

# US-Cuban Relations

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As one of only a few communist nations left in the world, Cuba provides an interesting case study, not only because it is a communist nation, but as the mighty Soviet Empire crumbled half a world away, tiny Cuba has remained alive, although barely. How could a nation, located so close to “defender of democracy” remain long after the Soviet Union, the nation that first implemented a communist regime, fell to the way side? The purpose of my paper is to examine the relations of the United States with Communist Cuba, beginning with the overthrow of Batista and the rise of communism through the Cuban Missile Crisis. The threat that Cuba posed to the US 40 years ago is different than the threat that Cuba poses to the US now, thus the foreign policy that was used 40 years towards Cuba is antiquated and should be changed.

## History

Geographically, Cuba is the closet Caribbean island to the US, located just 90 miles off the shore of Florida. Today US-Cuban relations are marked with distrust and hostility. US policy is meant to isolate Castro politically, give residence to Cubans that want to live in the US, and the centerpiece of US foreign policy towards Cuba is an economic embargo. For a number of years the policy towards Cuba has oscillated in severity, but relations soured in 1996, when Cuba shot down two civilian planes. Aboard the planes were four Cuban-Americans, opposed to the Castro Government, who worked with Brothers to the Rescue, a group of Cuban exiles. In response the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (1996) or more commonly known as the Helms-Burton Act was passed which strengthened the economic embargo against Cuba. First, it denied

visas to anyone who did business with property that was confiscated during the revolution. Second, it gave American citizens the right to file in domestic courts for financial compensation for the property they lost. This right, though, was followed with the stipulation that the President has the right to waive this rule every six months. Finally, the Act restricts the movement of Cuban diplomats within the US, and expands the broadcasting range of the government-supported, anti-Castro radio station, Radio Marti.<sup>1</sup> US relations with Cuba were not always this bad.

During the 1940s and 50s President Fulgencio Batista allowed US companies to gain influence over the political process and turned his island into a vacation spot for rich Americans. Fulgencio Batista's tenure as President was marked with corruption, bribery and brutal repression of Cuban citizens, and he received kick backs from the American Mafia and Cuban gambling establishments. Although Batista had a relatively small group of supporters, Batista's grip on power was maintained through US support and by paying police and top military officials to repress dissenters and dissidents. The US viewed Batista as a protector of US business interest in the nation and someone who could push US interests in the region. However, by 1957 it was clear that Batista's prowess was beginning to wane and the US tried to distance itself from Batista. In response to Batista's declining popularity, the US State Department crafted a policy that suggested that the US begin to formulate plans to create an alternative government to Batista's that was more liberal and more democratic.<sup>2</sup>

While Batista's star was waning another Cuban's was rising. Fidel Castro, who led a band of rebels in the mountains, was a charismatic leader that captured the hearts

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<sup>1</sup> US Treasury Department. Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996. <http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/eotffc/ofac/legal/statutes/libertad.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> David Halberstam, *The Fifties*, Villard Books, New York p. 715.

and loyalty of the Cuban people. Between 1956 and 1958, Castro led a group of guerrillas that challenged Batista's hold on power and sporadically engaged Batista's forces. As Castro's attacks increased, the US government lost faith in the Batista government and a problem arose that the US was ill-prepared to handle. The US government did not have a suitable and legitimate candidate, one that could run the government in a liberal democratic fashion and still act as agent of the US, in addition to winning the hearts of Cubans. Castro's rhetoric led the US State Department to believe that he was highly nationalistic, but if he came to power would he install a communist government?

### **The Cold War Heats Up**

In 1958, Castro descended from the mountains and began his march towards Havana. On January 8, 1959, Castro entered Havana as a glorious victor.<sup>3</sup> Batista fled and the Castro era began.

