

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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U. S. POLICY AND CUBA

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

U.S POLICY AND CUBA

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ABSTRACT

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Today, as the world enters the new millennium, the world stage has changed dramatically since the early days of the Cuban Revolution. There is a new world order. The Cold War and the former Soviet Union no longer exist. The U.S. is the world's lone superpower. The globalized economy is rapidly becoming a reality as ever-improving information technology better creates the means to instantly communicate anywhere in the world. The former Eastern block nations, as well as Latin American countries, have all embraced free enterprise and democratic governments to raise the living standards of their citizens. The United States enjoys normal trade and diplomatic relations with all the countries of the former Soviet bloc and recently granted China Most Favored Nation status. In establishing these relationships, the United States seeks to enhance security, bolster its economy and promote democratic values throughout the world. Yet in the United States' own Caribbean backyard, Cuba remains a lone holdout to American democratic capitalism.

For four decades, the United States has maintained an economic blockade against the neighboring island nation of Cuba. Throughout the Cold War period, from 1960 onward, Cuba was perceived as a threat to U.S. national security. Cuba's expropriation of U.S. property following the 1959 Cuban Revolution, subsequent alliance with the Soviet Union, communism, the Cuban missile crisis and support for armed revolutionary forces throughout Latin America and Africa during the 1970s and 1980s ensured support for the embargo remained strong in the United States. This research paper examines the U.S.-Cuban relationship in a historical context and addresses current U.S. policy in light of disparaging national views of a shared history. It concludes with recommendations for the future policy.

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PREFACE

I would like to express my sincere and deep appreciation to Dr Harry Yarger for his astute mentorship, patience and above all the manner in which he challenged me to look at the issues in a different and much higher light. He devoted many hours of his personal time and his in-depth knowledge of history to this project. Without him, this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my wife, Iris for her constant support, encouragement and prayers. She is a constant reminder to me that we accomplish nothing worthwhile in life outside of the grace of God.

U.S. POLICY AND CUBA

The aim of the U.S. policy for Cuba is to promote a transition to a democratic form of government.¹ But the policy to accomplish this goal will never be right, and therefore effective, until we understand the Cuban perspective of our shared history and the nature of Castro's strengths and appeal to the Cuban people. Today, as the world enters the new millennium, the world stage has changed dramatically since the early days of the Cuban Revolution. There is a new world order. The Cold War and the former Soviet Union no longer exist. The U.S. is the world's lone superpower. The globalized economy is rapidly becoming a reality as ever-improving information technology better affords the means to instantly make transactions and communicate anywhere in the world. The former Eastern block nations, as well as Latin American countries, have all embraced free enterprise and democratic governments to raise the living standards of its citizens. The United States has normal trade and diplomatic relations with all the countries of the former Soviet bloc and has granted China Most Favored Nation status. In establishing these relationships, the United States seeks to enhance security, bolster its economy and promote democratic values throughout the world. Yet in the United States' own Caribbean backyard, Cuba remains a lone holdout to American democratic capitalism.

In many ways, Cuba is out of step with the rest of the world. The clamor for democracy and freedom is being heard around the world. Political change may now occur in Iran and just recently Russia's Central Election Commission approved the first woman ever to run for president in Russia. Yet Castro remains the only unelected leader in all of Latin America and the entire Western Hemisphere.² During the November 1999 Ninth Ibero-American Summit in Havana, which was attended by heads of state and Foreign Ministers from 23 countries around Latin America, Spain and Portugal, many of the leaders publicly called for more freedom on the island and an end to Cuba's one-party state and its crackdown on dissidents.³

For four decades, the United States has maintained an economic blockade against the neighboring island nation of Cuba. Throughout the Cold War period, from 1960 onward Cuba was perceived as a threat to U.S. national security. Cuba's expropriation of U.S. property following the 1959 Cuban Revolution, subsequent alliance with the Soviet Union, communism, the Cuban missile crisis and support for armed revolutionary forces throughout Latin America and Africa during the 1970s and 1980s ensured support for the embargo remained strong in the United States. This research paper examines the U.S.-Cuban relationship in a historical context and addresses current U.S. policy in light of disparaging national views of a shared history. It concludes with recommendations for the future policy.

DIVERGENT VIEWS OF HISTORY

Only 90 miles from the coast of Florida, Cuba is the largest island in the West Indies. Along with Jamaica, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, Cuba is part of the Greater Antilles Archipelago. Early Spanish settlers immediately recognized the strategic value of Cuba in promoting trade. The island is centrally located between North and South America and lies on the lanes of sea travel to all countries bounded by

the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. Cuban waters consist of three strategically located sea-lanes: the Straits of Florida, the Windward Passage and the Yucatan channel.

Unlike North America where European settlers arrived with the idea of settling with their families, establishing communities and investing and reinvesting in the land, early South American history is that of conquest, colonization, exploitation and repressive anti-democratic rule. The exportation of the natural resources of the colonized lands for the monarchy was the chief concern of the Spanish conquistador and not the well being of the native inhabitants. This exploitation resulted in a continuous struggle for independence spanning five centuries. The last South American country to gain its independence, Cuba was claimed for Spain by Christopher Columbus in the latter part of 1492. This was the beginning of four centuries of Spanish rule. Most of the indigenous population that inhabited the island was either killed, perished from starvation or died of disease. In the early 1500s, slavery was introduced to the island when the first ship load of African slaves arrived from Hispaniola. The demand for sugar, coffee and tobacco necessitated the need for a large labor pool to work the rich Cuban fields. By 1520, Cuba's natural resources were generating huge profits for Spain in the world's trade markets. In 1519, Spain conquered Mexico. Soon after, Havana became a natural port for fleets returning to Spain carrying precious cargoes.⁴

Despite the economic boom the island produced for Spain, most Cubans saw very little improvement in their standard of living. Spanish authorities controlled every aspect of the government. Native born Cubans were denied any voice in the government. Laws, to include taxation and the courts, routinely discriminated against Cubans. In 1762, England declared war on Spain. For a brief period ending the following year, England occupied portions of Havana. At the conclusion of hostilities, England surrendered any claims it had to Cuba in exchange for Florida that was captured by Spain during the course of the war. Throughout the entire war, both countries maintained tight control over every aspect of life and commerce on the island. The average Cuban was insignificant in the eyes of the two superpowers of the day.⁵ This was to be a very familiar pattern for years to come.

