

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

United States – Cuba Policy: Strategic Framework For Re-emergent Relations

by

Allen J. Jamerson
United States Air Force

Gary H. Maybarduk
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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After 44 years, Fidel Castro continues to defiantly run his Socialist-Marxist government under the nose of the world's hegemon. He does so in spite of powerful economic and political pressures that have severely impacted his nation's way of life and political status. From Eisenhower to the current Bush Administration, American Presidents have seemingly failed to successfully employ the four instruments of power to effect a regime change; at the same time, the Cuban dictator adroitly thwarted American gestures with his own set of military and diplomatic countermeasures. The Bush Administration maintains its staunch position that positive relations will not occur until Castro frees his political prisoners, holds democratic, free elections, and allows free speech. Inversely, the administration, at the behest of new actors in the Cuban policy arena, allowed increased cash trade and remittances that help Castro feed his nation and limit domestic pressures. Typically, United States foreign policy can be viewed as objective-based and developed to further national interests. During the Cold War, the policy and objectives were clear: defeat Soviet-led Communist aggression. Since the Cold War ended years ago, the question must now be asked: Does the United States' current Cuban picture truly strive for re-emergent relations? As important, does it offer the right carrots to entice Castro's assent while at the same time developing the right strategy to deal with his successors? Presuming it does, will Castro or his successors finally see the light or will they just find another way to stymie American advances? This paper will assess United States–Cuba policy to determine its congruency with national strategy. Based on that foundation, this paper will also examine Cuba's strategic value and discuss challenges that strategists face as they push for positive relations and plan for governmental transition.

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UNITED STATES – CUBA POLICY: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR RE-EMERGENT RELATIONS

After 44 years, Fidel Castro continues to defiantly run his Socialist-Marxist government under the nose of the world's hegemon. He does so in spite of powerful economic and political pressures that have severely impacted his nation's way of life and political status. From Eisenhower to the current Bush Administration, American Presidents have seemingly failed to successfully employ the four instruments of power to effect a regime change while the Cuban dictator has adroitly thwarted American gestures with his own set of military and diplomatic countermeasures. The Bush Administration maintains its staunch position that positive relations will not occur until Castro frees his political prisoners, holds democratic, free elections, and allows free speech. Concurrently, the administration, at the behest of new actors in the Cuban policy arena, allowed increased cash trade and remittances that help Castro feed his nation and limit domestic pressures. Typically, United States foreign policy can be viewed as objective-based and developed to further national interests. During the Cold War, the policy and objectives were clear: defeat Soviet-led Communist aggression. Since the Cold War ended years ago, the question must now be asked: does the United States' current Cuban policy truly strive for re-emergent relations? This paper will assess United States–Cuba policy to determine its congruency with national strategy. It will then examine Cuba's strategic value and discuss challenges that strategists face as they push for positive relations and plan for governmental transition. The paper will also determine if America's Cuba policy offers the right carrots to stimulate Castro's assent. Since Castro has a long history of thwarting American advances, this paper will also offer some cogent recommendations to entice his successors to conduct bilateral relations.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

For the past 44 years, the United States' relationship with Cuba has been wrought with confrontation and mistrust, initially brought about by Castro's bold seizure of power and transformation of Cuba into a Communist state. Castro overthrew President Fulgencio Batista in January 1959, and America officially recognized his new government six days later. However, relations quickly changed when he confiscated American owned properties and moved Cuba towards a Marxist-Leninist style of government. In October 1960, the United States initiated what would become a four-decade embargo against Cuba. This period also marked the beginning of many political, economic, and military confrontations with the island nation.¹

Throughout his reign, Castro successfully parried every American president's ability to establish normal relations. In the 1960's, he aligned himself with the Soviet Union, which led to the Cuban Missile Crisis and nearly resulted in world war. During the 1970's, Castro launched a large-scale intervention into Angola, thereby killing Nixon and Ford Administration normalization attempts. In 1980, internal Cuban pressures raised to the point that Castro felt compelled to let citizens leave the country. This precipitated the Mariel Boatlift during which over 125 thousand people departed Cuba for American shores. Southern Florida was overwhelmed, particularly upon the discovery that Castro had also allowed scores of criminals and mentally ill to leave. Despite this fiasco, the Reagan Administration attempted low-key diplomacy with the aim of preventing future such catastrophes. Reagan abandoned this initiative in 1983 when Cuba's military intervened in Grenadian affairs; the United States and allies invaded the small island to dispel Cuban forces and reestablish Grenada's rightful government.²