On April 1959, at the invitation of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Castro made his first trip to the United States. At his first event, Castro spoke the rhetoric of a revolutionary that wanted to preside over a democratic government with a free press. However, on his second trip to the United States Castro's rhetoric changed markedly and he dropped his democratic message that he so prominently displayed on his first visit. On his second trip Castro began to show signs that he was politically aligned with the USSR, and he dined Khrushchev at the Soviet mission. Castro's dining

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<sup>3</sup>*Id at p. 719*

with the Premier of Communist USSR set the stage for a hard-line approach to US-Cuban relations for the next 40 years.<sup>4</sup>

Until Cuba established a communist regime there had not been a credible Communism movement in the western hemisphere. However, a communist nation that was allied with the Soviet Union, located only 90 miles from the sovereign territory of the United States at the height of the Cold War would shift the balance of power in the western hemisphere and would pose an immediate clear a present danger to US citizens. The threat that Cuba posed to the US due to its proximity necessitated a foreign policy that prepared Americans for the worse case scenario; one that took into account Soviet aggression and allowed for a more aggressive rather than a more passive approach to US foreign policy. As the Cold War heated up around the world, a communist government, allied with the USSR, in the back yard of the United States posed a threat to the American people.

### **The Old Threats**

One threat that Cuba posed to the United States was its dogged persistence to spread revolution and its support for guerrilla insurgencies and military support for revolutionary governments in Africa and the Western Hemisphere. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Cuba expanded its military presence abroad, spending millions of dollars in exporting revolutions; deployments of Cuban military personnel reached 50,000 troops in Angola, 24,000 in Ethiopia, 1,500 in Nicaragua, and hundreds in other various parts of the world. Cuba exported troops to Angola in 1975 to back the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in its effort to take power after Angola

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<sup>4</sup> *Id at p. 720.*

won its independence from Portugal. Cuban forces also supported Ethiopia in its war against Somalia and remained there in substantial numbers for a decade. Cubans also served in a non-combat advisory role in Mozambique and the Congo.<sup>5</sup> Communist Cuba also has had a history of supporting revolutionary movements and governments in Latin America. In 1982, Cuba was added to the State Department's list of states sponsoring international terrorism for its ties to an insurgent group in Colombia. Cuba has supported revolutionary movements in Panama, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and Bolivia beginning in the 1960s.<sup>6</sup> If Cuba had installed communist governments that were loyal to the USSR the scales of Latin American influence would have tipped towards the Communists and upset the hegemony that the US had in Latin America.

Another threat that Cuba posed to the US was that the island could be used as a military intelligence center or a center for secret collaboration for the USSR. Vital shipping lanes lie near the island and information on all ships that enter and exit the Caribbean could have easily been collected by Soviets. Also located in Florida was Cape Kennedy, which launched both military and civilian satellites, and the US Atlantic Missile range, where US rockets were tested. The Russians could have easily erected a listening station on the island that would pass secrets onto the Soviet leaders in Russia. At the height of the Cold War the loss of US secrets would have eroded the US's position in the conflict and potentially put US lives at risk.<sup>7</sup>

The third threat that Cuba posed to the US was its large standing army. The threat did not arise from fear that Cuba would invade the US, but rather that Cuba

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<sup>5</sup> US State Dept. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm>

<sup>6</sup> US State Dept. <http://www.state.gov>

<sup>7</sup> Phillip Brenner, *From Confrontation to Negotiation: US Relations with Cuba*. Westview Press. 1988

would use its army in other Latin American nations and destabilize the region. In 1967, Cuba had between 75,000 and 125,000 well trained and well armed persons in the army, with an additional 75,000 men in the militia. In addition to the 200,000 man Cuban army there were a number of forces that were from other nations on the Cuban island. At that time there were an estimated 35,000 Soviet troops located within Cuba.<sup>8</sup> Any military strike against Cuba would surely have killed Soviet troops and that would have inevitably provoked a Soviet reaction. The potential for a Soviet attack limited the number of military options that the US could employ to protect itself and this limitation in itself presented a danger to US security.

Not only did Cuba have a large military contingent that posed a threat to the US, but Cuba also was a potential missile site where thousands of missiles could target strategic positions in the United States. This security threat became a reality in 1962, during the Cuban Missile crisis. Cuba as a missile site allowed the USSR to employ short to intermediate range missiles, which were cheaper and more accurate than intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and would provide the Soviet Union the opportunity to counterbalance American superiority in its nuclear delivery capability.

