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U.S. policy and civil liberties in Cuba: A qualitative analysis

Jason E. Mann
James Madison University

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U.S. Policy and Civil Liberties in Cuba: A Qualitative Analysis

An Honors Program Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

by Jason Edward Mann

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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Political Science, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

FACULTY COMMITTEE:

HONORS PROGRAM APPROVAL:

Project Advisor: Charles H. Blake, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Political Science

Bradley R. Newcomer, Ph.D.,
Director, Honors Program

Reader: Kristin Wylie, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science

Reader: Terry Beitzel, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Justice Studies

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

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Introduction

The U.S.-Cuba relationship is often referred to as a relic of the Cold War. The two countries have a long and tumultuous history. In 1959 Fidel Castro led an uprising against the Cuban dictator, Fulgencio Batista. Upfront the United States recognized the new revolutionary government in Cuba. However, as Cuba aligned itself with the archenemy of the United States, the Soviet Union, relations deteriorated. When the United States moved to cut sugar imports from Cuba, Castro responded by nationalizing American-owned properties in the Caribbean country. Two years after the Cuban Revolution, and following months of confrontation, the United States and Cuba severed diplomatic relations on January 3, 1961. Over five decades passed before diplomatic ties were reestablished in July 2015.

In between these momentous dates a number of confrontations, negotiations, and crises took place. Most U.S. administrations have implemented economic sanctions and isolation toward Cuba. Few, such as the current U.S. leadership, have managed to negotiate with the Cuban regime. Almost all U.S. governments have sought to alter the Cuban regime in some fashion, including by reducing Soviet ties, or by overthrowing Fidel Castro. Most recently U.S. presidents have sought to promote openness on the repressive and often isolated island. At times Cuba has moved away from its strict socialist economy and allowed some criticism against the government, among other reforms. But did the United States really contribute to these often minor, albeit important openings? In analyzing U.S. policy toward Cuba since 1966, and the island's corresponding willingness to strengthen or worsen respect for civil liberties, this thesis will attempt to answer this question. Moreover, it will aim to decipher how successful the United States has been in promoting liberalization in communist Cuba.

Why Civil Liberties?

After the Cold War, the United States made incremental liberalization an important aspect of its goals in Cuba. In addition to other objectives, the United States wanted to increase the space for Cuban citizens to organize and speak out against the Cuban regime without facing harassment or arbitrary detention. Until then, U.S. policy toward the country had focused mostly on removing Fidel Castro, an ally to the Soviet Union, from power. Given this change, this paper will seek to address how successful the United States has been in promoting openness in Cuba. More specifically, how has U.S. policy toward Cuba affected the rights guaranteed under liberalization, commonly referred to as civil liberties, on the island? Answering this question is not only important for encouraging progress in Cuba, but with regard to all efforts that entail liberalizing and democratizing authoritarian regimes as well. Understanding the effect of U.S. policy on Cuban civil liberties could provide insight for other states attempting to promote openness and liberalization abroad.

Additionally, this paper's focus on civil liberties is in line with contemporary political theory. Too often foreign policy has focused on promoting solely free and fair elections, rather than freedoms against the state that are an integral part of full-fledged democratic societies. This has led to an increase in what political scientist Fareed Zakaria refers to as *illiberal democracies* (1997). These regimes are democratic in the sense that citizens elect their governments, yet they fail to ensure the rule of law or civil liberties that are customary in a constitutionally liberal society. Without these traits a democracy can be dangerous, abusive, and divided. Liberal ideas and good governance tend to lead to stability and growth. With this in mind, Zakaria argues, democratization efforts should also focus on promoting the rule of law and civil liberties to

encourage peace, security, and development abroad. Research focusing on civil liberties might help to alter the tendency of governments to centralize efforts on promoting solely democratization in autocratic regimes.

Finally, the focus on civil liberties serves this paper well in a practical sense. Liberalization almost always precedes the attainment of democracy, whereas democracy does not as often lead to liberalization (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986; Zakaria 1997). Therefore, we can expect to see liberalization in autocratic regimes more often than we observe democratization. This is true in the case of Cuba, where, throughout the years, there has been more variation in terms of civil liberties than with regard to political freedoms ("Freedom in the World Index"). Since the Cuban revolution, Cubans have gained or lost little power in choosing their elected officials. Rights against the state, for example the ability to obtain employment in the private sector, religious freedoms, and rights against arbitrary detention, have fluctuated more over time.

Operationalizing Liberalization and Democratization

Addressing the differences between the terms *democratization* and *liberalization* will be important as this project progresses. Whereas *liberalization* refers to the process that increases the rights that protect an individual or group against the state, *democratization* involves the greater equality of citizens with regard to their influence in governmental decision-making. Rights guaranteed under *liberalization* traditionally include the right to habeas corpus and a free trial, and the freedom of movement, speech, etc. *Liberalization* can refer to the state's involvement in the market. These rights are often referred to as civil liberties. *Democratization*, at its most simplistic level, refers to the right to vote in free and fair elections. While these terms

are often coinciding conditions in free and open societies, they are neither synonymous, nor do they always take place together (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986, IV: 8-9).

Still, democracies tend to exhibit more liberal properties than other types of societies, and very well might be dependent upon one another (Plattner 2002). As pressures for liberalization increase so do demands for democratization (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986, IV: 10). So connected are the two terms that liberalization is often referred to as “the step towards democratization” (Aknur and Okalan 2012).

Literature Review

Liberalizing Factors

To understand why U.S. policy might cause civil liberties to improve or worsen in Cuba, we must first identify what conditions tend to cause states to liberalize. In turn, we must answer the following questions: What methods then can be taken to promote liberalization and civil liberties abroad? Which methods are most effective in achieving liberalization? Why are certain methods effective and others not? The answers to these questions are sought after in substantial literature regarding transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes, which constitutes a significant portion of scholarly work in the field of international affairs.

In the groundbreaking work, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* a group of leading scholars in the field of international affairs teamed-up to understand the factors driving transitions toward liberalization and democracy. They tackled this issue from both the case study and theoretical approach. According to one of its authors, Adam Przeworski, liberalization occurs when a regime faces internal threats to its position of power (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986, III: 50). As the regime loses support within the country it will have to: 1) offer liberalizing reforms and, or, 2) hand over power to a democratically elected leader. Przeworski suggests that a regime will almost always prefer liberalization if it can escape a complete transition of power. We see this tendency in autocratic regimes today in places like Egypt, China, and several African countries, where autocrats have instituted some reforms, but not full-fledged democratic rule (Aknur and Okalan 2012; Nasong'o 2007; Zhao 2003). Liberalization is often used to as a tool to ease internal tensions temporarily, only to be reversed by authoritarian rulers later on.

Yet the central focus of *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule* and many other scholarly contributions like it, is the process of democratization. In truth, scant literature focuses solely on the issue of liberalization. Often works combine the issues of liberalization and democratization to refer to the opening of a country and movement away from autocracy. As already established, while the two terms are separate, they are strongly related. As liberalization progresses so do calls for democratization (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986, IV: 10). To ease the murky task of differentiating between the two terms in every occasion where they appear this paper will treat liberalization and the process of democratization as deeply related yet distinct topics.

Ultimately the decision to liberalize or democratize must come from pressures within the country, except in the case that foreign intervention occurs. A major finding from the work of O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead was that transitions from authoritarian rule were almost always explained through internal factors. It is internal groups pushing for change and openness that will cause a dictator to liberalize and or democratize. "External actors tended to play an indirect and usually marginal role" (1986, I: 5).

While the onset and strengthening of democratic principles requires support from internal factors, one cannot overlook the international components that contribute to democratization and liberalization. More recent literature has discussed the importance of these external factors. In Samuel Huntington's 1993 work the author observes that a rise of liberalization in the late 1900s occurred in conjunction with global pressure and growing preference for democracy. During this time many states, including the United States and several European powers, promoted democracy abroad. Regardless of the internal factors, Huntington found, external pressures

contributed to the liberalization of authoritarian regimes, particularly in Asia and Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War.

Laurence Whitehead identifies “three international dimensions” that cause transitions to democracy (1996). These include the proximity to democratic societies, attempts by one state to democratize another, and the interaction between both internal and international actors. Central to this paper will be to build an understanding of one state’s attempts to democratize or liberalize another. Ultimately this paper seeks to find, how successful the United States has been in promoting civil liberties in Cuba. However, seeking to determine causality between one state’s actions and another’s response in the midst of an increasingly interconnected and complicated global system is a complicated and difficult task. Thus, it will also be helpful to comprehend the interconnection between internal and international actors.

Scholars have noted that since the 1970s democracy promotion has been a major focus of U.S. foreign policy (Huntington 1996, 91-92). Attempting to liberalize them, the United States has targeted authoritarian regimes through a variety of diplomatic, economic, and diplomatic means. While there exist a variety of methods a state might take to promote democracy and liberalization abroad, this study seeks to examine major foreign policies implemented by the United States toward Cuba. These are *economic sanctions*, and *democratic exposure* techniques including academic exchanges, migration, and exposure to pro-democracy media. However, this paper also acknowledges the importance of internal factors and the interaction between external and internal conditions. To control for internal factors this study will examine how domestic *economic factors* might influence a state to liberalize. The research on these conditions in relation to democratization and liberalization will be considered to frame our discussion of the U.S. role in promoting civil liberties in Cuba.

Sanctions

Through sanctions, it is suggested, that one state or organization, such as the UN, could reduce economic engagement with a targeted state, thereby coercing the targeted state into changing a policy or behavior, such as the treatment of their citizens. Following the Cold War international, bilateral, and unilateral implementation of sanctions gained increased popularity as a useful foreign policy tool. Since World War II, the United States has been the largest user of sanctions (Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot 2007, 45). While the intent behind economic sanctions was clear, the efficacy of such practices became less obvious overtime.

A growing area of literary discourse has been concerned with the effectiveness of economic sanctions in changing the behavior of a targeted state, including liberalizing that state. Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot (HSE) compiled three separate works dedicated to this issue (1990; 2000; 2007). Their analysis and the compilation of case studies provided by them frame the groundwork of this discussion and provide the most comprehensive results regarding the effectiveness of sanctions.

Despite being used persistently throughout recent history and today, economic sanctions rarely achieve their intended foreign policy goal. The database created by HSE finds that of 204 cases of sanctions, only 34 percent produced their intended result. Other major contributions find that economic sanctions are successful around one third of the time as well (Cortright and Lopez 2000).

Although they are generally ineffective, it would be rash to suggest that economic sanctions never work. In theory, economic sanctions will be effective if the perceived economic and political cost on the target country is larger than the political or economic cost of altering

behavior in the way desired by the sender country. Several traits have been identified as tending to be more economically and politically costly to a target state. Financial sanctions tend to be more useful than simple trade sanctions, for example. Whereas trade sanctions (restrictions on imports and exports) can be easily evaded through smuggling, financial sanctions (restrictions on investment and other transactions) are more difficult to avoid. Moreover, financial sanctions are easier to implement and can cause additional economic effects like a lack of foreign currency to buy goods with (HSE 2007, 47). Shagabutinova and Berejikian advocate for the implementation of “smart sanctions”: sanctions directed towards political elites and leaders in the target country, rather than at the country as a whole. In their study of 115 sanctions cases they found that “smart sanctions” were as much as 31 percent more effective than traditional trade sanctions (2007).

Several other factors tend to produce positive results. Sanctions are more successful if they are implemented in a multilateral fashion or with support from international organizations. Conversely the effects of sanctions can be offset if the targeted state has international support or economic backing from other countries or organizations of its own. Moreover, the impact of sanctions will be strengthened if the target state is weak economically (HSE 2007, 51). Finally, economic sanctions will be rarely effective if the sender country’s demands are very ambitious. For example, if the sender country demand that a totalitarian regime step down and hold democratic elections, it is very unlikely that the target country will acquiesce (HSE 2007, 54).

Certain circumstances economic sanctions might particularly be influential in altering the human rights conditions on the targeted state. Given this paper’s focus on civil liberties, it is important to note these relationships. Cortright and Lopez find that economic sanctions can severely harm vulnerable populations in targeted countries. That is, the economic suffering caused by sanctions can deprive groups in the target state of basic human rights like access to

food and other goods. Thus, some of the very sanctions that set out to improve human rights conditions actually worsen those conditions in the targeted country.

Finally, economic sanctions might backfire and go against the humanitarian intentions of the sender country by strengthening the target country regime and incentivizing repression in the target country. As a result of unfavorable economic and social conditions produced by sanctions, the opposition in the target country often mobilizes against the existing regime and demands change. The governing party perceives this as a threat to its position of power and responds with increased repression. Indirectly, the sending country has caused “sanctions-induced repression” (Wood 2008). Sanctions may also produce a “rally around the flag” effect. An autocrat is enabled to reinforce their claims to legitimacy by ridiculing the sender country or organization, and thereby heightening nationalism. This might strengthen the regimes ability to permit repression against political dissidents (Peksen 2007).

While the consensus is that sanctions are ineffective in producing widespread democratization and liberalization nationwide, some scholars point to important factors that can contribute to positive results. Such sanctions might avoid creating the unfavorable conditions resulting from “sanctions-induced repression” and “rally around the flag”.

