

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



THESIS

**U.S.-CUBA RELATIONS:
REVISITING THE SANCTIONS POLICY**

by

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June 2002

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U.S.-CUBA RELATIONS: REVISITING THE SANCTIONS POLICY

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ABSTRACT

In October 1960, faced with an increasingly hostile and threatening Marxist dictator, the United States implemented economic sanctions against Cuba. As Cuba aligned itself with the Soviet Union, it became a legitimate threat to U.S. national security interests. During the Cold War period, the sanctions policy was successful in achieving some of its aims; most notably, containing Communism in the hemisphere. However, it clearly failed in removing Fidel Castro from power.

In 1989, the Soviet Union collapsed, and Soviet subsidies to Cuba ended. Since the Cuban economy had become extremely dependent on Soviet infusions of capital and military support, when Soviet subsidies disappeared, Cuba's ability to threaten the U.S. national security quickly evaporated. In this new multi-polar international system, U.S. policymakers have chosen to tighten the existing sanctions policy, rather than developing a new one. Passing the Cuban Democracy Act (1992) and the Helms-Burton Act (1996), the sanctions policy, previously an executive policy, became codified into U.S. law.

This thesis will examine the origins of the sanctions policy, and follow its successes and failures during the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. It will argue that the rise of domestic influence has eclipsed the international and national security justifications for the current policy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 1960's, the United States faced an increasingly hostile and threatening Marxist dictator in Cuba. Attempting to bring about agrarian reform and break-free from U.S. dominance of the Cuban economy, the new government of Fidel Castro passed laws prohibiting foreign ownership of Cuban property. Since U.S. businesses owned approximately 25 percent of Cuban land holdings, the new Castro government quickly faced U.S. opposition. As U.S.-Cuban relations became more strained, and President Eisenhower canceled the Cuban sugar quota, Castro began aligning himself with the Soviet Union, the United States' principal Cold War adversary. In January 1961, the U.S. broke diplomatic ties with Cuba. In April 1961, President Kennedy authorized the U.S.-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs, which failed miserably. Following these incidents, Cuba began receiving economic and military aid from the Soviet Union. The nadir of U.S.-Cuban hostilities occurred during the 1962 Missile Crisis, when the U.S. discovered that Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles were being installed in Cuba. This attempt to gain an offensive first-strike capability, coupled with attempts to export revolution and Communism within the hemisphere, clearly demonstrated that Cuba had become a legitimate threat to U.S. national security interests. When President Kennedy imposed sanctions against Cuba in 1961, he faced little opposition from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, Organization of American States (OAS) countries, or from his domestic constituency.

During the Cold War period, the sanctions policy was successful in achieving some of its aims, most notably, containing Communism in the hemisphere. However, it clearly failed in its objective of removing Fidel Castro from power. Throughout the Cold War period, domestic politics exerted little influence on the sanctions policy, and managing the U.S. policy toward Cuba remained an executive branch prerogative.

During the late 1970's, as East-West relations were thawing, President Carter began negotiations with Cuba aimed at normalizing relations with the U.S. Fearing that reestablishing relations with Cuba would strengthen and legitimize the Castro

government, Jorge Mas Canosa, a wealthy and staunch anti-Castro Cuban-American exile, established the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) in 1981. It became the most powerful and influential actor vis-à-vis U.S.-Cuba policy.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, Soviet subsidies to Cuba, estimated at \$4-5 billion dollars, also ended. Cuba's economy had become extremely dependent on these Soviet infusions of capital and military support. When Soviet subsidies disappeared, Cuba's ability to threaten the U.S. national security also evaporated. Despite Cuba's diminished threat to U.S. security, and given the new multi-polar international system, a policy of U.S. sanctions against Cuba remained. U.S. legislators, greatly influenced by CANF campaign contributions, and pursuing the Cuban-American vote in South Florida and New Jersey, voted to tighten the sanctions policy. After passage of the Cuban Democracy Act (1992) and the Helms-Burton Act (1996), the sanctions policy, previously an executive order, became codified into U.S. law. Although the language of the sanctions changed from addressing the containment of Communism to the promotion of democratic reforms in Cuba, removal of Fidel Castro remained a central goal of the policy.

Robert Putnam's 1988 theory of international bargaining as a two-level game provides one method for analyzing the decisions for maintaining the U.S. sanctions against Cuba. Level one represents the international negotiations and level two the domestic agenda. During the Cold War period, U.S.-Cuba policy remained largely a level one issue. The President was in control of policy making with regard to Cuba. During the post-Cold War period, with the rise of the Cuban American National Foundation as a strong and influential domestic actor, U.S.-Cuba policy became largely a level two, or domestic issue. The international ramifications of implementing Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, (Title III allows U.S. citizens to sue foreign investors in U.S. property expropriated after the 1959 Cuban Revolution), prevented the President from obtaining international support for the sanctions policy. At the domestic level, the passage of legislation restraining the President's authority by codifying the sanctions policy illustrates the growth of domestic actors.

The future of U.S.-Cuban relations is likely to continue the status quo. Despite a resurgence of criticism of the sanctions policy following former President Carter's visit to Cuba in May 2002, overturning the current policy would require the expenditure of a significant amount of political capital. Since no countervailing group, either within the Cuban-American community, or beyond it, can begin to compete with the Cuban American National Foundation's influence on Cuban policy, it seems unlikely that the embargo will be overturned any time soon. 2002 is a Congressional election year, and U.S. attention is resolutely focused on the war on terrorism and conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia, Cuba policy is not a major issue of consideration. Fidel Castro's death will most likely be the watershed event that brings any significant changes or lifting of the present U.S. sanctions against Cuba.

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I. INTRODUCTION

On 1 January 1959, President Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba after the United States announced that it would no longer provide support to his “fraudulent regime,” and as revolutionary forces led by Fidel Castro marched into Havana. Although the Cuba that Fidel Castro inherited had one of the highest standards of living among Latin American countries, in reality there were gross inequalities in terms of income distribution and land ownership. To alleviate this disparity, Castro aggressively pursued sweeping economic and agrarian reforms. In implementing these reforms, Castro was faced with the necessity to nationalize the sugar and petroleum producing industries, most of which were composed of U.S.-owned companies. In retaliation to this “unlawful expropriation” of U.S. property, the United States imposed sanctions on Cuba in October 1960. Second only to the sanctions imposed upon North Korea in terms of longevity, the U.S. embargo imposed against Cuba has now spanned over four decades, ten U.S. presidents. It has endured changes in political and economic conditions, both at the international and domestic levels.

During the Cold War period, the sanctions were aimed at protecting the United States’ national security interests, as Cuba’s alignment with the Soviet Union clearly posed a threat to the U.S. The sanctions’ objectives were designed to contain the spread of Communism in the hemisphere and to bring about the ouster of the Castro regime. During the Cold War period, the sanctions were a justifiable measure taken to protect U.S. national security interests against a Soviet-sponsored Cuba. They directly contributed to stemming the spread of Communism in the region. Nevertheless, Fidel Castro’s grip over the Cuban people never loosened.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, Cuba’s military and financial backing also ended. Prior to its collapse, Cuba had enjoyed \$4-6 billion in annual economic subsidies from the Soviet Union. (Mitchell, 2000, p. 1) The United States, however, did not change its foreign policy instrument, namely the economic sanctions, despite the significant change in the international political system. In fact, the sanctions policy was strengthened following the cessation of Soviet subsidies to Cuba. Moreover, in the

domestic political arena, the U.S. Congress assumed the primary policy-making role vis-à-vis Cuban policy from the President, when it passed the Cuban Democracy Act in 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act in 1996. The question that this thesis asks is: Why has the United States maintained an economic embargo against Cuba for over 40 years? Additionally, it will identify the groups and actors that have influenced the sanctions policy, and what challenges and obstacles would need to be overcome if the Cuban embargo were to be lifted.

Former President Jimmy Carter's visit to Cuba in May 2002 sparked renewed debate regarding the efficacy of the sanctions policy. This thesis provides a history of the origins of the sanctions policy, and evaluates its accomplishments and failings during the Cold War period. It then examines the factors, both domestic and international, that have asserted influence over the sanctions policy following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It traces the change in policy-making authority from the President to the Congress, and it explores the factors that influenced this change. Supporters for a lifting of the sanctions argue that the United States and Cuba have a history of close relations dating back to the Spanish-American War. They argue that the U.S. should seek to reestablish a strong and stable relationship with a former trade partner and the largest country in the Caribbean. Pro-sanctions supporters argue that Cuba remains the only non-democratically elected regime, and the only openly hostile country in the hemisphere. They contend that lifting or easing the current sanctions policy would only serve to infuse the Castro regime with much needed capital, and would legitimize Fidel Castro's standing. This thesis shall explore both arguments.

I will argue that although the U.S. sanctions policy against Cuba achieved several successes during the Cold War period, it failed in its goal of removing Fidel Castro from power. When the international political situation changed following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. policy with regard to Cuba also changed from destabilizing the Communist regime on the island to promoting democratic reform. At the core of the policy, however, the removal of Fidel Castro remained. The mechanism through which the United States has attempted to destabilize the Castro government failed during the Cold War period. U.S. legislation passed during the last decade attempts to employ the same mechanism, the sanctions policy, now with tightened measures, to accomplish this

same goal. In the post-Cold War period, U.S. policy toward Cuba has moved away from a foreign policy issue decided by the President, to a domestic policy issue, largely dominated by the Congress, and heavily influenced by the Cuban-American community.

Sources for this thesis include publications and documents detailing the history and evolution of the current economic and political situation between the United States and Cuba, and current opinions on how to improve the relationship between the two nations. Additionally, research into congressional records and testimony was used to better understand and explain the political rationale behind the recent legislation which strengthened the sanctions policy. It is a case study of the formation and modifications of the United States foreign policy as it relates to post-1959 Cuba.

A. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter II will identify and discuss the origins of the U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba. By examining the international and domestic situation in 1959, we can better understand the rationale behind the initial implementation of the sanctions policy. Following the successful revolution in Cuba in 1959, Fidel Castro undertook an ambitious program of land and economic reforms. Central to these reforms was severing Cuba's dependence on sugar, and by nationalizing foreign property, most of which belonged to U.S.-owned corporations. These actions led to a break in U.S.-Cuba relations, and pushed Castro into the arms of the Soviet Union in search of foreign trade and capital investments. The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 cemented in the minds of American policymakers, and the general public, that Cuba posed a serious threat to the national security of the United States. This perception would endure throughout the 1960's and into the late 1970's, as Cuba's active support of revolutionary movements continued to reinforce this view. The specter of Cuba as a threat to the United States, by virtue of its close ties to the Soviet Union, would not be lifted until after the collapse of Soviet Communism in 1989. This chapter will identify the objectives of the sanctions policy during the Cold War, and evaluate which of those objectives were met, and which ones failed.

Chapter III will focus on the post-Cold War period of U.S.-Cuban relations. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost its principal source of economic

and military support. Lacking the equipment, training, and funding to maintain its military forces, or to fund revolutionary movements abroad, Cuba's threat to the national security of the United States quickly evaporated. Cuba's economy began to suffer dramatically, and hard-line anti-Communists in the United States attempted to exploit Cuba's economic ills by pressing for a tightening of the sanctions, resulting in the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act (1992) and the Helms-Burton Act (1996). This legislation, however, while increasing the pressure on Cuba's failing economy, and punishing countries that engaged in trade with Cuba, failed to achieve the ouster of Fidel Castro. The chapter will examine the political actors and groups that shaped the post-Cold War Cuba policy, and the reactions of the new legislation in the international community.

Chapter IV, the concluding chapter, will summarize the finding of the previous chapters. It will then illustrate how the U.S.-Cuban policy fits within the framework of a two-level game. Finally, it will provide the most likely prospect for the future of U.S. sanctions against Cuba. The opinions presented are aimed at foreign policy decision makers at the federal government level, who may find them useful in constructing future policy decisions.

II. THE CUBAN SANCTIONS IN A BI-POLAR WORLD

A. INTRODUCTION

The Castro-led Cuban Revolution of 1959 became a watershed event for U.S.-Latin American relations. In particular, U.S.-Cuban relations began to deteriorate rapidly following Fidel Castro's efforts to accomplish agrarian and economic reforms. In the process, he built a repressive Communist dictatorship, and while succeeding in breaking free of economic dependency on the United States, moved Cuba into economic dependence on the Soviet Union.

The tense, and often openly hostile nature of U.S.-Cuban relations during the Cold War period, is characterized by the covert operations to assassinate Fidel Castro; the Pay of Pigs invasion; the October 1962 Missile Crisis; Cuban support for revolutionary movements and Marxist guerillas in the Western Hemisphere; and the 1980 Mariel Boat Lift. In light of the national security threat that Castro's Cuba posed to the United States, the U.S. adopted a policy of isolating Cuba through the use of comprehensive economic sanctions. The sanctions had three clearly defined goals: 1) contain Communist expansion and revolution in the hemisphere, 2) increase the cost of, and ultimately break, Soviet-Cuban relations, and 3) advance the Castro regime's downfall. The sanctions policy succeeded in accomplishing the first two goals. When Cuba, with its intimate relationship with the Soviet Union, posed a serious and legitimate threat to the national security of the United States during the Cold War period, the sanctions policy was a justifiable and mostly successful response to this threat. When the level of support for the sanctions began to wane as east-west tensions began to abate during the 1970's, the sanctions policy remained in force because there was politically little to be gained in the domestic arena by removing the sanctions policy. So long as Communism and the Soviet Union challenged democracy and capitalism, and so long as Cuba continued to receive economic and military support from the Soviet Union, it was much easier to receive support for a policy of isolating Cuba. Throughout the Cold War period, then, U.S. foreign policy was based upon the international level of negotiations, as domestic factors generally not play a role in the decision making process.

B. PRE-REVOLUTIONARY CUBA

1. Cuban Perspectives on Democracy

An understanding of Cuban perspectives on democracy offers some insight into Cuba's post-revolutionary political experience. Cuba's current political system reflects a convergence of Marxist theory and Cuban history – a “socialist democracy.” From 1901 until the revolution in 1959, Cuba had a republican political order. It was essentially patterned after the U.S. system, constructed during the U.S. occupation following the Spanish American War of 1898. Ideas of liberal government, equality, economic, and political independence were widely espoused by independence advocates like José Martí. Cuba had been a colony for much longer than other Latin American countries, and it felt the desire to “catch up” to its neighbors in becoming independent. The U.S. occupation's disbanding of the revolutionary movement and the implementation of the Platt Amendment to the 1901 Cuban Constitution, which permitted U.S. intervention in Cuban affairs, quickly halted this democratic transition, however. (Lutjens, 1992, pp. 56-58) The dynamics of Cuba's liberal democracy, corruption, party competition, and military coups all left indelible marks on Cubans' images of republican politics.