The threat that missiles on the Cuban island posed was four fold. First, missiles located so close to the US drastically reduced the early warning time that existed with ICBMs. Second, now many of our Strategic Air Command (SAC) bases could be destroyed before planes could be scrambled. The time between launch and impact of ICBMs was long enough that many SAC planes could be scrambled before the missiles impacted. However, with the short-range missiles in Cuba, the planes had no hope of being scrambled before impact. Third, with ICBMs only a few cities were within missile

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<sup>8</sup> John Plank, *Cuba and the United States: Long Perspectives*. The Brookings Institute, Washington DC. 1967

range, however, with Cuban missiles the nation's great cities were brought within easy striking distance. Fourth, the close proximity of Cuba put American cities in danger of nuclear fallout if nuclear weapons were ever employed on the island. These threats were non-existent when the nuclear weapons were going to be used half a world away, however with missiles in Cuba the threat of nuclear annihilation was brought to America's door. All of these factors necessitated that nuclear missiles be removed from the island of Cuba.<sup>9</sup>

Given the threats that Cuba posed to the US the hard-line approach that the US took towards Cuba was justified in the 1960s and 70s. Cuba tried to export revolution and undermine American influence in Africa and Latin America. Castro allowed the Soviets to use Cuba as a missile base and a post to spy on the US. And third, Cuba maintained a large standing army that could have been deployed to other nations in Latin America. All of those circumstances signaled that Cuba had military intentions to undermine the security of the US and these actions necessitated the embargo that was implemented in October 1960 to reduce Cuba's economic capability.

The United States saw communist Cuba as a threat to American security and decided that a tough stance was needed. Tensions between the two governments peaked during the April 1961 "Bay of Pigs" invasion and the October 1962 missile crisis. The Bay of Pigs was planned under the Eisenhower administration and was implemented under the Kennedy administration. The operation was to militarily train and equip 1,000 Cuban exiles and help them invade Cuba and overthrow Castro. Unfortunately, the operation was a miserable failure and out of the original 1,000 exiles only 26 survived.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> James Blight and Philip Brenner, *Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba's Struggle with the Superpowers after the Missile Crisis*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. 2002

<sup>10</sup> Tim Weiner, *CIA bares own bungling in Bay of Pigs Report*. Feb 22, 1998

In order to ensure that Cuba was never invaded again, Castro asked the Soviet Union to place missiles on the island. The Soviet Union placed mid-range nuclear weapons on the island and so began the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was unacceptable for the Kennedy administration to have nuclear weapons only 90 miles from the US coast so Kennedy ordered a blockade of the island. The next weeks of the stand off brought the world to the brink of nuclear war and required both sides to capitulate in order to prevent a nuclear disaster. In the end, the missiles were removed in exchange for the US removing its missiles from Turkey. For the next forty years, the US took a hard-line towards its foreign policy toward Cuba with the main point of the US policy to isolate Castro politically, give residence to Cubans that wanted to live in the US, and maintain an economic embargo.

### **Does Cuba Still Pose a Threat?**

With the collapse of the Soviet Union the US should take a new stance towards Cuba. Russia no longer poses the threat to the United States that it once did. Since the end of the Cold War the United States has tried to help Russia transition from a communist regime to a democratic one and incorporate the nation into world politics. However, given Russia's new stance in the world, there has been concern by some members of the Congress about the Russian signals intelligence facility at Lourdes, Cuba. The facility at Lourdes was built in the days immediately following the Cuban missile crisis and allowed the Russians to spy on U.S. civilian and military communications.<sup>11</sup> Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that the Russian military planned to close the Lourdes facility beginning in January 15, 2002. The announcement

