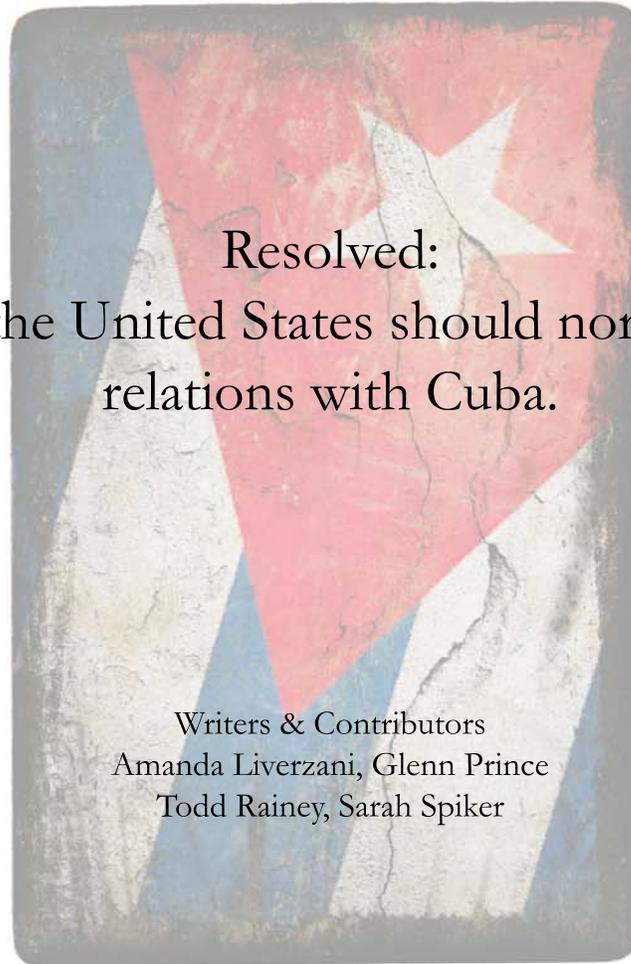


2008/2009

Public Forum Debate

Topic Analysis



Resolved:
That the United States should normalize
relations with Cuba.

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Topic Analysis by Glenn Prince

Congrats on making it to NFL Nationals! It is a great honor to represent your District and I wish you all the luck as you make your way through preparation for this tournament. That being said, the NFL Nationals Public Forum topic is Resolved: That the United States should normalize relations with Cuba. Before jumping into the arguments with both sides, its important to figure out what both the Pro and Con must do in order to effectively debate this controversial issue.

SIZING UP THE RESOLUTION

Normalize relations is not a term of art that is easily defined by foreign policy experts. Normalize is defined as to establish or resume in a normal manner, as between countries.

Essentially, in the case of Cuba, almost all scholars agree that the key component to normalizing relations involves removing sanctions on the country of Cuba. In fact, it may be a prerequisite to doing anything else with Cuba because the sanctions placed on Cuba encompass most other actions that the Pro can take to normalize relations. If the Pro does not remove sanctions on Cuba, the negative could effectively argue that they are the Pro will not be able to resume normal behavior if one of the main parts of our foreign policy toward them is not repealed. Thus, the Pro is also boxed into having to deal with the sanctions debate, even if they do not initially intend to do so. This is good news for the Con side because the foreign policy literature is fairly expansive on normalizing relations with Cuba as a positive benefit to the United States. Utilizing these burdens arguments will allow the Con to craft more ground for their side while still maintaining a healthy, topic specific debate.

ISSUES IN US-CUBAN FOREIGN POLICY

While Guantanamo Bay dominates the news, the closure of Guantanamo Bay has been covered extensively by the media. Thus, this essay will focus on some of the other issues facing US-Cuban relations: agriculture,

Agriculture

Agriculture is one key component for both sides of the debate. Agriculture firms and lobbies have been very vocal about their support about reversing the current policies toward Cuba. In 2000, agricultural companies won a small victory when the embargo was amended to allow some food and agricultural exports to Cuba. In 2008, \$710 million dollars in goods was exported into the country of Cuba. However, the trade embargo could be totally lifted and the economic climate could be more inclusive to Cuban exports. For the Pro, the Pro can argue effectively that famine and malnutrition are real problems for the people of Cuba that domestic production in Cuba cannot offset. As the World Resources Institute noted in 2008¹:

Still, many people in Cuba aren't getting enough to eat, and the problem is twofold. For one thing, the government stores where residents can spend their ration cards often run out of staple foods. And the more recent additions of free market stalls, where farmers can sell their surplus after meeting the government quota, have prices too high for many average Cubans to afford. Essentially, to feed the country the successful cooperative system needs to be grown even more.

The centralized control of most industry coupled with the devastating hurricanes of 2008 has decimated the domestic production in agriculture and principally, sugar. Moreover, with outdated technology in the sugar sector, the amount of output has declined from an all-time high in the late 1980s of over 8 million tons to just over a million in 2007. Moreover, Cuba is looking to import more and more of its food as the global fluctuations in weather patterns have made agricultural output inconsistent. However, Cuba's greatest opportunity to do so would be to open up agricultural markets to US firms, but the current embargo

¹ Lisa Raffensperger, Changes on the Horizon for Cuba's Sustainable Agriculture, 5/5/08, <http://earthtrends.wri.org/updates/node/306>

stops them from doing so. For the Pro, with the global economy in the tank, it's an easy argument that the Cuban market would alleviate some of the economic impact felt by agribusiness by allowing a full an open market to develop between the United States and Cuba. While it is unknown just how much money would be made by a total resumption of normal relations, in its modest form the current policy has made almost 1 billion dollars. Thus, it is fairly easy to argue that total resumption would reap billions of dollars with a relative low start up cost given the proximity of Cuba to the United States.

For the Con, while it is true that famine and poverty do exist and that agriculture may be part of the problem, Cuba is home to some of the world's best sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture connotes farming methods that conserve the environment by minimizing damage to soil, water sources, species habitat and other natural resources. Examples include no-till farming, crop rotation, and prevention of runoff or leaching of fertilizers and pesticides. In light of the embargo, Cuba has had to develop methods that were not mainstream and utilized the services found internally. However, with the lifting of the embargo does come with a loss of this agriculture. As the World Resources Institute noted again in 2008²:

Those farms, and the influx of subsidized U.S. food, may be the answer to the food problem that has plagued Cuba for decades, finally making food affordable for all its citizens. But it would also be a premature ending of Cuba's grand experiment in sustainable farming, just as productivity has nearly reached its previous highs. And the experiment would end, potentially, on the eve of better U.S.-Cuba relations, when much of Cuban farmers' and scientists' accumulated knowledge in sustainable farming could finally have an open route to being shared with American growers.

Thus, while improving relations between Cuba and the United States would undoubtedly help the flow of food and other agricultural products, it may foreclose the ability for Cuba to share its knowledge with the US and other

² Lisa Raffensperger, Changes on the Horizon for Cuba's Sustainable Agriculture, 5/5/08, <http://earthtrends.wri.org/updates/node/306>

smaller, developing countries that desperately need a way to sustain their own populations without turning to large, corporate farms which often harm the environment and decimate local economies. Moreover, huge agribusiness utilizes every pesticide it possibly can to increase output. While this does substantially increase yields, the environmental consequences of pesticides result in higher rates of cancer and other neurological disorders and diseases which can ultimately lead to an untimely death not just for those who are close to these factory farms, but because pesticides leech into the water table, it can severely effect entire populations for generations to come.

Travel Ban

In April of 2009, President Obama lifted the travel ban for Cuban Americans allowing Cuban Americans to travel back and forth between the United States and Cuba. Under this same plan, the President lifted the limit on remittances allowing more money to flow freely between Cuba and the United States. However, Obama's declaration did little to signal a larger change in foreign policy on the travel ban.

For the Pro, there are lots of advocates who have argued for a total removal of the travel ban to Cuba. In fact, there is growing bipartisan support for the total revocation of this ban. On May 21, 2009, Senator Richard Lugar was joined by 16 other Republican and Democratic Senators in sponsoring the Promoting American Agricultural and Medical Exports to Cuba Act of 2009, which among other things, advocates for a total lifting of the travel ban. Lifting the travel ban would reap tremendous rewards for both the United States and Cuba. According to the Center for Democracy in the Americas in 2009³:

Allowing Americans to visit Cuba freely by ending the travel ban would also be a

³ 9 Ways for US to talk to Cuba and Cuba to Talk to the USA,
<http://democracyinamericas.org/cubacentral/cubacentral/mission>

boon for U.S. businesses. One report, sponsored by the Freedom to Travel campaign, predicted that an end to the travel ban could increase U.S. economic output by more than \$1 billion and could create tens of thousands of new jobs in the U.S. tourism industry. U.S. consumer product companies would also benefit from an end to travel restrictions as demand by American tourists in Cuba for familiar products like toothpaste and soda would increase. And, according to a study by the U.S. International Trade Commission in 2007, overall farm sales could increase by more than \$300 million per year if travel and trade restrictions are lifted.

Not only would lifting the travel ban help from a purely economic standpoint, but many have argued that the opening of dialogue between ordinary Americans and Cubans that would occur when the embargo is lifted would allow a cultural exchange that would provide Cubans insight into a government absent the Castro regime. The conservative think tank The Cato Institute has noted that this would be one of the most basic ways to restore proper governance to Cuba by showing Cuba that democracy is a viable, functioning alternative found in a powerful, neighboring country. While Cubans certainly understand there is a different political system in the United States, the extent to which they understand that difference in a real, meaningful way can only be known when dialogue can occur not between high-level diplomats, but between citizens of Cuba and the United States.