The Spanish continued to exploit Cuba's economy with little regard for the welfare of the Cuban people. Slavery and the lack of representation in the government denied equality to Cuba's diverse population. As a result, to this day, Cuba has no history of equality or human rights similar to the American experience. According to a census in 1774, the population on the island had grown to 172,620. Of the total, 96,440 were white, 31,847 were free blacks and the remaining 44,333 were slaves. From 1792-1815, during the era of the Napoleonic Wars, the market for Cuban goods greatly expanded as well as the corresponding requirement for additional slave labor. During this period, the U.S. became a major market for Cuban goods. From 1821-1831, more than 60,000 additional slaves were imported into Cuba. By 1827, Cuba's population had grown to just over 700,000 and included some 286,000 slaves. Generating vast wealth for Spain was the island's 1,000 sugar mills, 30,000 ranches, 5500 tobacco farms and 2100 coffee plantations.⁶

Denied the right to participate in the Spanish colonial government which was monopolized by the Spaniards and living in abject poverty despite the enormous success of the economy, thoughts of independence began to surface. Spanish government officials outright rejected organized public appeals to Madrid for relief.⁷ Many leaders for independence began rising up throughout South America. Most notable was Simon Bolivar. The equivalent to George Washington throughout Latin America and the Caribbeans, six nations—Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia recognize him as their “Great Liberator” from Spanish rule. The United States generally supported these democratic revolutions. Inspired by Bolivar’s fight for independence in Venezuela, a handful of Cubans organized a secret society know as “Suns and Rays of Bolivar.” The sole purpose of the organization was to gain Cuban independence through a series of planned rebellions.⁸

The United States expressed an early interest in Cuba. The U.S. Secretary of State, John Quincy Adam speaking in a session with key members of Congress in 1823 succinctly spoke of American interest in the area.

These islands (Cuba and Puerto Rico) are natural appendages of the North American continent and one of them [Cuba] almost with in sight of our shores, from a multitude of considerations has become an object of transcendent importance to the commercial and political interests of our union.⁹

The U.S. has always been ambiguous about Cuba. For a period of time, Cuba was considered a potential additional southern slave state by southerners seeking a balance of congressional power with the north.¹⁰ On December 2, 1823, President James Monroe, in his message to Congress, first stated the Monroe Doctrine. In essence, the doctrine warned European powers that the United States would not allow any attempts to help Spain win back Latin American colonies that had recently gained independence or permit any interference in their affairs. Two years later, when word reached the U.S. that Venezuela and Mexico were planning to assist Cuba in their fight for independence, Secretary of State Henry Clay announced that the U.S. would block any move to liberate Cuba from Spain. This position was in stark contrast to the earlier support for Bolivia and the spread of democracy throughout Latin America. The U.S. feared that an independent Cuba would end slavery with repercussions on the south. Furthermore, it was widely believed that in time Cuba would become a part of the United States.¹¹

Over the next 20 years, the demand for Cuban exports grew exponentially. During this same period, the U.S. replaced Spain as the largest consumer of Cuban exports. Native born Cubans still had no voice in the government and to make matters worse, in 1830, Spain substantially increased taxes for the citizens of the island furthering degrading the quality of life and increasing unrest. Because this was the same situation the early settlers of the United States struggled against—taxation from a colonial power without representation, a measure of sympathy grew in the U.S. for the Cuban flight.

By the 1840s, the United States was again expressing an interest in acquiring Cuba. President Polk offered Spain \$100 million dollars for the island, but the offer was refused. To keep pace with the ever-increasing trade, Yucatan Indians from Mexico were brought to Cuba as additional slave labor. The

diverse population of the island was now over 1 million people and included whites, nonwhites, Negro slaves, and free Negroes and Chinese who served as contract workers. Whites instituted segregation as Cuban discontentment continued to grow. In 1854, the Pierce administration also made a multimillion-dollar offer to Spain for Cuba. Again, the offer was refused. American preoccupation with Cuba was temporarily put on hold during the Civil War years.¹²

In 1867, a twenty-two member Cuban delegation appeared before the Spanish government in Madrid seeking reforms. Their issues were dismissed and beginning the following year, civil war broke out in Cuba. On October 10, 1868, Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, a Creole planter from eastern Cuba, initiated a ten-year revolt against Spanish rule.¹³ The Spanish entered the war with an overwhelming force. In turn, the rebel forces were estimated to be between 20,000 to 40,000 soldiers. The United States, still hoping to gain control of Cuba, supported the rebels by providing them arms. But by 1878, the patriots were beaten and had lost the will to continue the war. The Spanish proposed a treaty and granted a general amnesty and a pardon for all that had taken up arms against the crown. Modest improvements in colonial rule were offered. The leaders of the revolution left Cuba to live in exile. Despite the defeat, the Ten Years' War did much to create a strong sense of nationalism among native Cubans. The rebels went into the war seeking only reform. By the end of the Ten Years' War, they were committed to full independence and racial and class equality for all.¹⁴

Between 1878 and 1895, Cuba went through a period of financial and social upheaval. Slaves who fought on both sides were freed in 1878 at the conclusion of the Ten Years War; and that same year, the Spanish increased the Cuban debt an additional 300 million dollars to pay for war damages and costs.¹⁵ A reduction in the demand for sugar caused the price for sugar to fall sharply. The shift from unpaid slaves to paid laborers increased the cost of sugar production. By the mid-1880s Cuba was in a deep economic depression. Many Cubans blamed an unjust colonial government for the hard times.¹⁶ Antonio Maceo, a major rebel leader, issued a circular known as the "Kingston Proclamation." In it, he reminded Cubans that the modest reforms promised by the government at the conclusion of the war had not materialized.

"Instead of giving Cubans the opportunity to participate in the direction of their government, Spaniards have been pouring into the island to man political posts pushing the rightful representatives of the people to one side. They are guided only by the interests of their pocketbooks and that of the peninsula."¹⁷

During these years, several political entities emerged on the scene all with different ideas for the future of Cuba and looking to protect their interests. Those loyal to Spain began organizing to protect their property interests and positions. Conservative Creole planters and the Spanish elite formed political parties that worked to maintain Cuba's ties to Spain and rejected armed revolution as a means of changing government. They were known as the autonomists. Because of Cuba's strong economic ties to the U.S. and the fact that the U.S. was the most powerful and progressive nation in the world, many in Cuba and the U.S. advocated the annexation of Cuba by the United States.¹⁸

The independence forces in exile continued to organize as well. Cuban writer Jose Marti (1853-1895) soon emerged as the most prominent leader of the renewed separatist movement. At the age of 16, he was arrested and imprisoned for writing a letter which accused an old friend of being a backer of Spain. For this trivial charge, he received a six-year sentence and later went into exile. He traveled extensively throughout both North and South America before finally settling in New York City in 1881. While living in New York, he wrote numerous influential newspaper articles, busied himself with the activities of exiles and became a powerful advocate for Cuba's independence. In 1890, he founded *La Liga de Instruccion*, a training school for revolutionaries. In January 1892, he organized his growing following into the Cuban Revolutionary Party (Spanish acronym PRC) in an attempt to unite the various revolutionary factions and to fuse white and black Cubans into a single, focused movement. Within two years, all the revolutionary factions had joined the PRC. Over the next several years, the PRC solicited funds, purchased weapons, and trained troops in Cuba and in the United States in preparation for the war that they felt was inevitable.¹⁹ Officially, not to offend Spain, the United States remained neutral, but sympathy grew for the independence cause. However, in spite of U.S. support, an early note of discord already existed between the Cuban revolutionaries and the U.S.