Sanctions Hypothesis List

Hypothesis 1: *economic sanctions will fail to bring about liberalization in a target state (HSE 2007).*

Hypothesis 2: if economic sanctions are implemented with the support of international organizations or other countries, then sanctions will be more likely to bring about liberalization in the target state (HSE 2007)

Democratic Exposure

International exposure to democracy is another technique utilized in attempt to liberalize authoritarian regimes. Support of democracy exposure techniques are largely based upon the theoretical idea set forth by Levinsky and Way, and other scholars, who posit that increased ties to democratic ideology will enlighten “domestic constituencies with a stake in adhering to democratic norms and strengthening democratic forces in relation to autocrats” (2005). This proposition is supported by several studies following the Cold War, which found that the likelihood of democratization and heightened exposure to democratic ideals were tightly linked (Diamond 2003; Kopstein and Reilly 2000; Richmond 2010;).

Educational Exchange

Educational exchange programs are commonly implemented by democratic states for the purpose of promoting liberalization abroad. The United States, for example, engages in various educational exchanges with students from autocratic states to promote democratic ideas. For one, it is generally agreed that increased levels of education promote democracy (Sanborn and Thyne 2014). Additionally, such an experience should provide the important linkages to democratic ideas discussed by Levinsky and Way. Nye contests that U.S. programs remain highly effective in spreading democratic ideology because “many of these former students eventually wind up in positions where they can affect policy outcomes” (2004). Educational exchanges, particularly

those with the United States, tend to directly affect some of the brightest young citizens traveling from autocratic regimes. One such example is Soviet political scientist Aleksandr Yakovlev, who studied at Columbia University in his youth. Yakovlev was an extremely influential figure in promoting the liberalization of the Soviet regime.

Nye's claims are backed up in various quantitative research studies. For example, in a study of 160 countries spanning the years 1972-2000, Atkinson finds that, of various potentially liberalizing factors, the presence of U.S. military educational exchanges served as the strongest determinant of liberalization in autocratic regimes (2006). Countries whose military soldiers study in U.S. military academies tend to liberalize sometime afterward. Atkinson further investigates the effects of educational exchange programs on autocratic regimes in a later study, which determined that a country's participation in a U.S. civilian or military exchange is positively correlated with future improvements in human rights conditions (2010).

Migration

Migration to a democratic country is another form of democratic exposure, which, while less robust in scholarship, is regarded as an effective means for the dissemination of democratic ideals. Most studies concerning migration and democracy promotion deal with Latin American immigration to the United States (Levitt 1998), and in particular Mexican migration to the United States (Perez-Armendariz and Crow 2010; De la Garza, and Yetim 2003). De la Garza and Yetim find that Mexican immigrants display higher appreciation for democratic ideals than their Mexican counterparts as a result of socialization (2003). It argues against those who argue that cultural values are rigid, and instead argues that it can be altered, through democratic exposure, for example. This increased commitment to democratic values is directly in line with

the theory of international linkage and democratization put forth by Levitsky and Way. Perez-Armendariz and Crow also observes an increase in democratic ideals of Mexican immigrants to the United States, but further contributes to the debate by considering the effect immigration has on non-migrants living in Mexico (2010). They determine that non-migrants, particularly those with relatives living in the United States, frequently experience heightened appreciation of democratic values due to direct exchange with returning migrant family members, remittances, and informational channels. These connections promote democratic diffusion and democratic principles are strengthened in the home country.

Pro-democracy Media

Exposure to Western or pro-democracy media has been shown to promote democratic values among those living in autocratic regimes. The role of the media as a democratization promoter became an area of study following the Cold War. It is generally agreed that Western media observed in the U.S.S.R. during the Cold War was an important contributor to promoting liberalization in Soviet Russia (Parta 2007; Nye 2004; Richmond 2010). Parta offered some of the strongest statistical evidence of that claim, in a study which utilized more than 50,000 interviews of Soviet citizens to determine that information from Western broadcasts were in fact critical in forming democratic attitudes in the USSR, and the eventual liberalization of the country (2010). However, the generalization that exposure to western media often produces liberal attitudes may be over reliant on the Soviet case (Kern and Hainmueller 2009). In Eastern Germany during Soviet occupation, for example, it was observed that those who were exposed to West German television, which often promoted democratic ideas and portrayed East Germany in a negative way, actually displayed an increase in support for the East German regime (Kern and

Hainmueller 2009). Still, it appears that general exposure to democratic media sources tends to reduce support for authoritarian regimes and promote democratic ideas. Such tendencies have been observed to in other regions of the world, such as Brazil (Stein 2012).

Democracy Exposure Hypothesis List

Hypothesis 1: if exposure to democratic ideas increases in an autocratic regime, through academic exchange, migration, or exposure to Western Media, then pressures for liberalization will increase and a regime will liberalize (Levinsky and Way 2005; Nye 2004; Perez-Armendariz and Crow 2010; Parta 2007).

Domestic Economic Conditions

In 1959 Lipset established the modernization theory, which argues that economic development spurs democracy. The various social advancements in urbanization, wealth, and education that accompany economic development, he argues, are “requisites of democracy”. It provides us with an understanding of the domestic elements that may spur democratization (Lipset 1959). Lipset’s modernization theory (which he credits Aristotle with) has been confirmed in various subsequent studies (Acemoglu, Robinson and Yared 2005; Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994; Bollen and Jackman 1985; Barro 1999). These analyses, however, have provided a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to Lipset’s theory. Still, some arguments have been made in opposition to Lipset’s proposition (Przeworski et al. 1997; Przeworski et al. 2000).

Bollen and Jackman found strong evidence to support the notion that economic development increases the likelihood of democratization (1985). Barro utilized a more

comprehensive set of data from 1960 to 1995 to further support the positive effect that economic indicators, including high GDP per capita and primary school attendance, have on democratization (1999). Other studies have confirmed Lipset's proposition that education leads to liberalization as well (Barro 1999; Glaeser et al. 2004). Overall, there is consensus that supports Lipset notion that economic development, which promotes educational advancement and "modernization", leads to democratization.

It is not just the development of the economy over time, however, that seems to affect democratization. In their collective work O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead stress the importance of the relationship between present economic conditions and democratization (1986). Where economic conditions are positive, internal pressures for regime change will be low. Other studies, influenced by Lipset's theory, have focused on the interaction between socioeconomic classes, economic conditions, and pressures for democratization. In Acemoglu, Robinson, and Yared democratization and liberalization are shown to be dependent on both the presence of inequality and the state of economic conditions (2005). If inequality is high, then the poor in that society will collectivize and pressure the governing autocratic regime to democratize (2004). Moreover, these authors find that during an economic crisis or recession internal opposition will be high and democratization is more likely to take place.

Despite strong support for the modernization theory, some contributions have argued against its premise. Przeworki et al. point to Lipset's and others' simplistic approach to the issue of modernization. They argue that modernization theory fails to prove that economic development *leads* to democratization. Przeworki et al. argue, rather, that economic development is simply correlated with democracy because the former works to strengthen the latter (1997; 2000). Economic development should prevent a democratic regime from falling into a

totalitarian state, but does not enable an authoritarian regime to democratize. However, using the same data as Przeworki, Boix and Stokes prove that economic development does increase the chance that democratization will occur (2003). Still, that study agrees that economic development can help sustain a democracy, a nuance that Lipset's theory did not originally consider.

Domestic Economic Conditions Hypothesis List

Hypothesis 1: *If economic conditions are poor, then an autocratic regime will face more pressure for change and liberalize (Lipset.1959; Acemoglu, Robinson and Yared 2005)*

Methods

This thesis will use a case-study approach to draw connections between variations in civil liberties in Cuba and changes in U.S. policy toward the island. It will separate the period from 1966 to present into three different time periods: 1966-1981, 1981-1991, and 1991-present. These time periods are broken down based on fluctuations in civil liberties in Cuba. At the end of each period we observe a change in the numerical civil liberties score and qualitative analysis provided by Freedom House. During the period 1966 to 1981 we observe an improvement in civil liberties. From 1981 to 1991 we see a worsening of conditions. Finally, in the time frame of 1991 to present an improvement in civil liberties once again takes place.

The time periods are also formed based on changes in U.S. policy over time. From 1966 to 1981 policies implemented toward Cuba were focused on promoting migration and cooperation with the Cuban regime. In the period 1981 to 1991 policy is predominantly aimed toward isolating Cuba and promoting access to democratic information among Cubans. In the post-Cold War era from 1991 to present policies attempted, at first to strengthen economic pressure against Cuba, and most recently to heighten cooperation as in the 1970s. Changes *within* each time period are common, and important, and will be addressed throughout. This mixed approach of considering both changes in U.S. foreign policy and changes in our dependent variable, liberalization, allows us to examine how fluctuations in policy between eras tend to affect liberalization trends in Cuba.

This thesis' analysis begins in 1966 because that is when the United States ended overt and covert attempts to topple the Cuban regime. By focusing on trends after 1966 we offer an

analysis of how one country might influence an established, autocratic regime to liberalize. Moreover, data on the conditions of civil liberties in Cuba during the early 1960s is scant.

To measure the level of liberalization and civil liberties in Cuba this study will utilize data and qualitative summaries provided by Freedom House, a Washington D.C.-based organization, which observes and analyzes human rights, and supports efforts to promote democracy and freedom abroad. Freedom House's first assessment of freedom began in the 1950s. The *Balance Sheet of Freedom* offered broad analysis of the level of individual freedom in the world. However, it lacked substantial qualitative assessment included in the reports today. Since then Freedom House has thoroughly advanced its analysis. In 1974 it began providing scores for civil liberties and political freedoms worldwide. In 1978 scholar Raymond Gastil produced the first *Freedom in the World* report, a comprehensive analysis on the situation of freedom throughout the globe. Beginning in 1989 a group of leading scholars contributed to the annual report. Today the *Freedom* project is a massive and in-depth report that requires the assistance of regional and academic analysts ("Freedom in the World 2015 Methodology" 2015).

Every year *Freedom in the World* provides a score for the level of political rights and civil liberties within each country during the previous year. Each score range from 1, most free, to 7, least free. Countries with a score of 7 on civil liberties, for example, have few or no civil liberties. In 1978 the annual reports produced by Gastil and a set of advisors was expanded to include summary discussions of the facts and events that helped determine the ratings provided for each country. In 2015 the assessment was produced by a team of 30 advisers and 60 analysts, who use "a broad range of sources" to produce the scores for each country. The ratings for political rights and civil liberties are based on sets of 10 and 15 questions, respectively, that are indicators of those freedoms ("Freedom in the World 2015 Methodology" 2015). Freedom

House claims that only “modest changes” have been made over the years and that changes are made incrementally so that ratings are comparable overtime. Admittedly, a time-series analysis based on the *Freedom in the World* report will be affected by the changes in methodology and differing levels of subjectivity over the years.

Since this thesis’ focus is on civil liberty conditions in Cuba, it will draw on the scores (provided since 1974) and the qualitative summaries (offered since 1978). Thus, from the time period 1966-1976 and particularly from 1966 to 1974, other sources were required to gain insight about the situation of civil liberties in Cuba. These include human rights reports produced by the Organization of American States (OAS) and other relevant assessments. For the historical analysis of U.S. policies toward Cuba this thesis uses secondary historical documents related to U.S.-Cuba relations, the U.S. embargo, and other relevant topics. Leading experts in the field of U.S.-Cuba relations produced all of the works used.

Historical Background

On January 1, 1959 Fidel Castro and other revolutionary leaders overthrew Cuban President Fulgenico Batista. In the following months during the first few years of the new regime, Castro's revolutionary government implemented various reforms intended to reduce U.S. influence in the country and to create a more egalitarian society based on the principles of communism. Not only did the revolution require changes to its internal society that diminished hierarchical structures, it mandated that the relationship with the United States, which was based on a balance of power that the United States dominated, be redefined. Cuba reduced imports from the United States, nationalized American assets in the country, and provided zero monetary compensation to the thousands of business owners who had their investments expropriated.

Rebalancing the U.S.-Cuba relationship also meant that Cuba had to align itself with U.S. enemies, namely the Soviet Union. With every instance of confrontation the Cuba-Soviet Union relationship was strengthened. Following the discontinuation of the Cuban Sugar Quota by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, for example, Cuba and the Soviet Union entered into a variety of economic agreements.

The U.S.-Cuba relationship quickly moved toward complete isolation in 1960 and 1961. In October of 1960 the United States initiated an economic embargo against Cuba. The Caribbean country responded by nationalizing the remaining American enterprises on the island. In January 1961 the United States and Cuba severed diplomatic relations when they closed their respective embassies (Perez 2003, 238-244). The stage was set for a long era of antagonism and confrontation.

As Cuba aligned itself with the Soviet Union and attempted to reduce U.S. influence on the island, the United States moved equally fast to remove Cuba's leaders from power. Over the next five or so years, the United States implemented several attempts to overthrow Fidel Castro and his supporters. The most famous attempt was the failed Bay of Pigs invasion organized by the Central Intelligence Agency in April 1961. Following the Bay of Pigs operation, formally known as Operation Zapata, the CIA looked for alternative subversive strategies to topple the Cuban regime. From 1960-1965 the US attempted to assassinate Castro at least eight different times (Husain, 27). The CIA also intended to implement a comprehensive plan of covert activity in Cuba, Operation Mongoose. The initiative included a variety of approaches to promoting dissent within the country, including coordinating with churches and labor groups in Cuba, and carrying out economic warfare. Cuban exiles were also trained in Florida and propaganda was distributed to the island via balloons. This operation intended to build a counterrevolutionary movement in Cuba that would topple the Communist regime. After years of intelligence gathering, failed attempts to overthrow the regime, and the Cuban Missile crisis in the fall of 1962, Operation Mongoose was officially discontinued in January 1963 (Husain 2005, 27-42) While this initial time frame of confrontation sets the stage for decades to come, this paper will focus on the period after foreign intervention attempts, from 1966 to present day. By beginning the analysis in 1966, the focus throughout will be on efforts to get an established, autocratic regime to liberalize.