The Con has some work to do on this debate. One basic argument against the travel ban is an argument seemingly for the Pro. The fact that the travel ban encourages daily interactions between citizens that could lead to a revolution would not please the new Castro regime. While Raul is more moderate than Fidel, Raul is still interested in keeping the consolidation of power found currently in the government. While partial revocation of the ban or allowing greater commerce to flourish are lauded by Raul, allowing this much openness may be a threat to his government. The perceived threat to the Cuban government would

be enough to cause Raul to become more hard-line and crackdown on political dissidents or others who seek to question his government. His recent removal and shuffle of Cabinet members signals that Raul will do whatever it takes to ensure his power is not vulnerable to challenge. Knowing that revolution was the way that his father seized power, Raul will be careful to avoid any such challenges to his political prowess. Moreover, tourism already provides 2.7 billion dollars to the government, so there is really no need to expand that industry. As long as Canada and the European Union continue to frequent Cuba, the need for the United States to create Cuba as the next great tourist attraction is more of an argument for expanding the United States economy, not helping Cuba. Thus, lifting the travel ban may not lift any of the economic hardships facing Cuba. In fact, it may only exacerbate the rich poor gap as those who can afford to invest will become more wealthy, while the lower and middle class in Cuba will be once again left behind in this seeming economic boom.

Terrorism List

Cuba has been on the U.S. State Department's List of terrorism-sponsoring states since 1982. The Pro's argument to remove them from the state sponsor's of terrorism list would be a natural claim to make given this topic. Normalization of relations would require the United States to recognize that Cuba should not belong on the list because it has not actively engaged in any antagonistic or terrorist activity since the late 1980s. The Pro will need to argue that many of the claims that have placed Cuba on the terrorism list lack substantiation. In 1998, a comprehensive study was undertaken that indicated that Cuba lacked the capability to be a threat to the United States and that the current Cuban regime was not friendly or supportive of terrorist organizations. Moreover, since that study, no other study has been able to make a definitive link between Cuba and any terrorist organization worldwide. Much like the Iraq weapons of mass destruction myth, the Cold War myth of Cuba's overriding hostility toward America is based more on bombast and posturing than actual evidence that can

link Cuba to known organizations. Additionally, our placing them on the terrorist list may actually be undermining global counterterrorism efforts because the United States and Cuba refuse to have an active dialogue about the issue because Cuba is skeptical of the interests of the United States in trying to procure this information. Thus, the United States may be taking actions that could result in a loss of intelligence that could spur another major terrorist action against the United States, an outcome the United States purports to actively fight against.

For the Con, the argument is simple: the State Department has a reason to keep them on the terrorism list. First, Cuba has engaged in dialogue with Syria, Iran, and Libya about increasing ties between themselves and those nations. In the case of Iran, Cuba sought an extensive expansion of relations from the economy to foreign policy. Their public and vocal opposition to the war on terror indicates that Cuba is more interested in not supporting counterterrorism than being an active ally in the fight against global terrorism. Moreover, according to the State Department, Cuba has not made any attempts to “track, block, or seize terrorist assets,” which is a hallmark of global counterterrorism. If Cuba were really interested in ceasing terrorism and being an active ally in the fight, taking these nonviolent actions would seemingly be a natural extension of the alliance. However, as Cuba continually balks at actions undertaken by the United States, one can only wonder the underlying reason why they continue to do so. Perhaps the most telling evidence is that Cuba actively supports two Colombian rebel groups who are currently engaged in terrorist activity both in Colombia and abroad. The National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) both maintain an active presence in Cuba, one that is not fought by the Castro regime. Without a public condemnation or declaration by the government that these organizations and their behavior engage in activities that the Cuban government does not approve of, the United States makes the logical conclusion that the Cuban government endorses the actions taken out by both of these organizations.

CONCLUSION

A normalized relation with Cuba is more than Gitmo and sanctions. I hope this essay has illustrated 3 other very important areas of normalization that you may not immediately attend to in your research. Good luck and enjoy your nationals experience!

Topic Analysis by Todd Rainey

What does normalization of relations have to do with oil?

Rumor has it that there is an embargo in place on Cuba.⁴ While the Obama administration has taken a few steps toward normalizing relations with Cuba right now, at the end of the day, economic activity is severely restricted, and until goods and services are more freely exchanged, relations could hardly be called “normalized.” Knowing that the Obama administration is more likely to change its course of action than the Bush regime, a lot of good literature has been written – especially by business articles which stand to gain from normalization – regarding potential economic and/or diplomatic expansion into Cuba. The largest gains we may see, however, would likely come from the oil sector.

Will Weissert of the Associated Press points out in an article on March 24, 2009 that “the U.S. embargo not only prohibits American oil companies from investing, but bans the sale of the latest drilling equipment, forcing Cupet⁵ to use less efficient technology...” The embargo, then, not only prevents the United States from drilling for oil in Cuba, but it effectively prevents any company from using American technology to drill in Cuba’s waters. Because of this, many oil fields lie unexplored and/or unexploited.

In 2006, Congress considered a bill known as the “Western Hemisphere Energy Security Act of 2006,” which would have granted exception to the Cuban embargo for the purpose of oil exploration, but failed. Much of the debate at the time centered around recent drilling contracts which Cuba had signed with oil companies in other countries – this debate was heard again to some extent when, toward the end of the Bush administration, Dick Cheney’s office stated, falsely, that Chinese companies were actively drilling for oil in Cuban waters. Although many of the claims surrounding the nature of Cuba’s oil fields are contradictory, the certain truth is that the American oil industry is lobbying for

⁴ Yes. There is an embargo on Cuba.

⁵ Cupet is the Cuban state-run oil company.

access to these fields, and that Cuba has partners lined up and ready for American cooperation. When looking up the debate surrounding any oil drilling, consider the above bill, refutations of the claims from Cheney's office, and the "Drill, baby, drill!" from 2008.

So why debate oil?

Long story short, if relations with Cuba become normalized, oil drilling will more than likely become a part of that normalization. Although it can be easy to dismiss petrochemicals as a problem of the past, America still needs energy, and when it recovers from recession, oil will be extremely relevant. The company Ernst & Young LLP, for instance, noted in a February of 2009 report that oil companies expand their drilling operations through the current economic crisis, even if investment in alternative energy is still a good idea.

It would be faulty to assume that the oil debate is made obsolete by an increase in alternative energy investments. Although alternative fuels likely are the way of the future, oil drives the present economy, and the technology to transition away from this economy simply is nonexistent. Therefore, if we are to produce affordable energy in the near future, new oil sources may be the answer to our troubles. With Cuba seeking to access its oil reserves (but unable to do so), the two countries may be able to help one another out.

So how does oil drilling in Cuba work?

Cuba currently has an oil drilling operation on its land mass and in its shallow waters. Nevertheless, the nation is a net importer of oil, and currently depends on Venezuela as its lifeline in a doctors-for-oil relationship. In an attempt to wrangle investment in oil fields it wishes to explore, Cuba has opened up fifty-five "lots" for sale to outside companies under a joint offer – if they drill, Cuba gets a share of the profits, but the company has a new oil field with which to work. So far, a few nations have purchased lots; China, for instance, has made agreements with Cuba. However, because all of the "lots" for sale by Cuba lie in

deep waters, the cost of drilling is higher for many foreign investors because equipment has to be shipped from great distances, as well as operate without American components.

American oil companies have the necessary technology and expertise to drill in Caribbean deep waters – and being uniquely close to the island, are more than capable of moving in anything they need to explore and transport resources. Most important, however, is the possibility that if relations with Cuba are normalized, oil could be transported to the mainland United States by pipeline rather than by tanker. Richard Ranger, a senior policy advisor for the American Petroleum Institute, stated in a June 19, 2008 conference call that when America imports its oil, it does so via oil tankers, which are much more likely to produce oil spills than pipelines. Drilling for oil in Cuba, then, grants the only technology available to reach deep-water oil fields while also increasing oil intake via pipeline, likely to refineries in Texas or Louisiana.

What should Pro debaters go for?

Since global warming and the “green revolution” is all the rage, the odds of a debate on whether or not normalized relations will result in drilling for oil are fairly low. In the event that the argument arises, pro debaters should consider whether or not the argument is worth making. Oil development is a strong economic boon and a solid investment as the economy recovers and demand increases. This can also pull the debate to “oil vs alternatives,” which favors a well-prepared pro team, but can absolutely crush one not willing to go for the big arguments. Con debaters can briefly mention global warming, and most of this environment’s judges will be receptive, so oil development should be thoroughly framed as a means of smoothly transitioning to new fuels.

On the subject of the environment, the Pro needs to remember, as stated above, that the status quo policies of the embargo force the nation to import its oil via tanker, which is hardly an environmentally-friendly way of living. The pro

may also want to consider what would happen if a foreign company did try to drill for oil in Cuba without American technology. Without the stronger technology, the risk of oil spills would increase, and again, the environment would pay the price. Rather than dismiss the environment as inconsequential, embrace the debate and co-opt it by acknowledging the already destructive status quo as a problem that needs a solution. Conduct research into how oil transitions into alternative energy, the benefits of American rig technology in specificity, and how the American operation may assist Cuba in its own environmental endeavors.

Oil Normalization

A normalization of relations would once again allow U.S. companies to involve themselves economically with Cuba. This would inevitably allow U.S.-based oil companies access to Cuban offshore drilling. In the event of a thaw in U.S.-Cuban relations, Cuba would be willing to allow the United States access to their resources. Jens Erik Gould, a staff writer for Bloomberg, on April 3, 2009 indicates that Cuba would welcome oil production cooperation from the United States. Citing a senior oil adviser from Cuba's Ministry of Basic Industries, the article notes that U.S. cooperation would be acceptable because of geographic proximity. Gould also notes that China, Russia, and Angola are currently engaged in discussions with Cuba over oil exploration. Several oil deals have already been made. According to Hillary Moise, a research associate at the Center of Hemispheric Affairs, on July 18, 2006, Norway, India, Spain and China have signed drilling contracts for Cuba's offshore reserves. Moise notes that steadily increasing competition from outside companies has only heightened as Cuba has begun to auction off permits for its oil reserves. Americans would be prudent to remember the devastatingly high oil prices of last year. While prices have decreased tremendously since the oil peak, Platts on February 17, 2009 explains that increasing U.S. oil production now is necessary:

The current downturn in oil and natural gas prices may be about halfway over,

according to consulting firm Ernst & Young, which urged producers...to continue drilling to be in a position to take advantage of an eventual recovery. The company said it believes when the current pricing cycle stabilizes, oil and gas producers "will benefit from solid opportunities in the overall economic recovery," adding that previous downturns in commodity prices have lasted an average of 73 weeks.⁶

Normalization of relations would allow U.S. oil companies a key advantage for when market rebounds. Additional benefits would exist if the U.S. would engage in Cuban oil exploration.

