF remained entirely opposed to any relaxation of the embargo and encouraged Washington to maintain a hostile and strictly anti-Castro approach toward Cuba. Their position remained static for nearly thirty years, but in 2009 the CANF published “A New Course for U.S.-Cuba Policy: Advancing People-Driven Change.” This report outlines the organization’s new policy positions and acknowledges that a static and reactive policy toward Cuba is not in the best interest of the United States

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 74–75.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 81.
or the Cuban people. Their new approach advocates for grass roots efforts and for adjustments based on incremental improvements in Cuba. They seek to instigate change from the bottom-up rather than through top-down reform. The means through which the CANF seeks to bring about this change include increased support for the development of Cuban civil society, increased people-to-people exchanges, improved communication to advance freedom of information, and engagement in targeted bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts. More specifically, CANF supports lifting restrictions on Cuban American family remittances and humanitarian aid parcels, increasing the weight limit of these parcels, permitting direct cash aid, encouraging or requiring more investment in Cuban Civil Society, allowing private micro-loans, permitting more private aid for pro-democracy groups, lifting restrictions on Cuban American family and humanitarian travel, promoting Radio and Televisión Martí, upgrading telecommunications equipment, reestablishing semi-annual migration talks, opening channels of communication, and encouraging international cooperation in the development of Cuban civil society.91

Despite their new focus on people-driven change, the CANF still maintains that the embargo should not be unilaterally lifted until the Castro regimes makes significant moves towards freedom and democracy. The organization feels that such a drastic action would have negative consequences for the Cuban people, who would continue to be subjected to the deprivation of basic human rights and freedoms. In addition, the CANF claims that unilaterally lifting the embargo would have a detrimental impact on the long-

term strategic interests of the United States.\textsuperscript{92} In addition, the organization maintains that people-driven change will lead to prosperity, social progress, and political stability among the Cuban people; according to their recommendations, it is only through this approach and not through a lifting of the embargo that change will arise.

\textit{Conclusion}

The embargo on Cuba was originally implemented in response to a national security threat from Cuba. The U.S. government hoped it would lead to the demise of the Castro regime and felt it was an appropriate reaction to the nationalization of U.S.-owned property by the revolutionary government. Today, there is no legitimate threat from Cuba to the United States’ national security, the embargo has proven to be ineffective in leading to the collapse of the Castro regime, and the Cuban government shows no signs of returning U.S. property or compensating affected individuals. In light of the inapplicability of the original justifications for the embargo, subsequent legislation has stipulated that Cuba must also transition to democracy, give its people freedom, and cease the human rights violations that have defined its repressive regime. The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program, supposedly implemented for humanitarian reasons or for significant public benefit, encourages Cuban medical professionals to ignore their commitment to the Cuban government and desert their medical missions abroad.

Even though it is undeniable that the Cuban government is repressive and commits serious human rights violations, other countries that exhibit these same issues have not been subjected to sanctions. Saudi Arabia has one of the most repressive

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
regimes in the world as it does not permit any form of dissent. Nevertheless, it remains the United States’ third largest source of crude oil. At the same time, China, a communist regime that shows no signs of transitioning to democracy and is well-known for its human rights violations remains the United States’ largest trading partner. In addition, both Saudi Arabia and China were determined to be Tier I threats by the CFR’s Preventative Priority Survey in 2012. Despite the fact that these conditions merited a fifty year embargo on Cuba, trade with Saudi Arabia and China has not been sacrificed in the name of human rights, democracy, or national security.

Put simply, Cuba does not possess the level of economic influence that would instigate a unilateral lifting of the embargo. Surveys have shown that Americans tend to be more interested in foreign and domestic policies that affect them personally, and with a myriad of other issues facing the United States today Cuba is usually overlooked. As such, a change in something such as oil prices or the price of goods and services will have a greater impact on how Americans will vote. For this reason, elected government officials have a vested interest in maintaining favorable relations with Saudi Arabia and China for the purposes of keeping prices low. Human rights and ideological differences are cast aside for short-term economic benefit.