Chapter I: Encouraging Cooperation and Migration (1966-1981)

Overview

The end of the Kennedy administration marked the conclusion of U.S. efforts to topple the Castro regime directly through mainly interventionist means. In subsequent years various tactics would be taken to weaken Castro's regime, to reduce Cuba-Soviet interaction, and to encourage human rights on the island. However, rarely did these approaches entail the support of guerrilla groups or other clandestine means of promoting Cuban destabilization. Still, some of the policies implemented toward Cuba under President Kennedy and in the first half of the Johnson administration were left intact. The Nixon administration for example did little to alter economic sanctions originally implemented under President Eisenhower. The Ford and Carter administrations altered U.S. policy toward Cuba by implementing a somewhat more conciliatory approach in which resolve was combined with an effort to negotiate via a carrot-and-stick approach. Under these administrations sanctions were eased, and opportunities for travel and migration were heightened. President Carter was particularly interested in increasing U.S.-Cuba cooperation. Under the Carter administration Cuba and the United States opened Interests Sections, allowed for the visits of congressional leaders, and signed a maritime and fishing agreement, among other peacemaking actions.

Near the end of this time frame we observe an improvement in civil liberties according to *Freedom in the World*. In 1977 Freedom House upgrades Cuba's civil liberty rating from a 7 to a 6, based on the freeing of thousands of political prisoners and allowing Cuban exiles in the United States to visit their families in Cuba. At first glance, Ford and Carter's conciliatory approach appeared to have a positive, yet minor effect on liberalization in Cuba. In this section

we will examine a series of conditions that might affect civil liberties to try to determine what factors played the most important role in the slight liberalization observed in the late 1970s.

Civil liberties

Freedom House began providing global scores for civil liberties and political freedoms in 1973. From that year, until 1976 Cuba received the lowest grade possible, a 7, on civil liberties. While Freedom House provides no qualitative summaries during this time period, other sources confirm the abysmal human rights conditions on the island... State media was strongly controlled throughout this era. Political opponents were discriminated against and those unwilling to renounce their opposition were held in harsh conditions. Furthermore freedom of religion and choice of workplace, education, or residence were absent. Torture was reported as well (Gastil 1977; Gastil 1978).

In 1977 the *Freedom in the World* Reports upgraded Cuba's civil liberty score to 6. Throughout the remainder of the 70s Cuba's scores remained at that level. The corresponding qualitative reports indicate improvements, albeit minor ones, with regard to the respect for civil liberties in Cuba during this time period. The most significant opening occurred in 1978 when the Cuban regime began to release thousands of political prisoners and exiles to the United States. Castro also allowed exiles to visit their families on the island for the first time since the revolution. Some freedom to criticize the government informally was established, however writing, even privately, against the government could result in severe punishment (Gastil 1981, 339).

Sanctions

A Slight Relaxation

Under the Johnson and Nixon administrations economic policy toward Cuba was largely unchanged. The full-scale embargo instituted under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 was maintained, as well as cut backs to the sugar quota originally instituted by the Eisenhower administration. Regional economic isolation did increase under the Johnson administration in 1964 when the OAS passed, with U.S. support, an agreement to institute a regional embargo against Cuba, and in 1967 when the OAS instituted even more economic restrictions (Kaplowitz 1998, 67). Despite this initial success, the United States largely was unsuccessful in making the embargo multilateral worldwide. The OAS was the only international organization to ever adopt economic sanctions against Cuba. The regional sanctions only existed for a mere ten years, probably not long enough to make a lasting impact. Moreover, even when the regional policy was in place, several OAS members refused to comply (Kaplowitz 1998, 78). The United States' inability to make the economic embargo multilateral was costly, in both an economic and political sense. As Latin American states reinstating trading and diplomatic relations with the island, the effect of the embargo dwindled and the United States appeared isolated in its policy toward Cuba. The exceptional nature of U.S. policy was even more visible when compared with the stance taken outside of the Americas where governments of various political and economic orientations maintained diplomatic and economic relations with Cuba.

As some countries in the region began reinstating relations with Cuba in the mid 1970s and other voices criticized the embargo, U.S. intransigence on the economic embargo began to dwindle. During President Gerald Ford's time in office the United States made its first significant reversals in its economic approach toward Cuba. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger authorized secret meetings with Cuba in 1975 and sought to relax the hostile relationship that

existed between the two countries. These discussions included talk of easing the embargo. Although they were cut short in 1975 when Cuba deployed soldiers to Angola to bolster Marxist rebels fighting in that country, these meetings resulted in several achievements. The United States moved to allow foreign subsidiaries to interact with Cuba and to authorize ships doing business with Cuba to refuel at U.S. ports. President Ford also revoked the foreign aid penalizations that were imposed upon foreign countries trading with Cuba (Perez-Stable 2011, 12). Finally, the Ford administration helped reduce regional isolation of Cuba with its support of a 1975 OAS resolution that revoked the hemispheric sanctions against Cuba implemented under President Johnson (Haney 2004, 26; Kaplowitz 1998, 86; Perez-Stable 2011, 12).

Despite Cuba's involvement in the Angolan conflict, the Carter administration quietly continued efforts to improve economic relations. After just two months into his presidency, Carter ordered the State Department to revoke existing restrictions on travel to Cuba. Following this announcement, Americans were able to visit Cuba and purchase goods with dollars while there. In June 1977 the Carter Administration further reduced economic restraints by discontinuing the practice of "blacklisting" foreign vessels that traded with Cuba (Kaplowitz 1998, 95). A serious congressional initiative was undertaken to further repeal the embargo as well in 1977 when South Dakota Senator George McGovern introduced a bill to allow Cuba to import food and medicine. Although McGovern's and several others' attempts to repeal the embargo failed they symbolized an interest in changing policy with the Cuban regime.

Efforts to derail the embargo and to further increase cooperation with Cuba gained momentum until 1978 when Cuba became involved in a proxy war in Ethiopia. This reinvigorated earlier concerns about Cuba's willingness to export communist revolution and derailed the prospect of openly normalizing relations with Cuba. Additionally problematic was

that U.S. intelligence discovered a Soviet military base in Cuba in 1979. With a reelection looming and Carter administration appearing to be increasing “soft” on Cuba and the Soviet Union, economic relaxation toward the island became increasingly difficult to endorse (Haney 2004, 28-30; Kaplowitz 1998, 101-102).

Although they were cut short, Carter’s conciliatory efforts produced positive results. Most importantly this approach persuaded Castro to come to the negotiating table and to alter the way Cuba treated its political dissidents. Since the severing of diplomatic ties in 1961, Fidel Castro has made normalizing relations with the United States conditional on the removal of the U.S. embargo. Carter’s relaxation of sanctions, however moderate it might have been, showed Castro that he was serious about negotiating a path towards normalization. Moreover, it displayed to Castro that Carter’s foreign policy was not solely based in hostility, as many of his predecessors’ had been.

Carter also relaxed economic policy toward Cuba in terms of the goals he aimed to accomplish through that policy. Rather than hoping to oust Castro from power, as many of his successors had, Carter focused on the limited objective of improving human rights on the island. Nor did the Carter administration aim to alter Cuba’s foreign policy. Even when Cuba continued its involvement in Angola, the U.S. moved to relax the embargo. As Cuba sent troops into Ethiopia, those policies remained in place, despite political pressure within and outside Carter’s cabinet to reverse them (Kaplowitz 1998, 100). Economic sanctions tend to be ineffective if the sender country’s demands are overly ambitious (Hufbauer, Schott, Elliot 2007). Carter’s moderate goal of improving human rights conditions in Cuba is in line with this tendency. After a 1978 dialogue between Cuban exiles and the Cuban government, which was facilitated by the United States, the island announced the release of more than 3,000 political prisoners. It also

permitted the occasional return to the island of Cuban exiles, who had been previously been forbidden from visiting family members in Cuba (Gastil 1978; Kaplowitz 1998, 102). These might not be significant alterations in Cuban policy, however they reveal real change that was a direct result of Carter's pragmatism.

Democratic Exposure

Heightened Migration

Cuban migration to the United States increased significantly after the 1959 Cuban Revolution as dissidents were marginalized and offered little opportunity for political expression. In particular Cuba's elite, disenchanted by the nationalization of industries and various communist economic reforms, left Cuba in large numbers (Pedraza 1996, 312). Furthermore, immigrant assistance programs such as the Cuban Refugee Emergency Center, established in 1960, incentivized migration to the United States. More than 170,000 Cubans immigrated to the United States from 1960 to 1964. This program along with a variety of other state and municipal level initiatives provided subsidized educational, professional, language and other forms of training to Cuban immigrants (Perez 2003, 254).

Following the October 1962 missile crisis the United States actually restricted migration, although only temporarily. Amidst migration pressures Fidel Castro announced in 1965 that those with family in the United States could leave Cuba at the port of Camarioca. President Johnson shortly thereafter declared that those seeking refuge in the United States would be welcome. Relatives of exiles picked up thousands of Cubans, who were brought safely back to Miami, Florida. After a month of these boatlifts, "Freedom Flights" were initiated between the

United States and Cuba. From 1965 to 1973 airlifts facilitated the transportation of more than 250,000 Cubans to the United States (Perez-Stable 2011, 16; Gibbs 2011, 18).

Moreover immigration was augmented in 1966 when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Cuban Adjustment Act (CAA). The CAA granted an alleviated pathway to residency for Cuban citizens admitted to the United States. The law offered legal permanent residency to any Cuban who lived in the United States for at least two years and arrived after January 1, 1959, the date of the Cuban Revolution (Arteaga 2008, 210). Thus, the CAA made Cuban immigrants exempt from traditional restrictions of immigration that apply to most other nationalities seeking residency status in the United States. The CAA also eased the naturalization process for Cuban immigrants. Cuban migrants could now apply for citizenship after staying only two and a half years in the United States rather than five (Gibbs 2011, 18; Pedraza 1996). The attraction of an eased path to residency and citizenship prompted thousands of Cubans to migrate to the United States, regardless of how dangerous the 90-mile journey might have been.

An Abrupt Halt

In 1973 Fidel Castro abruptly ended migration flows when he announced that Cubans seeking refuge in the United States would no longer be able to leave the country. From 1973 to 1979 less than 50,000 Cubans migrated to the United States. Interaction between Americans and Cubans continued, although through touristic rather than migratory means. Within two months of his inauguration, Carter removed the U.S. ban on travel to Cuba. Shortly after that, in September 1977, the Carter administration opened an Interest Section in Cuba (Perez 2003, 256; Perez-Stable 2011, 13). After talks between Cuban exiles and the Cuban government, which were facilitated by the United States, Castro agreed to allow family visits to the island in 1978. The

United States also accepted thousands of political prisoners and their families. In the subsequent year 100,000 Cuban Americans with family members on the island and tens of thousands of Americans would visit Cuba (Perez-Stable 2011, 20; Perez 2003, 256).

Family members and American tourists flooded Cuban cities with dollars and U.S. consumer goods. The presence of material goods, along with stories of wealth, surely provoked an interest about the economic opportunities America might provide. As a result of these desires a mass migration from the island took place. The Mariel Crisis began in the spring of 1980 when a group of thousands demanded asylum at the Peruvian embassy in Havana. In order to prevent a potential crisis, Castro announced that Cubans could once again leave the island. This time Cubans were free to leave via the Mariel Port provided they had someone to pick them up. Hundreds of Cuban Americans arrived on boat at the Mariel Port and transferred family members and others to Miami. Within just a few months 125,000 Cubans chaotically fled to the United States via boatlifts (Perez 2003, 256-257).

The Mariel Crisis

The Mariel Crisis signified an end to this period of mass migration. Although evidence shows that the great majority of *Marielitos* were mainstream Cuban workers seeking economic opportunity, the American press highlighted the fact that a small percentage of these Cubans were criminals. The subsequent public outcry was problematic for the continuation of the pro-immigration policies implemented under President Carter (Pedraza 1996). The Mariel boatlifts were ended in October 1980 on mutual terms between the Cuban and American governments.

During the late 1960s and the early 1970s exchanges between Cuban and American officials increased, albeit slightly. A series of high-level diplomatic visits occurred during the

70s. This included visits from Senators Jacob Javits and Claiborn Pell, the first visits by U.S. elected officials to Cuba since the severing of relations in 1961. In the summer of 1974 President Ford liberalized U.S. travel provisions by allowing scholars and journalists to travel to Cuba with the issuing of special licenses. U.S. presidential candidate George McGovern and Senator James Abourezk also visited Cuba in 1977 and met with officials from the University of Havana (Kaplowitz 1998, 89; Martínez and Resende 2006, 32).

In particular Carter sought to increase contact between average Cuban and American citizens. Within two months of his inauguration President Carter lifted the travel ban to Cuba. Carter and Castro further facilitated interaction between the two countries with the opening of Interests Sections in September 1977. This was integral in supporting travel between the two countries. The major exchanges in academics occurred under the Carter administration occurred in October 1977 when Cuban academics visited U.S. campuses including Johns Hopkins and Yale University. In 1979 a group of American academics from Johns Hopkins visited the University of Havana. The 1979 trip initiated an annual exchange between the two universities that continued at least until 2006. These constitute just a few examples of several academic exchanges that occurred between Cuban and American academics during the Carter administration (Martínez and Resende 2006, 34).