Environment

Who would have thought that U.S. oil exploration could actually save the environment and not simply destroy it. Since several oil contracts have already been made and Cuba is set on auctioning off the remaining permits, drilling in Cuban waters is inevitable. However, U.S. oil companies would hold a geographic advantage. Because the Cuban oil fields are just 100 miles off the U.S. coast, fewer U.S. tanker ships would be needed to extract the same oil. Richard Ranger, a senior policy advisor for the American Petroleum Institute, on June 19, 2008 explains that if the U.S. does not drill in Cuba, many more foreign tankers would be needed in the Gulf for oil extraction. He notes that foreign tankers would not hold a high commitment to environmental standards: "[U.S.] tankers, properly regulated, properly manned, using the procedures that we operate under here in the U.S., are quite safe. What we can't say is if that's the same around the world." Thus, U.S. oil exploration would hold two benefits because (1) U.S. environmental standards are much higher than those found elsewhere in the world and (2) fewer tankers would be needed to transport the oil due to regional proximity.

Furthermore, increasing cooperation would allow for pro-environmental development of Cuba's energy sector. According to a U.S. Senate staff trip report

⁶ <http://www.platts.com/Oil/News/6154589.xml>

on February 23, 2009, “an important element of an effective energy strategy [between the U.S. and Cuba] from both the cost and environmental perspectives lies in forging technological and open trading relationships...”

The staff report indicates that if relations would thaw, the U.S. would be an important force to ensure a sustainable Cuban energy sector. Limiting the short-term damage caused by tankers and developing a long-term plan for sustainability is necessary to protect Caribbean coral. Laretta Burke, a senior associate at the People and Ecosystems Program of the World Resources Institute, and Jonathon Maidens in August 2005, explain that oil spills destroy coral by damaging reproductive tissues of coral (therefore making the coral more susceptible to other environmental stresses) and permanently killing off existing coral structures. The sources of this pollution are many. Burke and Maidens explain that:

Marine-based sources of pollution, including oil discharge and spills...are a cause for great concern in the Caribbean region. Much of this threat is related to the high amount of marine transportation in the Caribbean. For example, ship anchors can extensively damage the seafloor; discharge from ships releases a toxic mix of oil, nutrients, invasive species, and other pollutants. The routine maintenance and washing of oil tanks, drilling rigs, and pipelines releases a significant amount of oil into the environment. Oil damages coral reproductive tissues, harms zooxanthellae (algae that lives symbiotically inside corals), inhibits juvenile coral recruitment, and reduces the resilience of reefs to other stresses.

However, debaters must remember that this damage is inevitable even in a world where the U.S. does not normalize relations with Cuba. Protecting Cuba’s coral reefs and microorganisms are necessary to protect biodiversity throughout the whole Caribbean. According to the Environmental Defense Fund last updated on October 14, 2004, Cuba is situated in a key position for the region:

Located where the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean meet, Cuba is the largest island in the Caribbean. Its coastal waters are strung with islets and keys, and its massive reef tracts (three of which equal or exceed the Florida Keys) provide spawning grounds for multitudes of snappers, groupers, lobsters and corals. This unique ecosystem has remained relatively undisturbed

but now faces increasing threats from coastal development, tourism and overfishing. Because of the prevailing currents and its proximity to neighboring countries, preserving this hot spot of Caribbean biodiversity is important for other biologically rich marine areas in the region.

Healthy and biologically rich coral reefs are necessary for cultivating other marine life that sustains populations. Burke and Maidens in August 2005 explains that coral reefs help prevent malnutrition for millions living in the Caribbean.

Furthermore, they note that the structure of coral reefs build up shorelines to protect islands like Cuba from tropical storm swells. Burke and Maidens also note that protecting Cuban biodiversity through environmentally safe oil drilling could lure divers and tourists from around the world, which could boost Caribbean economies. These tourism dollars represent a small fraction of the economic benefit that Cubans could have as a result of US oil involvement.

Cuban Economy Benefit

Debaters are free to discuss the benefits of the resolution framed in terms of the Cuban people. In fact, looking at Cuban benefits would provide a refreshing alternative to the current myopic view that the United States holds. Despite growth in some areas, failure to develop the Cuba oil industry has left Cuba economically vulnerable and has pushed the nation even closer to another unstable partner and U.S. enemy, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. The South Florida Sun Sentinel on March 17, 2008 explains that Venezuela's \$2 billion annual oil deal with Cuba may suffer cuts. Normalizing relations with Cuba by ending barriers to oil drilling and open up the country economically, would allow for a much quicker development of Cuban oil by decreasing transport and development costs associated with other, regionally-alienated countries. Gould on April 3, 2009 explains that a pro-oil lobby within the United States is pushing for exceptions to the oil barrier. In the process, Gould notes that if Cuba U.S. companies could be able to lower the cost of oil services and supplies and speed up oil development from status quo drilling policies. The United States'

geographic proximity also makes the delivery of equipment much more efficient. Gould explains that “the difficulty of getting equipment from partners halfway around the world is a key reason only one offshore well has been drilled so far.” These benefits would augment other economic advantages by speeding up the process and improving profits. Will Weissert, an Associated Press writer on March 24, 2009, explains that the production of oil dollars is vital to improve access to basic goods in Cuba. Weissert explains that:

In a country plagued by shortages, petrodollars could mean more steak, shoes and soap, as well as medical supplies and heavy machinery needed to replace Soviet-era equipment. Havana also needs hard currency for President Raul Castro to raise state salaries, which support about 90 percent of the island's working population on an average \$19.70-a-month wage.

Normalizing oil relations could stave off malnutrition and generally improve the quality of life for all Cubans even in an economic crisis. People will always buy oil. In comparison to the rest of the world, the United States is slow to warm up to alternative fuels (save, maybe, for biofuels). Therefore, the U.S. could put the inevitable amount of petrodollars we are going to spend anyways towards Cuban development. Weissert's findings are confirmed by the UN Secretary General. In 2006, the United Nations noted that Cuban economic growth could significantly improve job growth/creation, access to food, availability of health care, quality of schools, and the safety of drinking water.

What Should Con Debaters go for?

Despite the benefits that normalization can bring to the oil debate, the con debaters can find a great deal of ground here. Although pro debaters may have an advantage in people's perception of oil prices (given the recent increase as the summer months come into full swing), America is moving toward a green revolution. This means that many pro-environmental campaigns have already laid the perceptual groundwork for con debaters. Do not frame the oil debate in a vacuum – on its own, drilling for oil only presents an option that American

companies can choose to work on or not. Instead, expand the idea that normalizing relations with Cuba (and therefore opening the floor for oil drilling) to suggest another front in the battle against global climate change. Drilling for oil could lower oil prices, yes; and this would in turn cause Americans to continue their high demand for oil as a complete reversal of the healthy trend we see now. Arguing for high oil prices can be tricky, but it can pay off.

Because of the fact that the debate is still centered around normalization with Cuba, the con does face an issue of time management when the oil debate comes up. For the pro side, it is merely an option to go for; if the con team simply argues oil drilling is bad, the pro can simply kick the position and go for something stronger. This means that true offense is the name of the game. If you plan to hit the pro with a hard argument that solidly defeats them, be sure in the first crossfire that they state, plainly, and to the judge, that if we normalize relations with Cuba, American companies will drill for oil. Alternately, if you can prove that nobody will drill for oil in Cuba at all, their offense disappears. You will, however, have to pick one position and stick with it, as the two do not work well together.

What Can a Drill Really Do?

Although both Cuba and the United States agree that there is oil under Cuba's seas, the amount of oil actually present remains to be known, as there are still seismic tests being undertaken. Considering that in other parts of the world, companies are drilling with much more zeal, it would seem that the free market has already concluded that the reward is not worth the risk or the investment. This may be partially due to the embargo, but there are foreign drills on Cuba's landmass, where oil was confirmed long ago. At the end of the day, drilling itself is a slow and risky move that may not even pay off. Were the embargo lifted today, for instance, and companies chose to drill in Cuba, not a single drop of oil would reach a consumer until three years down the road; this is assuming an

optimistic timeframe. Therefore, if normalizing relations with Cuba produced a benefit from oil operations, any drawbacks would occur long before an advantage were seen. This may make con debaters want to focus on the near-term ramifications of a shift in policy.

Drilling can, however, expose pristine coastline to oil spills it has not had to face before. David Ivanovich and Kristen Hays coauthored a July 2008 article in the Houston Chronicle explaining that in the hurricane-prone gulf, even the most capable of American technology is unable to prevent oil spills from happening at the rigs themselves. Look up the effect of these long-term small spills on the Louisiana and Texas coastlines, and you can find a few horror stories about how once vibrant ecosystems slowly dwindled away. Cuba, having been unable to access its offshore assets, has a respectable coral reef, which is in fact one of the healthiest in the Gulf of Mexico. There is a good deal of literature that argues that the reefs are essential to not only Cuba's survival as an economy, but also to the well being of the entire Gulf. If you normalize relations and open the floodgates, you have a new problem on your hands.

Stepping back into the larger ideas of what a drill can do, the con can argue for the green revolution mentioned earlier in this essay. In order to do so, they will have to prove three things. First, the con must display that a green revolution is currently in progress. The Obama administration has established a rather environmentally friendly initiative in its energy policies, and there are examples abound of private market entities expanding the presence of solar and wind technology. Second, the con must display that the green revolution has a great chance of success in its goals. Proving that wind and solar technology are viable alternatives to oil is easier said than...said. However, many European nations, particularly Northern European countries such as Norway and Sweden are full of communities that have made green transitions. Small community steps represent a major step in a positive direction, and the state of California's growing Hydrogen fuel program provides even more alternatives. Finally, the

con will have to argue that a new oil source would delay the green revolution. Look into figures of oil consumption when prices dropped in 2008 – you will find that, shockingly, when oil isn't as expensive, people are happier using it up. This builds you up to a global warming argument – that we have to do what we can to prevent a major environmental catastrophe.