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<sup>11</sup> Global Security [http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/imint/c80\\_04.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/imint/c80_04.htm) On October 17, 2001,



was met with approval from President Bush who said that both Russia and the United States “are taking down relics of the Cold War and building a new, cooperative and transparent relationship for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” The Lourdes complex, which is 28-square-miles and employed up to 1,500 Russians, is believed to be among the biggest spy stations in the world. In 1993, Russia obtained 75 percent of its strategic intelligence on the United States from communications intercepted there.<sup>12</sup>

Cuba has also rebuked exporting revolution, beginning in the late 1980s, when Cuba began to pull back militarily from nations where it had a military presence. Cuba withdrew its forces from Ethiopia, Angola, and ended military assistance to Nicaragua following the Sandinistas' 1990 electoral defeat. In January 1992, following the peace agreement in El Salvador, Castro stated that Cuban support for insurgents was a thing of the past.<sup>13</sup> In 1992, Fidel Castro said that his country's “support for insurgents abroad was a thing of the past.” Cuba's change in policy was in large part because of the breakup of the Soviet Union, which resulted in the loss of billions in annual subsidies to Cuba, and led to substantial Cuban economic decline. Now that Cuba no longer exports revolution, the Russians have closed their spy base in Cuba, and Cuba no longer acts a base for Russian missiles, the present goal of US foreign policy towards Cuba should be to foster a smooth, gradual transition from communism to democracy that respects human rights.

## **The New Threats**

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Wines The New York Times Russia Closing 2 Major Posts for Snooping, One in Cuba, October 18, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> US State Department, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm>

The new threats posed by Cuba are no longer Russian missiles aimed at US cities or the island acting as a base of operations for our enemy. The new threat posed by Cuba is its spy operations and the flood of immigration of Cuban citizens. Over the past several years, the FBI has arrested and convicted several Cuban intelligence agents in the United States. In June 2001, five people from Cuba were convicted on espionage charges by a U.S. Federal Court in Miami and the sentences ranged from 15 years to life. Cuban spies have also tried to penetrate exile groups and enter U.S. military bases. Even the US government is not immune from Cuban infiltration. In February 2000, an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) official from Miami was arrested. He was convicted in May 2000 for handing over classified information to a friend with ties to Cuba and was sentenced to 5 years in prison in June 2001.<sup>14</sup> Although Cuba no longer allows the Soviets to spy on the US, the convictions of Cuban spies highlight the threat, although minimal, that Cuba still poses to the US in terms of Cuban spying.

Forty years ago the US worried about Cuba acting as a launch pad for missiles to hit US cities, now the threat that Cuba poses to the US is the massive outflows of immigrants from the island. Today Cuba is a country that is struggling to survive. The country is now starting to recover from a severe economic recession that began in 1990, following the withdrawal of former Soviet subsidies, worth \$4 billion to \$6 billion annually. Cuba has managed a slight improvement in GDP in 1994 after the fall of the USSR. In 1994 GDP grew by a miniscule 0.7%, to 2.5% in 1995, and 7.8% in 1999, but this growth is pale in comparison to the period of economic activity that saw national output fall a third between 1989 and 1993.<sup>15</sup> So far the slight economic improvement

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<sup>14</sup> Mark P. Sullivan, Maureen Taft-Morales, CRS Report for Congress, Cuba: Issues for Congress. February 1, 2002, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/8121.pdf> p20

<sup>15</sup> CIA fact book, 2002 <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html>.

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has not affected the average Cuban's standard of living which remains at a lower level than before the severe economic depression of the early 1990s.<sup>16</sup>

Most serious was the increased scarcity of food through the rationing system. The decline in food rations reached a crisis point in 1993, when the average daily caloric intake of Cubans declined from 2,550 in 1970 to 1,780 in 1993, compared to a level of 2,600 per day as recommended by the World Health Organization.<sup>17</sup> The actual amount of food available in the monthly ration system declined to 10 to 14 days from the normal 30 or 31 days by 1994, requiring people to purchase food on the black market at exorbitant prices. The economic downturn in conjunction with a scarcity of food led to an increase outflow of people from Cuba.