It is my duty to prevent, by the independence of Cuba, the United States from spreading over the West Indies and falling, with that added weight upon other lands of our America. All I have done up to now and shall do hereafter is to that end. I have lived inside the monster and know its insides.—Jose Marti's last letter before being killed in the battle of Dos Rios May 19, 1895.²⁰

A new war for independence started on February 10, 1895. General Valeriano Weyler, a veteran of the Ten Years War, was selected by the monarchy to command the Spanish forces. Severe, single-minded and ruthless, he placed the whole populations of towns and villages into concentration camps to eliminate support for the rebels who tended to operate in the countryside. In the camps, thousands of people died of starvation, disease, and exposure. The political leaders of the insurgents took full advantage of the situation with the American media to gain support for their cause and to raise money. They often embellished their stories of the alleged "atrocities," which suited the media just fine. Two of America's leading newspaper publishers, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, were locked in a fierce competitive battle for readers and eagerly printed every story they received from the revolutionary junta, often time not checking stories for validity.²¹

By 1896, the media had whipped the U.S. public into a frenzy. The overwhelming majority of Americans favored going to war with Spain to liberate Cuba from the "brutal" rule of the Spanish. American investors were increasingly worried about their property holdings in Cuba. The public cry to enter the war dramatically increased following an explosion that sank the U.S. battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898. President McKinley had sent the battleship to Cuba as a show of force in an attempt to pressure Spain to bring the war to a rapid conclusion. Americans blamed Spanish sabotage for the explosion although there was never any evidence to suggest that Spain had committed the act. In April 1898, Congress declared war on Spain to liberate the island and grant sovereignty to the new

republic of Cuba. As part of the politics of a war declaration, Colorado Senator Henry M. Teller introduced the Teller Amendment, which in essence prohibited the U.S. from annexing Cuba. Instead became a promise that the U.S would treat the new nation as a sovereign nation.²² The Spanish-American war lasted fourteen weeks. After the war, the United States occupied Cuba, and the U.S. Army disbanded the patriot army and excluded from power many of the Cuban patriots who had fought for 30 years for liberation.

The 1898 Treaty of Paris formally ended the Spanish-American War. The U.S. flag, and not the Cuban flag, was raised over Havana. Without any Cuban representation during the negotiating phase of the treaty, the United States walked away from the negotiations in control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam. The United States maintained a military occupation of Cuba from January 1, 1899 until May 20, 1902. Under U.S. occupation, public schools were built and a host of social programs were instituted throughout the island. Missionaries arrived from the U.S. and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rebuilt or constructed much of the war torn infrastructure.²³

To ensure U.S. influence in Cuba's new government and to ensure that democratic principles were instilled in the new government, the U.S., as a condition for ending the military occupation, insisted that the new Cuban constitution clearly define the relationship between the two nations. The Platt Amendment, named after its author, U.S. Senator Orville Platt, prohibited Cuba from making treaties and alliances with other foreign countries, granted military basing rights on the island to the United States that are still in effect today, and allowed U.S. intervention on the island during periods of social unrest. It also limited Cuba's ability to accept foreign loans and directed the government to step up measures aimed at improving public health.²⁴ In essence, Cuba became a U.S. protectorate. Most Cubans strongly opposed the Platt Amendment and viewed it as an intrusion on Cuban sovereignty and an attempt by the United States to control the affairs of the island nation. Initially the measure failed in the Cuban assembly. But after bitter debate, it passed by one vote. In the end, the people of Cuba developed a strong anti-American sentiment.²⁵ The fact that the Platt Amendment directly contradicted the Teller Amendment seemed to escape U.S. politicians and the American public.

American political leaders, on the other hand, viewed the Platt amendment quite differently. Many in the U.S. government thought it was America's duty to help Cuba establish its new government and to protect the nation from outside influences that could possibly take advantage of Cuba in its weakened state after the war. Cubans had never governed themselves, there was no government in place and there were as many ideas among Cubans on how they should govern themselves as there were factions willing and ready to take over the leadership. Interestingly, the amendment did not contain provisions for annexation although there were many Cubans and Americans that favored it. Instead, America committed itself to remain in Cuba until a stable economy and democratic government were established. Cubans opposed to U.S. involvement viewed the U.S. interest in Cuba as imperialist and not democratic in nature.

The constitution developed for Cuba was modeled after the U.S. structure of government and was adopted in 1901. It provided for democratic elections at the local, provincial, and national levels of

government. The president could serve two terms and a congress with two houses approved laws. The judicial system was separate from the executive and legislative branches. Tomas Estrada Palma, who had assumed the leadership of the Cuban Revolutionary Party following the death of Marti, won election in 1901 as Cuba's first president. He and his administration had the very difficult task of pulling the country together after the war and dealing with the various factions within Cuba, all vying for political power.²⁶

Following the war, many Americans and Spaniards took advantage of the weak Cuban economy to buy land cheaply and as a result, economic and political power once again began to concentrate in the hands of a very few. Thus, the revolution represented a transfer of colonial and economic power to the elite and only continued economic hardships for most Cubans. Even the Cuban elite lost their lands and the Cuban poor lost their jobs to less expensive foreign laborers from Haiti and Jamaica. In 1903, to stimulate the economy, the United States and Cuba signed the Treaty of Reciprocity, which promised Cuban sugar growers 20 percent of the U.S. market without paying U.S. import taxes. In exchange, Cuba dropped taxes designed to protect its industries from U.S. imports. As a result, the Cuban economy became even more dependent on the United States.²⁷

To counter opponents, who criticized his commitment to the United States, Estrada Palma organized the Moderate Party, which used local political organizations to control blocks of voters during the 1905 election. Although Estrada Palma won the election, opposition parties interpreted the use of these political organizations as election fraud and an abuse of presidential power. Open rebellion broke out against his administration. In 1906, under the provisions of the Platt Amendment, U.S. Marines were sent to the island to help restore order following the resignation of Palma in the wake of widespread social unrest. For two years afterward, an American attaché served as the provisional governor of Cuba until calm and the election process were restored.²⁸ Over the next half century, the U.S. routinely intervened in the internal affairs of Cuba.