This debate, however, may be hard to compare against the pro's human rights arguments. Leaving people in poverty, for instance, in the name of environmental protection may seem silly – but it is all a matter of framing. If global warming destroys impoverished communities anyways, opening relations to Cuba is in fact sacrificing the well-being of the poor for what seems a friendly step. Not only this, but you could expand the local fallout of environmental drilling to point out that normalizing relations with Cuba may harm the people as our evil, Yankee, greedy corporations maim, destroy, and pillage the people. If you think the Cuban poor were in bad shape before normalization, you should wait to see what happens to them after. The situation can get worse (search Nestlé's interaction with the third world to see how corporate opportunity destroys communities).

Expropriation and Capital

The fastest argument a con debate can go for in a round, however, lies not in the direct harms of drilling, but in the fact that no sensible company would drill for oil. In addition to facing the uncertainty mentioned above, foreign operatives frequently have to worry about expropriation when dealing with regimes similar to Cuba's. For instance, Mauricio Claver-Carone, director of the U.S. Cuba Democracy PAC and former attorney with the U.S. Treasury, wrote on July 26th 2008:

Equally important, foreign companies trying to do business with Cuba still face a lot of expenses and political risks. If, or when, the Cuban regime decides again to expropriate the assets of these companies, there is no legal recourse in Cuba.

Without legal protection, the risk of repossession at any time weighs a heavy burden upon foreign companies. Given the political climate in Cuba, expropriation becomes not just a greedy maneuver by the government but also a means of maintaining the control over the people. Given that Hugo Chavez basically stole American oilrigs in Venezuela as well as his closeness to the Cuban government, the notion is not far-fetched.

In the event that the pro team produces a quotation from the CEO of an oil company declaring an interest in drilling for oil in Cuba, remember that the shareholders and not the CEO ultimately own oil companies. Although any sensible company may lobby for the right to an action, it does not necessarily mean that doing so makes good business sense. In a recession economy, a major risk of expropriation is not attractive to shareholders, and they would likely use their voting power over the company's management to prevent any major oil operations.

Final Remarks

How normalization will incorporate US oil production is up for debate. However, oil production remains a critically economic avenue for US-Cuban interests. Between the environmental and economic benefits of oil production, there are many strong arguments why the United States should normalize its relations with Cuba. Oil production is just a single argument that teams may choose to focus on when constructing their cases. Teams will need to quantify the benefits of oil production and stress the try-or-die situation that oil production in Cuba presents; since dirty, foreign tankers in the Gulf are inevitable, clean US technology offers a unique benefit to all biodiversity in the region.

Topic Analysis by Sarah Spiker

For half a decade, the United States has taken a hard line stance against Cuba, politically and economically. While originally intended to produce change in Cuba, many have argued that the embargo has failed in its goals. The 1960s trade embargo has a dual purpose: to remove Fidel (now Raul) Castro from power and encourage the country to pursue neoliberal policies consistent with U.S. values. However, the United States has attempted to cloak these reform efforts in the guise of personal choice for all Cubans. Dan Restrepo, a senior director for Western Hemisphere affairs at the National Security Council, argues that political space must be opened for Cubans so that they can work on grassroots democracy movements, a precursor to a “better” Cuban future⁷. However, many of these social, economic, and political benefits must be carefully scrutinized. Public Forum debaters would be prudent to analyze the source of the view and the control of the Castro government.

Debaters have many areas in which they can choose to develop cases from. Although “normalizing relations” generally refers to the normalization of trade and travel, it is not an official term of art, debaters are free to expand their research in many areas: agriculture trade, credit financing, modifying the cash-credit system, energy, doctors without borders program, migration negotiations, narco-terrorism prevention efforts, scientific exchange expansion, removal from the terrorist list, and general trade. Hard-line policies have limited or prevented cooperation in these areas entirely.

Since the handover of power from Fidel Castro to his brother, Raul, Cuba has experienced several significant economic and social reforms including a new wage policy, better pay for farmers, and commuting death sentences for political

⁷ *The New York Times*, April 14, 2009, “Loosening Cuba Restrictions, Obama Leaves the Door Ajar for More,” Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Damien Cave

prisoners among others⁸. Raul has hinted at further reforms. However, these recent policy changes have failed to meet the needs of the Cuban people; social inequality, elite privilege and the food crisis are significant sources of unrest in the country. At the same time, an impatient youth population, “the tip of spear for change,” represents a strong force for political change within Cuba⁹. A young population not engrained with the ideals of the Revolution is the keystone to a peaceful or violent reform process. The gerontocracy is the greatest threat to Castro’s regime because the youth are not committed to the same ideals as older generations and are tired of rights violations most notably the violation to their right to information in print and electronic form. Thus, Raul must appease young Cubans to prevent further unrest and maintain ties to the old regime. Yet within Raul’s own regime, struggles exist. Infighting and intense debate within Raul’s own regime represents change from Fidel’s unity-based approach. Raul’s insistence on open debate on issues of social policy has divided senior ranking members of the Cuban government¹⁰.

In the face of such civil unrest in Cuba, a change in U.S. policy may be opportune. In his early days in office, President Obama made several grand gestures towards Cuba, including the closing of Guantanamo Bay, the removal of family travel restrictions placed on Cuban-Americans, and the opening of telecommunication lines for US companies that seek access to Cuba. While the hardened relationship between the United States and Cuba is beginning to thaw,

⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, June 13, 2008, “Cuba sweeps away egalitarian wages; Raul Castro reforms continue with abolition of rule that labourers and surgeons earn the same,” <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/cuba-sweeps-away-egalitarian-wages-13894344.html>

⁹ Alfonso Chardy, *Miami Herald*, and Jeffrey M. Boan, *El Nuevo Herald* Staff, March 24, 2008, “Are Cuban students organizing against government repression? Over Internet, Cuban youths offer rare insights,” <http://havanajournal.com/politics/entry/are-cuban-students-organizing-against-government-repression/>

¹⁰ *The Economist*, August 2, 2008, US Edition, “Big Brother’s Shadow: Cuba’s timid reforms”

recent developments do not mean that normalized relations are close at hand¹¹. Historic distrust over trade relations remains the prominent barrier towards US-Cuban associations.

Cuba is accused of holding political prisoners, although Fidel Castro denies that any Cuban is being held for their political beliefs. Additionally, Cuba has refused to respond to international calls to release said prisoners despite urging from many members of western countries as well as the UN Human Rights Council. Cuba justifies its lack of action by saying that outsider calls for prisoner release equate to intervention and a violation of national sovereignty¹².

In regards to US-Cuban foreign policy literature, there are many factors that must be considered in order to produce a qualified debate. Even though Fidel Castro has stepped down as Cuba's leader, he still maintains a party postposition that gives him significant influence within the military and government. Although Raul has departed from many of Fidel's views, debaters should take into account the source of the view involved. However, debaters should avoid leaning too heavily on Fidel's viewpoints when it comes to the normalization of US-Cuban relations. While Fidel remains in staunch opposition to reform efforts within in Cuba¹³, Raul has continued to pursue an economic agenda and has eliminated eleven cabinet member holdovers from the previous administration, proving that Raul holds the real power in government¹⁴. Despite several years of Raul's term in office, many news sources purporting views on US-Cuban relations continue to use outdated facts and quotes from Fidel without acknowledging Raul's new direction for the government.

¹¹ Vivian Sequera, Ben Feller, April 17, 2009, *Associated Press*, "US Cuba advance dizzying thaw in relations"

¹² *Thai Indian News*, February 10, 2009,

http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/politics/cuba-rejects-calls-to-free-political-prisoners_100153208.html

¹³ Peter Brookes, Heritage Foundation Senior Fellow, *Boston Herald*, April 15, 2009, "Let's take it slow on overtures to Cuba"

¹⁴ *The Economist*, April 16, 2009, "It takes two to rumba"

The normalization of US-Cuban relations has been largely accepted as the thawing of current restrictions against Cuba's government and citizens, including the removal of the trade embargo, the Helm's Burton Act, and subsequent travel restrictions. Thus much of the literature surrounding US foreign relations has focused on the economic advantages and disadvantages of lifting the embargo. By understanding the economic hierarchy present within the government, debaters can avoid the mindless "debate" or assertions of who benefits and who does not. Here, debaters should include analysis of the hierarchy of the Cuban government in relation to the Cuban people's economic well-being. It is not enough to simply say 'lifting the embargo would benefit the Cuban people' or 'lifting the embargo would benefit the Cuban government.' Debaters should quantify the benefit and address the influence of the government over the people.

The Cuban government holds a complex power over their citizen's economic well-being. If complete travel and trade were to resume on the island, the government would maintain the power of selection. Government officials would choose which airlines and cruises would be authorized to transport American tourists, thus limiting the benefits of American dollars to a select few corporations¹⁵. Over 90% of the economy is controlled by the Cuban government¹⁶. The government would still manage and negotiate labor contracts. Cuban citizens would not be able to choose their own employees or form independent labor unions; thus, after collecting the benefits of foreign investment, the government would still pay laborers only \$20 a month¹⁷. Moreover, the Cuban economy is built on a dual currency system: those with access to foreign dollars

¹⁵ Jaime Suchlicki, June 2000, *La Colonia Cubana Revista Mensual* Agosto 21, 2008, "The US Embargo of Cuba: Implications of Lifting the US Embargo and Travel Ban," <http://www.liceocubano.com/Spn/Secciones/JSuchlicki.asp>

¹⁶ Henry Louis Gomez, August 29, 2008, "Cuba Libre II: Wishful Thinking About Cuba," <http://blog.psaonline.org/2008/08/29/a-response-wishful-thinking-about-cuba>, (Its credible despite being a blog. Gomez is a Cuban American; Managing Editor of BabaluBlog.com; Planning Director of Hispanic Marketing for Hill | Holliday Hispanic in Miami Beach.)

¹⁷ Henry Louis Gomez, August 29, 2008, "Cuba Libre II: Wishful Thinking About Cuba"

and the Cuban peso¹⁸. The Cuban peso is worth far less than their counterpart. Further foreign investment will serve to only devalue the peso even more, forcing most Cubans into further poverty while benefiting only a few.