Immigration in the last two decades has increasingly become a point of conflict between the US and Cuba. Cubans have attempted to depart the island and enter the US using homemade rafts, alien smugglers, direct flights, or falsified visas.<sup>18</sup> In the 1980s the focus of friction in U.S.-Cuban relations shifted to include immigration when a migration crisis unfolded. In April 1980, an estimated ten thousand Cubans stormed the Peruvian embassy in Havana seeking political asylum. Eventually, the Cuban government allowed 125,000 Cubans to depart for the United States. Another migration crisis in the 1990s set back U.S.-Cuban relations even further when demonstrations fueled by food shortages and prolonged unannounced blackouts erupted in Havana in August 1994. The Cuban Government responded by allowing some 30,000 Cubans to set sail for the United States, most settling in Florida. In 1994 and 1995, Cuba and the United States

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<sup>16</sup> Central Intelligence Agency <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html>

<sup>17</sup> World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/en/>

<sup>18</sup> CIA fact book

reached two migration treaties that were designed to stem the immigration of Cubans refugees attempting to reach the United States by boat.

On the minds of U.S. policymakers was the 1980 Mariel boatlift in which 125,000 Cubans fled to the United States. In response to Castro's threat to unleash another Mariel, U.S. officials reiterated the U.S.'s resolve not to allow another exodus; however, Cubans still continued to flee from the island. In September 1994, Cuba and the United States began talks that culminated in a September 9, 1994 bilateral agreement that would hopefully stem the flow of Cubans seeking refuge in the United States. In the agreement, the United States and Cuba agreed to facilitate safe, legal, and orderly Cuban migration to the United States, consistent with a 1984 migration agreement.<sup>19</sup>

### **What prevents change?**

If Cuba no longer poses the same threat that it did to the US 40 years ago, then what accounts for the structural realist hard-line approach? One answer could be the role that the state of Florida plays in the electoral system during presidential elections and the large exiled Cuban population that resides in Florida. Florida is the fourth largest state, with 25 electoral votes, and is one of the states needed to win the presidency, thus anyone wishing to win the presidency must pander to Florida residents. In a close race, whichever candidate wins the support of swing voters wins the election or, in the case of Florida, wins all that state's electoral votes. Florida's Hispanic population is 2,282,715, which is 16.8 percent of the state's total population. The

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<sup>19</sup> *Id at* p 22

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Cuban population in Florida totals 833,120 and roughly two-thirds of the nation's 1.2 million Cubans lives in Florida.<sup>20</sup>

Bruce Cumings argued also that US foreign policy is affected by domestic factors. He argued that presidents pursue active, ambitious foreign policies that usually stray from the foreign policy of their predecessor in order to distinguish themselves early in their administrations. However, as their policy is blocked or influenced, it quickly moves back to the status quo. This happens so they will get their policy passed or not hurt their chances for elections. He believed that presidents use foreign policy to help them get elected and that right before the election they will move to center as to not "rock the boat" and upset potential voters. This phenomenon occurred during the 1992 Presidential election. George Kennan believed that "US foreign policy was heavily influenced by public opinion and that the only way to make new foreign policy was for policy makers to be more pragmatic and focus on interests rather and ignore morals."<sup>21</sup>

Two examples highlight the influence that exiled Cuban-Americans in Florida exert on American politics and US foreign policy towards Cuba. When President Bush took office in 1988, many Cuban officials thought that he would be sympathetic to Cuban issues and would be more willing to negotiate compared to his predecessor. Much to the contrary, Bush took a hard-line approach to Cuba and many factors contributed to his hard-line stance with Cuba. First, Cuban officials did not fully appreciate President Bush's relationship with Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) a conservative group that held influence in Florida. CANF was created in 1981 by Cuban exile leader Jorge Mas Canosa, and is an organization dedicated to bringing

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<sup>20</sup> Florida Today *Cubans are still the largest Hispanic group: But others are catching up.*  
<http://www.floridatoday.com/news/census2000/stories/2001/may/census051001a.htm>. May 10, 2001