Corruption, power and money characterized a number of political leaders who succeeded Palma. Racial inequality and social reform were seldom addressed despite the constant public outcry for reform. In 1912, a number of Afro-Cuban political groups resorted to armed revolt. Again, U.S. Marines were ordered to the island to help restore order. The Cuban government ruthlessly crushed the rebels. In the end, the government executed thousands of black activists and their supporters.²⁹ In 1917, the U.S. sent Marines to Cuba after rebellion broke out following a presidential election that was tainted by widespread voter fraud. By then, little popular support for U.S. intervention existed. Many political groups in Cuba called for the elimination of the Platt Amendment from the constitution. Nevertheless, the U.S. supervised the 1920 election further eroding public trust in Cuba's ability to act independently or successfully govern itself. Cuban politics suggested that political parties were more interested in gaining wealth and favor by currying to Washington and gave little thought to building Cuba for Cubans. Oftentimes, dishonest public officials pocketed government revenues.

In December 1920, the sugar market collapsed and prices tumbled. It was a devastating period for Cubans of all classes. United States' banks and individuals seized the opportunity to buy sugar estates for a fraction of their original purchase price, when their Cuban owners could not make mortgage payments. In less than five years after the collapse of the sugar market, Americans owned half of all Cuban sugar estates and refineries. As they continued to expand their holdings, many more peasants lost their land and took jobs working for the sugar companies. Salaries for peasants were minimal and remained that way in part because of a sudden influx of laborers from other Caribbean islands that willingly worked in the sugar mills for less pay.³⁰

The widespread political corruption and sustained economic despair led to the formation of many new political organizations promoting real reform in Cuba. A strong sense of nationalism swept through the country and citizens demanded an end to government corruption. Agricultural and industrial workers formed trade unions under the National Workers' Federation of Cuba. Other workers formed the Radical Socialist Party. Women fought to win their legal and social rights. In 1925, Communist associations united to form the Cuban Communist Party. Cubans generally agreed that the Platt Amendment had to go. (In 1934, the Platt Amendment was finally repealed.) Beyond that, political positions were deeply divided. Moderate nationalists sought to retain ties with the United States and modest reforms that would benefit the laboring classes. In contrast, radical activists wanted a reduction in U.S. economic holdings and socialist solutions to relieve economic hardship and promote economic and racial equality.³¹

The Great Depression of 1929 and the increased political repression that followed were very hard on the citizens of Cuba. Sugar prices, already low in 1928 at \$2.18 per pound, dropped to \$1.72 per pound in 1929. By 1933 a pound of sugar sold for \$.57 per pound.³² Demonstrations demanding jobs, decent wages, and the right of workers to unionize and strike increased in frequency. The government, led by President Gerardo Machado, responded by outlawing demonstrations and public meetings. A special police force was established that specialized in torture and execution of dissidents and media correspondents who wrote unflattering articles about the government. In retaliation, opponents of the government, to include university students, began bombing and killing government officials and police chiefs. A small-scale civil war ensued. The U.S. was confronted with a dilemma. If the U.S. intervened in any manner, there would be political elements in Cuba, who would complain that Cuba was once again placing the solution of Cuban problems into the hands of foreigners further, fueling the anti-American and revolutionary movements. Failure to do anything constituted support for a repressive and ineffective government. In 1933, fearing that continued repression would lead to wide scale revolt and wishing to protect U.S. economic interest in Cuba, the Roosevelt administration attempted to diplomatically resolve the situation. The opposition wanted a return to the 1901 constitution, which Machado had suspended, and social, economic and political reforms. The government refused to make concessions. In the end, without U.S. support, Machado was forced to resign.³³

The new leadership was overwhelmed with major economic problems and daily widespread violence as opposition factions sought revenge against and killed those loyal to Machado. In January

1934, with U.S. support, a military coup overthrew the new government. Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, who seized control of the armed forces in September 1933, led the coup. Over the next few years, a number of politicians served as president but it was Batista who was the real power broker in Cuban politics from 1934 to 1940. As chief of the military, he arrested and executed many of the radicals who worked to dislodge or reform the government. These actions brought peace and stability to the middle and upper classes but did nothing to relieve the plight of the poor or those who sought to make the government work for all Cubans.³⁴

Immensely popular with the upper and middle classes, during the late 1930s, Batista developed a broad base of political support, building close relationships with a number of political groups to include conservatives and Communists. In 1940, he entered politics as a civilian candidate for the presidency and won in a relatively fair election. During his four-year term, he supported the reforms of a new constitution, to include laws against discrimination and for educational reform. He left office in 1944 a millionaire and quietly retired to the United States. By the time he left office, organized crime based out of the U.S. controlled Cuban tourism, gambling, drugs, and prostitution.³⁵ Much like visiting Atlantic City or Disney World today, Cuba had become one of America's favorite recreational pastimes. Political semi-gangster groups openly fought gang wars in the streets of Cuba against one another for power and the riches that came with public service in Cuba.

The Cuban economy was very strong during this period, mainly due to an increase in trade during and directly after World War II (1939-1945). Between 1945 and 1948, sugar production rose 40 percent and produced millions of dollar. However, most of the money generated by the boom went into the pockets of wealthy individuals as the distribution of wealth remained heavily in favor of the wealthy.³⁶

In 1952, Batista returned from the United States to run again for president. When it became obvious that he did not have the popular support among voters or the various political parties, he orchestrated a swift and bloodless military takeover and established himself as a dictator. He totally abandoned the constitution, suspended all elections and opposition political parties and brutally ran the country, crushing those who opposed him. Fidel Castro, who was running at the time for a seat in the Chamber of Representatives, circulated a petition to unseat Batista's government on the grounds that it had illegitimately suspended the electoral process, which was in violation of the Constitution. On July 26, 1953, along with several armed resisters, Castro led an unfruitful assault on the Moncada army barracks near Santiago de Cuba. Most of his small force were either killed or captured and later executed. Castro was tried, convicted and jailed and subsequently went into exile in Mexico. While in Mexico, he organized the 26th of July Movement and vowed to overthrow the Batista government.