Despite the massive exodus of Cubans to the United States following the Revolution and throughout the early 1970s, migration did little to encourage exchanges of democratic ideas between Cubans and their expatriates. Migration to the United States represented a complete separation from the island, and family members and friends that remained in Cuba. Cuban policy required that those leaving the island could never return. The regime viewed exiles as traitors. Castro himself referred to exiles with hostility, labeling them *gusanos*, or worms (Barberia

2002). While migrants living in the United States surely were exposed to democratic ideas, the same cannot be said about their Cuban family members or friends remaining in Cuba. Finally, potential exchanges were limited due to U.S. policy as well. Throughout the early 60s and late 70s exchanges between scholars, officials, and statesmen were limited. Thus, sufficient exposure to democratic ideas to promote pressures for liberalization did not take place in the late 60s and early to mid-70s.

With the authorization of family visits in 1978 one might expect significant cross-national exchanges to take place. There is significant evidence that they did. More than 100,000 Cuban Americans visited the island in 1979 alone. Moreover, through their contacts with Cuban American family members, Cubans developed an interest in the market-oriented opportunities the United States had to offer. The mass protests and pressures for migration prior to the Mariel Crisis evidence these desires for economic freedom. Rather than liberalize Cuba's economic *policy, Castro had a much simpler solution to the growing interest in economic opportunity. He* allowed and encouraged those interested in the "American dream" to depart from the island. By encouraging the exodus of the opposition and by heightening the nationalistic rhetoric against those dissidents, mass immigration actually strengthened Castro's claims to rule in Cuba and diminished the likelihood of liberalization. Therefore, it is unlikely that the uptick in civil liberties was caused by the coincidental and corresponding increase in cultural exchanges.

Domestic Economic Factors

Strength from Soviet Aid

The embargo did little to debilitate the Cuban economy from the mid-60s to the late 70s. Although U.S. imports accounted for a large portion of Cuban trade prior to the implementation

of sanctions, Cuba was able to circumvent the policy by increasing trade elsewhere. This primarily meant heightening economic relations with countries of the socialist bloc, and in particular the Soviet Union. During the period 1961 to 1973 socialist bloc countries accounted for 73 percent of Cuba's total trade (Kaplowitz 1998, 77). These countries were often inclined to provide Cuba cheap credit, and pay higher prices for Cuban goods, such as sugar, to support a fellow socialist country in the western hemisphere, who persistently faced opposition from the United States. In some ways Cuba did not only offset the U.S. embargo, but also further advanced its economy after the implementation of economic sanctions.

In particular Cuba benefited from the support of the Soviet Union. The Soviets provided an estimated 1 million dollars per day in assistance to the island throughout the 1970s (Perez 2003, 259). From 1961 to 1985 Cuba received more than 40 billion dollars in aid from the Soviet Union. Trade between the two socialist countries prospered as well. The Soviet Union accounted for nearly 50 percent of Cuba's total trade, more than any other trading partner (Kaplowitz 1998, 77). Finally the island offset U.S. sanctions through improved relations with fellow Latin American and Caribbean states. Argentina, Barbados, Colombia, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela normalized relations with Cuba in the 1970s after more than a decade of diplomatic freezes. In 1975 the OAS, with support from the United States representative, ended multilateral sanctions that had been in place for more than a decade (Perez-Stable 2011, 11; Gibbs 2011). Trade between Cuba and these Latin American states would prosper throughout the decade.

Improved relations with the United States in the latter years of the 1970s also had positive effects on the Cuban economy. The introduction of family visits and the authorization of American travel to Cuba in 1977 was particularly beneficial. Returning exiles spent over 100

million dollars in Cuba from 1979 to 1980. Most of this activity occurred at government-sponsored stores where visitors could purchase goods for their Cuban families (Perez 2003, 256).

In economic terms the Cuban economy grew significantly during this period. From 1966 to 1970 the Cuba's gross national product (GNP) developed at a 3.9 percent annually. From 1970 to 1980 the Cuban economy grew at a rate of 10 percent (Morales and Provost 2008, 89). Living standards were strong as well. The economy was often running at full employment, and many Cubans were enrolled in formal education. Access to healthcare, which was provided free from the government, was high.

Near the end of the 1970s Cuba's economy underwent a minor decline. Growth dropped from 9.4 percent in 1978 to 4.3 percent in 1979. In a speech to Cuba's congress Castro discussed the economic decline. Of several issues, Cuba faced high energy costs and shortages of goods. Castro also spoke of a lack of sugar production due to sugar rust disease that had affected the industry (Kaplowitz 1998, 105). While the Cuban economy prospered in the late 60s and throughout the 1970s, it was headed for a sharp decline in the decade ahead.

Economic pressures on the Castro regime during the mid 1960s and throughout the 1970s could be characterized as low. The prosperity of the Cuban economy, and Cuba's ability to offset sanctions through heightened trade with Latin America, Europe, and the socialist bloc in particular, limited the influence of the United States' economic embargo. Moreover, internal pressures for reform were limited. Cuban living conditions were positive, and thus, they saw little benefit to changing the Cuban socialist system. Improved economic prosperity also gave Castro and the Cuban leadership political strength. Cuban growth in the face of U.S. isolationism made Cuba appear invulnerable to U.S. sanctions and hostility. Despite U.S. condemnation,

Cuba maintained troops in Angola and entered the war in Ethiopia. There is little evidence to show that Cuba's limited openness in the late 1970s was a result of economic conditions.

Chapter II: Hostile Diplomacy and Radio Martí (1981-1991)

Overview

U.S. policy toward Cuba during the 1980s was sharply contrasted from the conciliatory approach initiated under President Ford and heightened under President Carter. The Reagan administration instituted a hostile approach to Cuba that was left intact by his successor George H.W. Bush. Generally both administrations viewed Latin America's problems, particularly the various civil wars taking place in Central America, as direct results of Cuba's influence in the region. This perspective resulted in attempts to reverse diplomatic interactions with Cuba and to heighten anti-Castro rhetoric. In this regard exposure to democracy was diminished. Although these administrations supported pro-democracy propaganda programs such as Radio Martí, the impact of this and the subsequent TV Martí initiative have been viewed as limited.

Reagan's hardline approach was slightly relaxed for a short period of time in the latter years of his administration. The reinstatement of an immigration agreement that coordinated the return of Mariel undesirables to Cuba and facilitated the immigration of Cuban exiles to the United States indicated a more pacifying approach. Positive engagement continued in 1988 when Cuba agreed to remove troops from Angola under a tripartite accord that was facilitated by the United States. Despite this signaling of a potential turning point in U.S.-Cuban relations, the hostile approach established under the majority of the Reagan years continued in the first half of the Bush administration.

Civil liberties

The civil liberties scores awarded to Cuba from 1981 to 1989 are 6. Cuba's willingness to release political prisoners into exile in 1978 translated into a limited toleration for political dissidents, particularly those willing to admit to wrongdoing. Additional openings took place in 1984, when the right to private property and freedom to practice religion were improved through constitutional amendment (Gastil 1985, 286). In 1988, for example, the United Nations Human Rights Commission and several other international organizations were allowed to visit Cuba to meet with human rights activists. The Red Cross was permitted to visit a number of Cuban prisoners. In that same year Fidel Castro admitted to holding political dissidents in jail, several of who were later released (Gastil 1990, 134). In 1990 Castro announced that religious believers would be authorized to participate in the communist system.

Yet these slight openings reflect more of a symbolic movement rather than a true deepening of the liberalization of the late 1970s. The limited impact of the above actions is reflected in the consistency of civil liberty scores during the 1980s. Overall conditions remained highly repressive. Those identifying as part of the political opposition were often discriminated against or imprisoned for their activities. When opposition members did not recant on their political involvements, they were placed in difficult conditions, including facilities for the mentally ill. In 1986, while the Soviet Union began implementing economic and political reforms, Cuba initiated a rectification program that attempted to diffuse any support for reforms similar to those being implemented in Eastern Europe (Gastil 1990, 133). Freedom of the press remained highly restricted and religious practices were discouraged, among other abysmal conditions (Gastil 1982, 283; Gastil 1985, 286).

Significant changes did take place in the early 1990s, however. Unfortunately for Cuban citizens, these changes were for the worse. In the year 1990 Freedom House downgrades Cuba's

civil liberty status to a 7. *Freedom in the World* highlights several repressive and authoritarian tactics that coincided with this downgrade. The Cuban regime announced in 1990 that it would heighten the rectification process of promoting socialist principles, while discouraging notions for reform. Castro strengthened his direct control over the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) and the military as well. Castro and the PCC increase repression over the access to information, the right to free speech and to organize politically, and the right to due process. In particular repression of religious freedom was intense. Although they could join the Communist Party after 1990, Castro arrested Catholic leaders and prevented religious meetings, which were taking place prior to a potential visit from the Pope in the summer of 1990 (Gastil 1990, 134).

Hundreds of political and human rights activists, including many of those interviewed by the U.N. Human Rights Commission in 1988, were jailed in 1989, 1990, and 1991. Repression was particularly high prior to significant political or social events, where activists were present. During a visit by Mikhail Gorbachev in April 1989 dozens of individuals were arrested after evidence revealed that they had planned to demonstrate in front of the Soviet leader. A similar backlash against activists occurred prior to the hosting of the Pan American games in 1991. These incidents, in addition to other roundups, added to the existing presence of 200 or 300 political prisoners. Other activists, who were luckily enough to avoid detainment, faced threats and attacks from rapid action brigades, which were formed by security officials through the auspices of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, a pro-Castro neighborhood watchdog organization (Gastil 1990, 135; Gastil 1991, 170).

Other forms of liberty such as the freedom of press and movement were severely repressed. In 1989 Cuba restricted the Red Cross' access to prisons and expelled a number of

foreign journalists. Ability to choose one's residence or to leave the country was prohibited, except until 1991, when Castro permitted some travel abroad (Gastil 1991, 170).

Sanctions

Strengthening Sanctions

Several actions were taken during the Reagan Administration to reverse the economic openings initiated by President Ford and maintained under President Carter. In 1982 the Reagan administration ended the 1977 fishing agreement with Cuba. The United States also reinstated the travel ban to Cuba, as a means to limit potential economic benefits gained from tourism. In 1986 the embargo was made more strident so that Cuban-Americans could not send remittances to their families in Cuba. Action was also taken to identify ships and businesses that were secretly trading with the United States on behalf of Cuba. In 1986 the Office of Foreign Assets Control created a list of 118 firms and persons operating as "fronts" to Cuba (Kaplowitz 1998, 124-126).

Reagan also amended the embargo to further restrict the flow of goods containing Cuban nickel into the United States. The United States successfully convinced foreign states, including France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Japan to guarantee that products being shipped to the United States were made without Cuban nickel. In this regard the United States gained international support for the embargo, and was not so isolated in its approach towards Cuba.

A major aspect of Reagan's sanction policy focused on financial components of the Cuban economy. As sugar prices dropped and access to foreign investment dwindled the Cuban economy amassed billions of dollars in debt. The Reagan administration pressured foreign bankers to deny Cuba new credit or to reschedule debts. Although it was able to interfere with

some of Cuba's commercial relations, the United States was unable to gain international cooperation in preventing Cuba from obtaining new loans (Kaplowitz 1998, 128-129).

During the early years of the Bush administration the embargo was fortified as well. This included heightened restrictions on the sharing of intellectual materials between the two countries, which was originally exempted from the embargo under a law known as the Berman Amendment. The Bush administration also moved to further restrict the flow of remittances. After 1991 Cuban Americans were limited to sending their families 300 dollars per month (Kaplowitz 1998, 149).

Economic sanctions in this era might have contributed to the worsening conditions in Cuba in the late 1980s and early 1990s, albeit only in a minor way. During this time period the Cuban regime faced intense economic pressure, which was probably worsened by U.S. sanctions but was largely driven by an abrupt reduction in Soviet economic aid to Cuba. To counteract these pressures the Cuban government implemented rationing and an intensive work initiative through the rectification campaign. These programs worsened the living conditions of many Cubans. While this impact was indirect and unintentional, it is in line with scholarship arguing that certain economic suffering induced by sanctions can deprive vulnerable populations of economic and basic rights. However, there is little evidence to confirm that economic sanctions caused major changes in freedom in Cuba during this time. It is particularly hard to display causality given the already poor economic conditions in Cuba.

The economic sanctions implemented by President Reagan and Bush probably failed because they were able to make the embargo stronger at home, but proved largely unable to do so multilaterally. One exception was the international support gained from France, Japan, and others who were willing to oblige to the U.S. demands to label Cuban nickel. Although the

economic impact of this policy was probably minor, it may have had some political benefits, such as making the United States look less isolated in its Cuba policy. More importantly, Reagan was unable to gain international or regional support for U.S. financial sanctions toward Cuba. Financial sanctions tend to be more effective than traditional trade sanctions since they are more difficult to avoid (Hufbauer, Elliott, and Schott, 2007, 47). Such sanctions could have debilitated the Cuban economy and pushed it toward defaulting on its debt.

Finally, Reagan or Bush did not seek minor changes in Cuba. Rather both hoped to significantly alter the domestic political and economic system and to remove Cuba from Angola, Central America, and Ethiopia. As Hubauer, Schott, and Elliott argue, the success of sanctions can be dependent upon the foreign policy goals of those sanctions. Minor changes tend to produce better results than do major foreign policy goals. Reagan and Bush's aspirations were probably over ambitious.