<sup>21</sup> US foreign policy class, Professor Qing, 2/18/2003

democracy to Cuba. The organization is fiercely anti-communist and anti-Castro and is a strong lobbyist force in the political arena. A major triumph for the group was the passage of the Helms-Burton Act, which aimed to strengthen the U.S. embargo against Cuba. CANF supported President Bush financially and politically long before he was the clear nominee in the Republican primary, so when he came to office CANF had a sympathetic ear in the President. Second, President Bush's son, Jeb, had close connections to the conservative Cuban community. He spoke Spanish fairly well and his wife was Mexican. In addition, Jeb Bush was an eager politician who decided early on that he would launch his political career in Florida based with a Hispanic constituency.

One of President Bush's first moves was to take a hard-line towards normalizing relations and insisted that normalization would not occur until free elections were held. This contrasted sharply with the US's previous approach which insisted that Cuba stop exporting revolution, and cut military ties with the USSR. It is unclear how much influence that conservative Cubans had on US foreign policy, however, it is clear that CANF had a swift and informal line into the Oval Office.

One instance where CANF may have influenced the President and US foreign policy is in 1990. The UN Commission on Human Rights was in session and CANF became aware that a US sponsored bill that condemned Cuba was on the verge of failure because of abstentions by Latin American nations. The president of CANF asked Jeb Bush to persuade his father to apply pressure to the Argentine delegate to vote for condemnation of Cuba. She refused to be pressured by the United States and ultimately resigned. However, her replacement acquiesced and condemned Cuba for its human rights abuses.

The second instance of conservative Cuban Americans exerting influencing policy towards Cuba was during the 1992 presidential election. During that year, Democratic Congressman Robert Torricelli, who had a fairly large Cuban American constituency, used his position in Congress to write the "Cuban Democracy Act" (CDA). The purpose of the bill was "to encourage free and fair elections to determine Cuba's political future" and charge the President "to encourage the governments of countries that conduct trade with Cuba to restrict their trade and credit relations with Cuba."<sup>22</sup> Essentially the bill was supposed to apply pressure on the Communist regime and provide incentives for democratic change. As the bill made its way through congress CANF successful reduced the incentives and increased the penalties for non-compliance. Initially, President Bush took a position against the bill saying that it would hurt US investment and damage ties with US allies.

Although presidential candidate Bill Clinton was counseled by several of his Latin American advisors to oppose the bill, when his campaign coffers were critical low, he made a trip to Florida and not only publicly supported the bill, but he publicly criticized the Bush administration for not acting quickly enough to bring change to Cuba. Clinton was quoted as saying, "I think the Administration has missed a big opportunity to put the hammer down on Fidel Castro and Cuba."

Although it cannot be directly linked to his comments, candidate Clinton raised \$275,000 in Florida after he made that announcement. Hoping to mitigate political damage and to retain some of the Cuban support in Florida, President Bush reversed his decision and endorsed the full bill. On April 18, 1992 he issued this statement on actions to support democracy in Cuba.

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<sup>22</sup> Cuban Democracy Act ("CDA") United States Code Title 22. Foreign Relations and Intercourse Chapter 69. Section 6001., [www.ustreas.gov/offices](http://www.ustreas.gov/offices))

I am strongly committed to actions that will bring rapid, peaceful, democratic change to Cuba. My administration has pursued an effective policy of economic and political isolation of the Castro regime. The "Cuban Democracy Act of 1992" seeks to build on the strong pro-democracy policy of my administration. I applaud such efforts and endorse the objectives of this legislation to isolate Cuba until democratic change comes to that embattled island. I believe in and I am committed to work with the Congress this session to pass a stronger, more effective "Cuban Democracy Act," which tightens the embargo and closes any unintentional loopholes that could benefit the Castro regime while preserving the proper constitutional prerogatives of the Congress and the President.