Batista's brutal dictatorial reign and the extreme poor standard of living most Cubans endured resulted in widespread discontentment with the government. Returning clandestinely to Cuba in 1956, Castro, his brother Raul, "Che" Guevara and nine others hid out in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. From there, they attracted supporters and fought a guerilla campaign against the government. Lacking U.S

support, and at home, facing widespread indignation and disdain at his brutality toward opponents, Batista went into exile on January 1, 1959.³⁷

Over the next forty years, ever-escalating tensions, mistrust and strife have marked U.S.-Cuba relations. Initially on January 7, 1959, the United States acknowledged the new Cuban government headed by Fidel Castro. However, the relationship soon soured after the Cuban government expropriated U.S. businesses and properties and established Cuba as a communist nation, setting up forty years of animosity. A year later, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Cuba and in October 1960, established the initial economic embargo against the fledging nation. The April 1961 "Bay of Pigs" invasion and the October 1962 missile crisis further acerbated the growing tensions between the two countries.³⁸ For most of the Cold War, Cuba maintained very close ties with the Soviet Union and acted as an agent for Communist expansion in Africa and several Latin American countries.³⁹ In the 1970s, the Nixon administration began to explore ways to normalize relations. But the effort came to a halt in 1975 when Cuba intervened in Angola, further increased its international presence in Africa and strengthen its ties with the Soviet Union. Migration issues marked the 1980s and 1990s. In April 1980, thousands of Cuban citizens stormed the Peruvian embassy in Havana seeking political asylum. To settle the unrest, the Cuban government allowed 125,000 Cubans, to include a number of criminals and mentally ill persons, to illegally depart for the United States from the port of Mariel. This became known as the "Mariel boatlift."⁴⁰ Additional efforts aimed at improving relations were initiated under the Reagan administration but proved fruitless as Cuba continued to intervene in Latin America. In 1983, through the use of military force, the United States forced Cuba to withdraw from Grenada.⁴¹

On March 12, 1996, President Clinton signed the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (Libertad Act) better known as the Helms-Burton Act. This measure was enacted in response to Cuba shooting down two civil aircraft in international airspace a month before. Four people were killed in the incident. The new law further strengthened the trade embargo and imposed additional sanctions on Cuba.⁴² It also made it a requirement for Congress to act to lift any part of the embargo against Cuba; it requires mandatory denial of visas to individuals who use or profit from confiscated Cuban property; and it allows Cuban-born Americans to sue those who confiscated property in Cuba. (It should be noted here that the outcry of some of America's staunchest allies and trading partners forced President Clinton to suspend the latter portion of the act.) The government of Fidel Castro was quick to respond to the law. Cuban government leaders viewed it as the latest in a long history of aggression, hostility and interference in the internal affairs of Cuba. They vowed that the law would further unite the Cuban people in its struggle to remain free from U.S. control.

American and Cuban history have been economically, politically and ideologically interwoven for almost 200 years. Yet, current popular national perceptions of this history are diametrically opposed. Americans, from their background of private entrepreneurship, individualism, individual rights and expanding opportunities view their role as a positive one. Americans sought to bring freedom and the societal benefits that come with capitalism and a democratic form of government. For their part, Cubans

have looked at the same history and seen American actions as imperialistic and a continued exploitation of the Cuban people.

CASTRO'S APPEAL

I believe that capitalism, in spite of its great successes, is a catastrophe for the world. No matter how many cars, no matter how much good living you have, there are billions of people living in poverty who have no cars, no comfort, no public health, no education. The atmosphere is already poisoned. The waters are poisoned. The forests are being subjected to acid rain. The weather is getting warmer. We have suffered from that ourselves. Capitalism developed the forces of production; it developed technology. But at the same time, it has been digging its own grave. —Fidel Castro in a 1995 Time Magazine interview.⁴³

Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the past ten years have been very hard on the Cuban economy. From 1989 to 1992, the economy shrank as imports decreased from \$8.1 billion to \$2.2 billion.⁴⁴ Yet unlike in the past when social unrest often forced a change in leadership in Cuba, Castro remains firmly in power. How has he and his socialist form of government been able to survive when the other nations of the Soviet bloc dissolved? How has he maintained his popularity with the Cuban people?

First of all, unlike the communist countries of eastern Europe, Cuban communism was not guaranteed by Soviet might. When the Soviet military power ceased to exist, so did these governments.⁴⁵ The Cuban revolution on the other hand was founded on the principles of a more equal distribution of wealth and social justice. For the most part, Castro has honored these promises. Communism was simply a vehicle for achieving historical Cuban aspirations. But Castro has done much more than this. According to a leading U.S. scholar on Cuba, Castro's most significant accomplishment was "to give ordinary Cubans the sense that they were one people, that they had a shared sense of national purpose. A capacity to accomplish things, to work together, and to feel good and proud about being Cubans in ways that had never happened or thought possible before."⁴⁶ Castro created a strong sense of nationalism in Cuba and a sense that they could govern themselves without outside intervention.

Castro's social achievements are particularly impressive. The Cuban government raised the literacy rate to one of the highest in the world and instilled great public interest in education. Every child is guaranteed access to college. As a result, Cuba has a very high per capita ratio of professionally trained members of society (i.e. doctors, lawyers, scientists, etc.) The government provides free medical and dental care and Cuba has made significant improvements in public health and the well being of the population. Cubans also boast of having a very prestigious biotechnology sector, as evident by the meningitis B vaccine that was developed in Cuba in the 1980s and now successfully used around the world. Women can retire at 55 and men at 60 and receive full pensions from the state. Utilities, food and other daily necessities for living are provided for all since Castro came to power. Social programs and laws designed to bring Afro-Cubans more into the mainstream are other positive measures implemented since the revolution.⁴⁷

Before Castro came into power, the average Cuban had no control over the resources or the wealth of the country. Almost five million people did not have access to electricity, running water, or sewage facilities. Many peasants had no way of making a living or educating their children.⁴⁸ American companies and the American Mafia maintained strong influence over the Cuban government and economy. The Mafia built and controlled hotels and other tourist attractions. Huge amounts of money were made while the average Cuban citizen lived in poverty. American businesses also increased their holdings in Cuba. Cuban exports to the U.S. decreased as U.S. exports to Cuba increased. The U.S. owned a quarter of bank deposits in Cuba, 90% of the electric and telephone services, and half the public railways. The United States was so powerful in Cuba right before the Revolution that many Cubans blamed it for not putting an end to Batista's abusive rule.⁴⁹ In the eyes of the working class and the poor, Castro successfully addressed each of these issues after he came to power. He also eliminated taxes and put in place government programs that promote racial equality—both historical areas of contention with the Cuban people. Today, many blacks and whites in Cuba feel they live in a relatively discrimination free society.