Cuba-related issues, however, affect only a small percentage of the electorate. With direct negotiations with Cuba and general domestic opinion more-or-less out of the picture, the Cuban American lobby is able to exert its influence through voting patterns and direct campaign contributions. Up until this point, a majority of this segment of the voting population has favored a hardline approach toward Cuba that is grounded in
hostility and the maintenance of the embargo. However, in the next chapter I will look at how the approach of the Cuban American population to Cuba-related issues is changing and how this might affect the future of American politics and foreign policy.
VII. Conclusion: Implications and Recommendations

Outlook for the Embargo and the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program

Thus far, I have examined the state of U.S.-Cuban relations, the history of the embargo, the foundation of the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program, and the underlying motivations for each. Due to a marked absence of Level I negotiations between the U.S. and Cuban governments, long-standing hostility and Level II domestic influence have dominated the course of U.S. foreign policy. Because the geographic and economic value of Cuba has not proved to be of significance to the vast majority of constituents relative to other concerns, Cuban American special interest groups influence the voting patterns of Congressmen and Congresswomen in their districts. Nevertheless, political changes in Cuba and Venezuela and a gradual shift in the views of the Cuban American electorate provide some hope that change may be in sight.

Raúl Castro, who has been acting as president of Cuba since 2008 and was officially sworn in in 2011, has made some positive reforms during his time in office. He instigated market reforms to allow private enterprise, endorsed some private jobs, legalized the buying and selling of property, and more than doubled the number of private sector jobs in the past two years.¹ In addition, he has instigated anti-corruption initiatives, institutional restructuring, credit reform, and the legalization of some markets for consumer goods and services.² Of particular significance is Raúl Castro’s migration reform, which went into effect in January of 2013. By eliminating previous restrictions and conditions for travel such as “exit permits” and “letters of invitation” and extending

² Levy, “Cuba Under Raul Castro.”
the amount of time that Cubans can remain outside of the country, the reforms facilitate travel between Cuba and other nations. In addition, Cubans that illegally left the island after 1994 are able to return to Cuba if eight years have passed since their departure. Similarly, most healthcare and sports professionals that left Cuba after 1990 can visit the island if they have been away for the same time period.3

However, as promising as these and other reforms may seem on the surface, there has been very little actual change in Cuba. Even in the midst of seemingly significant market reforms, the Cuban government maintains control of key sectors and still denies agents to ability to facilitate transactions that would allow for the buying and selling of property.4 Mary Anastasia O’Grady of the Wall Street Journal published an article on the lack of real change in Cuba, claiming that Castro’s economic reforms are a way of formalizing and taxing black market transactions without threatening the stronghold of the regime.5 Other changes are just as ineffectual. With regard to migration reform, visa permits are still arbitrarily denied and the cost of these documents has nearly doubled.6 The Ladies in White, a Cuban opposition group consisting of the female relatives of dissidents jailed in Cuba, equated Castro’s reforms to putting makeup on a zombie7 and noted that repression has worsened since 2010. Berta Soler, the leader of the organization, described how the police drag, beat, abuse, imprison, and humiliate dissidents and laments that “There is no change in Cuba.”8

---

3 Havana Times, “Cuba Immigration Reforms Going into Effect Today.”
5 O’Grady, “Is Cuba Going Capitalist?”.
6 De la Cruz, “The State of Cuba in 2013.”
7 Eire, “CIA in Cuba: Operation Peter Pan.”
8 Agence France-Presse, “Cuba Intensifies Repression.”
At the same time, the Cuban American population has demonstrated a gradual shift in opinion toward being in favor of normalization despite the cosmetic nature of reforms in Cuba. An important distinction to make, however, is between the Cuban American electorate and the Cuban American population. While the Cuban American electorate consists of registered voters and tends to represent an older age group, the term population includes all Cuban Americans, naturalized or not. A 2011 report by the Cuban Research Institute asks Cuban Americans from Miami-Dade County about their opinions regarding trade, travel, and dialogue with Cuba. The data is separated into categories, including registered voters, Cuban Americans that migrated to the U.S. after 1994, and Cuban Americans aged 18-44. A similar poll of Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade County, conducted by the Institute for Public Opinion Research of Florida International University in 2008, breaks down the data based on age (18 to 44, 45 to 64, or 65 and older), by the year they left Cuba (before 1980, 1980 to 1998, after 1998, or born in the United States or country other than Cuba), and whether they are a registered voter.