Additionally, many of the employment benefits are never realized, especially in countries like Cuba that contains undeveloped populations.

The most pervasive problem with tourism development, regardless of the country, is repatriation of tourist revenue (industry leakage). In fact, it is estimated that the majority of tourism revenue generated in Third World countries is repatriated to developed countries. Many hotels, resorts, restaurants, tour operators, airlines, car rentals, etc. utilized by "Western" tourists in Third World countries are owned by corporations in North America and Western Europe." In addition to repatriation of money generated through the above mentioned business activities, host countries experience additional revenue leakages in the form of higher salaries for expatriate employees, employment of foreign construction crews to build hotels and infrastructure supports, food and beverage imports, interest on loans... Transnational corporations have a tendency to import a great deal of personnel and products (equipment, foodstuffs, supplies). Thus, the majority of the profit derived from tourism actually benefits the transnational corporations and developed countries, not the host country¹⁹. The article continues to note that up to 30% of the worker force may consist of foreigners. Thus, in the case of Cuba, economic benefits should be carefully scrutinized if given as a reason to normalize relations. Additionally, even if tourism and trade currently occurs in Cuba with other nations, U.S. action would uniquely increase the harms occurring to the economy. An increased focus on the tourism would increase the volatility of the employment market. Up to 25% of

¹⁸ Ray Walser, Ph.D, The Heritage Foundation, May 20, 2008, "Cuba Solidarity Day 2008: Remembering Our Totalitarian Neighbor"

¹⁹ Anna Hundt, July 28, 2006, Journal of Travel Medicine, "Impact of Tourism Development on the Economy and Health of Third World Nations,"
<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119957205/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0>

hotel workers are laid off in non-peak seasons²⁰. A good economic policy should encourage stable, consistent jobs, not unstable ones.

Normalizing of relations could wreak additional havoc on natural resources. As the United States lifts restrictions on travel, cruise ships, and hotel tourism, a number of problems present themselves. Anna Hundt explains:

Tourists consume far more water, food, and other resources than natives. This imbalance can dislocate local water needs' and reduce the availability of safe drinking water, thereby increasing the risk of disease. Lack of adequate sewage treatment is common, and untreated sewage discharge jeopardizes the health of natives and tourists²¹.

Debaters should take the economic debate one step further. Normally, Public Forum debaters have a nagging habit to declare that jobs are created, but never analyze any further economic benefit or disadvantage. Especially for the national tournament, debaters would be prudent to extend the economic harms of normalization beyond the obvious. While a few jobs may be created, good portions (30%) of those jobs go to foreign workers, the building contracts go to foreigners, natural resources dwindle, demand for food increases (and subsequently food rises in cost), and the foreign currency only serves to exacerbate a dual currency system to suppress individual's economic well-being.

A popularly cited article likes to advocate that American companies lose out on \$684 million to \$1.2 billion per year due to the embargo²². Others estimate that if relations normalized, trade between the two countries would reach \$6.5 billion within a year²³. Opening Cuba up to the United States may create important opportunities for agriculture, energy, and business, up to \$60 million alone for

²⁰ Anna Hundt, July 28, 2006

²¹ Anna Hundt, July 28, 2006

²² Daniel Griswold, May 27, 2002, "The Embargo Harms Cubans and Gives Castro an Excuse for the Policy Failures of His Regime," <http://www.freetrade.org/node/330>

²³ Irving Louis Horowitz, Jaime Suchliki, Cuban Communism: 1959-2003. Transaction Publishers, 2003

new Cuban construction²⁴. While Griswold concedes that more money would go to the Cuban government, he argues that more money would also be funneled into the hands of the Cuban people:

American tourists would boost the earnings of Cubans who rent rooms, drive taxis, sell art and operate restaurants in their homes. Those dollars then would find their way to the 300 freely priced farmers' markets, to carpenters, repairmen, tutors, food vendors and other entrepreneurs²⁵.

However, other areas of trade may threaten several key American industries, including the sugar beet industry. Cuba's sugar industry is floundering because of a lack of demand. Allowing for new trade could upset US domestic producers as well as those in other Caribbean countries, potentially placing US growers in critical condition²⁶. In order to resolve this economic situation, debaters will need to focus on the merits of the argument by focusing on the weight of arguments in the round. While the sugar beet industry may take a hit if relations are normalized, the countless other industry areas may outweigh the harm that occurs to a single industry.

The Cuban government's hierarchy and power extend to energy production as well. However, the US embargo and hard-line stance prevents American companies from interacting with Cuban oil reserves. The embargo prevents investment and the sale of better environmentally friendly drilling technology²⁷. Cuba is currently in the process of auctioning off permits for offshore drilling, but due to US restrictions, American companies have been denied access to these areas. It is uncertain to what degree the Cuban government would exercise its

²⁴ Amy Myers Jaffe and Ronald Soligo, A Report Commissioned by the Cuba Policy Foundation December 2001, Cuba Policy Foundation

²⁵ Daniel Griswold, May 27, 2002, "No: The Embargo Harms Cubans and Give Castro an Excuse for the Policy Failures of His Regime," <http://www.cato.org/current/globalization/pubs/griswold-020527.html>

²⁶ Tom Dennis, September 23, 1999, *Northscape GF Herald*, "Lift the Embargo with Cuba," <http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y99/sep99/23e7.htm>

²⁷ Will Weissert, March 24, 2009, "Oil Riches So Close Yet So Far Away: US Embargo Blocks Drillers," <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/24/oil-riches-so-close-yet-so-far-away/>

power to limit US influence if relations were normalized. But his may be an interesting area to pursue further.

As the national tournament rolls around, debaters may find themselves overwhelmed with such a large topic. To ease tensions, debaters should make extensive use of evidence files and check out videos from college level Lincoln-Douglas debate at their recent national tournament (NFA-LD debated constructive engagement with Cuba all year). National tournament cases should focus on a few simple, but clearly explained arguments. Avoid glossing over the key warrants to these arguments because they bolster your argument. Dig deeper into the literature to truly understand the complex economic benefits. There is ample evidence on both sides that make claims in regards to the economic reality, so the real difference will occur in the explanation of the argument. Spend time explaining how the benefit interacts with the people, how it exerts influence for change on the government, or how it generally improves relations (and why that's important!) between the U.S. and Cuba. With half a century of hard-line policy resulting in little Cuban change, it is imperative that we analyze and dissect our foreign policy towards a communist regime.

Evidence

The US government's policy toward Cuba has failed to create democracy and free trade.

The Atlantic Council of the United States, "A Roadmap for Reconstructing Relations with Cuba," Program on International Security, June 2007, pp 1.

The U.S. government has sought to advance democratic and free-market change in Cuba for 47 years. Those efforts have failed. Indeed, the transfer of power from Fidel Castro has produced little change in Cuba's politics and took place with no manifestations of broad popular demands for an end to one-party Communist rule. Instead, the Cuban people appear to be resigned to peaceful and gradual change on the island. Most observers judge that any transition to democracy, rule of law, and capitalism is years away. Thus, the time has come to chart a new course for U.S. policy towards Cuba. If the United States truly wants Cuba to embrace democracy, adopt a free market economy, and adhere to accepted standards for human and civil rights, then the United States must regain lost leverage with which to influence events on the island. To do so, it must begin by untangling a half century's worth of legal and regulatory sanctions that block most diplomatic, commercial, and other relations with Cuba. Then, the United States must engage the Cuban government in a dialogue that addresses common bilateral interests while encouraging positive change on the island.

With the decline of Castro the US has a chance to foster change in Cuba.

The Atlantic Council of the United States, "A Roadmap for Reconstructing Relations with Cuba," Program on International Security, June 2007, pp 3.

For nearly 50 years, the United States has sought -- without success -- to promote regime change in Cuba. Now, with its old adversary Fidel Castro passing from the scene, the United States has the opportunity to adopt a more effective strategy to encourage the transition to a democratic government that respects human rights, adheres to the rule of law, and moves to a free market economy.

US action in Cuba is restrained by fifty years worth of legal blocks.

The Atlantic Council of the United States, "A Roadmap for Reconstructing Relations with Cuba," Program on International Security, June 2007, pp 3.

Regardless of how the U.S. government might desire to respond to, or influence events in Cuba, its freedom of action is severely restrained by a half-century's worth of legal and regulatory constraints blocking most diplomatic, commercial, and other relations. Moreover, whereas those constraints were once mostly based on easily revocable Executive Orders, in recent years the sanctions have been codified in federal law. Thus, work needs to begin now in both the Congress and the Executive Branch to untangle that web of constraints -- starting with legislation giving the President greater flexibility to promote and respond to changes in Cuba.

The US trade embargo against Cuba has been ineffective in achieving US policy objectives and has been used as a propaganda tool by the Castro government.

The Atlantic Council of the United States, "A Roadmap for Reconstructing Relations with Cuba," Program on International Security, June 2007, pp 3.

The unilateral economic embargo has been the main U.S. policy instrument in recent decades. While the embargo and related sanctions have failed to achieve their policy objectives, they have been used by the Castro government as propaganda tools to turn the Cuban people against the United States. At the same time, the Castro regime silenced most dissent on the island while finding foreign benefactors (first the Soviet Union and now Venezuela) to prop up Cuba's inefficient command economy. As a result, the United States has been left with almost no leverage to effect change in Cuba. Thus, as the post-Fidel Castro era dawns, the United States urgently needs to adjust its policy so that it is able to influence future events in Cuba.

The US much fundamentally change relations with Cuba and bring it into the international arena.

The Atlantic Council of the United States, "A Roadmap for Reconstructing Relations with Cuba," Program on International Security, June 2007, pp 3.

After a half-century long unproductive experience with a unilateral Cuban policy, the time has come for the United States to encourage allies, regional partners, international organizations, and private groups to promote human and civil rights and free-market change in Cuba. Countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain, Mexico, Chile, and Uruguay could play increasingly constructive roles. The same holds true for the United Nations, the European Union, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other private sector groups.

It is in the United States interest to ensure democracy and free markets develop in Cuba in order to decrease the threats that ay originate from Cuba.

The Atlantic Council of the United States, "A Roadmap for Reconstructing Relations with Cuba," Program on International Security, June 2007, pp 4.