A more comprehensive look at United States – Cuba policy reveals a strategy that has been erratic at best. For instance, Title III of the Helms-Burton (Libertad) Act of 1996 gave United States citizens the right to pursue legal action against foreigners who knowingly trafficked in American property confiscated by Cuba during the revolution. Because of international backlash, the article has never been enforced and has received continual six-month waivers since its inception.³ The Libertad Act also prohibited United States citizens from traveling to and trading with Cuba. Yet, 3,400 business trips to Cuba took place in 2000 and over 80,000 Americans visit Cuba annually.⁴ Congress passed the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Law in 2000, allowing limited sales of farm products and eliminating licensing of pharmaceutical products to Cuba. The act spurred a huge United States Agriculture Exposition in Havana in September 2002. The event, hosted by Castro, had multiple purposes that benefited both he and the American agriculture industry. Castro's aim was to bring badly needed food items to the island in the wake of Hurricane Michelle, which caused widespread damage in November 2001.⁵ Though not a stated goal, certainly Castro also hoped to influence United States debate on the efficacy of maintaining the embargo.⁶ The agriculture industry's emphasis was simple: establish inroads to a potentially lucrative market. Dan Looker, a farmer and business editor for Successful Farming Magazine said, "Cuba is a poor country, but one that could be importing almost \$1 billion in United States food by 2005 if we normalize trade. American farmers can't afford to pass that up."⁷ Two hundred eighty-eight exhibitors peddled products ranging from livestock and gum to dog food; the end result was cash-only sales exceeding \$140 million in trade. Cuba stated its intention to buy more products worth \$200 million and United States farmers were eager to accommodate. When President

Clinton authorized licensing of agricultural products to Cuba, his stated objective was to, “promote development and evolution of peaceful independent activity and civil society.”⁸ Other high-ranking officials close to the Cuban issue failed to see the positive ramification that President Clinton envisioned. The United States’ top diplomat in Cuba, James Cason, said, “This is a Jurassic Park economy and it’s no great market for the United States.” He estimated Cuba’s foreign debt at \$11 billion and indicated America did not want to be part of that debt picture.⁹ In testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Ambassador Dennis K. Hays, provided a parallel argument, stating:

Cuba ranks 151st out of 154 countries on this year’s Index of Economic Freedom, somehow edging out countries the likes of Libya and Iraq. There are countries in the world poorer than Cuba, but no nation this side of North Korea works as hard to stifle individual initiative or to minimize the meaningful participation of its citizens in business activity.¹⁰

CURRENT POLICY ANALYSIS

Our current policy was set in motion on February 24, 1996, when Cuban MIGs shot down two unarmed United States civilian aircraft over international waters, killing three American citizens and one resident.¹¹ In response, the Clinton Administration swiftly supported passage of, and signed into law, the Libertad Act which punished foreign companies and nations that invested in properties seized by the Castro government. The intent of the legislation was to discourage foreign investment in Cuba and effectively continue the long-standing embargo.¹² However, with an eye towards the future, the act compelled President Clinton to develop an economic assistance plan for Cuban transition to democratic governance.¹³ In January 1997, Congress received the plan, which also promised to end the embargo and provide economic aid in return for free, fair, and internationally supervised elections and improved human rights.¹⁴

Expanding upon Clinton Administration policy, President Bush announced on May 19, 2002, his new initiative for Cuba, restating past policy, but expressing positive hope for future improvements:

Full normalization of relations with Cuba – diplomatic recognition, open trade and a robust aid program – will only be possible when Cuba has a new government that is fully democratic, when the rule of law is respected, and when the human rights of all Cubans are fully protected. Yet under the Initiative for a New Cuba, the United States recognizes that freedom sometimes grows step by step - and we will encourage those steps.¹

A breakdown of the initiative reveals two fundamental components, which are to, 1) maintain pressure on the Cuban Government to reform its political and economic systems and 2) provide humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people to further develop their civil society. To accomplish the first point, President Bush called for direct assistance from American religious and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), resumption of direct mail service with Cuba, and establishment of United States scholarships for Cuban students, professionals, and family members of political prisoners. The initiative states that the United States is not a threat to Cuban sovereignty, and its ultimate goal is to bring Cuba into the Western Hemisphere's community of democracies.¹⁵

Despite the "incentives," Castro continues to maintain his hard line political stance. In an October 2002 interview with Barbara Walters of ABC News, he emphatically stated his intention to remain in power indefinitely. He said, "the embargo is politically motivated", and if it is not lifted, "Cuba will continue to advance."¹⁶ Castro has however, demonstrated a willingness to strengthen economic ties with his long-time enemy. There are differing opinions in the United States as to whether the Cuba policy is really having any impact on Castro's decision cycles. It would, however, be difficult to argue that the policy is not well thought out and in line with grand strategy, goals, and objectives.

The National Security Strategy (NSS) and current Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) priorities are congruent with the president's Cuban policy. The NSS states:

This administration's goal is to help unleash the productive potential of individuals in all nations and the United States Government will...provide resources to aid countries that have met the challenges of national reform."¹⁷

The SECDEF stated in his FY 04 legislative priorities letter, that his number six priority, "New Concepts of Global Engagement," strives to "fashion new relationships worldwide..."¹⁸ The National Military Strategy says, "failed and failing states, and conflict that is not directed against the United States, can also threaten our interests and the safety of our citizen."¹⁹ Cuba should not be judged a failing state, but with Castro's predicted demise in the next decade, it is conceivable that anyone less than the charismatic Fidel will not be able to contain a population restless for more prosperous lifestyles and freedom of action.