The results of these polls reveal that younger Cuban Americans and Cubans that migrated later tend to be opposed to the continuation of the embargo, in favor of establishing a dialogue between the U.S. and Cuban governments, willing to allow unrestricted travel for all Americans, and supportive of reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba. However, these groups also had the lowest rates of citizenship and the smallest percentages of registered voters. The older Cuban American population and

---

9 Principal Investigators and Florida International University, “2011 Cuba Poll.”
the Cuban Americans that migrated to the United States before 1980, on the other hand, have voter registration rates nearly double those of Cuban Americans that migrated after 1994. As such, the influence of this older, conservative, and anti-Castro population significantly outweighs that of the demographic that favors a change in relations with Cuba.

An example of the disparity between the opinions of the Cuban American population and the Cuban American electorate is in the response to the question “Do you favor or oppose continuing the U.S. embargo of Cuba?” in 2008. 45 percent of all participants favored continuing the embargo while 55 percent opposed this measure. At the same time, 56 percent of registered voters favored continuing the U.S. embargo while only 44 percent opposed it (Figure 7.1). This difference in opinion is also seen in the responses to the question “Would you favor or oppose ending current restrictions on sending money to Cuba for Cuban Americans?” In 2008, the total percentage of Cuban Americans that was in favor of ending these restrictions was 11 percent higher than the percentage of registered Cuban Americans with that sentiment (Figure 7.2).

Despite the fact that certain demographics within the Cuban population are shifting in their opinion of U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba, registered voters still tend to see relations through a conservative lens. In 2008, 62 percent of registered Cuban Americans polled voted for candidate John McCain\(^{11}\) and in 2012 56 percent of registered Cuban Americans polled were Republican.\(^{12}\) The fact that registered voters have become more supportive of open relations with Cuba is encouraging, but there is

---

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Principal Investigators and Florida International University, “2011 Cuba Poll.”
still great resistance from the majority of Cuban American voters and Cuban American special interest groups with regard to the normalization of relations with Cuba. Anti-Castro Cuban Americans are resistant to relax travel and trade bans with Cuba for fear that these changes with only benefit the Cuban government,¹³ and CANF remains adamant that the embargo not be lifted short of complete reform and regime change in Cuba.

![Figure 7.1: Do you favor or oppose continuing the U.S. embargo of Cuba?](image)

¹⁴ Data from 2008 poll by the Institute for Public Opinion Research of Florida International University

¹³ “Cuban Americans and U.S. Policy Toward Cuba.”
Figure 7.2: Would you favor or oppose ending current restrictions on sending money to Cuba for Cuban Americans?

According to the provisions of the LIBERTAD Act of 1996, the embargo can only be terminated with congressional approval. While many members of Congress are in favor of improving relations with Cuba, without pressure from the American public there will be little incentive for Congressmen and Congresswomen to push for a change in policy. However, as more recent migrants become naturalized and U.S.-born Cuban Americans reach voting age, the voting patterns of the Cuban American electorate may shift in support of more liberal policies. In addition, pressure for elected government officials to reconsider U.S.-Cuba policy can come from the economic sectors that would benefit from access to the Cuban market.16

---

15 Data from 2008 poll by the Institute for Public Opinion Research of Florida International University

16 Hanson, “US-Cuba Relations.”
In their discussion of the future of U.S.-Cuban relations, Stephanie Hanson and Brianna Lee of the Council on Foreign Relations note that the process toward normalization will likely be long and controversial. In addition to the obstacles of congressional gridlock and the Cuban exile community, these scholars claim that an incongruence of ideologies, human rights violations in Cuba, and the status of Guantanamo Bay present barriers to the peace-making process. Julia Sweig of the CFR notes that the United States needs a “willing partner” in negotiations; the United States will not initiate the process of normalization without demonstrated cooperation and commitment on the part of Cuba.\(^\text{17}\)