*-Statement on Actions to Support Democracy in Cuba. President Bush's  
Presidential Library.*

He later instructed the Treasury Department to restrict further shipping to Cuba by issuing regulations that would prohibit entry into U.S. ports of vessels that were engaged in trade with Cuba. He vowed that his administration would continue to press governments around the world on the need to isolate economically the Castro regime.<sup>23</sup> The CDA passed both houses of Congress and on October 23, just two weeks before the election the president signed the bill into law. At that point in the race for president, presidential hopeful Bill Clinton had closed the gap of President Bush and it appeared as though there was a possibility of an upset.

Sensing that President Bush may not win the election, the president of CANF said that he would still vote for the president but Cuba-Americans had nothing to fear from a

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<sup>23</sup> George Bush Senior Presidential library, [bushlibrary.tamu.edu/papers](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/papers)



Clinton Administration. Seven months later, on July 4, 1993, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12854 which charged all government agencies to “carry out the provisions of the CDA.”<sup>24</sup>

Although the evidence I addressed is circumstantial and there is no scientific way to measure the influence that Cuban Americans have on US foreign policy towards Cuba, these accounts suggest that Cuban Americans exert some influence on US foreign policy. Cuban Americans had a sympathetic ear in President George Bush and his son in Florida Jeb Bush, and were able to persuade the administration to take a strong stance towards Cuba. CANF also seemed to influence the political climate during the 1992 presidential election in which both candidates courted the votes and financial backing of the Cuban American community and was able to get a bill passed that applied significant pressure on Cuba to change. The events of 1992 suggest that Bruce Cumings and George Kennan were right when they argued that domestic factors influence US foreign policy. It is difficult to measure the affect that Cuban Americans have on US foreign policy, in part because all evidence is circumstantial and in part because US foreign policy is not a science where concrete measurements can be made. This makes it difficult to suggest a possible answer to solve this problem.

## **Conclusion**

Forty years ago Cuba was an island that installed a communist, revolutionary government in the western hemisphere. Never until that point had the communist threat been so real to the US and it was an embarrassment for the US government to allow a nation so close to the US to align politically with its enemy. The tiny of island of

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<sup>24</sup> Implementation of the of the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992, Executive Order 12854 July 4, 1993, 58 FR 36587

Cuba first snubbed it noise at the "all mighty" US, with its move towards communism. It then undermined US influence in Latin America and Africa by militarily supporting revolutionary movements and threatened to destabilize Latin America by maintaining a disproportionately large army. Cuba brought the region to the precipice when it allowed the Soviet Union, the sworn enemy of the US and the antithesis of US values, to place mid-range, nuclear tipped missiles 90 miles off the coast of the US and within range of major US cities. A foreign policy that emphasized military strength was the only policy that was able to adequately handle the threat that Cuba posed to the US.

However, Cuba no longer poses the threats that it did 40 years ago. The Soviet Union has collapsed and long ago fallen to the wayside and the nation that has emerged is trying to work with the US in international affairs. The island of Cuba no longer supports revolutionary movements in Latin America or Africa nor does it keep a large standing army. The missiles that were pointed at US cities and threatened American families have been removed and the Soviet base that was used to spy on American technology and scientist is scheduled to close. The new threat that Cuba poses to the US is not hard military threats but rather soft threats. Immigrants fleeing the nation put financial pressure not only on the state of Florida, but also on other nations that house these refugees. Nations must provide food, housing, and medical care to the Cuban refugees. Nations also run the risk of refugees not returning to Cuba but rather permanently residing in their new home. This risk only adds to the financial burden of Cuban immigration. The only way to stem the periodic exodus of Cuban refugees is to try to implement policies that entice the refugees to stay in Cuba. The US should shift from a foreign policy based on military tactics, which was necessary for the military

threats of the past, to a policy that increases economic resources, and hopefully create a middle class that will demand more political rights.

The reason why US foreign policy has not changed is because of the large Cuban population in Florida and the role that the state plays in the US electoral process.

Florida is one of the five states that hold a large number of electoral votes necessary to win the presidency. This makes Florida one of the key states that anybody who wants to win the presidency must pander to. In the future, Cuban Americans will continue to act as potential swing votes in the state and politicians will shape policy in order to gain their vote.