The transition to democracy, rule of law, and a free market economy in Cuba is likely to take many years. If that transition falters, any number of physical threats to the United States could emanate from Cuba. Thus, as this uncertain period unfolds, the United States needs to place increased emphasis on preventing the rise of transnational threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and infectious disease.

Cuba is an important concern of the United States for national security reasons.

The Atlantic Council of the United States, "A Roadmap for Reconstructing Relations with Cuba," Program on International Security, June 2007, pp 5.

Cuba has been an important concern for the United States since the 19th century. After Fidel Castro seized power in 1959 and installed a single-party communist dictatorship, the U.S. government made it a top foreign policy goal to add a democratic, free-market Cuba to the family of nations in the Western Hemisphere. On a less altruistic level, Cuba's close physical proximity to the United States makes it a vital national security interest to assure that Cuba does not become the source of massive refugee flows or of other transnational threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and infectious disease. Finally, given that Cuba is the largest country in the Caribbean and was once the largest U.S. trading partner in that region, it is in the U.S. economic interest to see Cuba again become an important outlet for U.S. exports and investment.

Current US policy toward Cuba is ineffective and requires drastic revisions.

Jonathan G. Clarke and William Ratliff, "Report from Havana Time for a Reality Check on U.S. Policy toward Cuba" Policy Analysis No 418, (2001), pp 1.

Current U.S policy toward Cuba is based on historical inertia, domestic political calculations, and emotionalism. The embargo will continue to be ineffective—especially given dwindling support for the policy, the ease with which Cuba gets around the sanctions, and the ways in which Cuba has been adapting to changing world conditions. The United States could help improve Cuba's poor human rights record and reveal Fidel Castro's regime as the main source of Cuba's economic troubles by lifting the trade and investment embargo, restoring the right of Americans to travel to Cuba, and rejecting any current or proposed official aid to groups inside Cuba.

Cuba is currently not a democratic nation and gross human rights violations are prevalent.

Jonathan G. Clarke and William Ratliff, "Report from Havana Time for a Reality Check on U.S. Policy toward Cuba" Policy Analysis No 418, (2001), pp 11.

Real power is in the hands of Fidel Castro and a tiny clique around him. The normal trappings of democracy (free speech, freedom of association, a free press, Internet access, and so on)¹ are nonexistent or heavily circumscribed, and people who dare to oppose the regime suffer frequent harassment. According to dissidents interviewed by one of the authors in February, there were then about 300 political prisoners in jail. Human Rights Watch has stated that Cuba "has developed a highly effective machinery of repression." In its 2001 report, Amnesty International reported that there was "a serious escalation in repression during the closing months of 2000" and that "journalists, political opponents and human rights defenders were subjected to severe harassment," including, among other things, short term detention, house arrest, and threats.

Despite the US government's restrictions, many US citizens still travel to Cuba.

Jonathan G. Clarke and William Ratliff, "Report from Havana Time for a Reality Check on U.S. Policy toward Cuba" Policy Analysis No 418, (2001), pp 13.

In all, nearly 80,000 Americans, not counting Cuban Americans, visit Cuba each year. Some are there legally on journalist and cultural exchanges or on university travel and study programs. Others simply slip in through a third country or by sea. The Marina Hemingway, Havana's premier yacht harbor, is full of American yachts. American visitors receive a warm welcome. Visitors are constantly accosted by Cubans trying to practice their English, but the streets are safe, much more so than those of Kingston, Jamaica, or San Juan, Puerto Rico. At the Ministry of Foreign Trade, María de la Luz B'Hamel comments, "We have learnt to distinguish between Americans and their government."

The Obama administration is beginning to instigate reforms to Cuban policies.

Ginger Thompson, "U.S. Plans Informal Meetings With Cuba," New York Times, April 26, 2009.

Seizing the momentum from recent meetings with Latin American leaders, the Obama administration is quietly pushing forward with efforts to reopen channels of communication with Cuba, according to White House and State Department officials. The officials said informal meetings were being planned between the State Department and Cuban diplomats in the United States to determine whether the two governments could open formal talks on a variety of issues, including migration, drug trafficking and other regional security matters.

The Obama administration seeks to open cultural and academic channels with Cuba.

Ginger Thompson, "U.S. Plans Informal Meetings With Cuba," New York Times, April 26, 2009.

And the administration is also looking for ways to open channels for more cultural and academic exchanges between Cuba and the United States, the officials said. Polls suggest that there is increasing support among Cuban-Americans for ending the United States' policy of isolation toward Cuba. And proposals have been made in both houses of Congress that would lift restrictions on travel to Cuba for all Americans. In an interview, a State Department official described the pressure building for a new policy toward Cuba as a "steamroller" and said that the administration was "trying to drive it, rather than get run over by it."

The US embargo fails to impact the tourist industry in Cuba which still flourishes due to European, Canadian and Asian tourists.

Jonathan G. Clarke and William Ratliff, "Report from Havana Time for a Reality Check on U.S. Policy toward Cuba" Policy Analysis No 418, (2001), pp 11.

Some of the great tourist spots from the heyday of American tourism before 1959 continue to do a brisk business, among them the Hotel Nacional and the Tropicana de Cuba nightclub in Havana and the Hotel Casa Grande in Santiago, all of which were made famous by Graham Greene in *Our Man in Havana*. But most of the international tourist facilities have been built since 1990 when tourism began its rapid expansion, often via joint ventures. The number of visitors increased at an annual rate of 18 percent from 340,00 in 1990 to 1,774,000 in 2000. Tourism is projected to grow at about 6 percent a year until 2010. Canada is the largest single source of tourists, but there are sizable numbers from the larger European Union states, and efforts are under way to attract more visitors from Asia.

The current administration has the capacity to drastically change the nature of US relations with Latin America.

"A New Start in the Americas," *Economist*, Vol. 390, No. 8528, (April 25, 2009), pg 16.

ANTI-AMERICANISM was invented in Latin America as the expanding United States first swallowed a chunk of Mexico and then turned the Caribbean into an American lake, arousing nationalist resentment along the way. There have since been other, more co-operative strands in inter-American relations. But George Bush reminded many Latin Americans that what they like least about their northern neighbours is an attitude of overbearing arrogance. He thus offered an easy target for those, such as Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, who like to blame their countries' problems on a foreign scapegoat. Barack Obama seems determined to disarm such critics. On his first visit to the region, which included a 34-country Summit of the Americas in Trinidad from April 17th to 19th, he charmed his fellow leaders by talking of equal partnership.

Obama is in a tough situation regarding Cuban policy because of the failures of his predecessors.

Jorge G. Castaneda, "The Right Deal on Cuba," Wall Street Journal (April 20, 2009)

If President Barack Obama lifts the embargo unilaterally, he will send a message to the Castros and the rest of Latin America that human rights and democracy are not his bailiwick. Furthermore, he lacks the votes in the Senate to do so, unless he obtains an explicit Cuban quid pro quo, which Raúl Castro cannot grant him, especially with his brother back in charge. Conversely, if Mr. Obama limits change to the recently announced freer flow of remittances and family visits to the island, Democrats in the House, Latin American leaders, and the Castros will remain unsatisfied. And if he insists on political change as a precondition for lifting the embargo, Mr. Obama would be pursuing the policy that his last 10 predecessors have fruitlessly followed.

The US embargo is opposed by the majority of the UN and has resulted in many human rights violations that constitute crimes against humanity.

Remy Herrera, "US Embargo against Cuba: Urgent Need to Lift It," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 38, No. 41 (Oct. 11-17, 2003) pp 4310-4311.

The US embargo against Cuba is condemned by an ever larger and by now overwhelming majority of members of the UN General Assembly. However, it continues to be imposed by the US government's isolated but stub-born will, in spite of the UN's repeated injunctions, notably its resolution 56/9 of November 27, 2001. This embargo de-serves to be condemned in the strongest terms for the violation of law it represents and for its total lack of legitimacy. These measures of arbitrary constraint are tantamount to a US undeclared act of war against Cuba; their devastating economic and social effects deny the people to exercise their basic human rights, and are unbearable for them. They directly subject the people to the maximum of suffering and infringe upon the physical and moral integrity of the whole population, and in the first place of the children, of the elderly and of women. In this respect, they can be seen as a crime against humanity.

The US embargo is a denial of nationalization and imposes the US government's will onto the Cuban people.

Remy Herrera, "US Embargo against Cuba: Urgent Need to Lift It," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 38, No. 41 (Oct. 11-17, 2003) pp 4310-4311.

The normative content of this embargo - specially the extraterritoriality of its rules, which intend to impose on the inter-national community unilateral sanctions by the US, or the denial of the right of nationalisation, through the concept of 'traffic' - is a violation of the spirit and letter of the UN Charter and of the Organisation of American States, and of the very fundamentals of international law. This excessive extension of the territorial jurisdiction of the US is contrary to the principle of national sovereignty and to that of non-intervention in the internal choices of a foreign state - as recognized in the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice. It is opposed to the Cuban people's rights to auto-determination and to development. It also contradicts strongly the freedom of trade, navigation and movement of capital, all that the US paradoxically claims everywhere else in the world. This embargo is moreover illegitimate and immoral because it attacks the social benefits realized by Cuba since years and imperils their successes - recognized by many international independent observers(in particular those of the WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF and many NGOs). They are its public systems of education, research, health or culture, in plain exercise of human rights. Furthermore, the threat that this coercive operation poses for US nationals and for foreigners extends the practical impact of the embargo to domains completely or partially excluded from the texts, such as food, medicines or medical equipment and exchanges of scientific information.

The US embargo has caused significant economic damage to Cuba.

Remy Herrera, "US Embargo against Cuba: Urgent Need to Lift It," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 41 (Oct. 11-17, 2003) pp 4310-4311.

