

Gurneet Raina

### **Finding the Other Piece of the Puzzle**

Initially, the Cuban embargo in 1958 was established as a result of the Cuban-Soviet relationship. The purpose was to be detrimental to the economy of Cuba and dispel the Communist regime and promote democracy. Since the fall of the Soviet Union occurred in 1991, the Cuban embargo should be reexamined and reprioritized. Isolating Cuba from U.S. goods and travel has not caused a fall of the current regime, especially since Cuba is still open to other foreign nations such as Canada and China. After learning and witnessing various industries in the Cuba, it only seems logical that the US foreign policy should be to remove the embargo. However, because of the sensitivity to American-Cubans and others who have suffered in the hands of the Cuban regime, such policy would never be accepted. Instead, a slow integration should be implemented. This integration should start with the scientific research and medicine industry. This slow exchange would benefit significantly for both parties and pave future policies for even less restrictions placed on Cuba.

To carefully navigate through to this conclusion, this paper will adhere to the following order. In my first section, I will use Kenneth Waltz theory on international relations to explain the actions of Cuba and the United States to this date. The balance of power theory has played a significant role in Cuba's perspective of the US government. In my second section, I will provide the current situation of the Cuban people and country that I have observed through meeting various Cubans in different sectors. With this knowledge, it is evident that the attitude of this country is drastically changing. In my third section, I shall suggest how changing the current outdated US policy towards Cuba would benefit all parties involved. Isolating Cuba is no longer a viable option.

## I. Kenneth Waltz's Theory and Cuba

It is first important to understand the relationship between the United States and Cuba. In his book, *Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth Waltz constructs a theory to determine how states behave. His theory is a combination a few things: survival, anarchy, and material capability. When looking at the history of Cuba and U.S. with these three components in mind, their relationships can be better understood. Waltz begins with the assumption that all states want to survive. As he stated, "The survival motive is taken as the ground of action in a world where the security of the states is not assured, rather than a realistic description of the impulse that lies behind every act of state."<sup>1</sup> All states have survival in common. Maintaining existence is necessary to achieve anything and ensures a state's ability to continue acting for itself.

In this light, both Cuba and the United States have survival as their main interest. When the Batista regime fell in 1959, the U.S. observed the rise of the Castro regime as a threat to its survival. The fear was that an unstable country only 90 miles off the U.S. coast was too close to takes any chances. On the other side, Cuba observed U.S. abrupt policies on trade as a threat to its survival. Cuba understood that these policies were in order to destroy the Castro regime.

The next component of Waltz's theory is that the order in which international relations exist is anarchy.<sup>2</sup> In anarchy, both chaos and disorder is assumed because there is no higher authority than the states themselves. Each state is under threat by every other state due to the nature of the world. In anarchy, states are not influenced by other states and can determine how to deal with its problems. Waltz explained that even though there are differences between states, they all have the same functions: making laws, defending themselves, and using resources that

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth N Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Waltz, p. 79.

are available to them.<sup>3</sup> The key difference is in the states capacities in fulfilling the functions rather than the functions themselves. A stronger state can build its defense a lot more than a weaker one because it has a larger capacity to do so.

The U.S. historically has more resources and capacity to defend it self than Cuba. Cuba's only option then is to use the balance of power theory, which is a summation of Waltz's theory. Due to the assumption that states at least want to survive and at most want to completely dominate other states means that to achieve either of these there are two options: internal efforts and external efforts. Internal efforts entail increasing military and economic capabilities. External efforts require increasing alliances or weaken the other states.<sup>4</sup> A state could increase its military capabilities as much as possible in order to feel more secure and less threatened by other state. In addition, two states could work together as a last resort. Typically this works best for the weaker state, as it feels threatened by the stronger state. The weaker does not have the capabilities to surpass stronger states and thus must ally with weaker states, or any other state to survive.

Cuba had allied with Soviet Union initially after its revolution to balance the threat of the U.S. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it turned to its neighbor and ally Venezuela in order to combat the threat of the stronger U.S. Though the Soviet Union was not just another weak state during the Cold War, Cuba benefitted greatly from the protection and monetary funds through this relationship. Venezuela currently carries this role by providing Cuba natural resources and aid to maintain the current Castro regime in power and bridge the gap caused by the embargo.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.118.