Democratic Exposure

Diplomatic Hostility and Isolationism

The period 1981-1991 was characterized by heightened diplomatic hostility toward Cuba. Rather than being open to normalization and willing to compromise as President Carter was, President Reagan and Bush implemented diplomatic isolation toward the island. Both presidents viewed the implementation of free and fair elections and Cuba's withdrawal from Central American and Africa as preconditions for normalization. These conditions would not be met during either president's terms in office, and neither would moves towards rapprochement.

Reagan in particular was concerned about Havana's involvement in Central America, Ethiopia and Angola. The president's isolationist approach was showcased during a battle at the

United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) in 1987, when Reagan instructed his UN representatives to stress the issue of Cuba's mistreatment of its political dissidents. At the meeting, the Reagan administration hoped to persuade the UNHRC to pass a resolution condemning Cuba. Despite persistent efforts from U.S. representatives, the resolution failed by one vote (Gibbs 2011, 23). Another resolution was presented in 1988 when the UNHRC met again, although that resolution was withdrawn when Cuba authorized the visit of a UNHRC representative to Havana.

Reagan's intransigence at the UNHRC meetings resulted in Havana accepting a visit from a UNHRC representative and other compromises from the Cuban government. Throughout this time Cuba continued to release prisoners and invite human rights organizations to the island. In 1988 alone Americas Watch and Red Cross visited the island (Gibbs 2011, 23). Yet this seems to be more of a politically motivated move by Castro to temporarily appease international concerns over prison conditions, to only suppress citizens once concerns had calmed. Shortly afterward Cuba was stepping up its harassment and abuse of political opposition and activists through the reformation program launched in 1986. Moreover, as these organizations left the island later that year, Cuba began imprisoning more political opponents (Gastil 1987).

The select diplomatic engagements that took place in the 1980s seemed to produce more positive results. For example, the United States facilitated discussions between Angola, South Africa, and Cuba, which resulted in Havana withdrawing troops from Angola. 1987 discussions between Cuba and the United States led to the reinstatement of a migration accord established in 1984 (Kaplowitz 1998, 123).

Radio and T.V. Marti

Reagan and Carter both viewed increasing the access to information in Cuba as a useful mechanism to promote democratic ideas. *How* each administration went about heightening that access was starkly contrasted. Carter sought to increase direct contact between Cubans and Americans by opening up touristic, academic, and diplomatic exchanges. Reagan instead sought to promote information flows through a U.S. sponsored propaganda initiative, Radio Martí. The latter viewed tourism as a potential benefit to the Cuban economy. Moreover, American and Cuban interaction went against Reagan's policy of isolationism (Gibbs 2011, 31).

In 1981 President Reagan signed in to law Executive Order 12323 that created a Commission on Broadcasting in Cuba. Despite some initial pushbacks from Congress a bill entitled the Radio Broadcasting to Cuba Act passed in 1983 that would eventually facilitate the creation of a radio station, Radio Martí. That station would be broadcast live in Cuba on a 24-hour basis. Although hardline supporters of Radio Martí wanted to use it as a mechanism to expose Cubans to the realities of the Cuban regime, and its repressive tendencies, it merely offered informative information about world events. Since 1985 Radio Martí has also broadcasted daily news, music, sports, and entertainment to Cubans (Walsh, 86-87).

Radio Martí faced a series of challenges that restricted its ability to reach the Cuban people and have a significant impact on spreading democratic ideas as intended. Radio Martí spent nearly three years in a period of limbo in which it had been authorized but had not broadcast a single radio show. The United States was unable to hire sufficient staff to get the broadcast running and was concerned about a possible jamming of frequencies by the Cuban government (Walsh 2012, 90). When Radio Martí was finally initiated on May 20, 1985, almost three years after its congressional approval, these concerns were made reality. Castro began jamming Radio Martí by sending contradictory radio waves through the frequencies that Martí

was being aired on. There were also serious doubts about how impactful Radio Martí's content was and whether it actually resonated with Cuban listeners (Walsh 2012, 94).

With time Radio Martí increased its level of exposure and effectiveness. Throughout 1986 and 1987 Cuban listenership increased significantly. Estimates in 1987 suggested that more than half of the Cuban population listened to Radio Martí on a daily basis. Radio Martí covered important issues such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the Chernobyl disaster and the conflicts in Central American and Angola (Walsh 2012, 95-96).

As the economic situation in Cuba deteriorated in the final years of the decade President Bush and hardliners in congress saw an opportunity to heighten information flows and to promote factions against the Cuban regime. In 1990 President George H.W. Bush authorized the creation of a television equivalent of Radio Martí, T.V. Martí. This program faced similar challenges as Radio Martí. Many were troubled that a television signal from the United States would be considerably weaker than a radio frequency, and thus easier for the Cubans to block. Radio Martí faced confrontation in Congress, where U.S. officials raised issues of sovereignty and international norms concerning telecommunications. After much debate congress and the President authorized the Television Broadcasting to Cuba Act in January 1990. The program was finally launched on March 27, 1990 but was immediately neutralized by Cuban interferers. Within just a few months it was clear that T.V. Martí was a complete failure. Reports indicated that very few Cubans had access to T.V. Martí's programming (Walsh 2012, 126-127).

Radio and T.V. Martí could be described as ineffective simply based on their slow startup times and Castro's ability to block their signals, at least upfront. Broadcasting pro-democracy programs can only have a liberalizing effect on an autocratic society if they expose that nation's population to democratic ideas (Richmond 2010). Of the two programs Radio Martí was the

only one that Cuban's tuned in to. Yet, its content was mostly informative, rather than persuasive. It did not expose Cubans to the benefits of American life nor was it used as anti-Castro propaganda. Therefore it comes at no surprise that there was not a significant rise of pro-democracy elements in Cuba during this time.

Rather than support democratic momentum in Cuba, these programs may have indirectly impeded Cuba's openness. It was clear that Castro viewed the implementation of Radio and T.V. Martí as hostile acts. Not only did he order the interception of the radio stations frequency, but also he also unilaterally ended the migration accord that had been established in 1984. By halting the migration accord, the regime restricted thousands of Cubans' right to free movement. As a result thousands of Cuban exiles were forced to take the dangerous journey across the Florida Straights on rafts made of wood.

Withdrawals from Migration

During the Reagan administration there were several instances that indicated a reversal of the pro-migration and person-to-person exchanges instituted by Reagan's predecessors. As already noted in this chapter's *sanctions* section, President Reagan viewed such exchanges as an opportunity for Cuba to gain economic benefits. Thus, in April of 1982 President Reagan revoked the travel authorizations granted under President Carter in 1977. Academic exchanges took place at a significantly restricted rate (Kaplowitz 1998, 123).

Reagan also moved to cut off migration flows. He desperately wanted to prevent another Mariel Crisis from occurring under his watch. In particular, the president was concerned about the continued presence of criminal factions of the *Marielitos*, who had come to the United States during the crisis. Several diplomatic attempts were made to repatriate the Mariel desirables, but

were unsuccessful (Kaplowitz 1998, 123). An agreement came in 1984 shortly after Reagan's reelection. The United States and Cuba agreed to an immigration compromise in that year that would return nearly three thousand of the Mariel refugees and allow for 20,000 Cuban visas to be granted annually. The United States would also accept 30,000 political refugees and their immediate families. This agreement was mutually beneficial. It would allow Castro to continue to reduce anti-communist factions on the island, and for Reagan to return the undesirables that had committed crimes in Cuba and were continuing to cause problems in the United States (Perez-Stable 2011, 15).

The launch of Radio Marti in 1985 infuriated the Castro regime, however, which then suspended the 1984 immigration agreement. The United States responded by halting migration flows altogether. This suspension of entry visas for Cubans into the United States lasted for a period of two years. As immigration to the United States became increasingly difficult less Cubans managed to make the voyage to Florida. The most desperate, also known as *balseiros*, took to rafts and makeshift boats to escape Cuba. Altogether those that successfully made it via *balsas* were slim. Less than 75,000 Cubans immigrated to the United States from 1981 to 1990 (Pedraza 1996, 323). After suffering a serious economic downturn in 1986 and 1987 however Cuba became more conciliatory and initiated secret talks with Washington in 1987 in Mexico. These resulted in the renewal of the 1984 immigration accord (Martínez and Resende 2006, 34; Schmertz, Datlof, and Ugrinsky, 384).

Domestic Economic Factors

Collapse of Soviet Aid

Throughout the 1980s the Cuban economy deteriorated. Initial problems stemmed from bad commodity prices. Already low sugar prices in the late early 1980s further declined in the mid and late 1980s. The price of sugar dropped from 25 cents per pound in 1980 to 3 cents in 1985. The low price of oil also hurt Cuba since it often re-exported Soviet oil imports. Also debilitating was the devaluation of the dollar, which caused Cuba's purchasing power to go down and foreign debt to go up. Finally, as Cuba's economic conditions worsened, the U.S. embargo became more effective, at least in an economic sense. In the mid-1980s the U.S. embargo was costing Cuba about 400 million dollars per year (Kaplowitz 1998, 118).

Cuba took several steps to counteract these issues. Cuba heightened existing economic relationships with the Soviet Union and other communist bloc countries. By mid-decade Cuba was making more money re-exporting Soviet oil than it was exporting sugar, its largest export at the time. Cuba also increased ties with Latin American states, Europe and Asia. Finally, as part of Castro's rectification campaign, Cuba began conserving some goods and required Cubans to work harder for less money (Kaplowitz 1998, 118-119).

Yet these initiatives could only slightly offset the economic pains that were yet to come. As Cuba was building up its economic dependence on the Soviet Union, its own political economy became more aligned and vulnerable to the conditions in that country. The 1980s were a bad time to be dependent on the Soviet Union. Under the policies of perestroika and glasnost Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev reformed the Soviet Union. This liberalization fostered future reform movements in Eastern Europe that would lead to the overthrow of several communist regimes in the region. When socialist factions within the Soviet Union began losing power in favor of democratic proponents Cuba was headed for trouble. The Soviet Union stopped buying Cuban sugar at prices above international market level. It was also announced that the Soviets

would soon end the oil-for-sugar barter system that had disproportionately benefited Cuba for three decades (Kaplowitz 1998, 145).

Economic troubles worsened at the start of the 1990s. Trade with communist countries further declined and subsidized soviet oil continued to diminish. In 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed. Economic assistance from that country dwindled. In 1989 Soviet aid to Cuba was about five billion dollars. By 1992 the Soviets offered Cuba nothing. In an attempt to counteract these changes Cuba sought increased trade with countries in Latin America, and with Japan, China, and Europe. However, the damage could not fully be offset. Cuba was in full economic collapse by 1991. Cuba's official estimates suggest that GDP shrank by 35 percent from 1989 to 1993 Gibbs 2011, 27 (Kaplowitz 1998, 145).

The economic factors were in place for a transition toward openness to occur. In fact, many international groups and journalists predicted that a democratic transition in Cuba was imminent (Gibbs 2011, 28). While scholarship suggests that poor economic conditions should lead to liberalization in an autocratic regime, the intermediate factors for liberalization were not present (Acemoglu, Robinson and Yared 2005). Foremost, average Cubans were not uniting and demanding reforms.

The failure for Cuba to liberalize and for Cubans to advocate vigorously for reform despite economic collapse probably happened for two reasons. First, Cubans did not have enough access about the reformist movements taking place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Not only did Castro limit access to such information, but Cuba was geographically separated from these incidents as well. Laurence Whitehead suggests that proximity to democratic societies is an important external factor in promoting liberalization. Those closer to

democratic societies tend to be more prone to democracy as well (1996). Cubans status as an island nation has long isolated it from global trends such as democratization in the 1990s.

Second, Castro moved quickly to repress dissent through his rectification campaign so that those with any inclination towards expressing reformist ideas were quickly discouraged. For example, before the Fourth Congress of the PCC in October 1991, many international human rights organizations on the island organized to demand free elections, freedom of political association, and for the lifting of travel restrictions, among other human rights (Gastil 1991, 169). Yet before these activists could gain popular support, they were severely repressed. The state security forces attacked those demanding reform and jailed several of them as well. This showed others who were considering opposing the regime would be met with instant repression. Thus, in contradiction to what scholars such as Acemoglu, Robinson, and Yared predict, we actually observe that the deteriorating economic conditions in Cuba resulted in an increase in repression and a tightening of autocratic principles.

Chapter III: Heightened Economic Pressure and Obama's Rapprochement (1991-2015)

Overview

At the start of the 1990s Cuba was still dealing with the economic decline caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Cuba strengthened its rectification campaign, based on rationing and collectivist principles, to deal with the economic troubles. Yet conditions only worsened over time. By 1993 Cuba, facing firmer sanctions from the United States, was near economic collapse. Cuba implemented a series of economic reforms under the slogan "Special Period in Peacetime", indicating that they would only be temporary openings. In order to strengthen his position of power Fidel Castro also repressed the nascent political opposition movement in Cuba. At the end of the decade Cuba had dodged economic collapse, and Castro remained firmly in power.

At the turn of the century Cuba faced new problems. The opposition movement on the island was growing somewhat. In response, the Cuban regime heightened repression once again. Additionally, Cuba's leader, Fidel Castro, faced deteriorating health. In 2006 he relinquished power to his brother, Raul. This exchange led directly to a series of economic liberalizations. Changes in Cuban economic policy were met with a reformation of U.S. diplomatic efforts. Rather than isolate the island as many of his predecessors had done, President Barack Obama has sought to engage the Cuban government and its people.

Civil Liberties

Continued Repression in the Face of Ridicule

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s Freedom House continued to award Cuba scores of 7 on civil liberties. Freedom of association and organization, freedom to travel, religious freedom, and freedom of the press were all severely restricted. In a few instances some reforms of liberalization were made, but these were temporary and merely served to the political or economic benefit of the Castro Regime. On occasions where the regime was questioned or when opposition groups demanded reform, heightened repression followed.

