

The question of the restoration of the Cuban-American relations



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Introduction

The nature of the American ties with Cuba has changed a lot in the last century. Cuba started the 20th century as an American territory, but finished as a state enemy, that foreigners should not approach. The two regimes opposed each other because of their different ideologies and the USA, and its allies, isolated the country for decades. The USA are a symbol of free market economy, capitalism and where individual rights prevail, whereas Cuba is a socialist state controlled society and economy, where individual rights are limited, as well as private property.

After times of tumultuous relations, the American and the Cuban governments have decided to reconstruct their diplomatic ties, more recently with the intervention of the Pope Francis. The recent efforts are seen as a step towards the eventuality of the removal of the embargo. However, some issues still hinder this possibility. Of course, the decisions of the governments were met by criticism by certain representatives. The aim of this issue is to explore the possibilities to strengthen the ties between the two nations, but also the limits of these ties. Those limits also depend on the possibility of change in the Cuban regime: the USA could only lift the embargo if all the conditions set initially are met.

Definition of Key Terms

Diplomatic relations

Diplomatic relations are defined as the “arrangement between two countries by which each has representatives in the other countries”, but also the action of “negotiating alliances, treaties or agreements”.

Embargo

The embargo was issued on the 19th of October 1960. The embargo concerns commerce, finances and the economy. The Cuban embargo is based on six different treaties: the Trading with the Enemy Act (1917), the Foreign Assistance Act (1961), the Cuban Assets Control Regulations (1963), the Cuban Democracy Act (1992), the Helms-Burton Act (1996) and the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (2000). The embargo also used to limit travel to the island. The embargo can only be lifted if the conditions set in the Helms-Burton-Act, such as the demission of both Castro brothers and more freedom.

Ideology

The term 'ideology' is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a "system of ideas and ideals" regarding politics or economy, or the "manner of thinking characteristic of a group". The two ideologies who oppose themselves in this context are the communist ideology and capitalism, represented by Cuba and the USA. Those very different beliefs are at the root of the division between the two nations, and is still an obstacle to normal diplomatic relations today.

Communism

Communism is an ideology that originates from the Karl Marx's theory (Marxism), and which consists of a state run economy, salary distribution according to the employee's sole performances, the inexistence of private property and the abolition of social classes. This system also relies on an authoritarian regime and a single legal political party. Because the transition from capitalism to communism is somewhat hard to achieve, most countries that follow a communist ideology are closer to socialist economies. A socialist economy "advocates that the means of production, distribution and exchange should be owned and regulated by the community as a whole" (Oxford Dictionary). The is intermediate stage is closer to Cuban economics nowadays.

Capitalism



Capitalism is defined as a economical and political theory in which “trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit” (Oxford Dictionary). This model of free market is applied in most countries of the world nowadays, is often paired with some degree of regulation by the state. The capitalist model is embodied by the USA.

General Overview

Historical context

In 1902, Cuba became independent, with Tomas Estrada as it's president. The Island was taken by the USA after the 1898 war against Spain, in which the country lost this possession. Although independent, Cuba still remained under American protection thanks to the Platt Amendment. Under the same bill, the USA could intervene in Cuba's affairs.

Interventions of the USA before the Revolution

Following the resignation of Estrada, the USA occupied Cuba in order to repress a rebellion from 1906 to 1909. The rebellion leader, Gomez, became President at the end of the occupation. However, his success was undermined by corruption scandals. After a series of protests, demanding more rights for black citizens, the USA army returned to Cuba to bring back peace. In 1933, Sergeant Batista took power of the island after overthrowing Machado. The next year, the USA gave up its right to intervene in Cuban affairs and modified the sugar tax as well as tariffs. In 1958, the American government decided to discontinue its military aid to the Batista regime.

The Cuban Revolution

On January 1st 1959, Fidel Castro and his armed group led a revolt against Batista. The President was overthrown, and Castro established a revolutionary socialist regime. After Castro decided to nationalise foreign capital and increase taxes on American imported goods, Eisenhower, cut off diplomatic relations with Cuba, froze Cuban assets in America, imposed a trade embargo and diminished Cuban sugar quotas. A few years later, the USA sponsored attempt to invade the Bay of Pigs failed. Nonetheless, secret undercover operations on the island continued for decades.



The missile crisis

During fourteen days, the whole world watched closely what was happening in Cuba. Between the 14th and the 28th of October 1962, the possibility of a nuclear war threatened world peace. After US intelligence forces discovered that ramps for the firing of nuclear missiles were installed on Cuba, and built by the Soviet Union. After tense negotiations and a naval blockade, the missiles were removed from Cuba, as well as the US missiles in Turkey.