## II. The Cuban Mystery Solved

It would be unreasonable to determine how U.S. foreign policy should be when U.S. policy makers are not allowed to step foot on Cuban soil. The embargo has halted all trade between both countries and traveling without permission from the U.S. Treasury Department. Thus, Cuba has become one the United States' biggest mystery. By working through a third neutral party, Switzerland, the U.S. regime is unable to understand and implement a policy that would work to its advantage at the maximum level. However, through an education program set up by Garfield Institute, I have been one of the few students of Hiram College to view the current Castro regime and unravel few mysteries about this banned country.

Upon arriving in Cuba, the first thing I noticed was the immense propaganda about the US.. embargo. Billboards and posters cluttered the streets calling the embargo a blockade, Cuba's greatest genocide. Everything in reference to the U.S. was connected to the embargo. This is because the Cubans felt an economic shock when the embargo was implemented, which resulted in poverty and hardship for many. As Waltz would say, Cuba's resources were limited and thus the people suffered. Visiting people of a variety of sectors only reaffirmed this notion. We met with Dr. Alvarez Cambra, head of the orthopedic department, to discuss Cuba's well-known health care system. He informed us that Cuba purchased medical equipment from a Dutch company. In their contract, the company would not only provide the equipment, but also provide people to help assemble them since the Cubans lack that knowledge. Unfortunately, a U.S. company purchased the Dutch company and the contract was made void. To this date, the Cubans have \$23 million worth of equipment, a list of patients waiting, and no one to assist all because of the embargo. Situations like this along with over priced medications that must be bought through third parties have become a burden for the people.

Dr. Cambra made it clear that he wished the embargo would end so there could be an equal exchange of medical and scientific knowledge. Cuba has offered many countries physicians in exchange of other goods. Right after meeting with us, he was scheduled to meet representatives from Saudi Arabia. Cuba has offered physicians to the U.S. after Hurricane Katrina but because of the embargo, the U.S. denied their help. Without the embargo, Cubans could expand their medical technology at a more affordable cost. The U.S. would benefit by understanding the hands on approach of Cuban physicians that worked so well for them.

In visiting Angela Alanda Primary School, the principle led us to the student's library. It looked more like a classroom than a library. The books on the shelves were old, falling apart, and mostly authored by Fidel Castro. Surprisingly, there were some classical novels such *James and the Giant Peach* but the most interesting novel was called *US Terrorism*. Clearly, students are groomed to understand the US's role as an imperialist and terrorist country. This perspective then grows into their adulthood and may impact any future dealings with the US. This dangerous perception of the U.S. needs to be altered. If Cuba no longer assumes the U.S. as a terrorist, it would no longer see a need to seek a strong alliance.

The Cuban attitude is also deeply rooted into its culture. They are proud of their heritage and what they have fought for. Jose Marti's statue, the leader against the revolution from Spain, can be seen in many people's front yards, public places, and in art. This is sharp contrast from the U.S. where revolutionary leaders' statues are reserved mostly for parks and museums. When speaking with our tour guide, Alejandro, we also learned that religion plays a very little role in their lives. Most of the people are actually agnostic. It is no surprise then that they take what their country has gone through personally.

To be Cuban is something to be proud of in Cuba. The revolution runs through every city as strong as the day it started. When walking through the streets of Santa Clara, the Community of Defending the Revolution (CDR) was posted at the head office's doors. The need to still defend their revolution perhaps is embedded as part of their culture. Though this feeling of the importance of the revolution has not changed, many citizens' attitude on the economic reforms is changing towards a more capitalistic view. Their national identity is so important that the threat of the U.S. to obtain them and destroy it is enough to retain the revolution.

In the past few years, radical changes have altered what Cubans can do. They can now own property, privatize certain businesses, and do not require a visa to leave the country. I had the opportunity to see this first hand when we met Mongo, the organic farmer. Mongo now is only required to give 20% of his profits to the government. At our stay in Trinidad, one of the hotel workers asked to see my camera. I found out that he had a camera similar to mine but did not have an extension cord and asked if I could bring him one next time. Other various encounters made it clear that Cubans want more and they want the accessibility to products.

### **III. The Policy Reform**

The rationale of the embargo was justified because of the threat of the Soviet's involvement near the U.S. border. However, with the turn of the century, a revision of this outdated policy is needed. Now is not the time to isolate Cuba. Isolation would not deter the Cuban regime when every other country such as Canada has been maintaining trade and tourism with Cuba. After 50 years of trying, the Cuban regime can survive with its allies, which seem to be an endless list at this point. Furthermore, since Cuba is actively searching for another strong ally, this would be the perfect opportunity for the U.S. to review its policies. In order to do this,

opening up trade in certain sectors without anything in return would indicate a friendly, non-threatening neighbor.