Repression against political opposition organizations continued throughout the 1990s. Cuba maintained several hundred political prisoners throughout the decade. In 1993 it was estimated that at least 500 prisoners were being held in Cuba. This number was raised to 600 in 1994 (Gastil 1995). In 1996 dozens of opposition members belonging to the Cuban Council, a group of opposition organizations were arrested for forming a meeting (Gastil 1997). In July 1997 security officials threatened more than a dozen dissidents when they released a document asking for free expression, assembly, and other civil and political rights (Gastil 1997). Many of these individuals were tortured or held in psychiatric facilities. Throughout the 1990s and until 2007 Cuba denied requests from the United Nations for the presence of a human rights representative in the country to examine prison conditions and the status of other facilities.

The freedom to travel was restricted throughout the 1990s. To leave the country Cubans were required to obtain exit permits, which were difficult to get. Attempts to escape the country were met with prison time. In 1994 many Cuban refugees were shot at as they tried to escape the island and reach the U.S. base at Guantanamo Bay. About 1,000 individuals were arrested for attempting to leave the island in 1994 (Gastil, 1997). In 1994 massive riots took place in Havana, where thousands of Cubans gathered demanding refuge in the United States and chanting anti-

Castro slogans. Nearly 700 people were detained and thirty-five were injured (Perez-Stable 2011, 30)

Freedom of religion was virtually non-existent in Cuba during the early 1990s. Until 1991 religious believers were officially discriminated against and only atheists could participate politically. In that year Religious believers were allowed to join the Communist Party permitted they make an official commitment to the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) (Gastil 1992). Prior to a visit from the Pope in 1998 religious activities were authorized and Christmas was celebrated for the first time in 28 years (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 1999).

Freedom of the press was heavily restricted. Throughout the decade several non-state-sponsored media outlets were restricted from entering the country and several were expelled while working in Cuba. For example, in 1993 a *Miami Herald* journalist was expelled from Cuba (Gastil, 1994). Such expulsions were common. Prior to ceremonies for the opening of the National Assembly in 1998 several foreign journalists were sent home (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 1999).

At times minor reforms were introduced that eased repression of opposition groups, but usually when such action was politically or economically advantageous for the Cuban government. Moreover, such actions were often temporary or offset with heightened repression elsewhere. In 1992, for example, Castro released several dozen political prisoners (Gastil 1993). Castro furthered eased civil liberties that year when he introduced constitutional reform to end formal discrimination against religious believers. However, both actions were made prior to a meeting with Latin American states and the Spanish government from whom Castro sought to gain economic assistance. When the meeting proved unsuccessful, President Castro arrested

dissidents and granted himself further control over the military and the National Defense Council.

Castro did make some significant concessions prior to a 1998 visit by Pope John Paul II. In June 1998 the number of political prisoners on the island was numbered at 381, down from more than 1,000 two years prior (Gastil 1999). Castro responded directly to the Pope's requests to release 300 political prisoners. Instead of the Pope's number Castro freed 140 prisoners. However, in the same year four prominent opposition leaders, known as the Group of Four, faced and were later arrested for sedition charges. Relaxation of repression prior to the Pope's visit seemed merely an attempt to appease foreign pressures rather than a move towards liberalization. In 1999, just a year after the visit, Fidel Castro introduced anti-subversive legislation, Law No. 88, which targeted independent and foreign media, and the growing opposition movement on the island ("Freedom in the World Report: Cuba" 2000). Through this legislation those speaking poorly of the government could face up to 20 years in prison. In subsequent years dozens of journalists were arrested or forced into exile via this legislation.

The regime was truly tested with the rise of opposition movements in 2002 that gained domestic and international attention. The Varela Project and its leader, Oswaldo Paya, gained recognition from former U.S. president Jimmy Carter when he visited in June 2002. The Project collected 11,000 signatures of individuals who wanted referendums on the right to speech and vote, along with other reforms ("Freedom in the World Report: Cuba" 2003). Unfortunately, these developments were met with heightened repression, rather than reform. 75 dissidents and journalists were arrested in April 2003. All of the accused were found guilty. Shortly after the signatures were submitted, Havana held a referendum that declared socialism to be

“untouchable” in effect voiding the signatures of any legitimacy (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2004).

Fidel Relinquishes Power and Several Reforms Enslave

In 2006 after a stint in the hospital due to internal bleeding, Fidel Castro, at the age of 80, relinquished power to his brother, Raul. At first, little change seemed imminent. Raul continued the level of repression and economic control present under his brother. In 2007, however, Raul began to discuss the possibility of economic reform. More significantly, in his first year as temporary leader Raul authorized the release of more than 50 long-term political prisoners (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2008).

In 2008 Raul was named full-time president as Fidel announced his official retirement. What followed was a series of reforms, particularly economic ones, which motivated *Freedom House* to downgrade Cuba’s civil liberties score from 7 to 6 (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2009). Economic reforms included allowing Cubans to buy consumer goods and to stay in tourist hotels, and the elimination of salary caps. Cuban farmers were also given greater autonomy over their businesses. Also in 2008 Raul watched over the release of more political prisoners, including 20 of those arrested in the 2003 crackdown following the Varela Project (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2009). Raul permitted the signing of two UN human rights treaties. In particular, Cuba displayed openness with its involvement in the gay rights movement. The government sponsored an International Day Against Homophobia, initiated a center to test patients for STDs, and began providing sexual realignment surgeries for transsexuals.

Indications that Raul would offer a greater opening of society and easing of civil liberty controls continued in the years ahead. Several political prisoners, including prominent dissidents, were released from prison in 2009 (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2010). Thanks to negotiations between the Catholic Church and the Spanish government, and Cuba, the Cuban government started to release many of the remaining prisoners from the crackdown on dissent in 2003. Most of these prisoners were sent in exile to Spain, but many refused to leave and remained in prison. These releases were a direct result of negotiations between Cuba, and the Catholic Church and the Spanish government. By 2010 the number of political prisoners in Cuba was down to 167 (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2011). By December 2011 less than 75 political prisoners were being held on the island, although short-term detentions and harassment of dissidents were more common (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2012).

A Trend Toward Openness

In recent times economic reforms are continuing. The government has cut the amount of public sector jobs and authorized opportunities in the private sector. In 2011 it was announced that Cubans could more freely purchase homes and cars. (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2012)

Other reforms are taking place as well. Raul Castro has led efforts to reduce corruption and abuses of power in the government and state controlled industries. In January 2013 the government eliminated the exit visa requirement so that Cubans could more freely leave the island (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2014). Restrictions regarding residency in Cuba were also rescinded. As a result of these reforms dissidents, human rights organization, and leaders are freer to travel abroad. The independent press has gained some freedom under the

Raul's leadership as well. The national newspaper *Grandma*, for example, has been able to publish articles critical of the government. Other publications with low readership and some Catholic newspapers are able to criticize the government as well. In 2013 the government opened more than 100 Internet cafes throughout the country. The small community of Internet users and bloggers, such as the internationally recognized Yoani Sanchez, has been able to ridicule the government online ("Freedom in the World Report: Cuba" 2014). Some improvements have been made regarding the ability to organize and protest. In 2014 the Ladies in White organization was allowed to march in December ("Freedom in the World Report: Cuba" 2015)

On December 17, 2014 Cuba and the United States reinstated their diplomatic relations after more than 50 years of isolation. The rapprochement resulted in Cuba agreeing to release 53 political prisoners and of Alan Gross, the government contractor who was arrested in 2009. The United States also released three of the remaining "Cuban Five", several Cuban spies who were arrested in the late 1990s on espionage charges (Freedom in the World Report: Cuba" 2015).

Sanctions

Cuban Democracy Act and the LIBERTAD Act

In the early 1990s the United States viewed the struggling Cuban economy as an opportunity to further strangle the island through sanctions. It also suspected that the fall of the Soviet Union would increase the likelihood of a similar collapse in Havana. In 1992 George H.W. Bush passed the Torricelli act, also known as the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA). This legislation prevented foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with the island and restricted ships that trade with Cuba from entering the United States. Under the bill improvement

in relations between the two countries would only take place if Cuba implemented democratic and economic reforms (Kaplowitz 1998, 148).

Amidst fears that President Clinton (1993-2001) might take a more conciliatory approach to Cuba, the subcommittee on Western Hemispheric Affairs passed a resolution in 1993 calling for an international embargo against Cuba (Perez-Stable 2011, 29). Obviously this would not come. But, it signaled to President Clinton that more economic isolation was desired. President Clinton would not disappoint. In 1996, after easily passing the Senate and House, the Helms-Burton Act, officially the Cuban LIBERTAD Act, was implemented. The Libertad Act banned imports of Cuban products from third party countries. The law also allowed U.S. citizens to sue foreign companies and individuals who have obtained goods or property from Cuba that was owned by U.S. citizens prior to the Cuban revolution (Perez-Stable 2011, 33).

Clinton's Modest Relaxation of Sanctions

In strengthening its own embargo, the United States further isolated itself in its policy toward Cuba. In 1992, shortly after the passing of the CDA, the United Nations passed a resolution against the U.S. embargo (Perez-Stable 2011, 43). No other country maintained a similar policy toward the island and, in fact, in the early 1990s Western and Latin American countries were increasing economic relations with Cuba. In August 1996, shortly after the Helms-Burton Law was passed, the Inter-American Juridical Committee (IAJC), with support from OAS members, ruled that the law went against international norms (Perez-Stable 2011, 65). In response to the IAJC decision and a potentially similar solution from the WTO, President Clinton decided to waive the most controversial aspect of the Helms-Burton Law, which allowed individuals to sue third party companies that were trading expropriated goods in U.S. courts.

Clinton continued to show a desire for conciliation during the latter years of his tenure. In 2000 the United States relaxed economic sanctions regarding trade on food and medicine to Cuba through the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act. Although hesitant to accept the initiative at first, Cuba began importing U.S. agricultural products following the devastating Hurricane Michelle in 2001. By 2004 Cuba had become the twenty-fifth largest market for U.S. food exports as sales reached nearly 400 million dollars in that year alone (Mesa-Lago and Perez-Lopez 2005, 38). Agricultural interest and lobbyist groups in the United States continued to support the relaxation of the embargo during this time.

Contemporary U.S. Sanctions

Despite strong influence from Cuba hardliners, including his brother, the Florida governor, Jeb Bush, President George W. Bush did not bolster the sanction policies implemented by his predecessor. His impact on U.S. sanctions policy was limited. President Bush did limit the amount of money that family members could send to Cubans through remittances and travel, however. President Barack Obama, notwithstanding his support to end economic sanctions, has been unable to pass legislation to terminate the embargo. He has, however, reduced restrictions on allowing U.S. companies to work in Cuba, and the amount of money that can be brought to the island, among other minor economic relaxations (Reuters 2015). However trade sanctions remain intact. The embargo cannot be undone through executive action, and will need to be reversed by the U.S. Congress.

Overall, it once again seems that economic sanctions were not successful in promoting liberalization in Cuba. At the time of the implementation of the CDA (1992) and the Libertad Act (1996) Cuba was actually revving up its repression of the nascent dissident and pro-

democracy movement on the island. It was also strengthening the rectification campaign, which reduced workers' rights and Cuban's access to food.

As the United States furthered its embargo toward Cuba, it became increasingly isolated in the International arena. At the same time Cuba was gaining increased support abroad. This is evidenced by the IAJC vote that found the embargo in conflict with international norms, and at U.N. meetings throughout the 1990s and 2000s where the general body voted to condemn the U.S. embargo towards Cuba (Whitefield 2015). This is in support of Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot, who posit that sanctions imposed upon a target country with high levels of support will be unlikely to achieve its aims.

Moreover, the sanctions seemed to do little to mobilize domestic opposition against the Castro regime, as proponents of economic sanctions predict. Rather than lose support, Castro actually was gaining it. This fact has a lot to do with the history of the U.S.-Cuba relationship and Cuban sentiments toward the United States. Since the Bay of Pigs operation in 1961 Cubans feared that another U.S. invasion was feasible. Castro often preyed on these fears, and, when the United States displayed hostility toward Cuba through the implementation of sanctions, he exaggerated the likelihood of U.S. intervention (Ritter 2004, 38). This strengthened Castro's position in power and increased his ability to repress the small opposition factions. This situation fits into the predictions of Peksen, who predicts that sanctions might cause a "rally around the flag" effect (2007). Through ridiculing U.S. economic policies that were ostensibly aggressive Castro was able to heighten support and Cuban nationalism.

Democratic Exposure

"Wet-Foot Dry-Foot"

Leaving the island without permission was prohibited throughout the 1990s, except when granted an exit permit, which were difficult to obtain. Still, the 1984 migration agreement, which provided 20,000 annual U.S. visas to Cuban citizens, and the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, which offered preferential treatment towards Cuban immigrants in the United States, remained intact. More than 10,000 Cubans migrated to the United States every year from 1988 to 1993 on a legal basis. Due to worsening economic conditions on the island several thousands more migrated illegally (Perez-Stable 2011, 30). Eventually the demand for migration outnumbered the supply of exit-permits in Cuba and visas in the United States. Pressures to allow further migration surmounted in 1994 as rationing under Castro's rectification campaign reached intolerable levels. Following a mass riot in Havana in August 1994, known as the *Maleconazo*, Fidel Castro announced that he would no longer restrict Cubans from leaving the island. In the course of one month 35,000 Cubans attempted to reach the United States via makeshift rafts, or *balseros*, most of which the U.S. Coast Guard captured. In September the crisis ended when Washington and Havana established a new migration agreement. Similar to the 1984 migration accord, the United States agreed to take in 20,000 Cubans annually. Cuba would prevent the continued departure of Cubans on rafts (Gastil 1994). In May 1995 the U.S. government would alter its migration policy in a way that deterred migration flows. In what came to be known as the "wet-foot dry-foot" policy, Washington altered the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act so that those Cubans found at sea would be returned to Cuba and those found on U.S. soil, whether there legally or illegally, would be permitted to stay.