Policy analysis should always include a discussion of whether the policy is suitable, feasible, acceptable, and does it serve America's interests. According to the 2000 Commission

on America's National Interests, interests are defined by three categories—vital, extremely important, and important:

Vital – Vital national interests are conditions that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance Americans' survival and well-being in a free and secure nation.

Extremely Important – Extremely important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would severely prejudice but not strictly imperil the ability of the United States government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Important – Important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would have major negative consequences for the ability of the United States government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

A further breakout of the latter category will illustrate that the Cuban policy clearly falls within that realm:

Important United States national interests are to:

- Discourage massive human rights violations in foreign countries
- Promote pluralism, freedom, and democracy in strategically important states as much as is feasible without destabilization
- Prevent and, if possible at low cost, end conflicts in strategically less significant geographic regions
- Protect the lives and well-being of American citizens who are targeted or taken hostage by terrorists organizations
- Reduce the economic gap between rich and poor nations
- Prevent the nationalization of United States-owned assets abroad
- Boost the domestic output of key strategic industries and sectors
- Maintain an edge in the international distribution of information to ensure that American values continue to positively influence the cultures of foreign nations
- Promote international environmental policies consistent with long-term ecological requirements
- Maximize United States GNP growth from international trade and investment

To peel another layer off the onion, a review of United States national interests in the Western Hemisphere reveals the following:²⁰

- Vital
 - That there be no hostile major powers or failed states on United States borders
- Extremely Important
 - That the states of the Western hemisphere grow increasingly democratic, prosperous states, and stable
 - That there be no massive, uncontrolled immigration across United States borders
- Important
 - That narcotics trafficking not overturn or come to control the larger countries of the region

Art Lykke of the United States Army War College developed a policy/strategy model that illustrated strategy as a three-legged stool consisting of ends (the objectives), ways (the concepts for achieving the objectives), and means (the resources for supporting the concepts). If the stool is not in balance, the nation assumes a greater risk and the policy/strategy will likely not succeed.²¹ With respect to Cuba, the “ends” were clearly stated by President Bush: fully democratic government, respect for the law, and guaranteed human rights of all Cuban citizens. The “ways” of Cuban policy are somewhat ambiguous: political and economic isolation of the standing government, yet increased social and cultural engagement with the Cuban people. The “means” to support the ways are varied, ranging from continuance of the long-standing embargo and certain travel restrictions, to gradually increased business transactions and immigration levels. The dichotomous nature of this policy is indicative of strong interaction from competing domestic interests, primarily dominated by a Cuban exile community that wants to punish and banish Castro, yet expects to play a large role in Cuba’s future governance.

Lykke also proposed breaking policy/strategy into components to better analyze its usefulness:

1. Suitability – Will its attainment accomplish the effect desired (relates to objective)?²²

In his testimony before the Congressional Subcommittee on Trade of the House Committee on Ways and Means, the Honorable Michael Barnes said that the embargo was a relic of the past and it had not removed Castro’s repressively brutal regime. In fact, he stated, Castro was able to use the embargo as an excuse for his own failed economic policies.²³ On

the other hand, a 1999 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Task Force on Cuba noted that Cuban Communism is dead as a strong political force and this was proof that the “United States policy toward Cuba...has enjoyed real, though not total success.”²⁴

2. Feasibility – Can the action be accomplished by the means available (relates to concept)?²⁵

The CFR Task Force felt strongly that people-to-people contacts and not the embargo were largely responsible for promoting change within Cuban society. Expatriates and other non-Cubans were the “significant force in the island’s political and economic evolution” which helped Cubans “escape dependence on the state and attain autonomy.”²⁶ United States Senator Dick Durbin also noted that continued use of restrictions on United States exports to the Communist nation as leverage against the Castro regime hasn’t worked for almost 40 years.²⁷ In his view, a feasible policy would have already resulted in Castro’s demise.

3. Acceptability – Are the consequences of cost justified by the importance of the effect desired (relates to resources/concept)?²⁸

It can certainly be argued that the United States had significant reason to implement the original embargo in 1962 after Castro took power and nationalized foreign assets. The American public found it acceptable to maintain a hard line against Cuba as long as it was aligned with the Communist Soviet bloc. However, once the bloc collapsed, it became debatable as to the policy’s efficacy in light of Cuba’s weak political standing, both internationally and regionally. Also, as noted earlier, many opponents argue that our current policy comes at the cost of significant loss of economic benefit to both sides. This stance should not come as a surprise to anti-Castro proponents; in light of globalist trends, it is natural for free-market advocates to seek new markets and opportunities.

The end product of this analysis is the solid conclusion that the United States’ Cuba policy is still wrought with dissension and unclear to the average person. It is prudent to offer a final attempt at putting the Cuba policy in clear language, for to understand its essence is to hopefully make the future roadmap much clearer for strategic planners. Mark Falcoff, a resident scholar with the American Enterprise Institute identified five “drivers” that shape and limit current Cuban policy²⁹:

1. Inertia. Our policy tends to not be based on the merit or weight of the issue, but rather how long the policy has been in place. Several presidents have tried to change the policy’s direction, but the longer it stays in place, the harder it is to uproot the opposition provided by interest groups, particularly the Cuban-American National Foundation. These

groups exert significant political influence and always make themselves the loudest voices to be heard on Cuban issues.