2. Batista's Cuba

On 12 August 1933, a group of junior Cuban army officers, under the leadership of Colonel Fulgencio Batista, succeeded in the overthrow of the unpopular Cuban president, Gerardo Machado. Following the coup, Batista supported the head of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano, Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín, to lead the country. Although Grau's term only lasted four months, he attempted to implement wide-ranging social and economic reforms such as, an eight-hour day, a minimum wage for cane cutters, and the initiation of agrarian reforms. The newly installed administration of Franklin Roosevelt, pressured by U.S. businessmen, became displeased with Grau's reforms, calling them “Communistic”. President Roosevelt sent Sumner Welles to Cuba as a special emissary to explain to Colonel Batista that the U.S would not recognize the Grau government. Additionally, Roosevelt offered to cancel the Platt Amendment, which gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuba whenever it felt that it was necessary in order to protect life and property and to “assure Cuban independence”. Furthermore, it would provide a new, more stable Cuban government with economic assistance. Batista

agreed and forced Grau out of office, replacing him with Colonel Carlos Mendieta in January 1934. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 18-21)

Between 1933 and 1940, Batista oversaw a series of Cuban presidents that were more concerned with appeasing American interests than those of the Cuban people. In 1940, Batista himself won the presidential elections under a coalition composed of the Communist Party of Cuba and the Revolutionary Union Party. Although Grau reemerged to defeat Batista in 1944, by that time the former president's revolutionary movement had lost most of its momentum. Grau's second term (1944-1948) was even more contrary in terms of reform than his first. He succumbed to the political greed, stealing from Cuba's treasury, which became swollen as a consequence of the post-war world market price for sugar, and Cuba's flourishing sugar harvests. Carlos Prío Socorrás succeeded Grau, and proved inept at being able to handle the mounting problems of sugar overproduction and new international sugar producers which combined to threaten the Cuban economy. (Kaplowitz, 1998. pp. 21-22)

Fulgencio Batista, who had been in retirement in Key Biscayne, Florida returned to the Cuban political scene in 1952. Three months before the Cuban presidential elections, he staged a bloodless coup d' etat, and declared himself provisional president. He claimed to have had evidence that Prío was preparing to steal the elections. President Prío and his cabinet fled to Miami. Batista never held elections. Instead, he became a traditional Latin American dictator. He suspended the Cuban Constitution of 1940 and dissolved all political parties. He also adopted a strong, anti-Communist stance and even broke all ties with the Soviet Union, to the delight of the U.S. Government. His hard-line tactics, however, led to increasing dissatisfaction and restlessness among the Cuban population. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 22-23)

3. Fidel Castro Emerges

Fidel Castro was a young lawyer, recently graduated from the University of Havana, when Batista carried out his coup in 1952. Angered by the fact that Batista cancelled the elections that year (Castro was running for a seat on the Cuban House of Representatives) and then proceeded to eliminate them in the future, Castro was determined to return democracy to Cuba. He led the first open contest to Batista's regime

on 26 July 1953 with a guerilla attack on the Monaca Military Barracks in Santiago, Cuba. Although a dismal failure, claiming the lives of most of the guerillas, and resulting in the capture of Castro himself, it nonetheless found widespread support among the many Cubans who had become increasingly distrustful of Batista's corrupt military rule. (Hero File, 2000, p. 1)

Following his trial, during which Castro made his now famous "History will absolve me" speech, he was sent to a prison on the Isle of Pines to serve out a 15-year sentence. Public pressure for his release quickly mounted, and in a futile attempt to appease his opponents, Batista agreed to release Castro and his fellow revolutionaries on 6 May 1955. For the next year-and-a-half, Castro and some one hundred followers moved to Mexico in a self-imposed exile. It was here in Mexico that Castro joined with Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and together they began planning and training for their return to Cuba. (Hero File, 2000, p. 1)

In 1956, Castro, his brother Raúl, Che Guevara, and 79 other members of the "26th of July" Revolutionary Movement embarked on the yacht *Granma* en route to Cuba. They landed at the eastern province of Oriente, where they once again experienced military failure as they were met by soldiers from Batista's army. Although the exact number of survivors has been debated, the number thirteen quickly spread, leading to parallels of "Fidel, the Cuban savior, and his twelve disciples" to Jesus and his disciples by the catholic peasantry throughout the Cuban countryside. They escaped into the Sierra Maestra Mountains, where they were aided by local peasants. Here they were able to reconstitute their forces, and soon began conducting guerilla attacks against the Batista government, gaining increased popular support. The revolutionaries' efforts were unwittingly assisted by *New York Times* reporter Herbert Matthews, who was misled by Fidel Castro into reporting that the revolutionary movement consisted of much larger numbers than they actually did. Matthews' article succeeded in securing international and domestic aid to Castro. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 23-24)

The United States had initially supported the Batista regime, providing formal recognition to Batista following his coup. However, as time elapsed, it grew increasingly concerned with the levels of corruption and abuse in the regime. Although State and

Treasury Department officials expressed concerns about Batista's policies, U.S. business interests eclipsed government uneasiness. Not until 1958, however, did the Eisenhower Administration come to realize the extent of popular support for opposition to the Batista regime. Only then did a review of U.S.–Cuban policy begin. What the goals of the new policy should be however, was a source of disagreement among policy makers.

Although it was agreed that further support to Batista was unacceptable, Castro was not seen as a suitable alternative. Unwilling to suggest openly that Batista should resign, for fear of being accused of interfering in Cuba's domestic affairs, the State Department ultimately embarked upon a plan to aid Cuba in the creation of a transitional government that was both anti-Batista and anti-Castro. (Smith, 1987, pp. 22-23) The debate centered on whether or not to impose an arms embargo against the Batista regime. The State Department believed that U.S. business interests in Cuba were at risk under the deteriorating situation developing in Cuba. The Department of Defense, however, argued against the arms embargo because of Batista's support for U.S. global policies and because of Cuba's strategic position at the entrance to the Caribbean. The State Department position prevailed. On 4 March 1958, the U.S. implemented an arms embargo against Cuba. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 26)

The arms embargo had little effect in terms of actual military support denied to Cuba. In fact, the U.S. military mission in Havana continued to conduct training for Batista's troops in preparation for their offensive against Castro's guerillas. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 26) What the embargo did affect was the morale and commitment of the Cuban soldier.

The common Cuban soldier became increasingly demoralized as he realized he was fighting for an unpopular cause and defending a dictator whose corrupt system was hated by the vast majority of Cubans. (Smith, 1991, p. 84)

On 17 December 1958, U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, Earl T. Smith, informed Batista that the U.S. would no longer be providing support. Two weeks later, on 1 January 1959, Batista fled Cuba after attending a New Year's Eve celebration in Havana. Fidel Castro and his revolutionary movement easily stepped in to the power vacuum left in the wake of Batista's sudden departure. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 26-27)

C. ORIGINS OF THE EMBARGO

1. Castro's New Government

Fidel Castro's position in the spring of 1959 was problematic at best. With no organized political party, and in an attempt to build public support, he began to redistribute wealth. His focus then turned to consolidating power. Although Castro's pre- and post-revolutionary proclamations included great respect for liberal political principles, in reality, consolidation of power and political unity became the primary goals of the new regime. (Padula, 1993, pp. 17-20) Its very struggle for survival eliminated any possibility for liberal democratization. During a May 1960 speech, Fidel Castro publicly defined what he believed to be direct democracy:

Democracy is where the majority governs...Democracy guarantees not only the right to bread and the right to work but also the right to culture and the right to be taken into account within society. Therefore, *this* is democracy. The Cuban revolution is democracy. (Lutjens, 1992, p. 57)

Central to the idea of direct democracy were two characteristics: Castro's own leadership role and mass participation.

2. Nationalization of U.S. Property

Central to Castro's transformation of Cuba from a capitalist market economy to a centrally planned socialist economy, was the Agrarian Reform Law passed in May 1959. The law prohibited the foreign ownership of Cuban land, and property that was under U.S. ownership was transferred to Cuban public and private holdings. The U.S. accounted for about 25 percent of Cuban land holdings at the time, and the land reform immediately placed U.S. interests against those of Cuba. However, as U.S.-Cuban relations were growing apart, Soviet-Cuban relations were warming. In 1960, the new Castro revolutionary government and the Soviet Union entered into a trade pact whereby the Soviet Union would buy sugar from Cuba, and then supply Cuba with crude oil. (Mitchell, 2000, p. 2) On the advice of the State Department, Cuban-based U.S. oil firms refused to refine oil purchased from the Soviet Union. This step pushed Castro to nationalize the oil refineries, resulting in the U.S. then canceling most of Cuba's sugar quota. (Mitchell, 2000, p. 2) The Cuban revolutionary government began to nationalize all foreign property, to include U.S. property (then valued at about \$1 billion), with an

offer of compensation which the U.S. rejected. (Cuba Fact Sheet, 2002. p. 1) Anti-U.S. rhetoric, combined with the expropriations, stirred widespread public resentment in the U.S., which demanded retaliation against Cuba. In October 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower initiated an international campaign to prevent loans to Castro's revolutionary government, and imposed an economic embargo against Cuba, excluding everything except food and medicine. By April 1961, Castro's revolutionary goals had been unquestionably identified as socialist. As explained by Ernesto Che Guevara:

It is an agrarian, anti-feudal, and anti-imperialistic revolution, transformed by its internal evolution and by external aggression into a socialist revolution, and so it proclaims itself before the Americas: it is a socialist revolution. (Lutjens, 1992, p. 57)

Therefore, by early 1961, it had become clear that the Cuban Revolution was a Marxist movement which was seeking to align itself with the Soviet Union. This course of action placed it on a collision course with U.S. interests in the region.

3. Kennedy Inherits the Cuban Problem

During the U.S. presidential campaign of 1960, Vice-president Richard M. Nixon was in a heated contest against Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy. Although the situation in Cuba initially played a small role in the campaign, its importance changed when Kennedy "claimed that Eisenhower had 'lost Cuba' and opened the hemisphere to Communist infiltration." (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 43) Nixon responded by calling the Castro government "an intolerable cancer" and announced his administration's intention of quarantining the Castro regime. The next day, the Eisenhower administration implemented the Cuban embargo. (Robbins, 1983, 97) In response, Kennedy called the embargo "too little, too late" and advocated armed intervention. "Kennedy knew that plans for an invasion were in the works at the time, but that Nixon, as a member of the administration could not publicly acknowledge the covert activities." (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 43) The result was that once in office, President Kennedy's actions were constrained by the campaign rhetoric of candidate Kennedy.

John F. Kennedy, for his part, had committed himself in his electoral campaign to help the exiles and domestic Cuban opposition to overthrow Castro. He was caught up in a trap that he himself had laid. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 43)

In February 1961, President Kennedy signed an executive order extending the sanctions against Cuba. Pierre Salinger, President Kennedy's Press Secretary, recalled the event during an interview remembering the 35th anniversary of the Cuban Embargo:

I got a call that night from the President who said he needed something urgently. He said he needed Cuban cigars. I asked how many. Kennedy said one thousand. I said, "That's tough, but I will do my job." When did the President need them? "Tomorrow morning." The next day, I was called up into the Oval Office first thing in the morning. Kennedy asked, "How did you make out?" I told him I bought 1,200 cigars. Kennedy said, "Fantastic," and he pulled these papers from his desk and signed them. He signed the trade embargo. (Gibson and Ramirez, 1997, p. 2)

This exchange between President Kennedy and Mr. Salinger suggests that President Kennedy intended the sanctions to be a temporary measure, or at least one of a relatively limited duration.

The 1961 Cuban invasion attempt served to further redefine the nature of U.S.-Cuban relations. When Kennedy assumed the presidency, he inherited the plans for a military invasion of Cuba. On 16 April 1961, 1,300 Cuban exiles trained and equipped by the CIA launched an invasion of Cuba's Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs). The invasion proved to be an unmitigated failure, resulting in the death of 150, and the capture of over 1,100 of the attackers. Although much debate exists as to where to lay blame for the mission's failure, what is not in debate is that the outcome reshaped the nature of U.S.-Cuba relations, and those effects remain even today. The Soviets were also influenced by the outcome of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, with Nikita Khrushchev forming the conclusion that President Kennedy was weak. He used the opportunity to send the latest technology Soviet equipment to Cuba. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 47) Realizing that a U.S. military invasion of Cuba was politically unfeasible in the wake of the failed CIA-backed exile invasion, President Kennedy concentrated his efforts to remove Castro from power using economic measures. He also authorized the CIA to conduct covert operations to achieve the same ends. Although Cuba's actions to date had primarily threatened U.S. economic interests, its growing closeness and dependency on the Soviet Union made it a growing threat to the U.S. national security as well. The U.S. Government had come to view Fidel Castro as a clear and present danger to U.S. interests.

A number of punitive economic measures followed the Bay of Pigs disaster. In September 1961, Congress passed a measure that barred U.S. assistance to any country that provided aid to Cuba. An exemption was included which allowed the president to authorize waivers if he determined that maintaining favorable relations with the offending country was in the national interests of the United States. This became the first formal legislation regarding Cuba, incorporated under section 620(a) of the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 47) In January 1962, the Organization of American States (OAS) voted to suspend Cuba's membership in the organization. President Kennedy used the opportunity to expand the embargo by banning all trade with Cuba, save for the sale of food and medicine. (Chronology of Cuban Affairs, 1998, p. 1) Following Cuba's expulsion from the OAS, the U.S. Treasury Department outlined what it termed, the "Cuban Import Regulations," which prohibited the import of all Cuban goods into the United States, under the provisions of the Export Control Act of 1949. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 48) The justification for enacting the prohibition was the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA). The State Department initially objected to the measure because it feared that labeling Cuba an "enemy" was too severe, and that it would cause fissures in the support of the OAS, but the Treasury Department prevailed, and in February 1962, the measure was implemented.

In February 1962, President Kennedy decided to expand the embargo by banning all trade with Cuba, save for the non-subsidized sale of food and medicine, but it was not until the end of the month that he obtained international approval, and the embargo was formalized. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 47-48)

4. U.S. Covert Operations against Cuba

In addition to the economic embargo, the United States also resorted to covert operations in its attempt to remove Castro from Power. The CIA greatly expanded its Western Hemisphere Division. The White House formed an interagency committee called the Special Group Augmented (SGA). Headed by Edward Lansdale, the covert program was called Operation Mongoose. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 51) The purpose of the group was to conduct covert economic sabotage, with the objective of assisting the Cubans to overthrow the Castro regime.

Covert operations against Cuba eventually involved about four hundred U.S. nationals at CIA headquarters and at its Miami station, about two thousand Cuban exiles, a private navy of speedboats, and an annual budget of about \$50-100 million. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 51)

The covert operations also focused directly on efforts to assassinate Fidel Castro and other revolutionary leaders. In addition to the much publicized poisoned cigars, the CIA sent Mafia hit men, they attempted to make his beard fall out by dusting his shoes with a depilatory, explosives were placed inside sea shells where he regularly went skin-diving, lacing his diving suits with contaminants, poisoned pens and pills. (U.S. Congress, Senate, 1975, p. 86; Taylor, 2000, p. 1) Although the efforts of the CIA and their sponsored Cuban exiles failed to achieve any positive results, they continued in force until 1964. U.S. presidential advisor McGeorge Bundy questioned the feasibility of the covert program, because of the inconsistency of the various operations being conducted, and in 1965, assassination attempts against Fidel Castro ended. U.S. support to counter-revolutionary forces, however, continued through 1966. (U.S. Congress, Senate, 1975, pp. 174-180)

The covert operations, however, failed to achieve their intended results. Not only did they fail to eliminate Fidel Castro or any of his lieutenants, they also did little to enhance the effects of the sanctions themselves. Although they were unquestionably expensive and frustrating to the Cuban government, they ultimately served to galvanize the Cuban people against the United States. They also served to elevate Castro's status as someone who was deemed important enough to warrant so much attention and efforts on the part of the U.S. Government.

5. The Cuban Missile Crisis

In October 1962, U.S. U-2 reconnaissance flights confirmed the presence of Soviet nuclear Intermediate-range Ballistic Missiles (IRBM) at several locations in Cuba. In consultation with some of President Kennedy's closest advisors, known as the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, or ExComm, three possible courses of action for the United States were outlined: 1) to openly engage Castro and Khrushchev in an effort to resolve the crisis through diplomatic channels; 2) military action against Cuba, beginning by a series of air strikes aimed at the sites containing the

Soviet missiles; and 3) making public the presence of the missiles and implementing a quarantine of offensive weapons from entering Cuba. (Chang and Kornbluh, 1962. pp. 38-40) On 22 October 1962, President Kennedy announced that the United States was enforcing a naval quarantine to all offensive military equipment bound for Cuba. With the OAS and the United Nations (UN) firmly behind the United States, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev decided to turn the ships around. The final settlement, reached on 28 October 1962, called for the Soviets to withdraw all “offensive weapons” from Cuba, under UN supervision. In return, President Kennedy agreed not to invade Cuba in the future. Additionally, the U.S. agreed to withdraw its intermediate range nuclear missiles (already scheduled for removal) from bases in Turkey, within six months. (Chronology of Cuban Affairs, 1998, p. 1)

Although the settlement helped dissipate the tensions that had almost taken the U.S. and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war, the conflict was far from over. Castro refused to allow UN inspectors to enter Cuba (reminiscent of Saddam Hussein and UN weapons inspectors), and the U.S. and the Soviet Union disagreed over whether Soviet IL-28 bombers were “offensive” or not. The issue on the bombers was finally settled when the Soviets agreed to remove the bombers, but Castro remained adamant about refusing UN inspectors. That issue was resolved when the Soviets allowed U.S. ships and aircraft to photograph the cargoes of the Soviet ships leaving Cuba, much to Castro’s displeasure. “Interestingly, Kennedy never finalized his agreement not to invade Cuba,” and he was assassinated before the issue arose again. (Kaplowitz, 1998. pp. 61-62)

Two important precedents emerged from the experience of the Cuban Missile Crisis. First, it established the pattern of linkage, whereby future issues of dispute between the United States and Cuba would be linked to the state of relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Second, it established the U.S. policy of “no invasion” as a means to remove Castro from power. Although the U.S. was far from willing to accept the Castro government as legitimate, the thought of using a military invasion as the measure to remove him was never again given serious consideration. (Robbins, 1983, pp. 113-115)

Throughout this early period, the goals of the sanctions, as stated by the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations were twofold: first, to destabilize the Castro revolutionary regime, causing its overthrow; and, if that failed, to, "...make an example out of the Communist regime by inflicting as much damage on it as possible." When it became apparent that efforts to topple Castro's regime were failing, the U.S. objective shifted to a strategic policy of "containment." Then Undersecretary of State George C. Ball outlined the policy objectives in 1964 as follows:

1. To reduce the will and ability of the present Cuban regime to export revolution and violence to other American states;
2. To make plain to the people of Cuba and to the power elements of the regime that the current regime cannot serve their interests;
3. To demonstrate to the other American republics that there was no future for communism in the Western Hemisphere;
4. To increase the costs of maintaining a Communist satellite in the Western Hemisphere to the Soviet Union. (Layton-Brown, 1987, p. 88)

These objectives remained at the core of the U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba throughout the Cold War period.