Though removing the embargo completely would be ideal, the U.S. cannot remove it completely without discontent from the large American-Cuban populations who have been victims to the Cuban regime and play a pivotal role on U.S. policies towards Cuba. Instead, I suggest that the U.S. resumes medical and scientific exchange with Cuba regardless of any political agenda. Cubans have been lenient in letting in US citizens so the US should extend the same benefits to researches and physicians from Cuba. Instead of providing them another excuse to distrust the U.S., opening sectors one at a time regardless of any political agenda can ignite a change from within the Cuban population. This non-harmful gesture would indicate to Cuba that the U.S. is ready to observe Cuba as a sovereign nation rather than an extension of their own country.

The medical and research sector should be the first sector to open because it would be immensely beneficial to both parties. Initially the medical field was directly targeted in order to wage “war against public health.”<sup>5</sup> This led Cuba to decrease pharmaceutical dependency on foreign nations, specifically the U.S., and increase research in biotechnology in order to make up for the loss.<sup>6</sup> This developments achieved by Cuba have eradicated certain diseases and would be beneficial for the U.S. to learn and perhaps implement. Even allowing doctors and researchers to attend conferences and meetings in the US can be a sign of a friendlier nation. This is just the first step.

With the current lessening of restrictions in Cuba, it will only be a matter of time before the people demand more. There is currently a level of distrust between the people and their

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<sup>5</sup> S.M. Reid-Henry, *The Cuban Cure*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2010), p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

regime. A private entrepreneur who has created a hostel inside of his own house disclosed to us that he would rather hide his earnings under a stone than put it into a bank because then “they” would know how much he has. Individualism and capitalism is spreading through Cuba already. Perhaps this is another way for the regime to gain income, by letting people get rich. Regardless, it is enough to get the momentum going in Cuba. All that is left is diminishing the idea that the US is still an imperialist country. By first opening the medical sector, other sectors would follow.

During my stay in Cuba, I was able to witness a historical moment for the Cubans, the death of Hugo Chavez. It was amazing to see Cuba follow a weeklong mourning period for a leader of another country, indicating the deep bond between both national leaders. The aid that Chavez provided equivocated to Cuban’s freedom from the U.S. Without him, their future is undetermined. The balance of power theory predicts that Cuba will continue to pursue allies to balance the US powers. Since Cubans were the very doctors treating Chavez, I am sure they knew how much time they had until he would die and their aid would no longer be a guarantee. Since Venezuela is their largest supplier of oil, and even their electricity plants were fueled by oil, the survival of Cuba depended on oil. Who would be the next logical supplier? It would be Saudi Arabia, the very representatives that Dr. Cambra met right after our discussion. Though the US and Saudi Arabia have relations with another, there is no significant reason to for Saudi Arabia from denying the Cubans oil. Since states work in their interests, if the Cubans offer the Arabian regime something that would benefit them more than their relationship with the U.S., it is expected for them to become Cuba’s next big alliance.

With more Cubans exposed to Americans beginning with the physicians, the less fearful they may become. The change in Cuba has to come from within but without any exposure to Americans, they cannot fully understand the situation except for what they are being taught in

schools and hear from propaganda. But supporting this regime is better than the alternative, being absorbed by the U.S. Until the Cuban people feel unthreatened by the U.S., they will support any regime that allows their independence from the U.S. The only reason that is left to justify this embargo is the promotion of democracy and human rights argument.<sup>7</sup> However, other nations are equally or more guilty of this and yet the U.S. does not have an embargo on them. It is hypocritical and unjust to not lessen the embargo when current situations do not require it.

Instead of placing an embargo and threatening the survival of Cuba, it would be beneficial to U.S. to not push Cuba towards allying with other stronger nations. That would only increase problems for the U.S. If the US wants to remain unthreatened by strong, foreign nations, they will have to step in and treat Cuba with friendlier policies. The medical and research sector would be a small enough step with huge benefits for both parties. Americans and Cubans cannot keep living in ignorance of the other. A more open and exchangeable relationship would allow improvements. The Cubans want the U.S. as long as it does not try to dominate them. It is now the United States turn to make the move.

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<sup>7</sup> David Bernell, "The Curious Case of Cuba in American Foreign Policy," *Journal Of Interamerican Studies & World Affairs* 36, no. 2 (1994): p. 96.