However, it is possible that Cuba may be in need of a new trading partner following future elections in Venezuela. Through the discussion of Cuban-Venezuelan relations in Chapter V, it became apparent that Venezuela’s support was crucial to Cuba’s success both economically and politically. Sweig notes that Chávez’s support of and camaraderie with the Castro regime provided Cuba with “a kind of insurance policy that they haven’t had since the Soviet bloc collapsed.”\(^\text{18}\) With Chávez’s death, however, came the possibility that a new leader may not favor policies that bolster the Communist regime in Cuba. In his campaign in April 2013, opposition candidate Henrique Capriles pushed for a Venezuelan government that was more democratic and specifically stated that he did not want the Venezuelan government to parallel that of Cuba. Further, he declared that he would not allow Cuban military personnel to participate in the Venezuelan armed forces and that “not one drop of oil” would be given to Cuba to

\(^{17}\) Ibid.  
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
finance its political projects in other countries. Despite the fact that Chávez’s hand-picked successor Nicolás Maduro won the elections in April, he was only victorious by a slim margin of less than 2 percent. Should the opposition win a future election and cause support from Venezuela to Cuba to waver, the Cuban government may have to reconsider initiating negotiations with the United States.

Recommendations

Through an analysis of the embargo, the CMPP Program, and U.S. policies toward Saudi Arabia and China, it has become apparent that U.S. foreign policy is at times misguided, laden with double standards, and driven by domestic political pressures. Foreign policy towards Cuba, despite being reviewed and recognized as ineffective by U.S. scholars and government officials, has not experienced any significant progress in the past fifty years. In addition, policies impacting Cuba have been implemented with a single-objective mindset of ousting the Castro regime without consideration for unintended consequences. In this section, I will provide recommendations for the future of the embargo and the CMPP Program.

In the case of the embargo, the impact of shortages on the health of the Cuban people was at one time considered a necessary casualty. A frustrated, hungry population, it was reasoned, would instigate its own revolution against Fidel Castro. Since 1962, however, no formidable opposition has risen up to overthrow the Castro regime. Instead, the U.S. embargo has become a means for the Cuban government to justify a low standard of living among its people and to rationalize shortages. Because the Cuban

19 “Capriles Dice Que Si Gana Sacará a Militares Cubanos Del Ejército Venezolano.”
government was able to manipulate the embargo to work in its favor, it has become the only group to benefit from the restrictions. In addition, the sanctions have not been effective due to the fact that the United States stands alone in the international community with regard to its Cuba policy. Thus, Cuba has been able to diversify its markets while its program of medical diplomacy has allowed it to establish beneficial relationships with countries around the world.

Since the United States reestablished some trade with Cuba after the devastation of Hurricane Michelle in 2001, some scholars have questioned what the term “embargo” means. Carlos Eire, professor at Yale University and a Cuban exile that arrived in the United States through Operation Peter Pan, boiled the embargo down to two major points: Cuba cannot purchase manufactured goods from the U.S. and must pay cash up front for any goods. He declared “There really is no embargo” and added that what remains of the policy helps protect U.S. farmers by ensuring that they are paid for their goods immediately.  

Despite the importance of safeguarding the interests of U.S. farmers, however, it is important to recognize other conditions that exist under the embargo such as restrictions on travel and remittances. The Obama administration has made progress in lifting some of the restrictions in these two areas, but if the U.S. wants to encourage democracy and development Cuba it needs to at least maintain its current policy on remittances and allow more people-to-people licenses. Historically, the sanctions against Cuba have fluctuated in severity depending on which political party dominates the U.S. government. Should the embargo still be in place in 2017, it will be

---

20 Eire, “CIA in Cuba: Operation Peter Pan.”
the duty of the next president of the United States to support these developments rather than regress and institute tighter restrictions on travel and remittances. It is through these methods that the Cuban people can become empowered.