D. THE COLD WAR THAWS

1. Nixon and Kissinger

When Richard Nixon was elected President in 1969, there was little reason to think that relations with Cuba would improve. In fact, the animosity between Nixon and Castro dated back to 1959. When Castro, as the new leader of Cuba, met with then Vice-President Nixon, he reportedly told *Bohemia* editor Miguel Quevedo following the meeting, "That son-of-a-bitch Nixon, he treated me badly, and he is going to pay for it." (Duncan, 1993, p. 220) Nixon, for his part, announced after his inauguration that, "There'll be no change toward that bastard [Castro] while I'm President." (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 85) Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger was not so closed-minded. Following administration visits to China and the Soviet Union, improved relations ensued, ushering in the era of détente. These improved relations had the effect of reducing anti-Communist attitudes within the United States. "In 1972, Henry

Kissinger reportedly said that if President Nixon was reelected in November, then normalization of relations with Cuba would be ‘on the agenda.’” (Kaplowitz, 1998. p. 85) When Nixon won reelection, efforts to begin a normalization of relations commenced.

By 1973, Republicans in Congress had issued a report to the President recommending full normalization of relations with Cuba. The State Department, however, maintained that Cuba still posed, “a threat to the peace and security of the hemisphere,” which is puzzling since Kissinger had been appointed as Secretary of State in 1973. In 1974, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had unanimously approved a non-binding resolution advocating the restoration of normalized relations with Cuba. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) had introduced legislation on the Senate floor calling for an end to the U.S. trade embargo, and terminating retaliatory measures against third-party countries that traded with Cuba. Congressman John Bingham (D-N.Y.) introduced a bill in the House that matched Senator Kennedy’s bill. Later that year, after traveling to Cuba, Senators Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) and Jacob Javis (R-N.Y.), introduced legislation in Congress calling on President Ford to advance bilateral relations with Castro. Moreover, in August, Williams Rogers was appointed as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Rogers was a strong advocate of normalizing relations with Cuba. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 85-107) It appeared that by the mid-1970’s, there was sufficient bi-partisan support to ease the sanctions.

2. Carter and Vance

During the 1970’s, Cuba had succeeded in expanding its trading partners beyond the Soviet bloc nations. In 1974, 45 percent of Cuban exports were sold to Western governments, and between 1974 and 1975, Cuba received a \$900 million trade credit from Spain, \$596 million from England, \$350 million from France, and \$155 million from Canada. OAS support for keeping Cuba isolated had eroded, and ten of the twenty-two Latin American nations had reestablished relations with Cuba. Cuba had also joined into a number of sub-regional economic trade organizations, such as the *Sistema Económico Latinoamericano* (SELA), the Organization of Sugar Export Countries, and the Caribbean Multinational Shipping Company. At the same time, Cuban exports to Japan and Western Europe increased fourfold from \$218 million in 1970 to \$860 million in 1974. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 87-88)

Following Nixon and Kissinger's lead earlier in the decade, President Ford assigned Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers to begin clandestine meetings with Cuban diplomats, in hopes of reaching terms for normalizing relations between Cuba and the U.S. President Jimmy Carter went farther than any other recent U.S. President in attempting to improve relations. Although his Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, advocated improving relations, Carter supported "ending the embargo on food and medicines...saying he would not oppose efforts in Congress to do so" (Smith, 1987, p. 108). At President Carter's urging, negotiations began in earnest in April 1977:

...to raise with the Cubans the possibility of opening interests sections in one another's capitals...because even though we had ruled out formal diplomatic relations until the fundamental problems between us had been resolved, we needed direct communications if those problems were to be worked out. (Smith, 1987, p. 108)

Cyrus Vance noted in his memoirs:

At the outset of the administration, we had sought to improve relations with Cuba. In my confirmation hearing, I signaled our willingness to open a dialogue with Havana. Although it was not our first objective, President Carter and I believed U.S. interests would be served by maintaining diplomatic relations with Cuba.... (Vance, 1983, p. 131)

On 1 September 1977, a U.S. Interests Section was opened in the Swiss embassy in Havana, while the Cubans opened an interests section in the Czechoslovakian embassy in Washington, D.C. Each was staffed by a handful of diplomats who, according to Wayne Smith, second head of the U.S. Interests Section in 1979, wrote:

Calling off the Cold War with Cuba was intended to signal a more flexible, pragmatic U.S. approach and to make it clear that we no longer intended to respond to all situations in the developing world as though each were a zero-sum game with the Soviets. (Smith, 1987, pp. 117-118)

From the start of the Carter Administration, however, Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was strongly opposed to normalizing relations with Cuba. "Brzezinski also argued that Cuba was simply a puppet of the Soviet Union, and that gestures toward Havana might be interpreted in Moscow as a sign of weakness." (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 96) Despite Brzezinski's hard-line position, the political bow-wave was definitely headed toward repealing the sanctions policy. Several senators and

representatives made visits to Cuba in 1977-1978. Upon returning, they were unanimous in their views, concluding that the sanctions policy had “outlived its usefulness as a weapon against the Cuban government,” and that “it serves no U.S. purpose.” (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 98) Senator George McGovern argued that “the embargo never did make any sense. It only made Cuba more dependent on the Soviet Union...” (Greider, 1977, p. A2) The two interests sections remain, but the attempts to open dialog with Cuba failed when U.S. intelligence reported Cuban advisors sent to Angola to support the leftist government. When Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s National Security Advisor and staunch supporter of the Cold War establishment, claimed that the advisors were troops and not civilians, the uproar raised in Congress was such that all negotiations with Cuba were cut. The situation was further exacerbated when Cuba deployed combat troops to support Ethiopia’s Marxist government. This action effectively destroyed any hopes of building a relationship between Cuban and the U.S. In 1978, Cuba sent some 20,000 troops to Ethiopia in support of its war against Somalia. By the end of the decade, Cuba had expanded its presence into the Middle East, providing support to Yemen. The United States was left with the assessment that Cuba’s foreign interventions were further proof of Soviet aggression aimed at spreading world communism. (Schwab, 1999, pp. 16-17)

The Carter Administration was successful in achieving minor policy goals while still maintaining the sanctions policy. By reducing the emphasis on Castro’s removal, and introducing the goal of improving human rights in Cuba, Carter hoped to improve relations between the two countries.

3. The Reagan Years

Unquestionably, Carter lost the Presidential election to Ronald Reagan over the U.S. hostages in Iran. During the campaign, however, Reagan did not hesitate to criticize Carter’s policy on Cuba, particularly in his dealings with nations that engaged in human rights abuses. In what was certainly unwelcome support for the Carter campaign, Fidel Castro announced that he would welcome President Carter’s reelection, “...as the only president in the last 20 years to have made some positive gestures toward us.” (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 106) President Carter was perceived as a weak president, carrying the heavy baggage of the Iranian hostage situation, and of the failed hostage rescue effort (Desert One). Receiving the support of Cuba’s Marxist dictator did not help Carter at the

polls. On 20 January 1981, Ronald W. Reagan was sworn in as the fortieth President of the United States with an overwhelming majority of the popular and electoral votes.

Eight years of Ronald Reagan, followed by four years of President George Bush, succeeded in dismantling the changes Carter had made to the sanctions policy. In April 1982, Reagan revoked the general travel authorization that had been issued under Carter. Later that same year, the 1977 fishing agreement was allowed to lapse. This had been an important symbolic accord, as it was the first agreement signed between Cuba and the U.S. after the Missile Crisis. In an effort to globalize the sanctions, the Reagan Administration began targeting individuals and firms that evaded the embargo by selling U.S. goods to Cuba by way of a third foreign country. Many of these firms were controlled by the Cuban government, but were located in other countries. In 1986, the embargo laws were changed to restrict the flow of money to Cuba from gifts and remittances from Cuban exiles in the United States. The law also made it more difficult for Cubans to enter the United States from third countries in an attempt to discourage what the State Department termed, “Cuban trade in human beings.” The Cuban government had begun charging Cuban émigrés as much as \$30,000 to depart the country. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 123-124)

The Reagan Administration also spent significant time and effort in attempting to isolate Cuba within the hemisphere. Early in the decade, Reagan was successful in discouraging the formation and development of bilateral relations between Cuba and other Latin American countries. U.S. pressure successfully kept Cuba out of the OAS and other regional political and trade organizations. However, as authoritarian regimes began to sprout, and as U.S. policies in the region began to be viewed as imperialistic, Cuba became less isolated. In 1989, Cuba succeeded in obtaining the Latin American seat in the United Nations Security Council. Cuba had been denied this position in 1980, in part due to its support of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but also because of U.S. lobbying efforts to prevent it from gaining the post. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 126-130)

The resurgence in U.S. nationalism that followed Ronald Reagan into the White House also spread to Congress. In 1981, the Senate voted 84-0 to stop all U.S. government funds to promote trade with Cuba. In 1983, Congress approved the creation

of *Radio Martí*, a Voice of America-style radio broadcast targeted expressly at Cuba. In October of that same year, President Reagan launched Operation Urgent Fury, where U.S. Forces were sent into Grenada to expel Cuban military forces and overthrow the Revolutionary Military Council, which had been installed following a leftist coup. (Chronology of Cuban Affairs..., 1998, p. 1) Not all Congressmen fell into lock step, however. Representatives Bill Alexander (D-AR) and Doug Bereuter (R-NE) introduced legislation calling for a ban on food sanctions.

Alexander told Congress that he proposed the measure because trade embargoes ‘cost my constituents money’ in lost exports: sanctions on trade with Cuba had resulted in a \$450 million loss to rice farmers in his districts. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 133)

Bereuter however, opposed the embargo on moral grounds. In the Senate, Max Baucus (D-MT) introduced a similar bill that would have allowed cash-only trade with Cuba on agricultural products. His bill was defeated by a vote of 71-25. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 133)

4. The Rise of the Cuba Lobby

Jorge Mas Canosa was born in Havana in 1939. He fled Cuba as a young man, arriving in Miami in July 1960. He quickly joined the exile groups being trained by the CIA for the Bay of Pigs invasion, but instead of going ashore during the landing, he was assigned to a ship that remained offshore, and was one of the few that returned safely to the United States. Finding himself back in Florida penniless, he went to work as a laborer. He was a determined businessman, and acquired the small construction company where he worked. He anglicized its name from “Iglesias y Torres” to “Church and Tower,” and was able to build it into an empire worth several hundred million dollars. The corporation is currently headed by his son, Jorge Mas Santos, and has been renamed MasTec. It is the largest Hispanic-owned company in the United States.

Disillusioned by the U.S. policy toward Cuba, and committed to Castro’s removal from power, Mas Canosa founded the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) in 1981. He modeled it after the extremely successful American-Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC). Mas Canosa developed a new approach for unseating Castro: de-emphasize the direct action tactics of CIA covert operations, and instead, secure support

for CANF's interests by making lucrative campaign contributions to influential Congressional leaders. Their first campaign became the creation of *Radio Martí*. Shortly after President Reagan visited Miami in 1983, and after meeting with Mas Canosa and other Cuban-American community leaders, the creation of *Radio Martí* was approved, and Mas Canosa was named chairman of its advisory board. (The Cuban Connection, 2002, pp. 2-3 and Roy, 2000, p. 204) Mas Canosa and CANF's power and influence would continue to grow in the next few years, making the CANF one of the major actors in U.S. policymaking vis-à-vis Cuba.

5. Changing Times

When George H. W. Bush succeeded Ronald Reagan as President, Cuba was entering its worst economic crisis since 1959. Wide, sweeping changes had begun to consume the Soviet Union, and, under the leadership of Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union embarked upon *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (political and economic restructuring). These developments were most troubling for Havana, whose economy was heavily dependant on trade with the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc countries. "The Soviets were permitting Cuba to resell – for hard currency – a certain portion of the oil it received." (Padula, 1993, p. 32) In very short order, a number of crises around the globe were threatening the very future of communism, which so many Cubans had assumed would last forever. In the spring of 1989, Hungary announced plans to hold free and open elections; in China, students were massacred for holding pro-democracy demonstrations at Tiananmen Square; and in east Berlin, a massive flood of refugees were escaping to the West. (Padula, 1993, pp. 32-33) Only a few months later, President Ronald Reagan's call to bring down the Berlin Wall, one of the most visible symbols of the Cold War, would be heeded.

Crisis hit Havana on 13 July 1989 when Division General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez, veteran of the Angolan and Nicaraguan campaigns and a recipient of the title "Hero of the Revolution," was arrested in Cuba. Along with him, thirteen other officers, including Colonel Antonio de la Guardia, Chief of the Ministry of the Interior's Intelligence Section and one of Cuba's top spies, were also arrested. (Oppenheimer, 1993, pp. 18-21) The official charges against the men were "corruption and drug trafficking." Acting swiftly, high-ranking military and party leaders dispensed the

sentences a few days later: General Ochoa, Colonel de la Guardia, and two other officers were shot. The others received lengthy prison sentences.

Few in Cuba believed that the executions were anything but a purge of political dissenters, despite Castro's contention that there were no political motivations behind the executions. In General Ochoa's case, it was rumored that his close association with Soviet military officers during his deployments to Angola had made him responsive to Gorbachev's new *perestroika*. (Oppenheimer, 1993, pp. 18-21)

Concomitantly, Mikhail Gorbachev was declaring that, "class warfare was no longer a useful approach to social transformation." (Padula, 1993, p. 32) He withdrew Soviet forces from Afghanistan and announced that the Soviet Union would no longer support Third World liberation movements. Gorbachev then began attacking the Communist party; the Soviet Union was in the process of imploding, and Fidel Castro was left without a superpower to support his nation. In December 1991, Castro was quoted in the *Granma Weekly Review* as saying that "what fascism couldn't achieve, what imperialism couldn't achieve, what neither invasions [n]or blockades could achieve, human errors have accomplished." (Padula, 1993, p. 32) In Cuba's back yard, the Sandinistas denounced the Cuban model, claiming that they sought social democracy, not socialism, and in El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) guerillas declared that they were democrats: the Central American revolution was dead.

Concurrent with Soviet political reforms, came a decrease in Soviet subsidies to Cuba. Trade with Soviet and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) countries, (a Soviet bloc common market) declined by two-thirds between 1989 and 1992. Further exacerbating the Cuban economic situation was the end of socialism in Eastern Europe and a new demand that all trade occur in hard currency. Soviet military aid to Cuba, estimated at \$1.2 billion annually, also ended. Soviet economic and military aid together accounted for 20 percent of Cuba's Gross National Product. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 146-147) Just as Cuba's economy was seriously declining, its principal military and economic partner was disengaging.

E. EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF THE SANCTIONS

1. Sanctions Successes

Reducing Cuba's "ability and will...to export revolution and violence" was the sanctions policy's first objective. In 1964, however, a cache of arms from Cuba was discovered in Venezuela. This discovery led the OAS to enjoin the United States in further isolating Cuba by breaking all diplomatic links and establishing an OAS trade embargo with Cuba. (Reyna, 2001, p. 1) In 1967, Castro's right-hand man during the Cuban revolution, Che Guevara, was captured and executed while trying to lead Socialist guerillas in a revolution in Bolivia. (Anderson, 1997, p. 736) Aside from these two incidents, and attempts to incite revolution in Guatemala, Castro and Che Guevara's dreams of a Simón Bolívar-type Latin American revolutionary movement never materialized.

