

Cuba is presently in the midst of something akin to an awakening. The Castro regime is growing ever older, and is ready for retirement¹. The Cold War has ended and the remnants of it are, at long last, fading away to join their fellows in history books. Her people are slowly but steadily carving out a new class in the economy of their country, supported by revolutionary and radical changes in domestic doctrines within the past two years². Hugo Chavez, possibly Cuba's greatest foreign supporter and a crux of the country's energy source, is dead, presumably losing his battle with cancer³. Cuba's leaders are changing, her political climate shifting, her needs expanding, her people slowly coming to trust that the changes they see are here to stay and engaging in them as such⁴. Cuba is, without a doubt, changing; but we are not. Still we place restrictions on visitation to this island a mere ninety miles off our shores, still we impose the harshest of possible economic restrictions on their ports and markets, still we try to choke them out in the world market despite failing for over a decade, still we fail to accomplish the roots of what could prove to be one of the most mutually beneficial partnership in our hemisphere in the name of Cold War resentment and a distaste for each other on the behalf of a dying regime⁵.

It must be clear by now that the United States can not maintain its current course in foreign policy with Cuba, but that leaves the vast and complicated question of what should it be if not what it already is? In these few pages I intend to provide an answer, or

¹ Frank, Marc. Reuters Journalism, "Reuters." Last modified 02 25, 2013. Accessed April 09, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/25/us-cuba-castro-idUSBRE91N0HB20130225>.

² Michael , Voss. BBC News, ""A last hurrah for Cuba's communist rulers"." Last modified 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13103147>.

³ "Hugo Chavez to Return to Cuba for Treatment." *Aljazeera English*. Aljazeera English, 27 Nov. 2012. Web. 31 Jan. 2013.

⁴ "The Castros, Cuba and America." *The Economist*. March 24, 2012. <http://www.economist.com/node/21551047> (

⁵ William M. LeoGrande, "From Havana to Miami: U.S. Cuba Policy as a Two-Level Game"

at least a suggestion of what the right direction may look like. This suggestion, I feel, must absolutely include the ending of the Embargo with Cuba through small but meaningful steps, as seen in the European Integration project, starting with a gift of good faith on behalf of the United States towards Cuba. My reasoning for this is quite simple; we are both an immeasurable threat that would swallow Cuba whole in our industry if we attempted to lift the Embargo and normalize relations all at once, and at the same time we are prisoner to a ticking clock looming in the background which forbids us to take too long in our normalization. Cuba has dire and immediate needs that will make it look for friends, allies, and supporters. Europe has its own concerns to deal with, relations between Russia and Cuba are hardly what they once were, and with the death of Hugo Chaves the support from Venezuela will stop sooner rather than later. This leaves, in my eyes, two potential players with the size and capability to assist Cuba's developmental needs; The United States, and China. If we do not move into a better relationship with this Ohio-sized island off the Floridian coast, the Chinese will most certainly not hesitate to do so. Considering the last time a large foreign power decided to come to business in our back yard we nearly *annihilated all life on earth*, I feel rather strongly that this normalization is quite worth pursuing.

So the language of 'lift the embargo' is rather clear – it can only mean one thing – but what is it that I mean by “small but meaningful steps,” especially as compared to the European Integration project? This too, after a basic amount of clarification, is simple. The European Union started through a series of comparatively small but immensely powerful steps, the first of which was the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. While cooperating in the sharing of two basic resources between a small

handful of countries is not inherently a mutually invasive or threatening move, the impact of it was deep and significant. So too must our negotiations with Cuba contain steps which are small enough to preserve the interests of both countries while maintaining, to be realistic as ours would be under no threat, Cuba's sovereignty as well as stay on a rapid enough timeline that enables the US-Cuban relationship over the Chinese-Cuban one.

This process, I mentioned, should begin with a 'good faith' move on the part of the United States. Raul Castro doesn't plan on stepping down until 2018⁶ and the Cuban people themselves do not trust the United States as a regime; in the countryside we are still 'The Imperialism,' and in a presentation given to us by a professor at the University of Havana we were casually compared to the scorpion from the story of the scorpion who crosses a river on the back of a frog but stings the frog and drowns them both under the reasoning "it is my nature." We can not simply wait for Raul's resignation, much less the general trust of the Cuban people, before acting; the window of opportunity will have passed and been filled by someone else long before then. A move of good faith, done without prior negotiation and without expectation of anything beyond a more open negotiation table, could be a valuable first move and set the positive tone for future negotiations as a sign that we are serious about normalization between our countries.

Such a move is, obviously, strapped with limitations as to what it could be. Firstly, to avoid the need to work out a deal with Cuba, this must be a move which is strictly a policy on the U.S. side of things. Secondly, within that boundary, it must be a move which could prove difficult or highly irrational for the strong anti-Cuban-

⁶ Frank, Marc. Reuters Journalism, "Reuters." Last modified 02 25, 2013. Accessed April 09, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/25/us-cuba-castro-idUSBRE91N0HB20130225>.

relationship lobbies to oppose⁷. Thirdly, within both of these constrictions, it must be something which will positively affect the Cuban people while being popular enough in that respect to dodge opposition from the Cuban government. To these ends I can think of only one clear move to make; removing the Cuban-American family travel restrictions still in place, allowing for normal travel to and from Cuba for those with family on the other side of the border. Though President Obama has repealed the draconian limitations imposed by the Bush administration, there are still difficulties, complications, and limitations on the ability for Cuban-Americans to travel homeward or to receive visitors, and these policies are widely unpopular and viewed as a reminder of the embargo. A potential elevated version of this move would be to lift travel restrictions on Cubans in our country entirely, setting them as the same as visitors from Canada or Europe, but this is likely to run afoul of the aforementioned lobbyist groups almost immediately. Besides the risk of irritating these lobby groups, however, I can see little downside to making this move. In the realm of direct benefit to the United States, on the other hand, I can see several.