From an official Cuban source, the direct economic damages caused to Cuba by the US embargo since its institution would exceed 70 billion dollars. The damages include: (i) the loss of earnings due to the obstacles to the development of services and exportations (tourism, air transport, sugar, nickel); (ii) the losses registered as a result of the geographic reorientation of the commercial flows (additional costs of freight, stocking and commercialization at the purchasing of the goods); (iii) the impact of the limitation imposed on the growth of the national production of goods and services (limited access to technologies, lack of access to spare parts and hence early retirement of equipment, forced restructuring of firms, serious difficulties sustained by the sectors of sugar, electricity, transportation and agriculture); (iv) the monetary and financial restrictions (impossibility to renegotiate the external debt, interdiction of access to the dollar, unfavorable impact of the variation of the exchange rates on trade, risk-country, additional cost of financing due to US opposition to the integration of Cuba into the international financial institutions); (v) the pernicious effects of the incentive to emigration, including illegal emigration (loss of human resources and talents generated by the Cuban educational system); (vi) social damages affecting the population (concerning food, health, education, culture and sport).

Social progress in Cuba is impaired by the implications of the US embargo.

Remy Herrera, "US Embargo against Cuba: Urgent Need to Lift It," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 41 (Oct. 11-17, 2003) pp 4310-4311.

The US government's announcements intimating that it would be favorable to the relaxation of the restrictions concerning foodstuffs and medicines went unheeded and cannot hide that Cuba has been the victim of a de facto embargo in these domains. The reduction of the availability of these types of goods exacerbates the privation of the population and constantly threatens its dietary security, its nutritional stability and its health. A humanitarian tragedy - which seems to be the implicit objective of the embargo- has been avoided only thanks to the will of the Cuban state to maintain at all costs the pillars of its social model, which guarantees to every-one, among others, a staple food for a modest price and free consumption in the churches, schools, hospitals, and homes for the elderly. That is the reaffirmation of the priority given by the authorities to the human development, which explains the established excellence of the statistical indicators of Cuba concerning health, education, research and culture and this despite the extremely limited budgetary resources and the numerous problems resulting from the disappearance of the Soviet bloc. However, the continuation of the social progress in Cuba is impaired by the effective extension of the embargo.

The US trade embargo leads to unjustified suffering because it results in shortages for health care supply.

Remy Herrera, "US Embargo against Cuba: Urgent Need to Lift It," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 41 (Oct. 11-17, 2003) pp 4310-4311.

The pressures exerted by the US Departments of State and Trade on the suppliers of Cuba have concerned a wide range of goods necessary for the health sector (medicines destined for pregnant women, laboratory products, radiology equipment, operating tables and surgery equipment, anaesthetics, defibrillators, artificial breathing apparatuses, dialysis apparatuses and pharmaceutical stocks) and went as far as to prevent the free supply of food for new-born babies and of equipment for unities of pediatric intensive care⁴. The production capacities of vaccines conceived by Cuba are hampered by the frequent lack of spare parts and of essential components that have to be imported, as well as water treatment centers. This embargo provokes today an unjustified suffering of the Cuban people. The shortages affecting many medicines, which are not produced in Cuba, complicate the immediate and complete implementation of the procedures of treatment of breast cancer, leukaemia, cardio-vascular or kidney diseases, and HIV for example. Moreover, the US authority's infringements on individual freedom of movement and scientific knowledge (restrictions on travel of US researchers, the disrespect of bilateral agreements on Cuban researcher's visas, refusal to grant soft-ware licenses or to satisfy the orders from Cuban libraries of books, magazines, diskettes or CD-Rom of specialized scientific literature) have in fact led to the extension of the embargo to areas formally excluded from it by the law. One of the most fruitful opportunities to develop cooperation between nations on a solidarity and humanist basis is therefore blocked. The embargo is also in contradiction with the principles of the promotion and protection of human rights, which are desired by the US people for themselves and for the rest of the world.

Normalizing relations with Cuba in regards to family visitations will help to promote democratic values in Cuba.

“White House Fact Sheet: Cuba Policy,” The New York Times (April 13,2009).

All who embrace core democratic values long for a Cuba that respects basic human, political and economic rights of all its citizens. President Obama believes these measures will help make that goal a reality. Cuban American connections to family in Cuba are not only a basic right in humanitarian terms, but also our best tool for helping to foster the beginnings of grassroots democracy on the island. There are no better ambassadors for freedom than Cuban Americans. Accordingly, President Obama will direct the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and Commerce to support the Cuban people's desire for freedom and self-determination by lifting all restrictions on family visits and remittances as well as taking steps that will facilitate greater contact between separated family members in the United States and Cuba and increase the flow of information and humanitarian resources directly to the Cuban people. The President is also calling on the Cuban government to reduce the charges it levies on cash remittances sent to the island so family members can be assured they are receiving the support sent to them.

The Obama administration believes promoting the interests of the Cuban people is consistent with national interests.

“White House Fact Sheet: Cuba Policy,” The New York Times (April 13,2009).

Supporting the Cuban people's desire to freely determine their future and that of their country is in the national interest of the United States. The Obama administration is taking steps to promote greater contact between separated family members in the United States and Cuba and increase the flow of remittances and information to the Cuban people.

Lifting the trade embargo against Cuba would be a concession to Fidel Castro's regime.

Peter Brookes, "Keep the Embargo on Cuba," The Heritage Foundation (April 16, 2009)

Lifting the embargo won't normalize relations, but instead legitimize -- and wave the white flag to -- Fidel's 50-year fight against the Yanquis, further lionizing the dictator and encouraging the Latin American Left. Because the economy is nationalized, trade will pour plenty of cash into the Cuban national coffers -- allowing Havana to suppress dissent at home and bolster its communist agenda abroad. The last thing we should do is to fill the pockets of a regime that'll use those profits to keep a jackboot on the neck of the Cuban people. The political and human-rights situation in Cuba is grim enough already. The police state controls the lives of 11 million Cubans in what has become an island prison. The people enjoy none of the basic civil liberties -- no freedom of speech, press, assembly or association. Security types monitor foreign journalists, restrict Internet access and foreign news and censor the domestic media. The regime holds more than 200 political dissidents in jails that rats won't live in. We also don't need a pumped-up Cuba that could become a serious menace to US interests in Latin America, the Caribbean -- or beyond. (The likes of China, Russia and Iran might also look to partner with a revitalized Cuba.) With an influx of resources, the Cuban regime would surely team up with the rulers of nations like Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia to advance socialism and anti-Americanism in the Western Hemisphere.

The Cuban economy has been crippled by the US trade embargo.

John P Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained" The Heritage Foundation, November 10, 1994.

Cuba's economy has shrunk by more than half since 1989, the black market is more dynamic than the formal command economy controlled by the state, and Fidel Castro's efforts to build a huge tourism industry and attract billions of dollars in new foreign investments have proved dismal failures.

The economic impacts of the US trade embargo have decreased the stability of Castro's administration.

John P Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained" The Heritage Foundation, November 10, 1994.

This economic collapse has imperiled the stability of the Castro regime. The Soviet Union's demise robbed Castro of his ideological base and about \$4.5 billion a year in direct subsidies, exposing the complete failure of the communist revolution to improve the lives of the Cuban people. Moreover, as the economy's collapse has accelerated, popular discontent has increased to levels that threaten the survival of the regime. That was made clear in August, when thousands of Cubans rioted in Havana's Old Waterfront district, and by the subsequent flight to sea of more than 30,000 Cubans of all ages. Another indication that Castro's grip on power is slipping is the increased repression of organized dissident groups by Cuban security forces.

Living conditions in Cuba are imperiled by the US trade embargo and Castro's mismanagement of the economy.

John P Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained" The Heritage Foundation, November 10, 1994.

Many Cuban women have turned to prostitution in a desperate effort to feed their children and families, since government rationing provides only half of the average family's monthly nutrition needs. In May, Cuba's minimum wage would buy "only a two-pound chicken, or a pound of pork, or four liters of milk in unofficial markets." Many Cuban families now survive on one daily meal consisting of rice, beans, soy, and water. For months, Cubans have been deprived even of bath soap. Infectious diseases once thought to be eradicated, such as tuberculosis and malaria, are returning as Cuba's free health care system collapses. Hospitals lack even the most basic supplies such as bandages and surgical thread for sutures. There are not enough pencils and ruled paper to supply the country's school system.

Castro caused Cuba's current economic crisis, not the US trade embargo.

John P Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained" The Heritage Foundation, November 10, 1994.

Fidel Castro blames the U.S. trade embargo for the collapse of the Cuban economy. The truth, however, is that Cuba's economic destruction was caused by the regime's ruinous economic policies. Specifically, Castro's command economy, based on a 1976 constitution and laws which prohibit private enterprise and ownership of property, completely destroyed the free market in Cuba, hindering economic growth and prosperity.

China's response to free markets is not analogous with Cuba's.

John P Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained" The Heritage Foundation, November 10, 1994.

Those who favor lifting the embargo often point to the examples of Vietnam and China to justify their position, claiming that eliminating the embargo will encourage the growth of a free-market economy which will undermine the communist regime. Such comparisons are not valid. Capitalism is destroying communism in China, but the driving force is not international trade. It is a strong domestic market economy tolerated by the communist government. China's market economy is dominated by many millions of small entrepreneurs who are devouring the communist command economy. Moreover, China's market economy has been growing in depth and diversity since the mid-1980s. Free trade is promoting faster market growth and expanding the personal freedom of millions of Chinese, encouraged by entrepreneurs and investors from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and elsewhere who are providing the capital, entrepreneurial skills, and international trade contacts which are compelling China to transform its economy. In the process, a vast and prosperous middle class is being created. In Cuba, however, the Castro regime is not willing to liberalize the economy and create a free market.

Eliminating the trade embargo isn't necessary to improve conditions in Cuba.

John P Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained" The Heritage Foundation, November 10, 1994.

Even without access to U.S. markets and investments, there are many steps Castro could take to improve economic and political conditions within his country, but he refuses to do so. These include: Adopting free-market policies that include a reform of Cuba's constitution and passage of laws to abolish all legal prohibition of private enterprise and property ownership. Holding democratic elections in the context of a politically pluralist society in which the Communist Party is compelled to compete with democratic organizations and political parties. Freeing all political prisoners currently in Cuban jails. Disbanding the Interior Ministry's security police and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, which function as thought-control police and as spies in every neighborhood in Cuba. Eliminating the Marxist political indoctrination, which is a central feature of Cuba's education system. Restoring all confiscated assets and properties to their rightful owners, or agreeing to pay appropriate compensation for what the regime has stolen from them. Without these steps, lifting the embargo would only assure Castro's continuing repression of the Cuban people. Those who advocate doing so are violating their own professed commitment to hemispheric democracy and the individual's right to self-determination. Castro is a ruthless, charismatic dictator and is a potential danger to all democratic, freedom-loving nations. He is an anachronism, but a dangerous one. The embargo, however, is not an anachronism; it is a legitimate instrument for achieving the goal of a free and democratic Cuba.