In addition to "meeting the needs of the people," Castro constantly sought ways to permanently keep in place "the utopian society established by and for the people." In recent years, he learned some value lessons from fallen communist countries. One lesson dealt with handling reform. Reformers were eventually swept from office as evident by recent history in East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Chile.⁵⁰ The lesson here is to take on as few reforms as possible and never let an opposition organize. The results have been a crackdown on dissident groups and individuals. Castro successfully portrays them to the Cuban people as "traitors" to the revolution. Castro controls the media and very often shows "the bad news" from Europe's old communists regimes. This news includes the breakup of the former Soviet Union; Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia; the outbreak of civil wars; the increase in unemployment; and many other hardships that occur as governments transition to "the evils of capitalism." The message to the Cuban population is that the road to capitalism is harsh and quite painful.⁵¹ If Castro manages change to stay in power, he is also perceived by the Cuban people as controlling change to protect the very real gains of the revolution.

A student of history, Castro very effectively uses Cuban history to remain in power, portraying himself as the protector of the people. Children are taught the history of Cuba, to include the years of struggle and repression, from their earliest years in school through college. Jose Marti and many of the revolutionary leaders from past years are national heroes. In the context of Cuban history, Castro is also viewed as a national hero who led (and continues to lead) the war for liberation from "the great imperialist to the north." Cubans old enough to remember the days before the revolution appreciate the relative stability they have enjoyed over the past forty years under Castro. He is a charismatic, paternalistic figure who is affectionately known among the majority of Cubans simply as "Fidel." He is seen as a caring leader who ended government corruption and foreign influence, championed equal rights and brought relative stability and pride to a nation whose history is marked by strife, inequality, poverty and conflict. In

Cuban history, Castro is George Washington and Simon Bolivar. He has earned his place in Cuban history—and that is a fact that must be accepted.

THE POLICY DEBATE

The policy of the United States is clear. We want a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. It is that simple. It is that unshakable. And towards that goal, we will never compromise our principles, nor cease our efforts. —Secretary of State Madeline Albright February 27, 1998⁵²

The fundamental goal of United States policy toward Cuba is to promote a peaceful transition to a stable, democratic form of government and respect for human rights. The policy has two fundamental components: maintaining pressure on the Cuban Government for change through the embargo and the Libertad Act while providing humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people, and working to aid the development of civil society in the country....Support for the Cuban people is the central theme of the U.S. policy. New measures announced by President Clinton on January 5, 1999 increased this support without strengthening the government. These measures (broadening remittances, expanding people-to-people contacts, increasing direct flights, authorizing food sales to independent entities, and establishing direct mail service) responded to Pope John Paul II's call to open up to Cuba. U.S. policy also pursues a multilateral effort to press for democratic change by urging U.S. allies to actively promote a democratic transition and respect for human rights. —The U.S. Department of State⁵³

The U.S. policy towards Cuba for the past forty years has been centered on the economic embargo. The embargo is also at the heart of today's policy debate. Many in and out of government strongly feel that this economic strategy diametrically opposes American values and beliefs and is not in the best interest of the United States. They argue that the strategy is immoral because embargoes tend to affect only those at the lower end of society in the targeted country while doing very little to affect the leadership. Instead of using an embargo to stimulate change, anti-embargo lobbyists think more direct American involvement in Cuba would gradually lead to change. What is needed, they argue, is economic, cultural and diplomatic contact initiatives. Free trade would further expose Cubans to the world outside of their secluded island. Yet the restriction of free trade and lack of dialogue promoted by the embargo resembles exactly what America opposes in Cuba—socialism.⁵⁴ Business leaders are anxious to test the Cuban market. U.S. farm groups estimate that Cuba could become a \$1 billion dollar a year market for food exports.⁵⁵ If successful, a multilateral embargo will prevent the targeted country from getting goods or at least substantially increase the cost of getting goods. But in the case of the unilateral embargo against Cuba, the law of supply and demand in a global economy has somewhat adversely impacted the desired end state as evident by the perceived need for the Helms-Burton Act. Generating international outrage, ignoring international law and an assortment of other trade agreements to include NAFTA and the rules of the WTO, the Helms-Burton Act sought to punish in U.S. courts companies from other democratic nations who "traffic" in repatriated U.S. property in Cuba. This in effect would have dire consequences for U.S. trade as nations put into place legal retaliatory measures of their own. But more importantly, what many nations perceive as America's self-declared right to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries could result in other nations forming alliances to counter balance U.S.

geopolitical preeminence. American values promote independence, freedom of thought, action and trade--all in sharp contrast with the Helms-Burton Act and the embargo. Meanwhile, companies in many countries, especially Canada and Mexico, are producing and selling goods to Cuba and making money that could otherwise be made by American companies.⁵⁶

Opponents of the embargo also like to point out how Castro has used the situation to fuel his anti-American propaganda. He constantly blames the embargo and lack of diplomatic relations with the U.S. for Cuba's tragic economic situation. Many in Cuba and around the world agree with him and in a strange paradox, the embargo has actually increased his popularity and stature within Cuba. Many in Cuba see him as a valiant warrior willing to take on American aggression and imperialism in defense of their beloved Cuba. What they fail to see, because of the attention generated by the embargo, is the real cause of Cuba's economic woes---the misleading ideology of the Cuban communist state. Opponents of the embargo want to take this argument away from Castro by lifting the embargo. They argue that lifting the embargo will expose the Cuban people to the benefits of capitalism and thus spur a greater longing for democracy and the rule of law and thus bring about political change.

On the other side of the argument are those who maintain that the embargo is the only peaceful way to bring about political change in Cuba. They point out the fact that for the first thirty years of the embargo, Cuba enjoyed large subsidies from the former Soviet Union and as a result was able to withstand any adverse impact caused by the embargo. But in the last ten years, without Soviet backing, the embargo has forced the Cuban government to reluctantly start making economic reforms modeled after capitalism in order to save the government.⁵⁷ Foreign investment, once thought to be an impossibility in Cuba, has led to tourism replacing agriculture as Cuba's number one source for hard currency. In 1995, the government allowed Cubans to possess American dollars for the first time and granted a small number of citizens the right to own and operate businesses for profit. The presence of the dollar is also helping to create change. Professional people in Cuba are finding that they can make more money by working in tourism and as a result, are leaving the professional world in large numbers.⁵⁸ A number of dissident groups now openly meet and discuss plans to transition Cuba to democracy in the post-Castro era. The number of human rights violations and political prisoners, while still unacceptably high, has shown a decline. Cuba has been forced to make drastic defense cuts and is now no longer able to fund the revolutionary escapades of the 1970s and 1980s.⁵⁹ Those in favor of the embargo think that given more time, the embargo and the global marketplace will force Cuba to make economic and political changes. Ending the embargo now, in their opinion, ignores Cuba's dismal human rights record and would be sending a wrong signal to a communist dictator and the Cubans at precisely the point when the embargo is actually beginning to take effect.⁶⁰