Firstly, and chiefly in this instance, it would with any luck at all open up real negotiation opportunities which have thus far eluded us (granted there are many reasons for this – lack of trust of the U.S. is only one of them). Secondly it would enable a very basic level of information sharing, assuming the full lifting of travel restrictions for Cubans, allowing us to gain access to the highly educated individuals in Cuba. Thirdly it would inevitably provide a new source of income into our country; those in Cuba with the financial resources to get here would most assuredly spend money here.

⁷ Jilani, Zaid, “It’s Not Just Ozzie Guillen: How The Cuba Lobby Paralyzes U.S. Policy,” *Republic Report*, April 10, 2012, <http://www.republicreport.org/2012/ozzie-guillen-cuba-lobby-paralyzes-us-policy/>

With that first move out of the way, and before we get to what I consider small but meaningful in regards to this topic, let us first answer the sub-question “Why small? Why not go big?” My reasoning is out of concern for the maintenance of Cuba’s sovereignty, a concern that would obviously be held strongly by the regime there – Castro or not. Simply unilaterally lifting the embargo would open the floodgates so to speak; the number and size of various American industries chomping at the bit to be allowed into Cuban affairs would threaten to drown the country. Some would argue that the Cuban regime would clearly and decisively control and limit what was allowed to come into the country in lack of an embargo, but I must express my doubts; many corporations in industries ranging from cruise tourism to big oil have substantial resources at their disposal, some surpassing the GDPs of many countries on the planet. The kind of influence they could garner with their resources paired with the likely willingness to ignore the regime in favor of ‘progress’ could rapidly turn Cuba back into the business-colony that it was before the revolution. While there may be a fair amount of economic benefits to be gained from that, as well as finally ‘winning’ the war against the Castro regime, neo-imperialism looks bad in a very serious way internationally and would be far more trouble than the benefits are worth.

To address the point of what I would consider small but meaningful steps; I cannot answer with precision nor authority. I would humbly suggest that opening up certain blocks of industry – such as cruise tourism – would be an excellent step, as would lifting the restrictions on information sharing between Cuba and the U.S. to enable us to assist the Cubans in their oil drilling operations. While Cuba being able to produce its own oil seems to only help them as it lowers their foreign dependency, they are drilling

well within range of our own coasts and our territorial waters as far as a spill or a leak is concerned; with the devastation from the rig explosion in the Gulf still fresh in our minds, it seems only wise to take steps to ensure that a Cuban mistake on account of relative inexperience in the field does not deal a second blow to our coastal economies. Opening the Medical industries would be a positive step both economically and humanely; the ability to provide Cuba with modern and up to date equipment and medicine could provide a strong economic link between the two countries, as well as be presentable globally as a pro-humanitarian move. In an interview session with Dr. Alvarez Cambra it was revealed to us that despite its praise the Cuban medical system makes do with decades old technology, as well as the issues with the unavailability of certain medicines, such as cancer medicine, that the U.S. has a trade-monopoly on, leading to deaths every year due to the inability to even treat those afflicted.

Hanging over this entire proposition is, of course, a long and pained history between Cuba and the United States. It would not be the first time that these two parties have attempted to sit down at a negotiation table together, but it would be the first time in a very long while that it went anywhere. Between the anti-Cuba lobbies created by exiles of the revolution, Fidel's repeated history of committing to antagonistic policies against the United States to make negotiations impossible, and of course bitter memories from the Cuban Missile Crisis, there exists plenty of animosity between these two parties^{8, 9, 10}.

It is the case, however, that far too much of this animosity exists as the result of old men holding grudges and insisting their rightness rather than actual slights. The exiles

⁸ Piero Gleijeses *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959–1976*, 293-297

⁹ Nichols, John Spicer. "Cuba: The Congress: The Power of the Anti-Fidel Lobby"

¹⁰ "Cuban Missile Crisis." *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*. <http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/Cuban-Missile-Crisis.aspx>

are exactly that; exiles. They are the remnants of a system which was overthrown, cast out of a country which had suddenly evolved past them. That they have such a voice in the modern politics between these two nations is as nonsensical as presenting a Disney character on a presidential ballot. That Fidel antagonized the United States during his rule can hardly be presented as a surprising behavior from one who sought to remain in power against a nation a scant ninety miles away who actively and persistently sought to assassinate or coup him and his regime, especially when the embargo provided him a rallying point for his people against a convenient and present enemy during the height of his regime; we have no one but ourselves to blame for both that behavior and the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Though some will vilify the Cubans for daring to go to the Soviet Bloc, what choice did we give them? With no attempts at positive relations with the Castro regime, with no support for his goal or his mission, with discovered attempts to undo his work through assassination, what else could we expect of this small island living in our shadow when we made that shadow one with claws that cut and teeth that bite, like a monster out of a child's nightmares? It is time to stop letting pride dictate our foreign policy, and finally break bread with a people who should have been on our side for the better part of a century at this point.