2. **Property Claims.** As previously stated, current United States policy toward Cuba began because Cuba illegally nationalized United States owned assets. Nearly 6,000 certified claims exist against Cuba, with estimated recompense ranging from \$6-100 billion. Despite the fact that Cuba has not denied its responsibility to pay claims, it has never paid a dollar to any American claimant.
3. **Historic Grudges.** According to Falcoff, the United States is given credit for helping Cuba achieve its independence in 1898 and later gave it preferential economic treatment. He said Cubans saw it differently, noting that the United States snatched the victory from deserving Cuban forces and later forced the island nation to pay for part of the American occupation force. Modern grudges include Cuban allegations that the United States put Batista in power as its puppet and was responsible for the deaths of Cubans who challenged Batista. There are also many who will never forget the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and Cuban involvement in the Grenada operation.
4. **Basic Values.** Cuba continues to stand apart of one of few remaining Communist regimes and the only one in the Western Hemisphere. Falcoff gives interesting perspective, noting on one hand that, "the persistence of Communism in Cuba renders our victory in the Cold War slightly short of conclusive." Conversely, he states that from Cuba's point of view, it holds on to its Communist beliefs because "Marxism may yet live to fight another day..."
5. **United States Domestic Politics.** The previously mentioned interest groups have held rein over Cuban policy for 40 years. Because of the current recognition that Cuba holds economic possibility, forces in the business and agricultural communities are strongly pressing congressmen and governors to rethink past practices.

American state and legislative leaders have begun to modify how they think about Cuba, yet the federal government continues the status quo. Seventy-five nations have embassies in Cuba and only one nation has an interest section (which by nature implies limited transnational relations) and that is the United States.³⁰ Why is it that other nation-states and many international governmental organizations (IGO) do not see Cuba as the substantial problem the United States portrays? A review of how key IGOs and nation-states relate to Cuba provides sharply contrasting perspectives to United States policy.

The Pope's visit to Cuba in 1998 brought about significant change in the relationship between the Cuban government and the Catholic Church. Cuba has never had a national church, even though approximately 50% of the population claims to be Roman Catholic.³¹ The Castro government was known to harass the Catholic Church in past years, but the Pope hailed improvements by noting, "the restoration of Christmas...the presence of young Cubans at the

15th World Youth Day in Rome...and a notable increase in the number of the faithful who receive the sacraments.” The Pope also appeared to side with Cuba, stating that, “restrictive economic measures imposed from outside the country are and continue to be unjust and economically unacceptable.” He did, however, call on Cuba for “justice, freedom, and greater solidarity” and reconciliation among all Cubans both for those on the island, and those elsewhere.³² The Vatican’s stated aim is to continue to work for these improvements through pastoral initiatives.

In 1996, the European Union (EU) adopted a position that encouraged Cuba to transition to a pluralist democracy and demonstrate respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The EU’s plan to stimulate this change was to:

- Intensify its dialogue with the Cuban government and all sectors of Cuban society
- Remind Cuba of its human rights responsibilities
- Encourage internal reform and compliance with international agreements
- Provide humanitarian aid and focused economic cooperation projects

Cuba’s ability to make progress in these areas would result in further dialogue and economic cooperation with the EU.³³ In 2002, the EU noted that Cuba had made positive progress in the human rights arena, but had not fully achieved the objectives that made up the basis of EU’s Cuba policy. The EU made a further call for Cuba to institute democracy and implement stronger economic recovery policies.³⁴ Despite this cautious approach, the EU has steadily boosted its trade levels with Cuba since 1996. That year, trade totaled 392 million Euro while in 2000, trade exceeded 750 million Euro.³⁵

In 1998, Great Britain publicly announced its willingness to promote trade with Cuba. Despite being one of the United States’ staunchest allies, Britain clearly opposes the embargo and has moved forward with economic activity that undercuts the United States intentions to isolate Cuba. If not for the continuous waiver of Libertad Act Title III requirements, it is likely the United States and Britain would clash over the extraterritorial sanctions provisions.³⁶

Canada, another strong United States ally, is perhaps Cuba’s largest benefactor. In 1998, it was Cuba’s second largest trade partner, with two-way trade totaled at US\$490 million...only Spain topped that figure at US\$714 million.³⁷ Since the 1980s, Canada’s foreign policy has emphasized constructive engagement with Cuba, strongly encouraging peaceful transition to a democratic society, a transition managed by Cubans themselves. The Canadian International Development Agency has provided \$34 million in development funds to Cuba since 1997. Over 50% of the money went to bilateral programs to stimulate economic reform,

encourage human rights, and boost Cuba's health and education programs. Nearly \$12 million went to partnership projects with the primary purpose of fostering relationships between Canadian and Cuban NGOs. The remaining dollars went to multilateral agencies (primarily the United Nations) to promote poverty reduction and development.³⁸ Canada is the largest booster of Cuba's tourism industry, boasting over 660,000 visitors to the island between 1997 and 1999.³⁹ Canada has publicly stated that it considers Cuba a good business opportunity and boldly pronounced its opposition to the United States embargo:

Canada does not tolerate the extra-territorial application of laws adopted by other governments and encourages Canadian companies to carry out business under the laws and regulations of Canada, not those of a foreign country.⁴⁰

CUBA'S STRATEGIC VALUE

By making such bold pronouncements, Canada clearly indicated its' feelings on Cuba's significance. One should then question why the United States is unwilling to see and accept the same value that Canada does. The nexus lies in domestic politics...arguments for and against America's Cuba policy run an emotional gamut ranging from impassioned hard line expatriates to new strong voices for economic engagement. Somewhere in the middle lies the indifferent class; these are the people who would argue that Cuba has no significant value worth concern. To the contrary, there are specific reasons why strategic leaders and planners must focus on Cuba and develop strategy sufficient to address future issues.

Cuba and the People's Republic of China have had diplomatic relations since 1960. There were relatively few substantive contacts through the early 1980's but that gradually changed, culminating in 1989 when the respective foreign ministers exchanged visits. Since that time, Castro's exchange visits with the Chinese Premier and other high-ranking officials have resulted in the development of extensive bilateral relations. China's official Cuba policy is to "support Cuban people in its just struggle for state sovereignty and against the US blockade." China has agreed to improve trade and economic relations, exchange culture, education, and science and technology, and help Cuba improve its infrastructure. They have also had high-level military exchanges.⁴¹ It is the military-to-military contacts that should give the United States the most concern. Much like the Soviet Union, the Chinese have developed a strategic interest in Cuba and are taking initial steps to establish a presence. Uncorroborated Western intelligence sources indicate China is financing telecommunications operations and recapitalizing old Soviet listening sites.⁴² Assuming this to be true, Cuba provides the perfect

opportunity should China decide it wants to conduct electronic surveillance on the United States.

Two long-time Cuba concerns, terrorism and narcotics, have sparked new emphasis since September 11, 2001 (9/11). According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, Cuba is not considered a major narcotics transit point, but its waters and airspace are used by traffickers to evade United States interdiction efforts.⁴³ There is no known current link to traffickers and the Cuban Government; in fact, Cuba has shown a willingness to work with several countries, United States excepted, to interdict narcotics. Historically, Cuba has not aggressively pursued traffickers, and claims to not have the resources to address the issue. The estimated narcotics flow through and over Cuba has increased, and as Cuban tourism and economic ventures expand, we can expect narcotics volume to rise accordingly.⁴⁴ Undoubtedly, some of contraband will end up about 90 miles north. This issue is a small part of the larger concern about narcotics trafficking's impact on hemispheric security.

The United States continues to list the island nation as one of seven designated state sponsors of terrorism, along with Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Syria, and Sudan. Since the 9/11 attacks, Castro publicly demonstrated Cuban support for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and signed all United Nations counterterrorism conventions. Privately, he continues to believe that terrorism is a legitimate revolutionary tool. Accordingly, he harbors known Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) terrorists, and has provided safe haven and support to the Irish Republican Army and South American terrorist organizations, specifically, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC). Basque ETA and FARC are designated by the State Department as foreign terrorist organizations. Partial criteria for designation as a terrorist organization is that the unit's activities must be a threat to United States national security or its citizens.⁴⁵ Currently, there is no proof of a direct connection between Cuba and the terrorist groups' activities, but there is certainly ideological linkage that could bring them closer together.

As part of his GWOT policy, President Bush stated the United States would "isolate and apply pressure on states that sponsor terrorism to force them to change their behavior."

Government policy specifically imposed four sets of sanctions:⁴⁶

- A ban on arms-related exports and sales
- Controls over exports of dual United States items, requiring 30-day Congressional notification for goods or services that could significantly enhance the terrorist list country's military capability or ability to support terrorism
- Prohibitions on economic assistance

- Imposition of miscellaneous financial and other restrictions

There have been unconfirmed reports that Cuba may be involved in bio-terrorism or weapons of mass destruction production. Experts tend to discount these reports and view Cuba's designation as a terrorism state-sponsor skeptically.⁴⁷ It is, however, within the realm of possibility that a Post-Castro government could capitulate to anti-United States terrorists in return for some political or economic incentive. Vice Admiral Thomas R. Wilson, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, recently testified before the United States Senate that illegal drugs make countries like Cuba ripe targets for narco-terrorism.⁴⁸

International drug cultivation, production, transport, and use will remain a major problem. The connection between drug cartels, corruption, terrorism, and outright insurgency will likely increase as drug money provides an important funding source for all types of criminal and anti-government activity. Emerging democracies and economically strapped states will be particularly susceptible.