In all, the U.S. government needs to recognize the undeniable failure of the embargo and listen to the voices of the international community and its own population that have condemned this static, outdated, and unwise policy. It must pay attention human rights in all aspects of its foreign policy decisions and continuously reevaluate its programs to ensure that they are effective and in the best interest of the populations they are intended to help. Instead of solely responding to the demands of special interest groups, politicians must consider all of the potential consequences of a policy when deciding which initiatives to support. In the same way, Americans that are unsatisfied with the United States’ Cuba policy should work to make their voices heard in Congress. With an aging Castro regime and a changing Cuban American electorate, there is hope for change in the future. However, a transition to democracy should start now rather than waiting for a change in Cuban leadership. The United States can begin this process by forging a relationship with the Cuban people by means of promoting travel and trade.

The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program presents some of the same shortcomings as the embargo but requires a different response. Due to a lack of follow-through, the CMPP Program has had negative consequences on the Cuban doctors that use it to come to the U.S., the poor populations that depend on Cuban medical support, and the Cuban doctors that desert their missions but do not qualify for a visa. The Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers,
which outlines guidelines for recruiting healthcare workers from foreign countries, addresses all three of these issues in its provisions. Although the United States is not required to comply with these guidelines, it is ethical to do so and would ultimately serve to benefit the United States as well.

In order to give the CMPP Program an element of integrity, the United States needs to practice transparency; the program should only be implemented after the United States, Cuba, and the developing countries the Cuban doctors are serving in come to an agreement on the terms of the medical recruitment. While the United States should refrain from recruiting doctors that have an outstanding obligation to their country, if it is going to do so it should be with the consent of all nations involved. In order to compensate Cuba for the training it provides these doctors and the regions that are receiving these medical services for their losses, the United States should consider providing technical or financial assistance to these countries, facilitating the transfer of technology and skills, establishing training programs for the healthcare workers in the United States, and arranging for their return to the source country, which in this case would be Cuba.

Despite the fact that these suggestions would lead to a more ethical and acceptable program, they are fairly unrealistic. The CMPP Program is a political initiative, and getting rid of the damage it causes would cancel out the intended impact of the program. That being said, the United States does have the option of terminating the program entirely. With Cuba’s new migration policy, healthcare workers are technically permitted to leave the island under the same guidelines as any other citizen. While their
visa permits still must be approved by the government, this new policy eliminates the discrimination that served as part of the foundation of the program. On the other hand, the U.S. may choose to leave the policy in place as an alternative for the Cuban healthcare workers that are subject to semi-servitude on their medical missions.

If the United States does choose to extend this program, it should provide more support for Cubans that are in the process of leaving their medical missions. The safety of these Cubans may not be jeopardized if the United States works in conjunction with both Cuba and the direct sending countries, but as I mentioned before this collaboration is highly unlikely. Therefore, the U.S. must do more to ensure that Cuban healthcare workers understand that they are not guaranteed a visa and also provide some sort of protection for those that apply for visas and are either denied or subject to long waiting periods. Many of the Cuban medical personnel that desert their missions in Venezuela have sought refuge in Colombia while waiting to enter the United States. Some are unable to enter Colombia or leave Venezuela due to the strictness of Venezuelan border guards. At the same time, those that do successfully arrive in Colombia have little to no resources and must live in dangerous conditions. In order to decrease the prevalence of these issues, the United States could provide more information on the program and on its limitations both domestically and internationally. As it is, the CMPP Program is a public but relatively unknown initiative. If Cuban healthcare workers knew which categories of people would automatically not qualify for the program, they may be less inclined to defect and as a result would not be left stranded after being denied a U.S. visa. In
addition, due to how time-sensitive the issue is, the United States could prioritize these visa requests in order to expedite the application process.

Regardless of whether the United States keeps the program or not, it is imperative that the government invest more resources in the Cuban doctors that are already in the United States. A 2011 Fox News Latino article described the difficulties multiple Cuban doctors faced in seeking accreditation, whether they came to the United States with the permission of the Cuban government or illegally through the CMPP Program.21 In either case, it is difficult to obtain the documents necessary for medical accreditation. As a result, Cubans that spent years in medical school find themselves working as medical assistants and nurses or as entry-level employees in factories, warehouses, gas stations, and fast-food restaurants.22 This pattern of employment does not accurately reflect the education and training completed by these medical professionals. Fourteen medical schools in Cuba, the largest being the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM), are listed in the International Medical Education Directory as meeting the Medical Education Credential Requirements.23