The trade embargo must be maintained until there is democratic capitalism in Cuba.

John P Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained" The Heritage Foundation, November 10, 1994.

Maintain the embargo until irreversible economic and political reforms leading to democratic capitalism are in place. Tightening the economic screws may lead to more disturbances and riots, as well as increased repression as Castro struggles to remain in power. However, the embargo remains the only effective instrument available to the U.S. government in trying to force the economic and democratic concessions it has been demanding of Castro for over three decades. Maintaining the embargo will help to end the Castro regime more quickly.

Lifting the trade embargo would be tantamount to abandoning the Cuban people.

John P Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained" The Heritage Foundation, November 10, 1994.

The United States must not abandon the Cuban people by relaxing or lifting the trade embargo against the communist regime. Instead, the U.S. government must reject all pressures to ease the embargo until all of the objectives for which it was imposed are achieved. Anything less would constitute an unacceptable breach of faith with the Cuban people, who today are among the very few people left in the world who still suffer the brutality of a communist dictatorship.

Relations with Cuba should not be normalized because Cuba is not a normal country.

James M. Roberts, "Abnormal Regimes Don't Merit Normal Relations," The Heritage Foundation, (December 5, 2008).

Hard-left groups in the United States want to "normalize" diplomatic relations with Venezuela and Cuba. They want Congress to lift the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba and they're urging President-elect Obama to meet one-on-one with his Venezuelan counterpart at next April's Summit of the Americas meeting in Trinidad. Neither idea is a good one. Cuba and Venezuela are definitely not "normal" countries. The U.S. closed its Embassy in Havana in 1961, when Fidel Castro first imposed his brutal, totalitarian, police state on Cuba. Virtually nothing has changed in the intervening 47 years. Raul Castro has assumed absolute power in Cuba from his ailing brother, but made no meaningful reforms.

The US should not restore normal relations until Cuba undergoes reforms.

James M. Roberts, "Abnormal Regimes Don't Merit Normal Relations," The Heritage Foundation, (December 5, 2008).

The 2008 Index of Economic Freedom, published by The Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal, ranks Cuba at the bottom of the class--156th out of 157 countries. Venezuela is not much better - ranking 148th in terms of economic freedom. Why should we seek "normal" relations with such dysfunctional countries? Many on the left cling to then-Senator Obama's famous assertion that he would meet Castro and Chavez "without pre-conditions." It's a campaign promise that should be broken. Neither regime has earned the prestige that inevitably accompanies meeting with the leader of the free world. They must take many steps before America can restore conventional diplomatic relations with these two rogue states.

Obama's decision to question the embargo against Cuba ignores historical precedent and sends about message to dictatorial regimes.

James Jay Carafano, "100 Days of Obama's Presidency," The Heritage Foundation, (April 27, 2009).

The President declared that "50 years" of U.S. policy had not worked as justification for reversing long-standing U.S. policies to isolate the Cuban dictatorship. This explanation is fatuous. If the U.S. had followed a similar strategy with the Soviet Union, it would have abandoned containment and left Russia and half of Europe controlled by a nuclear-armed evil empire. What is most troubling and unexamined with this decision is how other dictators will interpret the seriousness of U.S. opposition to a dictatorial regime and its willingness to persevere against oppression and systemic violations of human and civil rights.

Current US policy makes Cuba a target for Russia.

Rens Lee, "Rethinking the Embargo" Foreign Affairs, Vol 87, No 6 (Nov-Dec, 2008).

Current U.S. policy makes Cuba a target of opportunity for a resurgent and increasingly hostile Russia. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin talks openly about "restoring [Russia's] position in Cuba," and hints are surfacing in Moscow that Russia might reestablish a military and intelligence presence on the island in response to the planned U.S. missile defense shield in eastern Europe. Points of cooperation under consideration include using Cuba as a refueling stop for long-range bombers and for reconnaissance ships and aircraft and reopening a gigantic Soviet-era electronic monitoring and surveillance facility near Havana. A state visit to Havana in July by the hard-line Russian deputy prime minister, Igor Sechin (a reported former KGB agent and a member of Putin's inner circle), and the head of Russia's Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, could presage a new strategic dialogue between Moscow and Havana, even though the visit was officially touted as investment-related.

The US should normalize relations with Cuba so that it will have access to Gulf of Mexico energy resources.

Rens Lee, "Rethinking the Embargo" Foreign Affairs, Vol 87, No 6 (Nov-Dec, 2008).

Another good reason to reevaluate U.S. Cuba policy relates to Cuba's huge potential energy reserves in the Gulf of Mexico, which the U.S. Geological Survey says could contain 4.6 billion barrels of oil and 9.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. With most of both the East Coast and the West Coast of the United States closed to offshore drilling, oil prices at well over \$100 a barrel, and international demand for hydrocarbons projected to increase massively, U.S. exploration and development of these deposits are becoming a tempting prospect -- and may provide a justification for rescinding the embargo or at least for creating an exception to it. Other energy-dependent countries (such as China and India) are already negotiating exploration rights in the Gulf of Mexico, but because Cuba is a U.S.-sanctioned country, U.S. companies are forced to stand idly by.

Cuba plays an important role in drug trading that the US has an interest in limiting.

Rens Lee, "Rethinking the Embargo" Foreign Affairs, Vol 87, No 6 (Nov-Dec, 2008).

Cuba can also play a potentially pivotal role in controlling the Caribbean drug trade. The island lies only 90 miles from Key West, on a direct flight path between Colombia's Caribbean coast and the southeastern United States. Cuba has seized some 65 tons of narcotics in the past decade, most of it heading toward the Bahamas and the United States. The United States and Cuba have an obvious mutual interest in stemming this flow (Cuba because some of it ends up on the island, creating an incipient drug market and a window of opportunity for organized crime). Yet they have not entered into a formal agreement to fight drugs -- even though Havana maintains such agreements with 32 other states -- and what cooperation exists occurs episodically on a case-by-case basis. Washington and Havana need to engage more fully on the issue, jointly deploying intelligence and interdiction assets to disrupt smuggling networks that operate in the western Caribbean. Yet Washington shies away from a deeper relationship, fearing that it would lead to a political opening and confer a measure of legitimacy on the Castro regime.

Cuba has declined in virtually all economic indicators since Castro came to power.

Carlos M. Gutierrez, The Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba and the Promise of a Free Cuba, Ambassadors Review, (Spring 2007).

For over 48 years, the Castro regime has survived by stripping the average Cuban of all power and consolidating it among the privileged few. While the Western Hemisphere has been on a steady march toward freedom over the past half century, Cuba has regressed, and the Castro regime has succeeded in devastating the Cuban economy. All major economic indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product, health, and the standard of living, have declined on a per capita basis in Cuba since 1959.

Tourism benefit's the elites of Cuba not the general people.

Carlos M. Gutierrez, The Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba and the Promise of a Free Cuba, Ambassadors Review, (Spring 2007).

Years of foreign investment have not improved the lives of average Cubans, only the lives of those in power. According to the State Department, 1.9 million tourists, predominantly from Canada and the European Union, generated \$2.1 billion for the Cuban economy in 2003. But the tourism industry, as is true of what little remains of Cuba's productive economy, is controlled by the Cuban military. In fact, as much as 60 percent of the Cuban economy is now owned and operated by Cuba's military establishment. These tourist resorts in Cuba are off limits for most Cuban nationals, since they cater almost exclusively to foreign tourists, thereby creating a kind of "tourism apartheid" that reinforces the repression of the Cuban people.

In the poor economic conditions of Cuba many people turn to questionable tactics to prosper.

Carlos M. Gutierrez, The Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba and the Promise of a Free Cuba, Ambassadors Review, (Spring 2007).

In such a degraded economic environment, it is difficult for Cubans to make an honest living and to apply their skills and creativity to help their families prosper. The Cuban people live on ration cards, which provide staples such as rice and beans. But, at best, the cards provide only enough rations to live for ten days. To make up the difference, many Cubans are forced to turn to the black market, which exploits the poorest of the poor. And if someone should try to make his life better by starting a small business venture, he risks being charged with breaking communist laws. The inevitable result of such economic conditions has been the creation of a culture of widespread corruption. To survive, Cubans are forced to skim off the top, live on the margins, and resolve to get by using whatever means are at their disposal. The common good suffers: Planks disappear from park benches to patch holes in roofs and walls; Tools disappear from government worksites so people can attempt to earn some income as cobblers or handymen.

The US trade embargo has not made conditions in Cuba worst.

Carlos M. Gutierrez, The Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba and the Promise of a Free Cuba, Ambassadors Review, (Spring 2007).

Some claim that by maintaining an economic embargo against Cuba, the United States has made the situation on the island worse. The evidence demonstrates otherwise. The United States has been a major source of humanitarian aid to Cuba. Currently, the United States supplies one-third of the island's food and medicine. According to the first report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, up to \$1 billion, or roughly 2.5 percent of the Cuban economy, came from remittances from the United States. The embargo is not the problem or the solution. The problem is the repressive communist system. The solution is for the Cuban people to change their system of governance.

The US trade embargo will not make the Castro regime weaken.

Carlos M. Gutierrez, The Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba and the Promise of a Free Cuba, Ambassadors Review, (Spring 2007).

We see scant prospects that lifting US economic sanctions would weaken the Castro regime and force change. The regime has long imposed policies to assure its own control over all economic activities, including those of foreign investors and tourists. Those policies are deliberately designed to keep Cubans dependent, and to minimize outside influences on them. The United States must stand firm in its rejection of the Cuban dictatorship. This means pursuing a policy of continued denial of revenue to the Castro regime while reaching out directly to the people of Cuba. This is a policy that has been pursued for almost 50 years by presidents from both political parties.