Pro-embargo lobbyists believe that foreign investment will do nothing to promote democracy, and in fact, is immoral because it subsidizes the oppression of the Cuban people.⁶¹ The real cause of the misery of the Cuban people they argue is not the U.S. embargo but it is the communist economic system. Foreign investment will not change this. It will not empower individual Cubans nor will it give them

independence from the regime because foreign investors do not do business with the average Cuban. The government makes every attempt to shield Cubans from the outside world. Foreign investors cannot hire, fire or pay Cuban workers directly. For example, Sheritt International is Canada's single largest investor in Cuba. The company operates a repatriated nickel mine that employs roughly 1,000 Cuban workers. The company pays the Cuban government approximately \$10,000 a year for each worker. In turn, the government gives the workers the equivalent of about \$10 a month.⁶²

Those in favor of lifting the embargo point out that rapidly expanding tourism is presently saving the Cuban economy, but is also used by the government as another means for oppressing the Cuban people. Every tourist dollar spent in Cuba ends up in the hands of the government. The Cuban government owns all the hotels. Unless a Cuban citizen is employed at one of the hotels, it is illegal for Cubans to patronize the establishments. This law in effect seeks to minimize the average citizen's contact with the outside world. In this view, opening Cuba simply strengthens the regime.

The policy issue is further compounded by the domestic politics of the Cuban-American exile community. It is the clear, implacable resolve of the Cuban-American community to undermine Castro and bring about internal change in Cuba that precludes any radical change in Cuba policy. In particular, the Cuban American National Foundation, formed in 1981, is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to re-establishing democracy in Cuba and has achieved great success in Washington lobbying for the continued isolation of Fidel Castro.⁶³ American politicians fear or need the political clout of the exile community. Changes in the Cuba policy will require the acquiescence of the Cuban-American community or a level of statesmanship not recently seen in Washington.

LOOKING BACK TO SEE THE ROAD AHEAD

Socialists and communists have no chance of coming to power in the U.S.⁶⁴

The "fair" distribution of income, which Karl Marx demanded for the people through the confiscation of private property, has already been given to the American people by their private-property system. After many years of socialism, no such progress has been made. The secret of success is good incomes for everyone and mass production under private-property capitalism. To have mass production, there must be mass purchasing power, which in turn requires large incomes for the people. The system works for both business and the masses. —Authors Fred G. Clark and Richard Stanton Rimanoczy⁶⁵

The policy debate over Cuba is diametrically opposed because there are truths in both arguments. On one hand, American values stress democracy, free speech, to include freedom of the press, and respect for human dignity. Americans believe in the sovereign right of a nation to determine its own destiny. They argue that engagement and people to people contact are the best means to bring about change and point out the fact that in the past, the U.S. business community has been a force for democratic change in other countries. On the other hand, neither Castro nor the Cuban people have shown any great aspiration to kick off the choking yoke of communism and embrace capitalism without the prod of the U.S. embargo. However, there is general agreement on both sides of the debate that

private enterprise and democracy are the best ways to improve the well being of the Cuban people and assisting Cuba in the transition to democracy is in the best interests of the United States. In reality, Cuban communism is dead and in the Western Hemisphere where democracy is flourishing, Cuba is becoming more isolated and an abnormality. The challenge for the United States is how to best support and nurture the change in Cuba in light of the historical tensions and lack of trust between the two nations.

It is history's grim humor that makes the American economic engine the source of Cuba's animosity toward the U.S. and its only hope for survival. It is undeniable that American entrepreneurs, honest and dishonest, have openly exploited the Cuban economy throughout much of the 19th and 20th centuries. It is equally true that only the American economic engine can pull the non-existent Cuban economy into the 21st century global economy. History suggests that how this is done will be crucial not only to the success of a post-Castro Cuba but also to U.S.-Cuban relations in general. The embargo and its lifting is a major policy decision in this process.

For the foreseeable future, the embargo, the cornerstone of the U.S. policy, should remain in place because we do not want to openly support or appear to support the present government. Ending the embargo now would only serve to prolong the current government. Instead, the embargo should be gradually phased out in conjunction with reforms made by the Cuban government.

For his part, Castro continues to make it perfectly clear that he will always believe in socialism and wants to normalize U.S.-Cuba relations without making any concessions towards opening his country to democratic rule or economic reform. However, the U.S. should be alert to any positive changes in Cuba's stance.

Although in disagreement with Castro's stance, the U.S. policy must accept Cuba as a sovereign nation and understand that Cuba will find its own way out of the economic and human rights problems generated by its current government and its corresponding economic system. Instead of dictating how change will occur, U.S. policy should look beyond Castro to create conditions that encourage and support a democratic transition. Focusing the policy on Castro is counterproductive. In the eyes of most Cubans, he is a genuine hero, a fact that the U.S. must accept. At 73 years old, he has been in power longer than any other ruler in the world.⁶⁶ He is a natural representation of the average Cuban's resentment of a history of perceived and real U.S. exploitation.

Therefore, the U.S. should continue to focus on strengthening democracies and economic development throughout the Americas as a whole and because of the historical tensions and Cuba's mistrust of American motives, rely more on other nations, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, to help transition Cuba to democracy. From the Cuban perspective of history, there is no compelling reason why Cubans should trust the United States. Much like the Spaniards during the colonial period, America's role has been that of the economic exploiter of the Cuban people. In the minds of many Cubans, the economic embargo is a further extension of this exploitation.

Allowing others to take the lead in transitioning Cuba allows Cuba to see capitalism and democratization through the eyes of other South and Central American nations with a similar historical

spotted relationship with the United States. It gives change credibility. Cuba's history of class division is another problem area that impedes its progress towards social reform. Cuba has a very dismal record at practicing democracy and no real and lasting experience in the process, due in part to their violent internal struggles for political control prior to the Cuban revolution. Today, including the exile Cuban-Americans in the U.S. and the Cuban Communist Party that is presently in power on the island, there are many factions with varying ideas on how a post-Castro Cuba should be governed. Tensions exist between Miami's Cuban American community and dissent groups inside of Cuba. The potential for strife in the post Castro era exists. Any type of instability or civil unrest could have serious implications for the United States, to include the possibility of having to militarily intervene to restore order. Mass migration, as a result of chaos and instability, is also another possible outcome that would have serious implications for the U.S. In this case, the U.S. must resist the urge to intervene and must not press the case of the Cuban exiles. How the U.S. allows Cuba to exercise its sovereign rights will determine the post-Castro phase of U.S.-Cuban relations. Cuban historical perceptions of U.S. interference pre-dispose Cubans to reject any U.S. offer of mediation or assistance. Here too, the U.S. policy should be one of "hands off" and support of acceptable third parties.