"I just want to do what I love, to be a doctor," said Roberto Carmona, a Cuban doctor who fled Namibia through the CMPP Program and now works as a medical assistant in the United States. This statement reflects the sentiments of many Cuban healthcare workers that came to the United States with hopes of continuing to practice

---

21 Fox News Latino, “Cuban Doctors Are Accepted Into U.S. But Face Problems Practicing Medicine.”
22 Ojito, “Doctors in Cuba Start Over in the U.S.”
23 “Search Results: Central America/Caribbean.”
medicine but have now settled for other jobs both in and out of the medical field. 24 This population faces language barriers, financial difficulties, and the ever-pressing issue of retrieving Cuban medical school diplomas and transcripts from an unwilling government. Because the United States created a program that encourages the defection of these medical personnel, it remains its responsibility to help them overcome these obstacles.

While participants in the CMPP Program are eligible to receive refugee reception and placement assistance, this support must be significantly expanded to accommodate this specific population. The U.S. government must consider offering ESL classes with special attention to medical vocabulary, providing financial assistance for the accreditation exams, arranging educational or training opportunities, and revising the application process to make it more feasible for Cuban medical professionals to apply for accreditation in the first place. In addition, the ECFMG should consider offering the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) in Spanish. While applicants would be required to take the exam in English first, they could elect to take it again in Spanish in order to demonstrate proficiency in the subject matter. The scores could be compared and considered on a case-by-case basis. For native English speakers, taking the exam in Spanish could allow applicants to demonstrate proficiency in a second language in a medical context. The Hispanic population in the United States has grown by about 43% from 2000 to 2010, 25 and in 2007 62 percent of the 55.4 million people who spoke a language other than English at home spoke Spanish. 26 With Spanish being the most

---

24 Fox News Latino, “Cuban Doctors Are Accepted Into U.S. But Face Problems Practicing Medicine.”
widely spoken language next to English, it is imperative that doctors, particularly those in areas with large Spanish-speaking populations, be able to communicate with their patients. By providing CMPP Program participants with additional education, training, and financial support, the U.S. can start to bridge its physician gap and can ensure that the Spanish-speaking population is able to effectively communicate with its doctors.

Conclusion

Despite U.S. attempts to oust the Castro regime, Fidel and Raúl have managed to maintain a stronghold on Cuba for over fifty years. The callous, authoritarian, communist state not only continues to control most aspects of economic activity, but it repeatedly commits grave human rights violations and severely limits its citizens’ civil and political liberties. The fifty-year embargo has done nothing but strengthen this system by giving it an enemy to blame for its shortages. Even the United States’ attack of Cuban medical diplomacy through the CMPP Program has been ineffective due to a lack of follow-through. The unintended—or at times intended—negative consequences of each of these policies on the very populations they were designed to help also demonstrates the shortsightedness of U.S. foreign policy.

The United States needs to reevaluate longstanding, ineffective, and outdated legislation, consider the potential impact of its policies with respect to human rights, encourage elected government officials to consider more than the desires of influential special interest groups in making foreign-policy decisions, and ensure that government-initiated programs receive attention post-implementation. Even though the past half-century of U.S.-Cuban relations have been marked by tension and hostility, these
characteristics do not have to define future interactions. While reforms in Cuba have been mostly cosmetic up to this point, the United States should capitalize on these incremental changes by encouraging communication between the Cuban, Cuban American, and American populations. It is never too early for the United States to reconsider its own policies and to foster dialogue and support of the Cuban people in the name of change.
Works Cited


Civitella, Gary M. Decade of Venezuela’s President Hugo Chavez, Por Ahora. Alabama: Air Command and Staff College, 2009.


http://www.canf.org/about/about-us/.


http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.


http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/tsra.aspx#about.


Interfering with U.S. National Security Interests: The World Trade Organization and the European Union Challenge to the Helms-Burton Law, Hearing Before the One Hundred Fifth Congress, First Session. USGPO, 199AD.


Russo Jr., Daniel L. Cuba’s Military Power as a Threat to South Florida. Coral Gables, Fla.: Research Institute for Cuban Studies, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Miami, 1990.