CHALLENGES FOR UNITED STATES COOPERATION WITH CUBA

In light of a likely leadership transition within the next ten years, the United States must give full consideration to cooperative initiatives with the current Cuban administration and future leadership candidates. There are several strong reasons why it is time for the United States to implement changes; thus, it will become evident that United States strategic planners must develop the military, economic, diplomatic, and information means to prevent catastrophic collapse, and help a Post-Castro Cuba successfully achieve democracy.

Militarily, the Defense Intelligence Agency reported that Cuba poses "no significant threat" to the United States. The disintegration of the Soviet bloc effectively isolated Cuba, and put into motion the Revolutionary Armed Force's (FAR) gradual degradation. The once expeditionary force has now become a self-defense mechanism that is approximately half the size it was in 1989. This is not to presume, however, that Cuba will not use military force. That same report noted that Cuba does have limited capacity to carry out military and intelligence activities that could have detrimental effect on United States interests and citizens.⁴⁹ The aforementioned shoot down of American aircraft in international airspace demonstrated Cuba's intent to forcefully defend its sovereign territory. Castro will continue to use his military to enforce his authoritarian regime, the last of its kind in the western hemisphere. The FAR will be a strong key to smooth Cuba transition; it is respected as the strongest institution in Cuban society, it has never turned on civilians in domestic matters, and it has loyally accepted civilian authority under Castro's leadership. This position of strength bodes well for the future.⁵⁰

At the same time the world has moved rapidly towards globalization, we have witnessed the continual collapse of national economies that have chosen to remain with socialist models. Cuba's unwillingness to change forced it to take drastic survival measures to include legalizing the United States dollar, seeking joint ventures with foreign partners, and tolerating private economic activities for the first time since the Batista government.⁵¹

The long-term purpose of United States policy towards Cuba was to stop the spread of Castro-influenced Communism. That goal was achieved and most experts consider Cuban Communism to be dead as a Western Hemisphere political force. Nations that used to fear Cuban subversion now have evolved toward stable democracies that participate in the global economy.⁵² The question becomes how long the Cuban style of government will last once Castro is out of office. Policy experts believe that a democratic and free-market Cuba will inevitably replace the Castro model.⁵³

During a May 18, 2001 Cuba Independence Day speech, President Bush made reference to an Information Instrument of Power (IOP) that America has used against Castro for years: Radio Marti which began transmissions in 1985 and TV Marti which started in 1990.⁵⁴ The purpose of both was to ensure, "fair and objective news were finally made available to the Cuban people..."⁵⁵ It remains debatable as to this IOP's effectiveness for two reasons. First, Cuba was successful in jamming TV Marti, thus most Cuban citizens never saw it. Secondly, Radio Marti did not warrant the greatest internal support because it was viewed as a tool of the South Florida anti-Castro constituency and not that of an objective United States government.⁵⁶ Despite this IOP's ambiguous success, President Bush is undeterred. He said, "We will look for ways to use new technology...to counter your silencing of the voices of liberty."⁵⁷

Formal use of the diplomatic IOP is limited in nature. The United States established an Interests Sections (USINT) in Havana under the protection of the Swiss Embassy; likewise, Cuba maintains a similar function in the United States. USINT's purpose is to provide consular services, maintain a political and economic section, conduct public diplomacy (as much as Castro will allow), and process refugee issues unique to Cuba. It also maintains open dialogue with the Cuban Government on a number of objectives that aim to promote a peaceful transition to a democratic system based on respect for rule of law, individual human rights and open economic and communication systems.⁵⁸ Though not the strongest IOP the United States employs, diplomacy has garnered limited success; a key example was the State Department's efforts to convince Cuba to work more closely together on drug interdiction. Assistant Secretary

of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Rand Beers, testified before Congress that Cuba took positive transnational steps to stem regional drug operations:

Our counternarcotics objective is to facilitate drug interdiction efforts around Cuba and to prevent the island from becoming a major drug transit center to the United States...we are currently exploring some modest steps to achieve these goals...the Cubans have responded favorably to these proposals, and we are currently examining next steps in light of international and domestic laws that govern how exchanged information can be used.⁵⁹

There has been and continues to be significant debate amongst policy officials and interested actors as to the effectiveness of our long-standing policy. One side argues that it has failed to deter Castro and weaken his grip on the island nation. The other side argues that it is the best way to inhibit the dictator, continue the focus on his brutal repression of human rights, and create pressure for economic and democratic reform. The author considers the current policy to be justifiable, but in need of significant updating. It would be questionable, at this point, to lift the embargo in light of the United States continued designation of Cuba as a terrorism state sponsor. On the other hand, by not reforming its policy, the United States risks future incidents such as mass refugee flows and violent Cuban episodes, particularly if the Post-Castro government fails to establish solid footing. Engagement now will allow the United States to help shape Cuba and prepare for critical situations that are likely to occur.

