

What should U.S. Foreign Policy be towards Cuba

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Imagine a small country approximately the area and population of Ohio and completely surrounded by water. It is tropical with countless pristine beaches. Traveling out to the countryside one would find a landscape of great green mountains with several small farms filled with cows and goats. Throughout the country are scatterings of small organic farms. Overall the people are friendly and most have the ability to speak both Spanish and English allowing for an ease of communication between many different types of people. The government provides free health care and education to its people. Its health care is even so highly regarded that it receives medical tourism from many other countries. Beyond merely medical tourism the country receives a couple million tourists a year. At first glance one would not expect this country to be so at odds with the United States of America and the U.S. to be so at odds with this. However, this country is the Republic of Cuba.

The history of U.S. relations with Cuba dates back far before the Castro regime. In the year of 1492 when Columbus sailed the open blue he landed onto the island known now known as Cuba. It was at that time that he claimed the territory for the Kingdom of Spain. A couple centuries later after the United States had gained its independence from Britain it looked southward a mere 100 miles wanting to expand. During the presidency of Franklin Pierce the U.S. tried to acquire Cuba by purchasing it through Spain. At this time Cuba was still a territory of Spain and despite the Spanish being poor at the time, they were proud and unwilling to sell to the U.S. At the end of the Spanish-American war or the Cuban War for Independence in 1898, Spain signed over the rights of its territories, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam, to the United States. At this time it granted independence to Cuba with the reservation that the U.S. could intervene in

Cuban affairs if it was deemed necessary and the U.S. was given a lease on the Guantanamo Bay naval base. (Suddath, 2009) A handful of years later the Platt Amendment was put into effect and U.S. troops were removed from Cuba. This amendment allowed the U.S. to intervene in Cuba if it was needed for the maintenance of a good government. Over the next couple of decades the United States heavily intervened in Cuban affairs. Eventually General Batista came to power in Cuba which led to a time of cooperation between the U.S. and Cuba. At this time the U.S. had control over much of the Cuban economy. Then in 1959 the Cuban Revolution occurred.

After the revolution President Eisenhower recognized the new Cuban government, but soon became worried with all of Cuba's reforms. Shortly after this Cuba nationalized many American interests in Cuba and Cuban leaders began negotiating with the Soviet Union. Then on February 7th, 1962 President Kennedy issued the embargo. The embargo restricted any goods to be sold to Cuba from the U.S. and for any Cuban goods to enter the United States. From here relations only lessened. The Bay of Pigs was a failed ground attack on Cuba by U.S. trained Cuban exiles. Operation Mongoose was a series of failed attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro. Then came the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Soviet Union was constructing a missile base in Cuba. Agreements were finally made to remove the missiles if missiles were removed from Turkey. From here relations and restrictions towards Cuba have strengthened and decreased with the current political atmosphere, but overall appear to remain sour (Suddath, 2009).

In light of all the past political history what should U.S. foreign policy be towards Cuba? This is obvious not something that can happen quickly given all of the past between the two countries, but I believe that relations should be improved between the two countries. Neither country can expect too much at one time, otherwise nothing will change. Slowly the two

countries must set up negotiations with one another to come to varying compromises that will over many years repair the relations and friendship between these two governments. From here I will detail the reasons why this is crucial time for the United States to act and suggestions for how the two countries can compromise with one another.

Now is a crucial time for the United States to act and become on better terms with Cuba. While on my recent trip to Cuba over spring break in March Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela died. Over the years Hugo became good friends with Fidel Castro and the countries were allies. Even when Chavez was on the brink of death he was being taken care of by Cuban doctors often times in Cuba itself. The two countries relationship has been one of unequal give and take. Venezuela gives close to 100,000 barrels of oil to Cuba every day. In return Cuba provides doctors to Venezuela. Many would regard this as an unequal partnership. Now that Hugo Chavez is dead it will be up to the next Venezuelan President to decide if they want to continue supplying oil to Cuba.

The next election will take place on April 14th, 2013. The two contenders are Nicholas Maduro, who is currently acting as President and is Chavez's handpicked man, and Henrique Capriles. If Maduro wins the election it is likely that Venezuela will continue with the policies it has in place and not much will change. However, if Capriles wins the election he will cut off the oil supply to Cuba. This would put Cuba into big trouble. They receive most of their oil from Venezuela and over eighty percent of their electricity is produced from oil. Therefore, without the help of Venezuela or another country Cubans will face massive shortages. Cuba needs a country to depend on just as it always has whether it was Spain, the Soviet Union, or Venezuela. The United States could be that country. It would be very beneficial for the U.S. to become this country rather than it being some enemy of the United States. If a country other than the United

States would become the country that Cuba depended upon than that country would be in close proximity to the United States, which could prove to be problematic, and is certainly not something the U.S. would want. (Sanchez and Anderson, 2013).

A second reason why the United States must act now is that Raul Castro announced that his current five year term as President will be his last. The Castro regime will be over as of 2018. This should give the United States incentive to start to work with the Cubans because soon they will no longer have to deal with any of the Castros.

Now that it is clear that the U.S. should move forward with negotiations with Cuba. Despite the imminence of the time that negotiations should begin with Cuba that does not mean that all compromises and full friendship between the two countries should resume immediately. In light of the great history and struggles between these two countries conversations must occur soon, but action should occur slowly. The U.S. government must join the Cuban government and make plans with them to slowly end the embargo. Perhaps in lieu of Raul Castro not running again plans can be in line with the next five years so that when the Castros are no longer in power in Cuba the embargo will be entirely disassembled.

A first step between the two countries would be to allow cruise ships to land in Cuba. This will easily be a benefit for both countries. The U.S. will benefit by allowing their businesses to expand and profit. Cuba will benefit by profiting from the increased amount of tourism. Americans will enjoy the additional and close proximity of the new vacation ground. It will offer them an exotic place to go and relax without the hassle of having to travel too far away. It will be an easy transition between cruise ships already travel frequently in the Caribbean and if this were to occur they would just be able to land on the largest island in the Caribbean.

A second step would be to take down other parts of the embargo. An excellent next choice of action would be to remove restrictions regarding medicine and medical related items to Cuba. Cuba has a surplus of doctors who amongst many countries are regarded as being excellently trained. However, they are highly lacking on medication and other medical supplies. In addition to lacking materials they are also unaware of many new innovations in the sciences. American companies can greatly benefit by this situation because it will open up a new market for them to sell to especially because they will not have to ship their items very far away.

The third negotiation that should be made between the two countries is that all stipulations regarding food should be removed from the embargo. Cuba is a country of approximately eleven million people and it imports the majority of its food. The U.S., its farmers, and its business could once again greatly benefit. It will again give these businesses another market to sell their goods to and thus increase their profits. Cubans will benefit by this because they will not have to import their food from as far away.

The U.S. must change the way that it has been acting towards Cuba. It must decide to do this soon because there is a large chance Venezuela will no longer help Cuba so Cuba will be in need of a country to be in a partnership with. The U.S. should realize that it would be better for them to be that country than for it to be some other country. The timing is also important because in the next five years Cuba will no longer be run by Castros. Opening up Cuba to cruise ships, exchanging medical supplies, and opening up food markets are good ways to start the transition of ending the embargo. Over the next several years different parts of the embargo should be removed until normal relations will resume between Cuba and the United States.

Works Cited:

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Suddath, Claire (2009). U.S. – Cuba Relations. New York Times.