For quite some time this agreement would stand and Cubans seeking refuge in the United States would not have to embark on a dangerous journey. The agreement was stalled in 2000,

however, when Cuba began denying exit permits to Cubans (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2001).

In 2013 Cuba eliminated the exit visa requirements for travel abroad. Also in that year Cuba’s were allowed to travel abroad for an extended 24-month period. Formerly Cubans could only travel for 11 months, after that their residency would be lost. After the 2013 reforms, former refugees were also able to reapply for lost residency in the country (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2014). As a direct result of these restrictions human rights organizations were able to travel abroad and work with other international organizations. For example Yoani Sanchez traveled to more than 12 countries in that year.

The Cuban Democracy Act, in addition to tightening restrictions on trade with Cuba, enabled Washington to implement a policy of engagement with the island (although the bill has been known far more for strengthening sanctions). In 1993 President Clinton utilized the policy to ease a variety of restrictions towards Cuba, including regulations regarding travel, academic exchanges, and remittances. Clinton’s actions also opened a Western Union in Cuba and enabled U.S. NGOs to cooperate with their Cuban counterparts (Perez 2003, 275).

Travel and exchange continued between the two countries during the early years of the Bush Administration. In the early 2000s several thousand Americans journeyed to Cuba and several senators and representatives visited the island as well (Perez-Stable 2011, 87). In his Initiative for a New Cuba plan, President Bush continued this strategy by offering scholarships to Cuban students, and reducing barriers to providing humanitarian and business assistance to Cuban organizations. In response to the 2002 imprisonment of 75 Cuban political dissidents Bush heightened support for civil society and human rights organizations on the island. He also

increased the amount of cash that Cubans could bring to their family members during visits to 3000 dollars.

Limitations Following Cuban Aggression

Bush changed course, however, when the Cuban government carried out a series of aggressive actions in the spring of 2003. This included the execution of three men who had hijacked a ferry crossing the Florida Straits. In 2004 Bush restricted visits to family members to once every three years and limited remittances to only immediate family members and grandparents (Perez-Stable 2011, 92). In 2006 the White House ordered an updated version of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba. This included supplying 80 million dollars in aid for Cuban opposition groups. These policies would remain intact during Bush's tenure.

Obama's Engagement Approach

Democratic President Barack Obama significantly heightened diplomatic and cross-country exchanges between the United States and Cuba. First, President Obama removed all restrictions that prevented Cuban Americans to visit their family members or to send money to relatives. Obama's executive action also allowed telecommunication companies to increase business in Cuba, and increased humanitarian aid to the island (Perez-Stable 2011, 120). The two countries started talks on issues including migration and postal service to the island. In the first year of the Obama administration travel to the island increased significantly (Perez-Stable 2011, 121). Academic and political exchanges increased as well with several high-level visits to the island occurring, including one from New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson.

With much thanks to mediation from The Vatican, on December 17, 2014 Cuba and the United States reinstated their diplomatic relations after more than 50 years of isolation. Since then Obama has worked with the Cuban government on a variety of topics ranging from migration, disaster risk reduction, counternarcotic policy, and direct mail. Obama has also promoted travel opportunities to the island. American citizens can travel to Cuba for academic, business, and religious activities (“Charting a New Course on Cuba” 2016).

The effects of engagement policies in the 1990s and early 2000s are unclear. Although migration to the United States increased during the early 1990s, it is unlikely that migration led to a significant increase in person-to-person exchanges. Exile visits to Cuba and the sending of remittances were restricted throughout this time period. Exchanges between exiles and their families were further limited after Bush’s reforms in 2006. In fact, migration might have once again strengthened Castro’s control of Cuba since many migrants in the early 1990s left because of economic reasons. Many exiles were upset about the limited access to economic opportunity and to general consumer goods thanks to the rectification campaign.

It is too early to tell if Obama’s decision to support exchanges between Cubans and Americans has produced positive results. Although dissident groups have a presence on the island, they existed and were growing long before the relaxation of travel and family visit rules. However, the diplomatic rapprochement between the two countries is clearly producing positive results even at this early stage in the process of normalization. As part of the 2014 negotiations Cuba agreed to release several dozen political prisoners. Discussions have also encouraged the growth of market-oriented reforms and to improve Cuban’s access to the Internet.

Domestic Economic Factors

Economic Struggles During “A Special Period in Peacetime”

Cuba remained under intense economic pressure in the early 90s as the Soviet Union declined and officially collapsed in August 1991 following the failed coup by Soviet hardliners. At first Castro responded to the pressure by heightening socialist style economics and reducing state rations through the already established rectification campaign. However, conditions worsened in the early 1990s. Fidel Castro announced a “Special Period in Peacetime” in 1990 to implement a series of economic liberalization policies. The reform process started in earnest and took off in 1993. Between 1993 and 1996 the Cuban government legalized the U.S. dollar, authorized private farming cooperatives, and expanded self-employment opportunities, among other market-oriented reforms (Mesa-Lago and Perez-Lopez 2005, 18). Havana also attempted to heighten trade and foreign direct investment elsewhere, particularly from former Soviet republics.

Slowly an economic turnaround took place. In 1995 the economy began to grow. In 1996 GDP grew by 7.8 percent (Mesa-Lago and Perez-Lopez 2005, 20) and for several years export and import grew and the value of the peso appreciated. In particular, the Cuban economy benefited from a booming tourist industry, which was authorized in the series of reforms from 1993 to 1996.

The economic success did not last long, however. Nor did the economic reforms that preceded it. Despite the successes of such reforms, the PCC feared that continued market relaxation went against the ideology of the state and threatened the power of Cuba’s leadership. As soon as the economy stabilized, new restrictions were placed on foreign investors, taxes and fees were assessed on private sector employees, and many other reversals took place. From 1996

to the early 2000s economic growth slowed considerably. Trade declined and the governmental deficit ballooned (Mesa-Lago and Perez-Lopez 2005, 22). Amidst worsening sugar prices Cuba was forced to close down nearly half of its 156 sugar mills. As a result, thousands of Cubans were left without jobs (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2003). The economy was also setback in 2001 due to Hurricane Michelle, which destroyed crops and infrastructure, and because of the September 11 Attacks, which reduced global tourism. Cuba also suffered from lower prices for Nickel, one of the island’s main exports (Mesa Lago and Perez-Lopez 2005, 34-35).

By the early 2000s many reform-minded economic leaders who implemented the successful 1993-96 policies were removed from office. Economic restrictions that strengthened the state’s control over the market continued throughout the early 2000s. The government’s 2003 decision to require all governmental business transactions to take place in pesos restricted investment and caused unnecessary expenses. In 2004 new consumer restrictions were implemented so that only a select group could apply to purchase vehicles. In 2004 the regime banned the use of the dollar for economic transactions and began to reduce the amount of licenses for entrepreneurial ventures.

New Allies and New Hope

The economic situation reversed course in 2005 when tourism began to increase once again and large amounts of foreign investment arrived from Venezuela, China, and Spain, who were interested in Cuba’s nickel industry, among other economic opportunities. In particular Cuba strengthened its economic alliance with the Venezuelan government, who shared many of Cuba’s socialist principles. Thanks to an agreement signed in October 2000 Cuba received

thousands of barrels of cheap oil from Venezuela. By 2006 Cuba was importing nearly 100,000 barrels of subsidized oil per day from Venezuela. In exchange Cuba sent tens of thousands of highly trained doctors to Venezuela. China and Russia became much stronger economic partners with Cuba as well. Cuba and China have negotiated deals on oil exploration, biotechnology, and trade. The former Soviet Union agreed to restructure Cuba's substantial debt in 2007 and the two countries made agreements on oil exploration and military technology (Perez-Stable 2011, 108-110).

The transition of power from Fidel Castro to his brother Raul had significant impacts on the Cuban economy. Raul began economic liberalization in earnest in 2007 when the government ended its control of milk prices and halted the practice of fining private taxi drivers. Raul permitted Cubans to buy consumer goods such as cell phones and allowed them to stay in tourist hotels ("Freedom in the World Report: Cuba" 2008). The new president also removed caps on salaries and increased the pension rate for retirees. Farmers were able to buy their own supplies and lease unused land from the state.

At times the pace of reform has been halted. Cuba's Old Guard has been particularly influential in restricting reform during times of economic crisis. In August and September of 2008 when Cuba was hit by two Hurricanes the agricultural industry was severely hurt, infrastructure was damaged, and an economic downturn was predicted. President Raul Castro implemented economic controls including a ban on street vending. The United States offered Cuba emergency aid, but the Cuban government refused to accept (Perez-Stable 2011, 135). Economic struggles continued in 2009 when the government was forced to close several state businesses and reinstate the rationing of electricity.

Recently the government's calls for economic opening have been followed with more consistent reforms. In 2011 at the Cuban Communist Party Congress a variety of economic openings were approved. Cubans can now buy consumer goods such as appliances and cell phones. They are also able to sell and buy used cars and stay in hotels in Cuba's tourist district. Many Cubans are involved in the real estate and private agricultural industry. Nearly 500,000 Cubans are currently self-employed. Due to these reforms and because of better global economic conditions Cuba's economy has done well as of late. GDP has steadily increased over the past several years, unemployment remains low, and living standards are high ("The World Factbook: Cuba" 2016).

Yet these reforms have not coincided with strong economic growth. In recent years growth has slowed sharply. Cuba's foreign debt was about one fifth of total GDP in 2014, and real GDP growth was only about 1.3 percent ("The World Factbook: Cuba" 2016). One main cause of this is that global oil prices are way down from pre-recession highs. Heavily discounted oil from Venezuela does not produce large profits when re-exported, as they did in the early 2000s. Additionally problematic for Cuba has been its relationship with China. Due to the U.S. embargo Cuba is limited in who can serve as its international lenders. China has filled that void and provided billions in credit to the island. Unlike the Soviet Union, China has required that Cuba pay its debt back in hard currency and do so on time. Moreover, Chinese companies and authorities have pressured Cuba to modernize the economy and make investments more efficient ("China Restructures Cuban Debt, Backs Reform" 2010).

Two periods of economic liberalization took place from 1991 to present. The first, starting in 1993, was a clear result of the worsening economic conditions on the island. To counteract the decline Cuba initially implemented a rectification campaign meant to strengthen

socialist principles and ration goods. When this failed and economic collapse continued, Cuba was forced into implementing its Special Period in Peacetime. Although the presence of opposition groups did not develop as predicted by scholars Acemoglu, Robinson, and Yared reformist factions within the government pushed for reforms. When the economy recovered in the late 1990s, Castro regained political stability, and reversed the economic openings implemented earlier in the decade. Hard-liners in Cuba also gained traction due to the strengthening of U.S. sanctions toward Cuba. Fidel had long succeeded in raising nationalism and support when economic sanctions were present. When the Helms-Burton and Torricelli Law were passed in 1996 and 1992, respectively, Castro gained support by criticizing U.S. “interventionism” (Ritter 2004, 38).

The second period of economic liberalization, from 2006 to present, is not likely a result of internal economic factors, but rather due to the internal political transition of power. Economic reforms only took place right after Raul Castro took over in 2006. Although economic conditions were not overly positive at the time, Cuba was neither facing economic collapse. However, continued economic pressures, from difficulties associated with economic and political instability in Venezuela and from the intensifying relationship with China, have contributed to recent reforms. Without financial support from socialist regimes abroad, Cuba has been required to implement economic reforms on two occasions. As Cuba becomes subject to international economic cycles and to stricter creditor-debtor relations it will face economic pressures and continue to reform.

Two periods of fluctuations in politically related civil liberties took place during this period. In both instances economic conditions were likely significant in influencing change. The first, during the early and mid 1990s, and somewhat in the early 2000s, involved heightened

restrictions on political expression and on the freedom of travel. Economic problems were high and probably encouraged the unusually intense civil discontent on the island. In the early 1990s Cubans were faced with heightened demands for conservation from the state, while they were simultaneously being told to work harder. Economic reforms, particularly the legalization of the dollar in 1993, altered the social environment as a new wealthy class developed. The majority of Cubans faced lowering wages (Gastil 1997). In the early 2000s the sugar industry failed and many were let off from work. In both instances economic troubles fueled social dissatisfaction. In 2002 a Cuban representative from the United Nations, among other experts, suggested that social discontent was a result of internal economic struggles (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2003).

Rather than acquiescing to dissident demands, Fidel perceived the changing political climate as a threat to his power and increased repression of dissident groups. Again we do not observe the predictions of Acemoglu, Robinson, and Yared to be true (2005). While we witness heightened internal pressure for change during economic crisis, it does not result in political liberalizations from the Cuban regime as those scholars predict.

The second period of change constituted improvements in political freedoms. Long-term political imprisonment declined and dissidents were not repressed as fiercely as they had been in the past. These reforms coincided with some economic problems, like the reduction of Venezuelan assistance and pressure from Chinese economic partners, but with relative economic stability. Thus, although internal economic conditions clearly influenced economic reforms, it is less clear how they might be promoting recent political liberalizations.