Before strategists can develop a workable Cuba policy, United States political and diplomatic leaders must institute solid guidelines that, first and foremost, provide consensus on the issue. No longer can our national policy be dictated by a single interest group; full consideration must be given to all parties with the overwhelming emphasis on what is best for national security. There are signs that the tide is starting to shift in the Cuban-American exile community, and the United States may be shifting its stance. On Jan 6, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell met with Oswaldo Paya, a Cuban dissident who has worked inside Cuba to promote human rights and democratic change. This meeting seemed to annotate a change in the government's approach to Cuba, increasingly listening to pro-democracy voices from inside Cuba and not just to Cuban exiles from South Florida. A recent poll also show that Cuban exiles are starting to change their views, primarily due to the arrival of new generations of Cubans in Miami.⁶⁰

Second, the Bush Administration should seek to look beyond Castro and make a concerted effort to intercourse with the next generation of Cuban leaders. This requires putting aside 44 years of animosity. Finally, United States policy should recognize that, while predominantly American, this should not be a unilateral effort. Budget constraints and more

pressing issues like the Iraq and North Korean crises will mandate a multi-lateral effort in which non-governmental actors play key roles.⁶¹

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENGAGE THE CURRENT CUBAN GOVERNMENT

As Castro's demise approaches imminence, the question becomes one of immediacy: should the United States put its primary focus on continued engagement with "El Comandante" or should its efforts tend toward identifying and shaping the Post-Castro government? The United States must continue its attempts to influence Castro even if one presumes results similar to the last 44 years. To do less would be an admission that our Cuban policy was an abject failure that should have been abandoned years ago. Quite the contrary, the policy did and continues to have some effect on Castro's behavior. If nothing else, it maintains Castro's best excuse for why the Cuban economy is so poor. If the Cuban people start to blame Castro for the nation's poor economy instead of the United States, it could lead to internal pressure and conflict. Castro's historic solution for such pressure is to open the ports and allow refugees to sail towards American shores. Indeed, it is time for an adaptive policy that leaves most of the current policy intact for political reasons, but introduces new initiatives that reach out to future Cuban governance. Within the United States' national instruments of power lie those critical components, both to engage Castro and to appeal to his replacements, that will make up the strategic framework for re-emergent relations.

Economic Courses of Action (COA) provide the best opportunities to continue engagement with Castro, while also signaling future Cuban leaders that the United States is sincere about helping it transform. America should continue with the recent trade initiatives, allow the export of communications equipment that could spur internal openness, and encourage foreign countries to increase investments in Cuba. This approach would maintain the gist of the embargo, but demonstrate to Cuba our willingness to help them rebuild their economy and improve the plight of their citizens. This is old ground that has been covered before, but any opportunity to increase the level of engagement with Castro is worth the gambit.

From a technological perspective, the Information IOP remains difficult for United States strategists to employ. Castro will continue to find ways to impede Radio and TV Marti transmissions and control Internet access. The most feasible recommendation is to stop using these mediums until a new government is in-place, but President Bush as already defined his policy. Therefore, the optimal method to exploit information is the old fashioned way: increased people-to- people contacts. The United States should lift the ban on travel by Americans to Cuba. This would allow more people to visit the island nation and bring their cash, ideals, and

values to bear. Opponents could argue that Castro may block such an attempt by the United States, but that is not likely because he needs the capital more tourism would bring. Increased tourist levels would also make it difficult for Castro's security mechanism to conduct surveillance on all visitors; thus many would be able to interface extensively with the Cuban populace. This approach can definitely have significant bearing on planners' efforts to identify and shape future Cuban leaders.

Diplomatic COAs present limited chances for success. The United States should seek out opportunities to use emissaries and other international actors to promote engagement. Recent visits by The Pope and former President Jimmy Carter give hope that Castro will continue to consider new ideas and philosophies. Most importantly, it is time to attempt a high-level State Department visit to Cuba with the purpose of signaling America's intent to establish positive bi-lateral relations. Most likely, domestic politics would impact such a trip's feasibility, but America lost its justification to diplomatically isolate Cuba when it sent then Secretary of State Madeline Albright to establish relations with North Korean President Kim Jong Il. Since that time, Kim has violated international nuclear law, continued serious weapons proliferation, and threatened the United States with war; Cuba has not and cannot provide any such challenge.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A POST-CASTRO GOVERNMENT

Opportunities for strategic success with a post-Castro government are much more bountiful, but certainly more risk laden. A recommendation sure to raise controversy involves the billions of dollars in property claims against Cuba. The United States should dangle a "democracy carrot" in front of future Cuban leaders by striking Title III of the Helms-Burton Act from law once Castro leaves power. This is not to suggest that former Cuban property owners should be ignored; they do have valid claims that should be adjudged in international courts of law. But the United States should use the initiative to encourage future Cuban leaders to move posthaste toward a democratic form of government. Cuba has expressed some willingness to negotiate just compensation, probably in terms of pennies on the dollar. Former property owners will likely deem this an unsatisfactory solution, but taken in the comparative context of a \$6-7 trillion United States economy, this is no longer an issue worth the dissension it creates.⁶²