Although the sanctions alone were not responsible for Castro's failure to successfully export revolution, they did exacerbate differences and create tension between the Soviet Union and Cuba. Castro had not only openly confronted the Soviets over their removal of the IRBM missiles from Cuba, but the missile crisis also led the Soviets to reassess their goals for Latin America. They eventually conceded United States dominance in the hemisphere. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp.73-73) In 1967, Cuba hosted the Latin American Solidarity Organization (LASO) conference, which included leaders of Latin American revolutionary movements. By 1968, however, fissures began to develop between Cuba and the Soviet Union as Castro was increasingly and openly criticizing Soviet policy in the region. Whereas the Soviet Union preferred state-to-state relations, Castro preferred to encourage and support revolutionary movements. The rift reached a climax in 1968 when the Soviet Union, tired of Castro's continued attacks on Soviet policies, threatened to cut-off economic aid. They backed this threat by slowing oil deliveries and suspending shipments of critical industrial supplies until Castro acquiesced. By the summer of 1968, Castro had changed his tune and was openly supporting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 74-75) Therefore, without the U.S. sanctions, Soviet threats to reduce oil and industrial shipments to discourage Castro's support of revolutionary movements would not have carried much weight in Cuba.

Another objective that the sanctions successfully accomplished was to “increase the costs of maintaining a Communist satellite in the Western Hemisphere to the Soviet Union.” With a U.S. embargo, and later an OAS embargo in effect against Cuba, the island became completely dependent on the Soviet Union for its very survival. The Soviet Union understood the importance of Cuba as a staging area for expanded Soviet presence in the region. Consequently, the Soviet Union recognized the need to buttress Cuba’s economy to keep it aligned with a Soviet-Marxist ideology, and beholden to Soviet demands. Soviet support came at a great price. Although the amount of economic support Cuba received by way of Soviet subsidies has been a subject of debate. It was reported to be \$3 billion dollars by Cuban economist Carlos Tablada Pérez in 1991. The Soviet Academy of Sciences, however, concluded that if commercial loans, military, and economic assistance was also included, as of November 1989, Cuba’s debt to the Soviet Union came to some \$27.4 billion dollars. (Padula, 1993, p. 33) Whichever amount is more accurate is not as important as the fact that this was economic assistance that the Soviet Union had to expend solely for the purpose of keeping Cuba’s failing economy from collapsing (by 1991, Cuba was receiving \$6 billion dollars in annual subsidies from the Soviet Union). (Mitchell, 2000, p. 1) Had U.S. sanctions not been in place, the cost of maintaining a Communist satellite state would have been substantially less.

2. Sanctions Failures

Although the sanctions policy met with some successes during the Cold War period, it clearly failed in one of its core objectives: the removal of Fidel Castro from power. The sanctions have not succeeded in creating a popular uprising calling for Castro’s removal. In fact, many argue that the sanctions policy has helped Castro by providing a ready excuse for Cuba’s economic failures, rather than hurt him. Conditions for removing the sanctions, as set by the United States, also failed to alter Castro’s domestic policies or political ideology.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the nature of international relations would change dramatically. How the U.S. policy with regard to Cuba was affected is the subject of the next chapter.

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III. THE SANCTIONS IN A MULTI-POLAR WORLD

A. INTRODUCTION

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, a new international system emerged - the post-Cold War era. Marking the end of Soviet subsidies, estimated at \$4-6 billion annually, many assumed that the Castro regime would be unable to survive. The U.S. government adopted policies designed to accelerate this outcome. Both would be proven wrong.

The end of Soviet subsidies plunged Cuba's already struggling economy into a steep decline. Hoping to capitalize on the Castro government's difficulties, and to modify the U.S. sanctions policy with Cuba, legislators developed and passed two new laws that were designed to "tighten the noose" around the Cuban economy, forcing Castro out of power once and for all. The first piece of legislation was the Cuban Democracy Act. Signed into law in 1992 by President George Bush, it sought to refocus U.S. policy from containment of Communism and revolutionary movements to the promotion of democratic reforms and recognition of human rights. Although initially opposed by the Bush White House, it was signed into law in the midst of a Presidential campaign election as both candidates were attempting to win over Florida voters.

In 1996, the Cuban Democracy and Solidarity (*Libertad*) Act, better known as the Helms-Burton Act, was signed into law by a reluctant President Clinton. The bill responded to the backlash of anti-Castro sentiment throughout the country following the February 1996 shoot-down of two civilian aircraft flown by Cuban-American exiles. The Act codified the sanctions policy into U.S. law, taking away the President's power to modify or suspend the sanctions without Congressional approval. Public outrage over the incident made opposition to the Act political suicide. President Clinton did, however, exercise a provision within the Act that allowed him to suspend Title III (the section allowing exiled Cubans to sue foreign corporations in U.S. courts), the most contentious part of the Act, for fear of backlash from the international community. In the post-Cold War period, the international level of policy making became less important; the rise of

strong, domestic political action groups placed the focus of U.S. foreign policy making toward Cuba at the domestic level.

This chapter will examine the actors that changed the U.S. policy on Cuba, and the domestic and international forces that influenced the new policy's implementation. It will conclude with an assessment of the new laws' successes and failures. It argues that during the post-Cold War period, the U.S. revised the sanctions policy and targeted them against Cuba's struggling economy, but that its efforts were undermined by Western countries seeking to capitalize on the new Cuban markets created after the Soviet collapse.

B. AN ECONOMY IN CRISIS

1. The Soviet Union Collapses

By the end of the 1980's, the Soviet economy was suffering greatly, and Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev was leading the way for political and economic reforms. In August 1991, the last bastions of hard-line Communists attempted to mount a coup against Gorbachev. When it failed, it marked the end of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev declared that "class warfare [is] no longer a useful approach to social transformation," and he began withdrawing Soviet forces from Afghanistan and announced that the Soviet Union would no longer support Third World liberation movements. (Padula, 1993, p. 32) In December 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved, and in its place, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States emerged. Fidel Castro was now left without a superpower to support him. When asked about the Soviet collapse, Castro was quoted in *Granma Weekly Review* saying that, "what fascism couldn't achieve, what imperialism couldn't achieve, what neither invasions [n]or blockades could achieve, human errors have accomplished." (Padula, 1993, p. 32) He did, and continues to, blame the collapse on the Soviet leadership's failure to remain committed to Marxist-Leninist ideology. In Cuba's own back yard, the Nicaraguan *Sandinistas* denounced the Cuban model, claiming that they sought social democracy, not socialism; and in El Salvador, the *Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) guerillas declared that they too were democrats. In Central America, as in Eastern Europe, Communism was dead.

2. A “Special Period” for Cuba

Due to the Soviet collapse, Cuba’s world was now also in jeopardy. The amount of economic support that Cuba received by way of Soviet subsidies had for years, been a subject of debate. One Cuban estimate placed it at \$3 billion; a Soviet estimate placed it at \$27 billion. (See discussion in Chapter II). Moreover, to add further insult to injury, the Soviets warned Cuba that future economic relations between the two nations would be conducted based on world trade prices. Castro attempted to distance himself from the crisis by claiming that Cuba’s problems came because of the uncertain and difficult times that were facing the entire world. Confronted with the worst economic crisis since the 1969 sugarcane harvest failure, Castro responded by announcing “the special period in time of peace.” He introduced it as:

...a battle against injustice, exploitation, a struggle between evil and good, the immoral and the moral. [Castro said] that the most important thing Cubans can do is to proceed along the Communist line to preserve socialism and to save the Cuban Revolution. (*Castro’s “Special Period...,”* 1990, p. 8)

On 29 August 1990, the Cuban government announced a series of oil and electricity rationing measures. A 50 percent reduction in the supply of diesel fuel for state vehicles and a 30 percent reduction in the gasoline supply for private cars were enacted. Cuban families had to reduce their electricity consumption by 10 percent or face having their electricity cut off for an entire month. (*Castro’s “Special Period...,”* 1990, p. 9) The Cuban government also began introducing draft animals to replace tractors and trucks in the fields. Bicycles and horse-drawn carriages appeared in increasing numbers on Cuba’s streets. “Two key triumphs of the revolution, electrification and mechanization, were being reversed.” (Padula, 1993, p. 34) Rationing soon spread to almost all consumer goods, and the Saturday workday was abolished in cases where “production and services are not affected”. (*Castro’s “Special Period...,”* 1990, p. 10) The “special period” would put to the test the Cuban people’s tolerance in dealing with hardship.

The inauguration of the “special period” also introduced the first reorganization of the Communist Party Central Committee since 1965. In an effort to reduce the bureaucratic inefficiency, the staff was reduced by 50 percent, and the previous nineteen

departments were consolidated into nine. (*Castro's "Special Period..."*, 1990, pp. 10-11) Bureaucratic inefficiency had become so pervasive that Castro was once noted as calling it "one of the greatest enemies of the Revolution – worse than the CIA". (Padula, 1993, p. 26) The military's role was also expanded as soldiers were sent to work in the fields and to manage special projects in an effort to improve economic sector performance. However, these actions were not be sufficient to prevent the Cuban public from organizing against the Castro regime, so tighter political control measures were also instituted. Committees for Defense of the Revolution were mobilized and instructed to work more vigorously in order to keep any unrest in check. (*Castro's "Special Period..."*, 1990, pp. 10-11)

Also adopted during this period was the introduction of private foreign investment, particularly in the tourist sector, but also in agriculture, manufacturing, and the petroleum industries. Castro also liberalized the many regulations against privatization. Some state enterprises were allowed to operate as private firms, with the state acting as the sole shareholder.

This [liberalization] move cleverly anticipates the do-it-yourself privatization underway in the former Soviet Union or the last-minute reward to the faithful undertaken by *Sandinistas* in Nicaragua in 1990. (Dominguez, 1993, p. 102)

The rise of the black market during this period is also significant. Its scope is difficult to gauge. In the agricultural sector, however, it has served to connect rural growers to urban consumers. Previously, under the government's inefficient distribution system, crops would frequently rot in the fields, unharvested. Instead, these illegal markets have become the agent of adjustment, helping to bring supply and demand into balance. More and more Cuban families, and families of government officials, have become dependent on these illegal markets to supply goods that are otherwise unobtainable. Even with government ration cards, the net result is that their existence has decreased the likelihood of food riots. Although the official government position is to denounce them, the government has come to rely on their existence for its continued survival and, as such, the black markets are unofficially tolerated.

C. DOMESTIC POLITICS

1. Capitalizing on Cuba's Troubles – The Cuban Democracy Act

After Soviet subsidies ended, the Cuban economy was faced with a loss of foreign income with which to finance its already strained economy. Viewing Cuba's domestic situation as an opportunity to capitalize on Castro's troubles, the Cuban American National Foundation embarked upon a campaign to tighten the sanctions during this strained period.

In 1989, Senator Connie Mack (R-FL) introduced legislation, known as the "Mack Amendment," that would have stopped all trade between U.S. subsidiaries and Cuba. The measure was strongly opposed by U.S. corporations, the U.S. State Department, and foreign governments. The Bush Administration went on record opposing the amendment, stating that the United States allowed subsidiary trade "because we recognize that attempting to apply our embargo to third countries will lead to unproductive and bitter trade disputes with our allies" (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 151). When Congress passed the Mack Amendment in 1991 as part of the trade bill, President Bush vetoed it.

In March 1990, Assistant Secretary of State Aronson enunciated new conditions for a change in U.S. policy toward the island:

If Cuba holds free and fair elections under international supervision, respects human rights, and stops subverting its neighbors, we can expect relations between our two countries to improve significantly. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 147-148)

This was the new justification for maintaining the sanctions policy: no longer was containment of Communism a valid rationale, instead, promoting democracy, human rights, and ending subversion justified the policy; and removal of Fidel Castro remained a chief goal of this policy.

As a presidential election year, 1992 introduced a new set of variables. Congressman Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.) proposed the Cuban Democracy Act ostensibly to accelerate the demise of Fidel Castro's authoritarian regime by tightening the sanctions and bringing the economy to its knees. It was introduced as:

...a bill to promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba through the application of appropriate pressures on the Cuban Government and support for the Cuban people.” (The Cuban Connection, 2000, p. 1)

Specifically, Section 1703 of the Act articulated ten points that outlined the new U.S. policy:

1. To seek a peaceful transition to democracy and a resumption of economic growth in Cuba through the careful application of sanctions directed at the Castro government and support for the Cuban people;
2. To seek the cooperation of other democratic countries in this policy;
3. To 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;
4. To seek the speedy termination of any remaining military or technical assistance, subsidies, or other forms of assistance to the Government of Cuba from any of the independent states of the former Soviet Union;
5. To continue vigorously to oppose the human rights violations of the Castro regime;
6. To maintain sanctions on the Castro regime so long as it continues to refuse to move toward democratization and greater respect for human rights;
7. To be prepared to reduce the sanctions in carefully calibrated ways in response to positive developments in Cuba;
8. To encourage free and fair elections to determine Cuba's political future;
9. To request the speedy termination of any military or technical assistance, subsidies, or other forms of assistance to the Government of Cuba from the government of any other country; and;
10. To initiate immediately the development of a comprehensive United States policy toward Cuba in a post-Castro era. (Cuban Democracy Act, 1992, Sect. 1703)

It represented the first major change to the U.S. policy on Cuba since President Kennedy's adjustments made in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion failure. Senator Bob Graham (D-FL) sponsored the bill in the Senate. At first, the Bush White House opposed the bill for the same reasons that it had opposed the Mack Amendment. However, when presidential candidate Bill Clinton told an audience at a campaign fundraiser in Miami's "Little Havana" district that he supported the bill, President Bush began to fear losing the conservative Cuban-American vote in southern Florida. In a highly politicized and publicized move to win back Hispanic votes, President Bush signed the Cuban Democracy Act into law during a campaign stop in Miami.

In response to questions concerning the harm that the Cuban Democracy Act's strict measures would inflict on the Cuban people, Torricelli responded:

I would suggest that having the Cuban people *not* suffer is not an option. They are suffering, and they're suffering terribly. And indeed, an entire generation has been lost. The only question is whether the international community, those people who believe in human rights and the concepts of democracy, are at this late date going to develop a strategy to lessen the degree of pain, and shorten the life of the Castro government, so that finally this nightmare can end. That is the founding principle of this legislation. (Torricelli, 1992, p. 1)

Although Representative Torricelli's rationale behind the Act was to expedite the end of Castro's reign, the true reason for his sponsorship was somewhat more dubious. Representative Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) claimed that:

...the [Torricelli] bill is not just a legislative initiative, but it is more a political statement...not being concerned so much about the future of the people living in Cuba as it is an appeal to the Cuban-Americans in Dade County [Florida]." (Roy, 2000, p. 25)

It is true that New Jersey does have a large Cuban-American constituency, which Representative Torricelli had an obligation to represent. However, the Cuban American National Foundation, through its Free Cuba Political Action Committee (PAC) had been a significant contributor to Representative Torricelli and more than half of the bill's original twenty-two House sponsors. Of the house members who received contributions, votes were 5:1 in favor of the bill. Of those who did not receive contributions, the vote in favor of the bill was 3:1 (see Figure 1).