One of the fundamental issues in U.S.-Cuban relations is a genuine mistrust of U.S. motives. Cuban history portrays Americans as exploitative and overbearing as evident by the Pratt Amendment, the sugar economy and the "gangster" era. U.S. policy must focus on changing this image. In this regard, contact at the people to people level may be one of the most effective policy tools. For while it is certain American businesses and individuals have participated in the economic exploitation of Cuba, it is also true that the vast majority of Americans have always possessed a genuine historical compassion for Cuba's people and a real desire to assist them in finding their rightful destiny. This is a fundamental truth and can help to close the gap between the two nations.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of the Cuban people in terms of democratic rights and economic development differs from the U.S. experience. There is no Cuban history of individual rights or democratic principles and their economic development is one of exploitation. On the other hand, the United States and the Cuban people share much in the way of common history and in this common history----and more specifically the different perspectives of it----lies the key to a successful U.S. policy. For while the history is shared, the Cuban perspective sees the U.S. as an exploitative great power and elevates Castro to sainthood as the leader of a martyred people. For the Cuban people, the current economic conditions are a historical normalcy---not an aberration. The historical aberration is that the Cuban people have achieved through Fidel Castro a national pride and a sense of dignity. Here lies Castro's appeal and the U.S. dilemma. Paradoxically, everything the U.S. does or might do to foster improved relations or enhance the well-being of the Cuban people strengthens Castro's hand. With this paradox in mind, U.S. policy changes can not be radical and must be driven by true statesmanship founded in our own national values and

interests. What our values tell us is that in the long term an economically viable, democratic government best serves our own national interests.

The U.S. should develop and gradually implement policies that will best build a new relationship with the Cuban people based on trust, mutual respect and quiet assistance of Cuba's transition to democracy. The U.S. should continue to look for ways to promote people to people contact emphasizing the use of non-governmental organizations to include educational, cultural and recreational entities. To build trust and respect between the Cuban and the American people, it is necessary that we get to know each other outside of the disparaging historical images from our shared histories. Although the U.S. trade embargo remains in place, the U.S. and Cuba have enjoyed athletic, cultural and academic exchanges. Additionally, a number of non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian organizations work inside of Cuba. More than a dozen U.S. universities have sent students to Cuba under a 1995 agreement between the two countries that established an exchange program. This year, San Diego State University will become the first university in the nation to allow students to stay in Havana for a semester or a full year to study Cuban culture, language and business practices at the University of Havana. Cuban students will also study at SDSU. Baseball is the national pastime in both countries. Cuban officials have also approved college baseball games with U.S. college teams that are routinely played in both countries. In 1999, the American League Baltimore Orioles played a limited number of spring training games in Havana to sold out stadiums. These initiatives are a correct step forward for U.S.-Cuban policy and should be continued and enhanced. More people to people contact will promote a return to close, friendly, and cooperative relations. Increased contacts will allow the average Cuban to see the benefits of living in a free society.

The U.S. should take an actively lead in promoting dialogue between Cubans in and outside of Cuba in regard to the best way to transition Cuba to democracy. This will be a very difficult task to accomplish because of the strong emotional ties and stakes the various groups have in the future of Cuba. But this is a task that must be accomplished if Cuba is to have a smooth transition. There are an estimated 150 dissident groups inside of Cuba today.⁶⁷ But they are divided among themselves, have no access to the media or any other public forum. U.S. policy that advocates free speech and provides proactive forums—whether U.S. inspired or serendipitous, such as the Pope's 1996 visit to Cuba—is in the best interest of future relations since they aid the transition. In addition, policy should encourage the exile community to tone down its anti-Castro rhetoric. The Cuban-American community should serve to show those still in Cuba how they have benefited from living in a democratic and capitalistic society. The ongoing Elian Gonzalez dispute has highlighted the tensions between the Cuban-American community and Cuba's dissidents, which in essence is a class dispute. The U.S. should lead dialogue that diffuses the emphasis on Castro, builds bridges between the various segments of Cuban society and is futuristic in nature. The emphasis should be on building a united Cuba that works for all of its people.

Until America can build a trustworthy relationship with the Cuban government and its citizens, the U.S. should adopt a policy of moving off of center stage, allowing our allies and friends to take a more

direct lead in working with Cuba to promote change. Legislation and other measures such as the Helms-Burton law are fundamentally counterproductive, threaten established trade agreements, infringe on the sovereign rights of other democratic nations and play right into Castro's hand. When Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar visited Cuba during the 1999 Ibero-American Summit to show Spain's displeasure with the Helms-Burton Act, he stayed in a repatriated hotel that is managed by the Spanish hotel chain Sol Melia instead of a Cuban government protocol house. Rather than create tensions with our allies and friends, the U.S. should engage in constructive dialogue with Canada, Mexico, the European Union and the Organization of American States aimed at getting other nations actively involved in finding ways to move Cuba in the right direction. The U.S. must convince the rest of the world that a stable, democratic Cuba is in the best interest of all as the world continues to move towards a globalized market and that the U.S. is willing to take constructive steps in this direction.

To promote trust and mutual respect, the U.S. must respect Cuban sovereignty and the right of the Cuban people to decide their own future. In every venue, U.S. officials should publicly express the U.S. policy to be that of respect for the Cuban people in determining their own future.

Regardless of what the U.S. chooses to do, Fidel Castro has earned his place as a national icon in the history of Cuba and is, and will continue to be, a genuine folk hero. "Personalizing" Cuba as Castro only serves to make him stronger among the Cuban people. If democratic elections were held today in Cuba, most observers think Castro would easily win. Therefore, Castro cannot continue to be made the issue in U.S. policy. Cuba is entering a period in world history where it has few options. Change is slowly and inevitably coming to Cuba despite Castro. The U.S. must be in a position to support and facilitate the change, and not appear to dictate when and how the change will occur or miss the opportunity to influence the change by over focusing on Castro. In the end, real and lasting change will only come from within Cuba.

Finally, the U.S. must posture itself so that it can lift the embargo when it serves U.S. interests to do so. For the near term, it serves U.S. interests to have a policy that precludes Castro and his regime from re-inventing itself funded by the U.S. economic machine. Such a re-invented government would not be self-sustaining or represent true democratic reform. It would merely be a socialist parasite, exploiting the Cuban people to stay in power using U.S. support. A healthy bi-national relationship must find common economic links that provide equal benefits. In a strange paradox, Castro's revolution has postured the Cuban people for such a relationship by leading them out of their historical role of an exploitative people. It remains for the U.S. to complete their transition by appropriately integrating them into the world economy. To do this, U.S. policy must manage the embargo, keeping it as long as it is needed and dropping it the moment it becomes counterproductive. This will require both extraordinary statesmanship and timing.

Word Count= 10,661

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