The United States should also make a strong push for Cuba's inclusion in regional IGOs like the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to help bring Cuba into a community of nations that can positively its direction.⁶³ CARICOM has already made some strides, inviting Castro and Cuban representatives to participate in recent conclaves.⁶⁴ The OAS, which banned Cuba from membership in 1962, is chartered to help the

American States “achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence.” The OAS key issues list is a perfect functional menu of exactly what Cuba needs for future viability.⁶⁵

- Strengthening the democratic commitment
- United against terrorism
- Security concerns of small island states
- Protecting human rights
- Evaluating progress against illegal drugs
- Free trade in the hemisphere
- A new approach to development
- Promoting national dialogue
- Promoting sustainable development

It is time for OAS to bring Cuba back into the fold. Castro will not likely take advantage of the assistance, but this is another carrot that can be offered to its future leadership. The assistance should come in the form of a “Partnership for Peace” (PfP) style initiative wherein Cuba would consult and cooperate with member nations on a range of economic, political and security-related matters. In short, Cuba would become a long-term junior partner until it is ready for a return to full membership. For this initiative to be successful, OAS and the United States should strongly consider doing what NATO did for its PfP members: accept Cuba without insisting on an immediate change in style of government. While completely counter to current policy and predominant thinking, it is not beyond the realm of possibility to assume that America can coexist with Cuba as something less than a democratic state. The United States has endeavored to establish strong relations with China, Russia and Vietnam over the past 10 years...one could easily argue that all three have done significantly more harm to American national security than Cuba ever has.⁶⁶ The rationale for this recommendation is sound: Post-Castro Cuba needs time to make a true transition to democracy and the United States has

never lacked compunction about working with dissimilar nations when it was in its national interests.

The most intriguing avenue for success is the military IOP. The United States and Cuban militaries have not worked together with the exception of Coast Guard drug interdiction operations. The FAR is Cuba's most dominant institution, clearly responsible for keeping Castro in power.⁶⁷ Subsequently, the likelihood of shaping Cuba's transition through the FAR is remote, considering its leader is none other than Raul Castro, Fidel's brother. Raul is also Fidel's heir apparent, which is indication that the military will probably stay loyal to the current style of government. Still, the United States military must make concerted efforts to establish a working relationship with its regional counterpart. The proverbial foot-in-the-door is the aforementioned transnational drug interdiction link. A military cooperation agreement should be offered to the Cuban government, encouraging cooperation on narcotrafficking, international crime, terrorism, and even environmental enforcement and catastrophe response.⁶⁸ An ideal organization already exists to implement such an initiative. The Conference of American Armies (CAA) is a 40-year old consortium of Western Hemisphere armies that aims to analyze, debate, and exchange defense ideas and experiences that will better improve cooperation and interoperability. Twenty nations including the United States essentially bonded together to promote security and democratic development of its members.⁶⁹ Because of Cuba's non-democratic status, it is not likely they would be accepted for full-membership, but the CAA does offer observer status that would allow Cuba to participate on a limited basis as it transforms. As an observer, the FAR would be required to:⁷⁰

- 1) Actively participate with an official delegation in a cycle event per year and in the Commanders' Conference, as well as the other conferences and official CAA activities, following the pertinent procedures set forth in the CAA regulations.
- 2) Establish a CAA Liaison Office with the CAA Permanent Executive Secretariat, in accordance with the stipulations for member armies in the regulations for the CAA Liaison Office.

A selling point to FAR and Cuban government officials is that the CAA is not dominated by the United States. CAA leadership rotates annually at the end of each conference with 13 nations having led the organization since 1960. Canada assumed leadership for the first time in 2002 and certainly could be a strong advocate for Cuban inclusion. International leadership vice unilateral United States actions will increase the likelihood of successful transition. The recommendation assumes that Fidel and Raul Castro would not be receptive to military cooperation, and any prudent attempts to expand military-to-military relationships will only be

successful with future military and government officials. This is a critical issue for the future; the FAR holds the key to stability in Cuba, therefore it is in the United States' interest to partner with them now before it has to face them in a future intervention.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

One could read this paper, particularly the recommendations, and conclude that the author is suggesting America concede to Castro. Quite the contrary; the United States should continue to pressure President Castro to relinquish his status as the hemisphere's last Communist. The author is, however, suggesting that the time has come to tone down domestic politics and do what is best for Cuba and United States national interests. Policy and strategy must be changed to achieve balance between engaging Castro in his remaining years and shaping future Cuban leadership to help them achieve Democracy. The roots for success are in place: economic basis in the form of strong tourism and potential trade, close proximity to the world's hegemon, an exile population that is religiously vested in Cuba's future success, and a military that is highly professional and capable of defending its borders. The United States' inability to successfully resolve this morass may prove true what some experts have implied for years: the United States does not have a viable Cuba strategy, but a "Wait Until Fidel Dies Act."² The time is now to develop and implement a coherent strategy that will further national interests, make the hemisphere a complete transnational body, and improve the lot of America's neighbors...only 90 miles away.

WORD COUNT = 7,677

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