Contribution Breakdown of House Members- Cuban Democracy Act

(From: The Cuban Connection, 2000, p. 1)

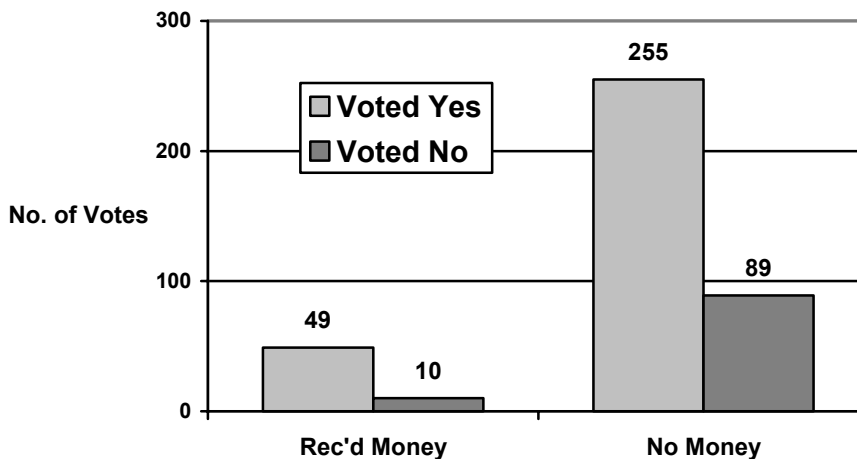


Figure 1. Breakdown of House Member Votes – Cuban Democracy Act

Although President Bush signed the Cuban Democracy act into law, it was the newly elected Clinton Administration that was left to oversee its implementation. Richard Nuccio, a former aide to Representative Torricelli, became President Clinton's Special Advisor the President and Secretary of State for Cuba. One of his first actions was to develop what became known as "Track II" of the Cuban Democracy Act. Track II capitalized on two provisions of the Act that allowed for increased communications and humanitarian aid to Cuba. Mr. Nuccio recommended the liberalization of direct telecommunications between the U.S. and Cuba, and encouraged human rights organizations to establish operations in Cuba. In July 1993, the U.S. State Department issued new guidelines for establishing more efficient direct telephone service between the U.S. and Cuba. By October 1994, five U.S. telecommunications companies had received Federal Communications Commission approval to establish services with Cuba. It was the first upgrade of services since the embargo was first established in 1962. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 177-178)

Freedom House, a New York-based human rights group, also received government approval and federal funding to undertake a project to provide assistance to political prisoners and their families, provide equipment and supplies to dissident groups

inside Cuba, and disseminate information throughout the island. Frank Calzon, a Cuban-American, was chosen to manage the \$500,000 grant. The project, however, did not meet with success. Fidel Castro's brother Raúl responded to Track II saying that "this is the 'other war'...with the objective of undermining us ideologically from within." (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 178) The Castro government then proceeded to initiate a crackdown on dissidents, hard-line party members replaced former loyal Cuban party members who had supported political and economic reforms, and new restrictions were placed on all contacts with Americans. The Cubans most affected by the implementation of Track II were the very Cubans that it was supposed to aide: the advocates of economic and democratic reforms. In August 1996, Stuart Eizenstat of the Commerce Department replaced Robert Nuccio, and immediately withdrew from any further support for Track II. (Kaplowitz, 1998, pp. 177-178)

After implementation of the Cuban Democracy Act, Cuba's economy suffered a dramatic decline. Together with the loss of Soviet subsidies, the Cuban Democracy Act contributed to causing Cuba's GDP to decline 35 percent by 1993 from its 1989 level. (The World Factbook, 2002, p. 1) It seemed as though Castro's days were finally numbered. Unintended effects of the Cuban Democracy Act, however, were its adverse consequences on the health and welfare of large numbers of the Cuban population. One was the ban on subsidy trade, which constrained Cuba's ability to import medicines and medical supplies from third countries. Another was the licensing of trade for medicines and medical supplies. Although the Treasury and Commerce Departments were allowed to license individual sales of medicine in order to mitigate the effects of the tightened embargo, in reality, the number of licenses applied for and granted since 1992 have been inconsequential. Many of the applications were denied on grounds of being "detrimental to the U.S. foreign policy interests." Licensing to non-governmental organizations was also cut, further exacerbating the situation. Last was the actual delivery of medicine and medical supplies to Cuba. Since the embargo prohibited ships from loading or unloading cargo in U.S. ports for 180 days after delivering cargo to Cuba, shippers were discouraged from making deliveries to Cuba.

2. Tightening the Noose – The Helms-Burton Act

Although the Cuban Democracy Act had contributed in causing the Cuban economy suffer its greatest decline, it had failed to bring about Castro's demise. In fact, Castro had responded by seeking out new trade markets to replace the void created by the collapse of the Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc partners. In 1994, Jorge Mas Canosa, President of the Cuban American National Foundation, sent letters to the embassies of countries with business interests in Cuba. In the letter, Mas Canosa warned the countries that the companies engaged in trade with Cuba were undertaking a "serious risk" and that "any investment made during the present [Castro] regime would be subject to a post-Castro government." (Roy, 2000, p. 29) It should be noted that Mas Canosa was considered a potential presidential candidate in a post-Castro Cuba. Also in 1994, the face of Congress changed as the Democrats lost their majority, and Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) became the new Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In February 1995, Senator Helms announced that "the spirit of the Torricelli Law" would soon be strengthened by the passage of the new "Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act". (Roy, 2000, p. 29)

The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (*Libertad*) Act, also known as the Helms-Burton Act, originated, in part, in Miami. In 1993, members of the Cuban American Bar Association expressed dissatisfaction with the limited effects of the Cuban Democracy Act. During the meeting, a member suggested adapting a newly introduced Florida statute to add teeth to the U.S. policy. The Florida law granted the victims of theft the right to sue in civil courts persons who bought stolen property for damages and restitution. The Cuban-American lawyers suggested that a similar procedure could be applied to foreign businesses that were profiting from property expropriated by the Castro government in 1959. The proposal was presented to CANF chairman Jorge Mas Canosa who immediately adopted the idea as one of the foundation's top priorities. (Roy, 2000, pp. 53-54) The idea was also shown to U.S. Congressmen, including Senator Jesse Helms, who readily embraced it.

The Helms-Burton Act consists of four titles, initially introduced in February 1995, to realize democratic reforms in Cuba. Title I imposes additional sanctions intended to deepen Cuba's economic isolation. Prior to Helms-Burton, the Cuban

sanctions were driven by executive orders issued by the President. The President had the authority to modify or even eliminate the sanctions with Congressional approval. Title I restricts the President from taking any actions, particularly toward normalizing relations, without the approval of Congress. Title II directs the President to develop an assistance plan for a post-Castro transition government. It lists requirements for determining that a transition government is, in fact, underway, with indicators such as free and open elections, and representative political activity. The Act is also specific in that the transitional government cannot include Fidel Castro, or his brother Raúl. Title III is the most contested section of the Act. It calls for the return of all property expropriated by the Castro regime. Moreover, it allows U.S. citizens, and former Cubans who have since become American citizens, to sue companies that currently invest in these properties. This provision has drawn the most international criticism from some of the United States' closest allies and trade partners because of its extraterritorial nature. Title IV directs the State Department to deny U.S. visas to the executives of foreign companies that profit from the use of property confiscated by the Castro government. (Sullivan, 1996, p. 1)

The Helms-Burton Act did not fare well in 1995. The Clinton Administration opposed the Helms-Burton Act on the same grounds that the Bush Administration had initially opposed the Cuban Democracy Act: that its extraterritorial nature would provoke a strong, negative response from U.S. allies and trading partners. A companion bill was introduced in the House by Representative Dan Burton (R-IN), and referred to House committees and subcommittees for review. It was approved in the House on 21 September 1995, by a vote of 294 to 130. In the Senate, however, the approval process did not progress as smoothly. Fears of a Democratic filibuster reduced the Senate version of the bill to Titles I and II only, and it was approved by the Senate on 19 October by a vote of 74 to 24. A House-Senate Conference Committee was formed to resolve differences between the two bills, but the Committee did not convene until 28 February 1996.

On 24 February 1996, MiG-29's from the Cuban Air Force shot down two civilian airplanes belonging to the Miami-based Cuban exile group, "Brothers to the Rescue." Although the aircraft were in international territory at the time, previous flights had flown over Cuban territory dropping anti-Castro leaflets. The incident resulted in the

death of three Americans citizens and one legal resident of the United States. Secretary of State Warren Christopher called the incident “a blatant violation of international law” and the U.S. called upon the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions against Cuba. (“Chronology of Cuban Affairs...,” 1998, p. 1) Cuban spokesmen claimed that the two Cessna 337s had violated Cuban airspace when they were shot down. U.S. radar surveillance tapes, however, as well as an investigation conducted by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), provided unimpeachable evidence that the aircraft were over the Florida Straights, or international airspace, at the time they were shot down. (“Chronology of Cuban Affairs...,” 1998, p. 1) Faced with the public outcry, not only in the Cuban-American community, but also across the nation, President Clinton and Congressional Democrats could no longer afford to oppose the bill. The House-Senate Conference presented its report on 1 March, and on 5 March, the Senate passed the bill 74-22. In the House, the vote was 336 to 86. On 11 March, 1996, the bill was sent to President Clinton for signature.

Robert Nuccio wrote that when the bill was briefed to President Clinton for signature, it was during a Cabinet-level meeting attended by Attorney General Janet Reno, Secretary of Defense William Perry, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shalikashvili.

[They were] shocked to learn that Helms-Burton codified the U.S. economic embargo. The Attorney General’s first reaction was to suggest a review of the bill’s constitutionality. However, all objections to signing the bill were overruled first by George Stephanopoulos and Leon Panetta, then by National Security Advisor Tony Lake. At the time that Helms-Burton was signed there was some debate within the Administration about how restrictive the legislation was. Some held that the executive branch retained its ability to promulgate regulations and, hence, change Cuba policy without prior approval, others that Helms-Burton was an intolerable, even unconstitutional, intrusion on the President’s ability to conduct foreign policy. (Roy, 2000, p. 34)

President Clinton signed the bill into law on 12 March 1996, and it was entered as Public Law 104-114.

3. Analyzing U.S. Politics and Policy on Cuba

The Cuban-American community is primarily concentrated in Florida and New York, two states of significant political importance. Together, they account for 40 Presidential electoral votes, and together they provide 36 out of the 435 Representatives in the House. These numbers remain relatively small, however. In 1996, Cuban-American voters comprised 7 percent, or 371,000, of the 5.3 million Floridians who actually voted. (Rothkopf, 2000, p. 118)

In terms of party affiliation, from the 1960's through to the 1990's, Cuban-Americans voted overwhelmingly for Republicans. This historical party loyalty would suggest that Democrats seeking to win over Cuban-American voters would be wasting their effort. Within the last decade, however, a shift toward Democratic Party support by Cuban-American voters has taken place. In 1988, Michael Dukakis won only 15 percent of Florida's Cuban-American vote. In 1992, Bill Clinton won 22 percent, and in 1996, following his signing the Helms-Burton Act, he won 34 percent. This trend of increased Cuban-American support for democratic candidates is also apparent in the patterns of political action committee contributions (see Figure 2). Overall, the recent evidence runs counter to the stereotype that Cuba-Americans historically vote exclusively for Republicans.

Free Cuba PAC Contributions

(From: The Cuban Connection, 2000, pg. 1)

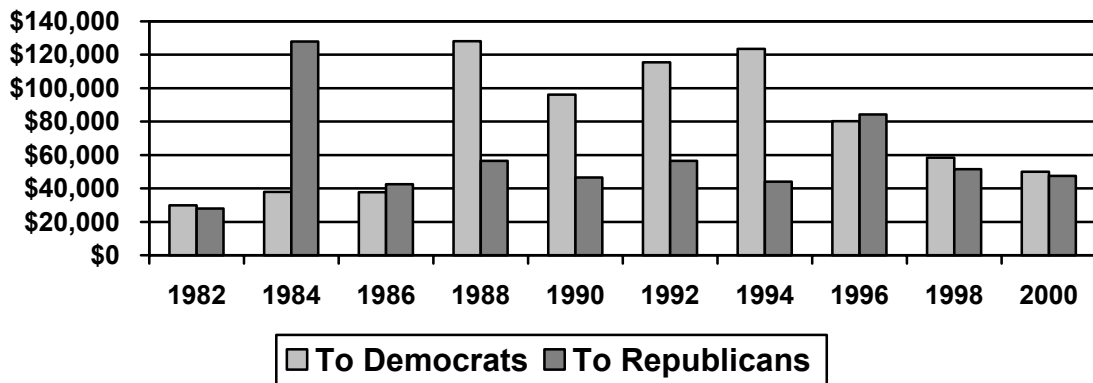


Figure 2. Free Cuba PAC Contributions by Election Cycle

The primary actor in voicing opposition to a relaxation of the U.S. sanctions policy continues to be the Cuban American National Foundation. No countervailing group, either within the Cuban-American community, or beyond it, can begin to match CANF's influence on U.S.-Cuban policy.

D. INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO U.S. LAWS

1. Our Closest Allies

Passage of the Cuban Democracy Act immediately upset some of the United States' closest allies and trading partners. Canada and Great Britain issued blocking orders against the Act on the grounds of its extraterritorial nature. British Trade Secretary Peter Lilly objected to the Act, stating that:

It is for the British government, not the U.S. Congress, to determine the UK's policy on trade with Cuba. We will not accept any attempt to superimpose U.S. law on UK companies. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 153)

Canada's Foreign Minister claimed that the Act intruded on Canadian sovereignty. In 1991, trade between Canada and Cuba had reached \$280.7 million dollars.

In the European Community, the Cuban Democracy Act was denounced because it had the potential to lose \$500-600 million in trade with Cuba. In other countries, such as Mexico and Japan, the Act's perceived intrusion on other nations' sovereignty was again cited as cause for condemnation. The move was particularly risky in Mexican President Carlos Salinas' case, since Mexico was in the process of trying to get U.S. Congressional support for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The Cuban American National Foundation had made its support for NAFTA conditional upon eradication of Mexican-Cuban trade, which had quadrupled from \$5.3 million in 1991 to \$21.9 million in 1992. (Kaplowitz, 1998. p. 167)

The irony of the Cuban Democracy Act causing negative effects on the very people it was intended to support did not go unnoticed by the United Nations. On 24 November 1992, one month after the Cuban Democracy Act was signed into law, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution introduced by Cuba entitled "The Need to Terminate the U.S. Embargo of Cuba." Only three countries voted against the resolution:

the United States, Israel, and Romania. When Cuba had proposed a similar resolution the year before, it had failed to receive the necessary votes. Now, with the Cuban Democracy Act directly affecting their trade practices, Castro found sympathetic ears for his anti-embargo stance. (Krinsky and Golove, 1993, pp. 13-84) The number of nations voting against the U.S. sanctions on Cuba has continued to increase each year, as the U.S. has become increasingly isolated in defending this policy (see Figure 3).

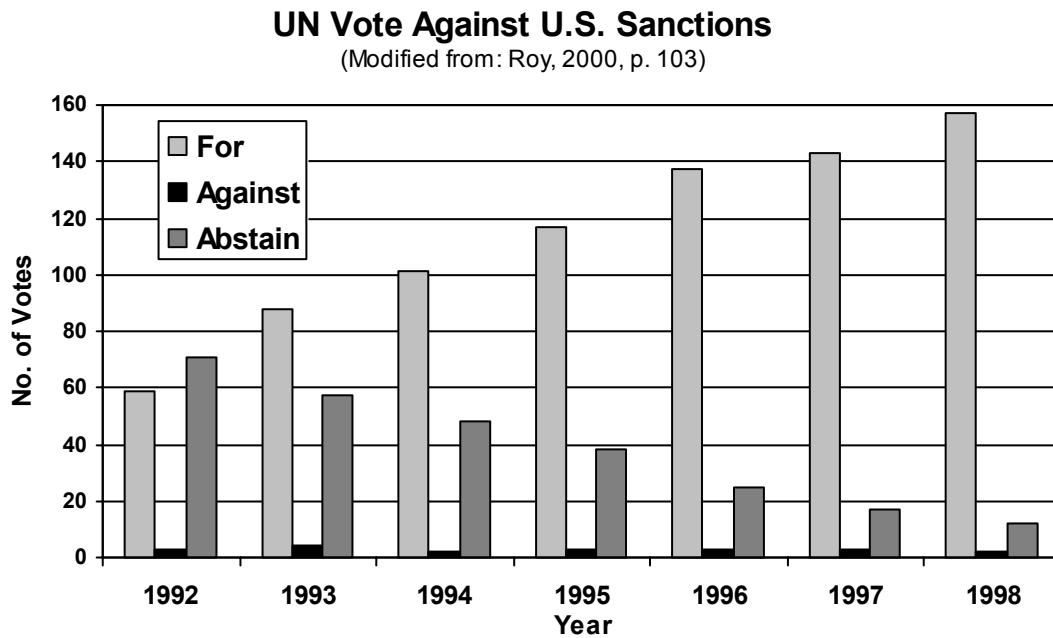


Figure 3. UN Vote Against the U.S. Sanctions Policy

2. Tensions Escalate

Initial reactions to the passage of the Helms-Burton Act were even more vocal than for the Cuban Democracy Act. Just before the bill was signed into law, Canadian and Caribbean leaders at a Caribbean Community Common Market (CARICOM) meeting in Granada issued a statement claiming that Helms-Burton was a violation of international law and an obstacle to trade liberalization. After the bill was signed, Canada called for a formal review under the rules of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and in April, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and the European Union condemned the Act at the World Trade Organization. European Union trade with Cuba has remained high, growing from only 6 percent of Cuba's total trade in 1989, to 38 percent of Cuba's imports and 29 percent of its exports in 1994 (see Figure 4).