Analysis of Hypotheses

Sanctions

Hypothesis 1: *economic sanctions will fail to bring about liberalization in a target state (HSE 2007).*

In implementing sanctions, a sender country attempts to induce economic conditions that are so costly it will require the target country to reform (Hufbauer Schott, and Elliot, 2007). Yet the United States was almost never able to do this. In each chapter, Chapter I (1966-1981), Chapter II (1981-1991), and in Chapter III (1991-present), we observe that sanctions did not bring about liberalization in Cuba. Thus, we are able to confirm Hypothesis 1. During the period 1966 to 1981 the strength of sanctions are reduced under Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. The reduction of sanctions led to Fidel Castro negotiating with the Carter administration, and eventually, to releasing thousands of political prisoners on the island.

In the era 1981 to 1991 we observe an increase in sanctions and a corresponding worsening of civil liberty conditions. Again economic sanctions failed to bring about liberalization in Cuba. In fact, sanctions might actually have furthered political repression during this time period. As mentioned earlier in this project, internal economic conditions deteriorated at the end of the 1980s due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Facing internal pressure due to poor economic conditions, Castro heightened repression toward those advocating for change. The sanctions in place further contributed to the economic collapse and thereby contributed to Castro's repressive policies.

Sanctions advocates suggest that economic embargoes might reduce internal support for the targeted regime, and thereby lead to liberalization. Instead we observe something akin to the “rally around the flag” effect predicted by Peksen (2007). Rather than lose support, Castro was able to gain popularity by inciting existing Cuban concerns about U.S. interventionism in Cuba. The Cuban regime continued to repress dissidents, and moved forward with its rectification campaign, which restricted Cubans access to consumer goods and foodstuffs.

Hypothesis 2: if economic sanctions are implemented with the support of international organizations or other countries, then sanctions will be more likely to bring about liberalization in the target state (HSE 2007)

The results for this hypothesis are mixed. Throughout the history of the U.S. embargo, sanctions have largely been unilateral. With the exception of OAS sanctions in the late 1960s and early 1970s, U.S. sanctions were never implemented alongside foreign governments or international organizations. Thus, we do not have sufficient instances of multilateral sanctions to conclude about Hypothesis 2. Yet, we do know that the unilateral sanctions were often circumvented because Cuba had economic opportunities elsewhere. Thus, the reverse of this hypothesis might be confirmed. The fact that U.S. sanctions were almost always unilateral is perhaps one reason why U.S. sanctions were rarely able to induce economic suffering in Cuba, and thus, why they failed to liberalize the Castro regime. From the onset of economic sanctions in the early 1960s Cuba has been able to redirect trade and investment lost from the embargo to Latin American and European states. During the 60s, 70s, and until the late 80s, trade and significant financial aid flows came from the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe, and from the

Soviet Union. In the late 1990s and in the 21st century, Cuba increased economic relationships with Europe, Latin America, and in particular, Venezuela. These relationships kept Cuba afloat and offset the potential political and economic hardship caused by U.S. sanctions.

A separate but related observation is that Cuba is highly susceptible to political and economic pressures from states and organizations outside of the United States. Prior to economic meetings with the Spanish government and several Latin American countries, Cuba released several dozen political prisoners and strengthened religious freedoms. The Chinese government recently has been influential in promoting economic reforms on the island. Throughout history the Vatican has been successful in encouraging the release of political prisoners. After persistent pressure from the United Nations and the UNHRC, Havana authorized a UNHRC representative to visit the island. Thus, U.S. economic sanctions implemented with the political support of other countries likely would have produced greater pressure for liberalization in Cuba.

Democratic Exposure

Hypothesis 3: if exposure to democratic ideas increases in an autocratic regime, through academic exchange, migration, or exposure to Western Media, then pressures for liberalization will increase and a regime will liberalize (Levinsky and Way 2005; Nye 2004; Perez-Armendariz and Crow 2010; Parta 2007).

Results for hypothesis 3 are mixed. While it is clear that some democratic exposure factors tend to result in Cuba liberalizing, other factors display less significance. High-level diplomatic engagement appears to be particularly effective. Most indicative of this was President

Carter's successful talks with Cuba in 1978 that resulted in the release of thousands of political prisoners. The detrimental effects of President Reagan's often isolationist policies offer a counter example. Reagan's negotiations in 1984, however, resulted in the signing of an agreement on migration and the release of 30,000 political refugees.

Migration's relationship with liberalization seems to be murky. Rather than serving as a tool to spread democratic ideology abroad, as scholars predict, migration appears to have been a helpful mechanism to rid the island of opposition factions, thereby improving majority support for Castro on the island and limiting the likelihood of liberalization. Moreover, exiles have been only recently permitted to travel to the island unrestricted. As these person-to-person exchanges continue over time it will be clearer if migration supports liberalization in Cuba.

Pro-democracy media outlets utilized by the Reagan and Bush senior administrations were ultimately failures due to Cuba's ability to block their signals, and because they did not sufficiently introduce democratic principles to Cubans. In turn, Barack Obama's efforts to talk with a more reform-minded government led by Raul Castro were associated with a new partial liberalization in Cuba. Following the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, Raul Castro allowed to release several dozen political prisoners as an extension of the economic and political changes discussed earlier in this paper. It remains to be seen whether an upswing in U.S. citizens' visits to Cuba will set into motion a deepening of the liberalization underway or not.

Domestic Economic Conditions

Hypothesis 4: if economic conditions are poor, then an autocratic regime will face more pressure for change and liberalize (Lipset 1959; Acemoglu, Robinson, and Yared 2005)

Results for Hypothesis 4 are mixed. In many instances it is hard to determine if poor economic conditions contributed to liberalization because often times economic pressures in Cuba were low. During the mid 1960s and throughout the 1970s, for example, Cuba's economy grew throughout. It also benefited from strong economic support from the Soviet Union. Yet during this period Cuba increased respect for political dissidents slightly.

In a few instances where economic conditions were poor, the Cuban regime actually reversed liberalizations. As scholars predict, poor economic conditions have led to the rise of internal discontent in Cuba. However, in contradiction to their theories is that Cuba seemed to heighten repression facing these factions, rather than acquiesce. This was particularly evident during the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and in the early 2000s when Cuban exports declined and the tourism sector suffered.

Economic conditions in the early 1990s provide the strongest evidence for supporting hypothesis 4. As internal pressures grew Havana was forced to implement a series of economic liberalizing reforms. Although liberalizations in the past decade have been, in part, due to the new leader being reform-minded, they are also a result of pressure from flattening growth. However, in the early 1990s economic reforms were coincided with heightened political repression.

Conclusion

This project has provided a brief review of U.S. policies toward Cuba from 1966 to present. It has also identified trends and fluctuations in the conditions of civil liberties in Cuba over that time period. In comparing these two variables it has sought to determine how successful the United States has been in encouraging liberalization in the Cuban regime. This analysis highlights that, despite successful instances of cooperation and diplomatic engagement, the United States has failed overall in its attempt to liberalize Cuba.

This paper reveals that U.S. sanctions policy, although detrimental to the Cuban economy at times, has not led to reform on the island. Rather the embargo has strengthened the Cuban regime against the country's opposition. In response to economic sanctions both Castros have highlighted U.S. aggression toward Cuba and confounded existing anti-American sentiments on the island. This was particularly apparent in the aftermath of the Helms-Burton Law and the Cuban Democracy Act. On a few occasions where the embargo was strengthened, as in the early 1990s, sanctions may have contributed to the repression of political opposition groups. Conversely, Cuba displayed a willingness to modernize when the United States reduced economic restrictions. This is evidenced by Carter's relaxation of sanctions that resulted in diplomatic discussions between the two countries, and in the release of several thousands of political prisoners.

It is also apparent that the embargo has failed because it is extremely unilateral. No other country has implemented sanctions toward Cuba since the mid 1970s and U.S. efforts to gain international support for the embargo were unsuccessful. In recent times the U.S. embargo has become extremely unpopular, and international support for the Cuban regime has grown. In

attempting to isolate Cuba economically, the United States has isolated itself politically. This is evidenced by the series of recent UN resolutions condemning the United States for its economic policy toward the island. Moreover, the importance of international support is evidenced by other countries' success in promoting freedom and change in Cuba. China has been particularly influential in promoting economic reforms on the island. Latin American states successfully have encouraged political openness in Cuba. Talks with the Vatican were particularly beneficial. Working alongside these countries who have friendlier relations with Cuba would likely benefit the United States in its foreign policy goals in Cuba.

Another significant implication of this paper is that high levels of diplomatic cooperation can be helpful in promoting liberalization. Both the Carter and Obama administrations were successful in reducing the level of long-term imprisonment on the island through diplomatic discussions. Reagan's negotiations in 1984 resulted in the release of 30,000 political refugees (Perez-Stable 2011, 15). Recent diplomatic efforts by the Obama administration have supported the growing Cuban private sector and spread the access to Internet on the island.

Although supported in existing literature, this paper cannot determine if democratic exposure techniques such as migration, exposure to Western media, or academic exchanges promote liberalization in an autocratic regime. Rather than serving as a tool to spread democratic ideology abroad migration appears to have been a helpful mechanism to rid the island of opposition factions, thereby improving majority support for Castro on the island and limiting the likelihood of liberalization. Moreover, exiles have been only recently permitted to travel to the island. As these person-to-person exchanges continue over time it will be clearer if migration supports liberalization in Cuba.

In particular we find little evidence to support or deny the notion that access to Western media might lead to liberalization in an autocratic regime. Although programs such as Radio and T.V. Martí were funded heavily by the United States they failed to reach Cuban audiences. Since Cubans did not have access to Western media it would be impossible to say whether such democratic exposure contributed to liberalization or not. Academic exchanges were limited throughout the history of the U.S.-Cuba relationship.

An additional finding, yet one that is unrelated to the hypotheses listed in this project, is that the goals of foreign policy matter in promoting liberalization. Those goals that are less ambitious are more likely to result in liberalization. For example, whereas President Carter sought to promote human rights in Cuba, President Reagan demanded a full fledged democratic system be implemented. As evidenced by our discussion on both administrations, Carter was more successful in encouraging liberalization in Cuba. This is in accordance with scholarly contributions from Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot (1986).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Study

One major shortcoming of this paper is the limited data on civil liberties in Cuba during the early periods discussed. As the *Freedom in the World* report has progressed over time, its reports have become more in depth and thorough. As mentioned in the methods section of this paper, the reports began as short summaries written by a single individual and a few assistants. Today several dozen experts collaborate on each report. Moreover, other sources of information regarding civil liberties in Cuba during the 1960s are scant. This is reflected in the noticeable differences in length between this paper's discussion of civil liberties in the first and last case studies.

Another potential flaw is that this study is limited in the variables considered. Although this thesis reviews how sanctions, democratic exposure, and internal economic factors might affect liberalization trends in Cuba, there are surely a variety of other potentially liberalizing factors. For example, internal political factors likely contribute to a regimes tendency to liberalize or not. Although this paper makes mention of this variable throughout, it might have benefited from treating that variable as a single unique factor. International and regional trends are likely influential in promoting or deterring liberalization as well. Given time constraints and limited access to information, this study was unable to cover these factors. Future studies might offer more insight about such variables and their relationship with liberalization.

Future studies might seek to narrow the time frames considered. An alternate approach to looking at time periods of ten or more years might be to examine the policies of particular U.S. administrations. This would provide a more thorough and rigorous discussion of the differences and varying levels of success of U.S. presidents.

Implications

Despite the recent liberalizations initiated under Raul Castro, Cuba remains a totalitarian and repressive society. The independent press remains illegal, although some state media is able to discuss corruption and other previously illegal topics. Access to the Internet is tightly controlled. According to *Freedom House* the estimated Internet penetration rate is 5 percent and access to the state-sponsored Internet cafes is extremely expensive. Religious freedom remains strained. Although long-term detentions are less common today, short-term detentions and harassment have replaced them. Such short-term imprisonments were particularly common during major political events, including the visit of the Pope in March 2012 and the International

Human Rights Day in December 2013. According to the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation in 2012 there was an estimated 6,602 short-term detentions and in 2014 that number reached a record 8,899 (“Freedom in the World Report: Cuba” 2013).

Continued efforts should be taken to promote freedom and openness in Cuba.

Thus, more liberalization in Cuba is needed and efforts to promote openness should continue. At the time of this paper’s writing it does not seem likely that Obama will renege on his efforts to engage the Cuban government, nor will he likely reverse efforts to end the embargo. In the midst of this papers writing, in March 2016, President Obama became the first active president to visit the island in over 70 years. Continued efforts toward normalization are likely. However, it is unclear what the policy of Obama’s successor might be.

Obama’s ongoing negotiations with the Cuban government are a step in the right direction. Those discussions have already resulted in the release of dozens of political prisoners and continued economic openness. The next administration ought to continue building ties with the Cuban regime to encourage liberalization and eventual democratization. In particular, the United States should continue to adapt its economic policies to align itself with the majority of countries and regions that treat Cuba with economic fairness. The economic embargo toward Cuba does not promote liberalization on the island, nor does it receive support from international organizations or foreign countries. Moreover, the U.S.-Cuba relationship is extremely tumultuous; engaging with other countries whose relations with Cuba are historically positive or neutral might be wise. Cooperating with the Vatican through diplomatic negotiations has been particularly beneficial. Through cooperation, mutual respect, and compromise the United States will be best equipped to promote liberalization and openness in Cuba.

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