EU-Cuban Trade 1985-1996

(From: Roy, 2000, p. 108)

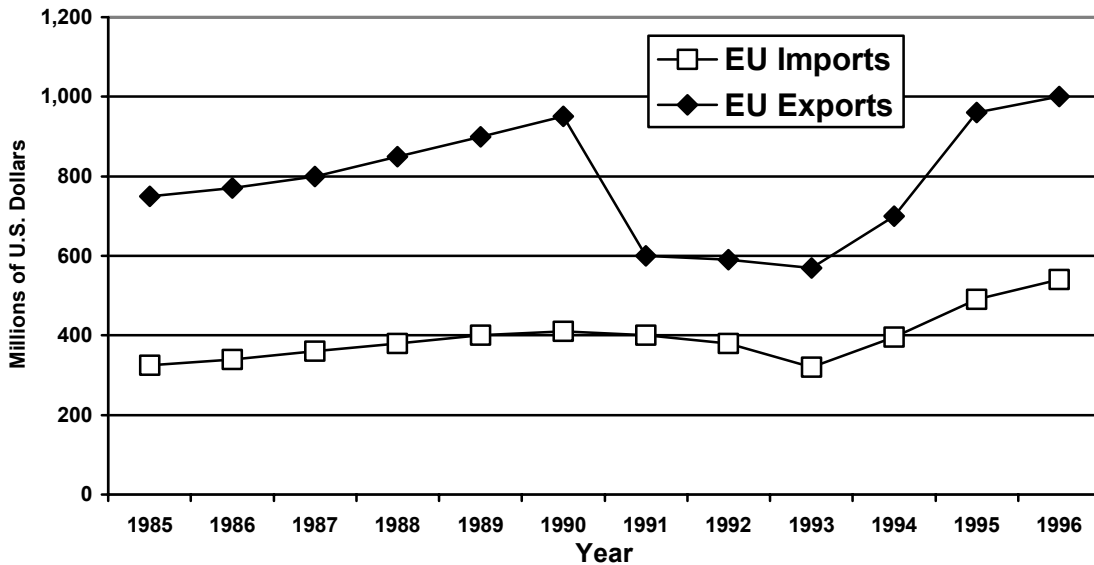


Figure 4. EU-Cuban Trade 1985-1996

Canada became the first, and most vocal, opponent of the Helms-Burton Act. Despite the long-standing discord between the U.S. and Cuba, Canada has been one of Cuba's most active trading partners. By 2000, Canada was Cuba's largest investment partner; only Italy's investments in Cuba exceeded Canada's, and then only in the field of tourism (see Figure 5).

Canadian-Cuban Trade 1985-1997

(From: Roy, 2000, p. 86)

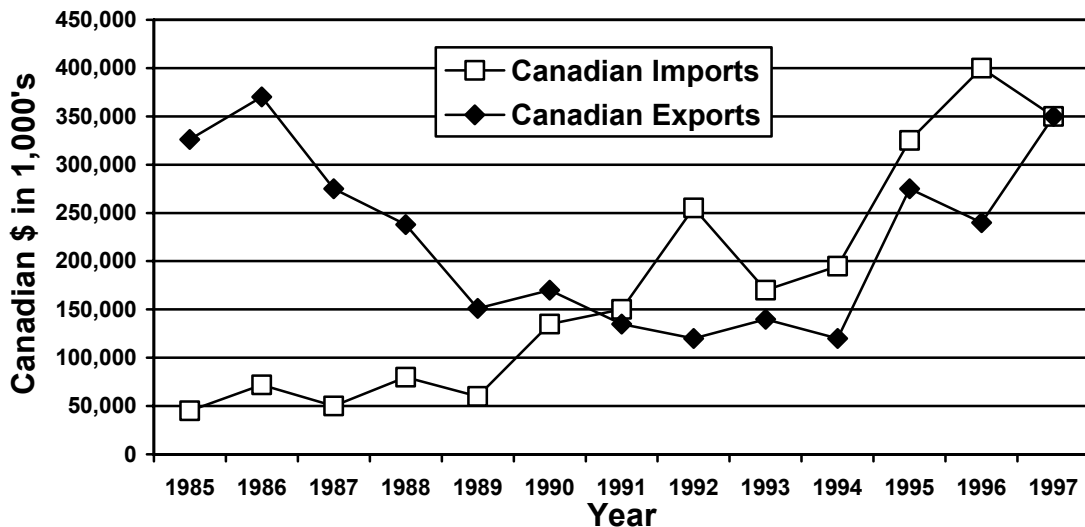


Figure 5. Canadian-Cuban Trade 1985-1997

The Canadians, fearing that Helms-Burton would adversely affect the lucrative Canadian-Cuban trade, threatened the U.S. with the Godfrey-Milliken Law, which counters Helms-Burton by allowing the descendants of the United Empire Loyalists who fled the United States in 1776 following the Revolution, to reclaim land “unjustly and illegally confiscated by the U.S. Government and its citizens”. (Mitchell, 2000, p. 9) Canadians with proven lines of descent would be entitled to full restitution, compensation, and interest. The Canadians were even planning to call the bill the American Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Loyalty) Act, and claimed that it would have been consistent with the Helms-Burton provisions. The United Kingdom and Mexico also threatened similar legislation at the time. (Mitchell, 2000, p. 9) Furthermore, Canada argued that U.S. policy toward Cuba, through its implementation of the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act, was impractical and had failed to achieve any results. Canada argued that the best way to influence democratic reforms in Cuba was through a policy of constructive engagement. Mexico and the European Union also shared this view.

In an effort to reduce some of the allies’ animosity, President Clinton employed Title III waiver provision (Title III allows U.S. citizens to sue foreign investors in U.S.

property expropriated after the 1959 Cuban Revolution, and is the most contentious section of the Act). The provision allows the President to waive implementation of the Title III, for a period not to exceed six months, if he:

...determines and reports in writing to the appropriate Congressional Committees at least 15 days before such effective date that the suspension is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.” (Roy, 2000, p. 57)

This practice of the President suspending implementation of Title III was exercised by President Clinton every six months from the time he signed the Helms-Burton Act into law, and President Bush has exercised this option twice since assuming office.

3. The Cuban Reaction

Following the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act, the Castro government embarked upon an aggressive campaign to have the sanctions lifted. The Cuban reaction suggests that initially, at least, the Torricelli bill was exacerbating Cuba’s already failing economy. Between 1989 and 1993, the Cuban government announced that its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) levels had fallen 35 percent. (The World Factbook, 2002, p. 1)

In an effort to offset the economic damage that the Cuban Democracy Act was causing, the Cuban government implemented limited reforms to try and encourage foreign investment in Cuba’s mining, telecommunications, and tourism industries. Since there has been no U.S. competition on the island since 1959, many western companies began investing in Cuban businesses. In 1994, the Cuban government allowed for liberalized farmers’ markets, which were permitted to sell above-quota agricultural products at market prices. In 1994, Cuba’s GDP showed positive growth for the first time since the end of Soviet subsidies, albeit only a modest 0.7 percent. In 1995, GDP growth was reported at 2.5 percent, and in 1996, it was up to 7.8 percent. (The World Factbook, 2002, p. 1) This combination of foreign capital investment in Cuban businesses and Cuba’s use of expropriated U.S. property to make the Cuban economy more competitive in the world marketplace prompted Representative Burton and Senator Helms to introduce the Helms-Burton Act in 1996.

International outcries against the Act's extraterritorial nature and intrusion into the sovereignty of other nations placed the United States on the defensive, and characterized Cuba as the victim, much as it had following introduction of the Cuban Democracy Act in 1992. Initially, fear of the impact of the U.S. law deterred some foreign companies from investing, causing Cuba's GDP to fall to 2.5 percent in 1997 and to 1.2 percent in 1998. However, after President Clinton repeatedly suspended Title III, the provision of the law that would directly affect their profit margins, foreign investors again began investing in Cuba. In 1999, Cuba's GDP rate reported a growth of 6.2 percent, and in 2000 it was at 5.6 percent. (The World Factbook, 2002, p. 1)

The Cuban response to the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act was to implement the types of economic reforms that Castro understands will weaken his authoritarian control, and lead to a more liberal economy. Although small private independent businesses were allowed to develop, they were heavily taxed and severely regulated. Most of the foreign investment was maintained in the hands of the government, and very little made its way to the hands on the Cuban people. (Purcell, 2000, pp. 89-90)

4. Explaining Castro's Staying Power

Fidel Castro has managed to survive ten U.S. Presidents, a United States-backed CIA invasion, a potential nuclear showdown, the loss of its Communist superpower backer, and a 42-year-old economic embargo. Throughout this period, Castro has remained firmly in control of the Cuban regime. How has he accomplished this? One theory suggests that while Cubans recognize many of the failings of the current regime, they are also able to identify with its successes such as increased life expectancy and literacy rates, and lower infant mortality rates. Criticism and protests against certain government policies and programs exist alongside considerable tolerance for the regime. Although the regime may be considered inept in many areas, it has not been uniformly oppressive, and many members of the *Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Cuban Communist Party) are, in fact, decent members of Cuban society. (Dominguez, 1993, p.99) Jorge Dominguez writes that Fidel Castro has learned four vitally important lessons from the failed reform efforts in Eastern Europe: first, undertake as few political reforms as possible; two, get rid of deadwood before you are forced to do so; third, deal harshly with

disloyalty; and fourth, do not allow formal opposition to organize. (Dominguez, 1993, p. 99) Consequently, Fidel Castro has made minimal political reforms. When he did make them, they were last-ditch measures, taken to address specific concerns. He allowed large numbers of Cuban dissenters to flee Cuba, and he was ruthless in dealing with disloyalty and possible opposition from members of his “inner circle” such as in the General Ochoa case. Lastly, political parties, other than the Cuban Communist Party, are outlawed in Cuba. Castro has been very careful not to allow internal opposition groups to organize and grow.

Another theory suggests that the Castro regime endures because of unknowing support from the United States. Opponents of the sanctions claim that U.S. policy provides Fidel Castro and other Cuban hardliners with abundant excuses for shifting the blame for Cuba’s failing economy elsewhere.

On a daily basis, Miami radio stations, and occasionally the U.S. government’s own *Radio Martí*, frighten citizens with the prospect of the return of [Cuban] exiles who will demand property restitution. (Dominguez, 1993. p. 103)

Dominguez also writes that during the 1970’s, the Castro government faced one of its most trying periods after Cuba’s borders were opened to American tourism following improved relations during the Carter Administration. This step allowed a flow of new and liberal ideas into the island, as well as first-hand accounts of the relative prosperity that was occurring outside of Cuba. In 1982, however, President Reagan inadvertently helped Castro regain control of his borders by making it illegal for U.S. citizens to spend money in Cuba. This action effectively ended U.S. tourism to Cuba. (Dominguez, 1993, p. 103)

E. ASSESSING THE POST-COLD WAR POLICY

The post-Cold War sanctions policy refocused U.S. efforts from containing the spread of Communism and revolution in the hemisphere to promoting democratic reform and recognizing human rights in Cuba. The economic isolation of the Castro government remained central to the revised policy. The Helms-Burton Act became the first policy document that officially made lifting U.S. sanctions contingent upon the exclusion of Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl.

Many opponents to the sanctions policy, however, argue that it is a relic of the Cold War, and that it has proven unsuccessful because Castro is still in power. They claim that the only way to bring about democratic reform is by engaging the Castro regime, and spreading democratic ideals through business and cultural contact. Furthermore, they claim that continuing the sanctions has prevented Cuba from embarking upon a transition to democratic reform. These assertions are based on the premise that the sanctions policy in effect today is the same one that was in place during the Cold War.

This is incorrect. The focus and nature of the Cuban sanctions have changed from the original 1961 executive order. The current sanctions policy, modified by the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act, and the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, is designed to encourage increased contact and communication between Cuba and the United States, and at the same time prevent financial resources from reaching the Castro regime. The Cuban Democracy Act provided for “calibrated responses” that would be used to lift the sanctions as the Castro government gradually implemented political and human rights reforms. The Helms-Burton Act, however, did not provide for this level of flexibility. It rigidly adhered to the requirement that Fidel Castro withdraw from the Cuban political scene before any measures for lifting the sanctions would be considered.

The current sanctions policy, however, has not had an opportunity to take effect. Western countries, most notably Canada, Mexico, and the European Union have moved to fill the financial vacuum created by the loss of Soviet subsidies in 1989. The sanctions policy has become, in effect, a unilateral measure on the part of the United States, with most of its “allies” undermining the policy’s objectives.

Many argue that a policy of engagement and rapprochement with Cuba is the only way to bring about democratic reform on the island. What they fail to recognize is that when the Cold War ended, so did Soviet subsidies. Since then, Cuba has in effect, been engaged in free trade with most of the world, with the exception of the United States. Yet, despite the foreign influence and droves of tourists from democratic nations, many of these tourists coming from former Soviet –bloc countries, and who could not afford, or were not permitted to travel abroad under Communist regimes, Fidel Castro has not eased

his repressive crackdown on dissident groups, nor relaxed his total dominance of the Cuban media. Although he did allow limited privatization of small, family businesses, and legalized the possession of U.S. dollars, this is only for a small group of individuals who pay very high taxes to the government for the privilege.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. EXPLAINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN U.S.-CUBA POLICY

During the Cold War period, Fidel Castro's ideological and military ties to the Soviet Union posed a direct threat to the national security of the United States. The U.S. sanctions policy, implemented by executive order under President John Kennedy, was a reasonable and justifiable defensive measure to protect U.S. security interests. During this early period of the sanctions policy, the U.S.-Cuban relationship was primarily determined by international factors. Public opinion and governmental policy were in agreement in their reaction to the Cuban Revolution, and in the measures employed to combat it. Also during this period, Soviet military aid, subsidies, and Cuba's admission into the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the Soviet bloc's common market, allowed Cuba to diminish the effects of the U.S. sanctions.

During the Cold War period, the sanctions policy succeeded in achieving two of its stated goals. First, it greatly limited Castro's ability to successfully export revolution. Additionally, it created tension between the Soviet Union and Cuba by intensifying ideological differences between the two regimes. Second, the sanctions policy succeeded in increasing the costs, to the Soviet Union, of maintaining a Communist satellite in the Western Hemisphere. With the U.S. embargo, and later an OAS embargo, in effect against Cuba, the Soviet Union was forced to sustain Cuba's economy at a substantial cost. By 1991, Cuba was receiving \$6 billion dollars in annual subsidies from the Soviet Union. Without the U.S. embargo, Cuban-inspired revolution and Communism would have been much easier to spread in the hemisphere, and at a much lower cost to the Soviet Union.

In 1958, total U.S. imports from Cuba amounted to \$543 million dollars and exports amounted to \$490 million dollars. At the time, Cuba's heavy dependency on the United States, and the overwhelming dominance of the Cuban economy by U.S. businesses, made Cuba extremely vulnerable to U.S. sanctions. Sanctions theorists Bienin and Gilpin have observed that the greater the differential of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between the initiating country and the target country, the greater chance

for success of a sanctions policy. They list a ratio of 50 to 1 as necessary to achieve success. At the time President Eisenhower signed the first embargo policy, the ratio of the U.S.'s GDP to Cuba's GDP was 173 to 1. (Kaplowitz, 1998, p. 31) So then why did the sanctions fail to cause Fidel Castro's expulsion? Quite simply, the Soviet Union moved in to fill the void created by the U.S. embargo.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War, Cuba no longer had the resources to support revolutionary movements and Communist regimes. Faced with a failing economy, and mounting public dissatisfaction, Cuba moved to build new economic relationships in Latin America and Europe. Once again, as Cuba courted and obtained trade agreements with Mexico, Canada, Japan, and the European Union, the U.S. efforts were undermined. Moreover, as the U.S. sought to tighten the sanctions policy through passage of the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act, international condemnation of these laws isolated the United States.

Prior to 1989, the Cuban economy was engaged in significant trade with the Soviet Union and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the Soviet-bloc common market. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the start of the post-Cold War period, Soviet subsidies and CMEA trade agreements were cancelled. As the United States sought to modify the sanctions in the new multi-polar world order, the sanctions were again undermined by new trade agreements between Cuba and Western economies. Mexico, Canada, Spain, Italy, even Japan, all moved in to fill the trade void left by the Soviet Union and the CMEA. The U.S. is today conducting a unilateral embargo against Cuba, as many U.S. allies conduct business in the U.S.'s backyard without having to compete against U.S. businesses. Once again, other international actors have offset the impact of the U.S. sanctions.

The rise of the Cuban-American lobby, through the Cuban American National Foundation, established the domestic political environment as the primary factor in shaping the post-Cold War U.S. policy on Cuba.

When the political costs of an international agreement fall disproportionately on a domestic group that is cohesive and politically mobilized, and the benefits from the agreement are diffusely distributed, the mobilized group often has the power to block ratification. (LeoGrande, 1998, p. 75)

Although the American public is inclined to favor normalized relations with Cuba, Cuban-Americans, and their allies in Congress, have had the ability to extract a heavy political toll from any U.S. President who attempted to normalize relations with Castro. Additionally, with little domestic political gain, normalization was turned into a political “third rail.” When the Clinton Administration began exploring new relations with Cuba, anti-Castro forces became concerned that President Clinton might rescind the executive order that authorized the sanctions. Aided immeasurably by the February 1996 aircraft shoot-down incident, pro-sanctions members of Congress succeeded in codifying the sanctions policy into law, thereby locking-in the existing policy until Castro fell from power. The 1996 aircraft shoot-down incident focused attention on Cuba to a much wider domestic constituency, and the domestic actors eclipsed the international actors.

B. CUBAN POLICY AS A TWO-LEVEL GAME

Robert Putnam’s 1988 model of international bargaining contends that in any international bargaining situation, national leaders are involved in two simultaneous negotiations: the international level (level 1); and the domestic level (level 2). (LeoGrande, 1998, p. 67) During level one negotiations, the political leader is attempting to reach concurrence with other international actors. In level two negotiations, the political leader needs to convince his constituency to accept the agreements reached during level one negotiations. In the Cuban policy model, during the cold war period, U.S. Presidents were generally successful obtaining international support for the sanctions policy. At the domestic level, fear of Communist expansion and Cuba’s military alliance with the Soviet Union provided support for the sanctions policy. In the post-cold war period, the rise of globalization and liberal market economies witnessed U.S. allies opening their markets to Cuba, and the U.S. is unable to make the sanctions multilateral. The domestic agenda becomes fractured and disjointed. The Cuban-American community, largely through the Cuban American National Foundation, becomes the only organized and influential voice on Cuban policy (see Table 1).

Cuban Policy as a Two-Level Game

		Cold War	Post-Cold War
International Game		East vs West world order	Multi-polar world order
		NATO and OAS countries generally honor U.S. sanctions against Cuba	U.S. attempts to make sanctions multilateral through retaliatory legislation
Domestic Game		Sanctions undermined by the USSR & CMEA	Sanctions undermined by the International community
		Solid anti-Communist domestic support	Fractured and disjointed domestic agenda
		President caught between being too hard and too soft on Cuba	Cuban-American community the only organized Cuba policy group
	Sanctions policy justified by Cuban threat to U.S. national security	Sanctions condemned by the UN & Vatican; remain due to a strong domestic lobby	

Table 1. Cuban Policy as a Two-Level Game

C. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Former President Jimmy Carter’s recent visit to Cuba has brought the issue of the U.S. sanctions policy back to the forefront of political discussion. Will President Carter’s meetings with Fidel Castro and Cuban dissidents, and his uncensored address to the Cuban people, bring about any substantive changes? It seems unlikely. Even if President Bush wanted to reverse the sanctions policy, recall that the Helms-Burton Act codified the sanctions, requiring a majority of the House and Senate to vote to overturn the policy. Although some Congressmen have recently become vocal in favor of lifting the sanctions, citing benefits to U.S. agriculture concerns, the facts that 2002 is an election year, and that Cuba is not a major concern for the majority of the American public, make it unlikely that Congress will expend any political capital to overturn the current policy. Moreover, Cuban exiles now hold leading positions in local and federal government. Cuban-Americans are firmly entrenched in the Miami city council and in the Florida state legislature. At the federal level, Florida Representatives Lincoln Díaz-Balart and Ileana

Ros-Lehtinen, as well as New Jersey Representative Robert Menéndez support continuation of strong, anti-Castro policies, as does recently appointed Undersecretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Cuban-American Otto Reich. The reality is that Cuba is no longer a significant foreign policy issue. *Miami Herald* commentator Andrés Oppenheimer has described Cuba as "...a once hyperactive Caribbean island that has become virtually insignificant in the world scene." (Oppenheimer, 1997, p. A14)

Maintaining the status quo, at least until the events of natural evolution (e.g., Castro's death), is likely to continue because, at present, Cuba represents the ideal neighbor. It is not a serious threat, and it does not present serious competition in terms of tourism, investments, or trade. The embargo has favored the Florida citrus industry, tobacco growers, and South Florida tourism, all of which would be seriously impacted if the sanctions were lifted. The near future of U.S.-Cuba relations is likely to see continued suspensions of Title II of Helms-Burton, a hard-line position in favor of the sanctions policy by the Bush Administration and the State Department, and continued strained relations between Washington and Havana. Not until Fidel Castro is removed from the landscape will the U.S. Congress and executive branches seriously review the sanctions policy.

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APPENDIX. CHRONOLOGY OF CUBAN AFFAIRS 1958-2002

(Sources: Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State, 1998; CRS Report, RL 30386, 1999; *The New York Times*; and *The Boston Globe*)

- 14 Mar 1958 The U.S. government suspends arms shipments to the Batista government.
- 1 Jan 1959 Revolutionary forces seize control of Havana.
- 7 Jan 1959 The United States recognizes the new Cuban government.
- Jan 1959 Trials and executions of former Batista regime officials begin.
- 17 May 1959 Agrarian Reform Law expropriates farmlands over 1000 acres and forbids foreign land ownership.
- 8 May 1960 Diplomatic relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union resume.
- 28 Jun 1960 Castro confiscates American-owned oil refineries without compensation.
- 6 Aug 1960 Nationalization of U.S. and foreign-owned property in Cuba begins.
- 7 Aug 1960 The Cuban Catholic Church condemns the rise of communism in Cuba. Castro bans religious TV and radio broadcasts.
- 19 Oct 1960 All remaining American-owned property in Cuba is nationalized.
- 24 Oct 1960 The U.S. imposes economic embargo on Cuba, except food and medicine.
- 3 Jan 1961 President Eisenhower breaks diplomatic relations with Cuba.
- 17 Apr 1961 U.S.-supported Cuban exiles invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs.
- 2 Dec 1961 Castro declares, "I am a Marxist-Leninist, and will be one until the last day of my life."
- 22 Jan 1962 Cuban membership in the Organization of American States (OAS) is suspended.
- 7 Feb 1962 The U.S. government bans all Cuban imports and re-export of U.S. products to Cuba from other countries. The U.S. will also cut off aid to countries that furnish assistance to Cuba.

- 14 Oct 1962 U.S. ports are closed to nations allowing their ships to carry arms to Cuba, ships that have docked in a socialist country are prohibited from docking in the United States during that voyage, and the transport of U.S. goods is banned on ships owned by companies that trade with Cuba.
- 27 Oct 1962 Cuba downs a U-2 plane. In a letter to Khrushchev, President Kennedy proposes immediate Soviet withdrawal of the missiles in exchange for an end to the blockade. Privately, the U.S. Government informs the Soviet Union it will withdraw U.S. missiles from Turkey once the crisis ends.
- 28 Oct 1962 Radio Moscow announces that the Soviet Union has accepted the proposed solution.
- 21 Nov 1962 President Kennedy terminates the quarantine measures against Cuba.
- 8 Feb 1963 The Kennedy administration prohibits travel to Cuba and makes financial and commercial transactions with Cuba illegal for U.S. citizens.
- 8 Jul 1963 All Cuban-owned assets in the United States are frozen.
- Jul 1964 Members of the OAS vote to enact economic sanctions and to break diplomatic links with Cuba.
- Oct 1965 Over 3,000 Cubans leave in a boatlift from Camarioca to the United States.
- 6 Nov 1965 Beginning of the Freedom Flights program, allowing some 250,000 Cubans to come to the United States by 1971.
- 1966 Father Miguel Laredo is tried for allegedly assisting in the attempted escape of a *Cubana* Airlines engineer. In addition, priests and other clergymen are required to enter into military service.
- 2 Nov 1966 The Cuban Adjustment Act allows 123,000 Cubans to apply for permanent residence in the U.S.
- 2 Jan 1968 Castro announces petroleum rationing.
- 13 Mar 1968 The Great Revolutionary Offensive is launched, culminating in the nationalization of the remaining private sector and mobilization of manpower for agricultural production.

- 2 Jan 1969 Castro announces sugar rationing.
- Jul 1972 Cuba joins the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the communist bloc trade association.
- Oct 1973 Cuba sends 500 tank drivers to aid Syria during the Yom Kippur War.
- Nov 1974 Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers and Assistant to the Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger conduct secret normalization talks with Cuban officials in Washington and New York. The talks end over Cuban involvement in Angola.
- 29 Jul 1975 OAS members vote to lift collective sanctions against Cuba. The U.S. government welcomes the action and announces its intention to open serious discussions with Cuba on normalization.
- Oct 1975 Cuba begins deployment of 35,000 combat troops to support the Marxist regime in Angola.
- 20 Dec 1975 President Ford declares that Cuban involvement in Angola and support of the Puerto Rican independence movement ends efforts to improve relations.
- 22 Dec 1975 Castro declares continued support for revolutionary movements in Angola and Puerto Rico.
- 24 Feb 1976 Under a new constitution, Castro becomes head of the government as of President of the Council of Ministers, commander of the armed forces, and First Secretary of the communist party. The PCC (Cuban Communist Party) is institutionalized within the formal governmental structure. Article 54 prohibits the practice of faith or the establishment of religious organizations in opposition to revolutionary principles.
- 18 Mar 1977 U.S. government lifts prohibition on travel to Cuba and allows U.S. citizens to spend \$100 on Cuban goods during their visits.
- Apr 1977 200 Cuban trainers arrive in Ethiopia. Cuba supports the Katangan rebellion, causing the government of Zaire to break-off diplomatic relations. Cuba maintains troops in the Congo, Mozambique, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea.
- 27 Apr 1977 The United States and Cuba sign agreements on fishing rights and maritime boundaries.

- Sep 1977 The United States and Cuba open interests sections in each other's capitals.
- Jan 1978 Cuba begins deployment of 20,000 troops to Ethiopia.
- 31 Jul 1978 Castro calls for the removal of U.S. bases from Guantanamo Bay. Bombings of the Cuban United Nations Mission, the Cuban Interests Section, and the Soviet Mission by anti-Castro exile groups follow throughout the fall. In December, the U.S. government announces that the full force of the law will be used against those responsible for these terrorist actions.
- Jul 1979 Cuban-supported *Sandinistas* overthrow the government of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua.
- 30 Aug 1979 Senator Frank Church, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, announces discovery of a Soviet combat brigade of 3000 troops in Cuba.
- 1 Oct 1979 President Carter reaffirms that troops from Cuba would not be permitted to move against neighboring countries and establishes a Caribbean Joint Task Force Headquarters in Florida.
- Apr 1980 10,000 Cubans storm the Peruvian embassy in Havana seeking political asylum. After the easing of immigration restrictions, a flotilla of refugees (eventually 125,000) begins an exodus from the port of Mariel in Cuba for the United States.
- 14 May 1980 President Carter demands that the Cuban government impose an orderly departure and orders a blockade to prevent private boats from traveling to Cuba to pick up refugees. The Cuban government closes Mariel harbor in September.
- 11 Sep 1980 An attaché of the Cuban Mission to the United Nations is assassinated by anti-Castro terrorists. Secretary of State Edwin Muskie issues a statement terming the murder "reprehensible."
- 22 Dec 1980 The first of several meetings between U.S. and Cuban officials to discuss the repatriation of the *Marielitos* occurs.
- 23 Sep 1981 The U.S. government announces plans to establish *Radio Marti* to broadcast to Cuba.
- Mar 1982 U.S. envoy Vernon Walters meets with Castro in Havana to discuss outstanding issues.

- 9 Apr 1982 Charter air links between Miami and Havana are halted by the U.S. government.
- 19 Apr 1982 U.S. Government effectively bans travel to Cuba by prohibiting monetary expenditures in Cuba by U.S. citizens.
- 25 Oct 1983 The U.S. intervention of Grenada begins following a leftist coup and the discovery that Cubans are being used to build an airstrip that could have been used for military aircraft.
- 11 Jan 1984 A Presidential Commission on Central America headed by Henry Kissinger reports that the Soviet and Cuban intervention in the region has created a major security problem for the United States.
- 31 Jul 1984 U.S. and Cuban officials hold talks on migration issues.
- 14 Dec 1984 The United States and Cuba conclude a migration pact under which Cuba agrees to accept the return of *Marielitos*.
- 21 Jan 1985 U.S. bishops visit Cuba. They meet with Castro and request the release of 250 political prisoners.
- 20 May 1985 *Radio Marti* begins broadcasts to Cuba. The Cuban government immediately jams the signal. Castro later suspends the 1984 U.S.-Cuban immigration agreement.
- 1986 The Cuban government begins to grant long-term visas to foreign priests and nuns.
- 19 Nov 1987 The United States and Cuba conclude a new immigration pact, which reinstates the 1984 agreement.
- Mar 1988 The UN Human Rights Commission sends a team to report on the human rights situation in Cuba.
- 23 Aug 1988 President Reagan signs a trade act that ends licensing requirements for importing recordings, printed material, and other media from Cuba.
- Nov 1988 At the intercession of the U.S. Catholic Conference, Cuba agrees to release 44 political prisoners.
- 20 Nov 1989 The Treasury Department limits travel related expenses for U.S. citizens to Cuba at \$100 per day.

23 Mar 1990	The first test of <i>TV Marti</i> is launched. It is jammed by the Cuban government.
20 May 1991	In a meeting with Cuban dissidents, President Bush calls for Castro to release political prisoners and hold elections.
11 Sep 1991	Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev states that he will withdraw all Soviet troops from Cuba.
1991	The Fourth Communist Party Congress resolves to allow members of religious groups to join the party.
Dec 1991	Soviet economic subsidies to Cuba, worth approximately \$6 billion annually, are terminated.
Jul 1992	Changes to the Cuban constitution include measures to attract foreign investment without compromising Castro's hold on power. The official designation of the Cuban government is changed from "atheist" to "secular." Religious discrimination is also forbidden.
15 Oct 1992	Congress passes the Cuban Democracy Act, which prohibits foreign-based subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with Cuba, travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens, and family remittances to Cuba. The law allows private groups to deliver food and medicine to Cuba.
1 Oct 1993	The United States and Cuba reach an agreement at the working level on the repatriation of 1500 criminal Cuban migrants. High level Government of Cuba approval was never forthcoming.
Aug 1994	Following Castro's declaration of an open migration policy, a new boatlift begins when 30,000 refugees set sail from Cuba as economic conditions continue to deteriorate. A "picket line" established by the U.S. Coast Guard prevents additional sea borne migrations.
1 Sep 1994	Talks on migration open in New York City between Cuban and U.S. officials.
9 Sep 1994	The U.S. and Cuba issue a joint communiqué agreeing to take measures to ensure that migration between the two countries is safe, legal, and orderly. The U.S. agrees that total legal migration to the U.S. will be a minimum of 20,000 per year.

- 2 May 1995 The U.S. and Cuba issue a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to promote safe, legal, and orderly migration. Under this accord, Cubans interdicted at sea or who enter the Guantanamo Naval Base illegally, are returned to Cuba provided that they do not have any protection concerns. Returned Cubans are monitored by personnel from the United States Interests Section in Havana.
- 5 Oct 1995 President Clinton announces measures to expand people-to-people contacts between the U.S. and Cuba, to allow U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to fund projects in Cuba, and to provide AID funding to U.S. NGO's for Cuba-related projects.
- Nov 1995 The *Concilio Cubano* is formed to organize the first human rights conference in which all human rights groups on the island were expected to participate.
- Jan 1996 The Government of Cuba denies *Concilio* legal recognition. *Concilio* requests permission for the conference to take place February 24, 1996.
- Feb 1996 The Government of Cuba begins an island-wide crackdown on *Concilio Cubano*. During the next 3 months over 200 *Concilio* leaders and supporters would be arrested, interrogated, and harassed.
- 24 Feb 1996 Cuban MIG's shoot down two civilian aircraft belonging to the Miami-based group Brothers to the Rescue, in international airspace. Three Cuban-Americans and one Cuban Legal Resident are killed.
- 12 Mar 1996 President Clinton signs the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (*Libertad*) Act, also called the Helms-Burton Act, which enacts penalties on foreign companies doing business in Cuba; permits U.S. citizens to sue foreign investors who make use of American-owned property seized by the Cuban government; and denies entry into the U.S. to such foreign investors.
- 16 Jul 1996 President Clinton suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act, which permits suits to be filed in U.S. courts against foreign investors who are profiting from U.S.-claimed confiscated property. Title III itself is allowed to go into effect on August 1.
- 19 Nov 1996 Pope John Paul II receives Castro at the Vatican. The Pope accepts an invitation to visit Cuba.

- 16 Aug 1996 President Clinton appoints Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat as the Special Representative for the Promotion of Democracy in Cuba.
- 2 Dec 1996 The European Union adopts the Common Position on Cuba, conditioning developmental assistance to Cuba on fundamental, democratic change.
- 3 Jan 1997 President Clinton suspends the right to sue provisions of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, pointing to the progress made under the U.S.-led multilateral initiative to promote democratic change in Cuba.
- 28 Jan 1997 President Clinton releases a report on assistance the U.S. and the rest of the international community would provide to a transition government in Cuba.
- 12 Feb 1997 The Administration approves licenses for U.S. news organizations to open bureaus in Cuba. The Cuban Government, however, allows only CNN in the country.
- 11 Apr 1997 The U.S. and European Union reach an understanding whereby the EU will suspend its World Trade Organization case against the Helms-Burton Act and other components of the U.S. legislation. The U.S. and EU agree to work together to develop binding international disciplines to deter investment in confiscated property. The U.S. agrees to seek presidential waiver authority for Title IV of the Helms-Burton Act if such disciplines are developed and adhered to.
- 16 Jul 1997 Cuban state security arrests the Dissident Working Group on charges of enemy propaganda.
- 16 Jul 1997 President Clinton for the third time suspends the right to sue provisions of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.
- Aug-Dec 1997 U.S. Government approves a license request by Archdiocese of Miami to charter a cruise ship to take pilgrims to Cuba during the Pope's visit, and licenses for other religious groups and media to use charter aircraft to go to Cuba for the Pope's visit.
- 17 Dec 1997 U.S. federal judge orders Cuba to pay \$187.6 million in punitive damages to the families of the three Americans killed in the two Brothers to the Rescue aircraft shot down by Cuban MiG's in February 1996.

- 16 Jan 1998 President Clinton suspends Title III of Helms-Burton Act for a fourth time.
- 21-25 Jan 1998 Pope John Paul II visits Cuba and conducts several open-air masses. In addition to encouraging Cubans to return to the church, the Pope criticized the U.S. sanctions as “unjust and ethically unacceptable,” and criticized the Cuban government for denying basic freedoms to the Cuban people.
- 12 Feb 1998 The Vatican announces that Cuba has freed dozens of political detainees in response to the Pope’s request to release “prisoners of conscience.”
- 20 Mar 1998 Following the Pope’s visit to Cuba, President Clinton announces four changes to U.S. policy: 1) the resumption of licensing for direct humanitarian charter flights to Cuba (curtailed following the Feb 1996 aircraft shoot-down); 2) the resumption of cash remittances of up to \$300 per quarter to support close relatives in Cuba (curtailed since the August 1994 migration crisis); 3) the development of licensing procedures to streamline and expedite licenses for the commercial sales of medicine and medical equipment to Cuba; and 4) a decision to work on a bipartisan basis with Congress on the transfer of food to the Cuban people.
- Apr 1998 U.S. State Department’s annual report to Congress, *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, again lists Cuba as a supporter of “international terrorism.”
- 21 Mar 1998 The UN Commission of Human Rights rejected a resolution that would have condemned Cuba’s human rights record, and would have extended the work of the Special Rapporteur to investigate Cuba’s human rights situation for another year. The vote was 16 for, 19 against, with 18 abstentions.
- 21 Mar 1998 The European Union allows its challenge to the Helms-Burton Act, filed with the World Trade Organization, to expire.
- 6 May 1998 The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency issued a report to Congress, which concluded that, “Cuba does not pose a significant military threat to the U.S. or other countries in the region,” and that Cuba “has little motivation to engage in military activity beyond defense of its territory and political system.”

- 18 May 1998 The U.S. and European Union reached a second accord that set forth EU principles regarding investment in expropriated properties worldwide, in exchange for the Clinton Administration's success in obtaining a waiver of the Helms-Burton legislation's Title IV visa restrictions.
- 2 Jul 1998 The U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control issued licenses to nine air charter companies providing direct passenger flights from Miami International Airport to Havana's Jose Martí Airport.
- 16 Jul 1998 For the fifth time, President Clinton suspends, for six months, Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.
- 25 Aug 1998 A U.S. federal grand jury in Puerto Rico indicted seven Cuban-Americans for plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro. The indictment stemmed from the seizure of a Miami yacht off the coast of Puerto Rico in October 1997, in which four Cuban exiles were carrying two sniper rifles. One of the men stated that the four were plotting to kill Fidel Castro while he visited the Venezuelan island of Margarita in November 1997.
- Oct 1998 Senator John Warner (R-VA), along with fourteen other senators from both parties, writes to President Clinton calling for a formation of a "National Bipartisan Commission on Cuba," to conduct an analysis of U.S. policy. Another nine senators signed on to the letter in December 1998.
- 14 Oct 1998 For the seventh consecutive year, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution (157-2) criticizing the U.S. sanctions against Cuba. The U.S. and Israel opposed the measure, and 12 nations abstained.
- 21 Oct 1998 President Clinton signs into law the FY 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Measure into law. The measure contains several provisions on Cuba, which include: 1) foreign states are not immune from judgments for violations of international law, although a presidential waiver for national security issues is provided; 2) it requires reports to Congress on the methods employed by the Cuban government to enforce the U.S.-Cuba Migration Agreement of May 1995; 3) it required the Clinton Administration to report to Congress on the enforcement of Title IV (visa-restrictions) of the Helms-Burton Act; 4) it withheld U.S. assistance for programs or projects of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Cuba; 5) it required the President to withhold foreign assistance and credits to Cuba; and 6) it prevented the U.S.

from accepting payments for trademark licenses that were used in connection with a business or assets in Cuba that were confiscated, unless the original owner of the trademark has consented.

- 4 Dec 1998 The U.S. and Cuba hold talks in Havana to review the 1994 and 1995 Migration Accords.
- 23 Dec 1998 Three diplomats stationed at the Cuban Mission to the UN in New York are expelled after ten agents were accused in September of spying for the Castro government. The U.S. State Department announces that the action is taken against the personnel for, “activities incompatible with their status as members of a UN mission.”
- 5 Jan 1999 President Clinton announces five measures to support the Cuban people that are intended to augment the March 1998 U.S. policy changes implemented after the visit to Cuba of Pope John Paul.
- 12 Jan 1999 A bipartisan task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations releases a report calling for more contact between the U.S. and Cuba.
- 15 Jan 1999 President Clinton suspends Title III of the Helms-Burton Act for a sixth time.
- 25 Feb 1999 The Cuban government cuts most direct U.S. telephone service in response to U.S. telephone companies withholding payments to Cuban because the payments were being sought in a judgment by the families of the three American citizens killed in the February 1996 Brothers to the Rescue airplane shoot down.
- 3 Mar 1999 The Clinton Administration announces that it will officially intervene as a party in the U.S. telephone companies’ lawsuit, and would support restoring telephone payments to Cuba as soon as possible.
- 18 Mar 1999 A federal judge awards \$6.2 million of the telecommunications payments due to Cuba from U. S companies to the families of three of the victims’ families of the Brothers to the Rescue pilots shot down by Cuban MiG’s in February 1996. The telephone companies appeal the ruling.
- 23 Mar 1999 By a voice vote, the House approves House Resolution 99, which condemns Cuba’s repressive crackdown against internal opposition and an independent press. Additionally, it calls for the Clinton administration to secure support for a UN Commission on Human

Rights resolution that condemns Cuba's human rights abuses; reinstate a Special Rapporteur on Cuba; and calls for the Administration to nominate a Special Envoy to internationally advocate for the establishment of the rule of law for the Cuban people.

- 25 Mar 1999 By a voice vote of 98-0, the Senate approves Senate Resolution 57, which states that the U.S. should make all efforts to pass a UN Commission on Human Rights resolution criticizing Cuban for its human rights abuses and securing the appointment of a Special Rapporteur for Cuba.
- 23 Apr 1999 The UN Commission on Human Rights approves a resolution criticizing Cuba for its human rights record by a vote of 21-20, with 12 countries abstaining. It did not, however, appoint a Special Rapporteur for Cuba.
- 13 May 1999 The U.S. Treasury and Commerce Departments issue regulations regarding the commercial sale of food and agricultural commodities to independent Cuban entities, such as religious groups, private farmers, and private restaurants. Restrictions on certain types of travel were also loosened.
- 31 May 1999 Cuba files suit against the U.S. in Havana for \$181.1 billion in compensation for victims of anti-Castro attacks dating back to 1959. The act is in response to the suit filed against Havana for the victims of the Brothers to the Rescue pilots shot down in February 1996. Cuban claims that the U.S. has caused "thousands of deaths and injuries to Cuban citizens and massive economic damage" as a result of the U.S sanctions.
- 7 Jun 1999 Approximately 25 Cuban dissidents begin a 40-day hunger strike in Havana in an effort to call attention to the human rights situation in Cuba, and to call for the release of political prisoners.
- 21 Jun 1999 U.S. State Department and U.S. Coast Guard officials meet with their Cuban counterparts to discuss ways to improve communication and coordination in fighting drug trafficking.
- 13-15 Jul 1999 The President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Thomas Donohue, travels to Cuba to support the development of the country's small private sector.

- 16 Jul 1999 President Clinton suspends Title III of the Helms-Burton Act for the seventh time. The group of about 25 Cuban dissidents in Havana ends their 40-day hunger strike with an appeal to foreign leaders to press Castro to institute political reforms.
- 11 Aug 1999 A U.S. federal appeals court overturns a lower court decision and rules that the families of three Americans killed in the February 1996 Brothers to the Rescue aircraft shoot down could not collect \$6.2 million in telephone payments due Cuba from U.S. companies.
- 9 Nov 1999 The UN, for the eighth consecutive year, approves a resolution calling for an end to the U.S. sanctions against Cuba. The measure is approved 155-2, with only the U.S. and Israel voting against it, and 8 nations abstaining.
- 10 Nov 1999 President Clinton declines to add Cuba to the annual list of major illicit drug producing or drug trafficking countries, stating that there was no evidence that any significant quantities of cocaine or heroine passed through Cuban to the United States.
- 15-16 Nov 1999 Cuba hosts the ninth annual Ibero-American summit, a meeting of leaders of Spain, Portugal, and Latin American countries. In the summits Havana Declaration, the leaders reiterated their opposition to “the unilateral and extraterritorial applications” of U.S. law, and specifically urged the United States to “put an end to the application of the Helms-Burton Act.”
- 25 Nov 1999 A boat with 14 Cuban refugees sinks off the coast of Florida. Two adult survivors wash ashore at Key Biscayne, and fishermen find five-year-old Elián Gonzalez clinging to an inner tube off the coast of Fort Lauderdale. The boy’s mother drowned in the incident.
- 27 Nov 1999 The Cuban government delivers a diplomatic note to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, seeking the return of Elián Gonzalez to Cuba.
- 28 Nov 1999 The father of Elián Gonzalez appears on Cuban television, calling for the return of the boy to Cuba.
- 2 Dec 1999 The Cuban government warns that relations with the U.S. could be harmed if Elián Gonzalez is not allowed to return to his father in Cuba.

- 5 Dec 1999 Fidel Castro appears on Cuban broadcast media demanding the return of Elián Gonzalez within 72 hours or vows that there would be mass Cuban demonstrations. He also threatens to boycott the upcoming U.S.-Cuba migration talks.
- 6 Dec 1999 Thousands of Cubans begin protesting outside the U.S. Interests Section in Havana for the return of Elián Gonzalez. Elián Gonzalez celebrates his sixth birthday with Miami relatives.
- 8 Dec 1999 President Clinton warns that politics should not enter into the decision regarding the custody of Elián Gonzalez. Relatives in Florida request political asylum for him to prevent his return to Cuba.
- 13 Dec 1999 Elián Gonzalez's father meets with U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents.
- 5 Jan 2000 The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service announces that Elián should be returned to Cuba to live with his father.
- 10 Jan 2000 Florida Family Court Judge Rosa Rodriguez rules that Elián should stay with his Miami relatives until March hearing to determine if he would be harmed by going back to Cuba.
- 12 Jan 2000 U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno rejects the family court ruling and backs the INS on its Elián decision.
- 21 Jan 2000 Elián's grandmothers fly from Havana to New York to seek the boy's return to Cuba. The following day they meet with U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno.
- 22 Mar 2000 U.S. District Judge Michael Moore dismisses the Miami relatives' lawsuit, ruling that the INS has the authority to return Elián to his father in Cuba.
- 29 Mar 2000 Miami-Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas states that if civil unrest occurs in the city, local authorities will hold President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno responsible.
- 30 Mar 2000 Vice President Al Gore, breaking ranks with the Clinton Administration, calls on Congress to make Elián a permanent U.S. resident.
- 6 Apr 2000 Talks break down between the Immigration and Naturalization Service and Elián's Miami relatives on returning Elián to his father.

- 12 Apr 2000 U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno meets Elián and his relatives in Miami; the U.S. government orders relatives to travel to Washington with Reno to turn Elián over to his father, or to give up custody at the Miami-area airport.
- 13 Apr 2000 Miami relatives defy the federal order to hand Elián over by the afternoon deadline, and then win a temporary court order barring the child from being sent to Cuba pending legal appeals.
- 19 Apr 2000 A U.S. federal appeals court upholds the temporary injunction that blocked Elián from leaving the United States pending the relatives' appeal.
- 20 Apr 2000 President Bill Clinton states that court's temporary ban on the Elián's leaving the United States means there is "no conceivable argument" against the boy being reunited with his father.
- 22 Apr 2000 Armed U.S. Department of Justice agents storm the family's Miami home before dawn and remove Elián. He is flown to Washington, D.C. and reunited with his father.
- 25 Apr 2000 Janet Reno meets with angry members of Congress about the raid. Supporters of Elián in Little Havana stage a work "sick-out," bringing Little Havana to a stop, but otherwise leaving Miami unaffected.
- 27 Apr 2000 A federal appeals court denies Elián's Miami relatives' request to visit the boy.
- 28 Jun 2000 Elián Gonzalez and his father return to Cuba.
- 16 Jan 2001 President Bush suspends Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.
- 16 May 2001 U.S. Senate proposes legislation to provide \$100 million over four years to promote democracy in Cuba by providing cash, fax machines, telephones, and other items to Cuban dissidents.
- 12 Jun 2001 The "Bridges to the Cuban People Act," a bipartisan, joint House and Senate bill that would allow financing of food and medicine sales to Cuba, lift restrictions on American travel to the island and fund a scholarship program for Cuban students to come to the United States for post-graduate studies is proposed in Congress. The bill is designed to compete with the legislation proposed in May giving aid to dissident groups.

- 16 Jul 2001 President Bush suspends the Title III of the Helms-Burton Act for a second time.
- Jan 2002 President Bush appoints Otto J. Reich as Undersecretary of State for Latin America during a Congressional recess. A former official in the Reagan Administration and ambassador to Venezuela, Mr. Reich's nomination had been blocked by Senate Democrats who claimed that he had behaved "unethically" during his time in the Reagan Administration and was "too partisan".
- 16 Jan 2002 President Bush suspends Title III of the Helms-Burton Act for a third time.
- Apr 2002 In the wake of Hurricane Michelle, the U.S. government offers humanitarian relief disaster assessment. The government of Cuba declines the assistance, but agrees to purchase agricultural products to make-up for damaged crops. It then claims that these purchases have opened the way for normalized relations with the U.S. U.S. Secretary of State Powell rejects this claim stating "This spin confuses American humanitarian sympathy for the people of Cuba with acceptance of a government that denies them the basics of freedom and opportunity."
- 12-17 May 2002 Former President Jimmy Carter travels to Cuba to meet with Fidel Castro as well as leaders of Cuban dissident groups. Former President Carter is the highest-ranking U.S figure to visit Cuba since the 1959 Revolution, and the first U.S. President since Calvin Coolidge's visit in 1928.

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