The Embargo

The 17th of February 1960, the American government announced the imposition of the financial, travel and trade embargo. The embargo had important consequences on Cuba, because most of its economic infrastructures depended on their neighbour. The losses, over the next 50 years, are estimated to 1,126 trillions of dollars by the Cuban government. The Johnson government also passed the Cuban Adjustment Act, which allows Cuban citizens who flee to the USA to demand American citizenship after one year of residence. Due to bad economic conditions in Cuba, the Carter administration and Castro came to an agreement, allowing 125,000 Cubans to flee to the USA. In 1996, the USA government strengthened the embargo, in an attempt to further isolate Cuba from foreign investments, through the Helms-Burton Act and the Cuban Democracy Act. This Act sanctions any company trying to create ties with Cuba. This Act can be overturned if Cuba is democratised.

Communism

An essential factor to the decades long rejection of Cuba by the USA is the Communist nature of the government. During the Cold war, two blocks, democracies on one side and communism on the other, tried to extend their influence. Because of the communist nature of the Cuban regime, it meant that it was unthinkable for the USA to cooperate with them, because they were opposed to their ideology and their beliefs. Moreover, the USA have had a difficult relationship with communism in their own country. During the 1950's communism was seen a crime and large investigations took place, amid a widespread fear and hate of this ideology. Anyone considered communist, could lose their job and be rejected from the community. It also meant that Cuba was considered as an enemy to the nation. At the same time,

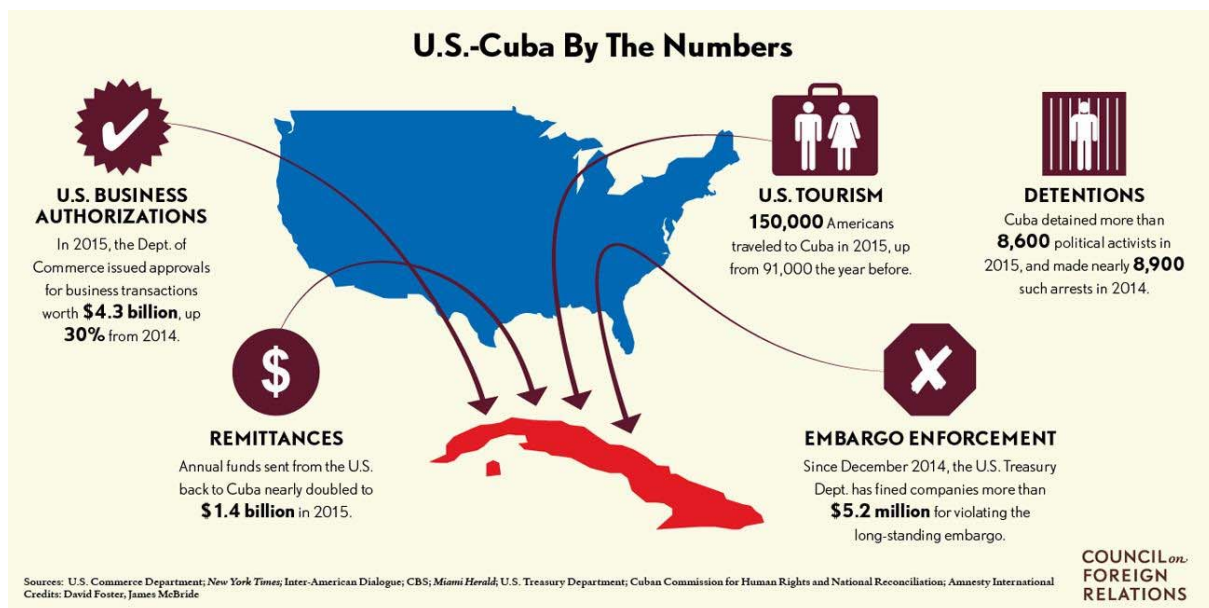


anyone who is against the revolution and its ideals is seen as a state enemy in Cuba. Diplomatic ties are now possible between the two countries because of recent reforms of the Cuban regime.

The restoration of relations

In 2009, the Obama administration lifted the travel and remittances ban. Travel is now allowed for educational or religious purposes. In 2012, Cuba also modifies its travel laws, lifting measures that limited the access to travel authorisations for Cubans. The 17th of September 2014, both heads of state announced the restart of diplomatic relations, after exchanging prisoners. The possibility of opening an embassy in La Havana was also mentioned. This move was criticised by republican representatives, who believe the economic embargo should remain in place. In another move to strengthen the ties between Cuba and the USA, the American government removed Cuba from the terrorism list in May 2015. Raul Castro and Obama also met during the Summit of Americas, an unprecedented reunion. Furthermore, the both sides opened embassies in the neighbouring country. At the beginning of this year, commercial flights were announced for this summer, after the President visited Cuba. Furthermore, the new course set by President Obama regarding Cuba aims at strengthening the ties between the two countries as well as improving the living conditions of Cubans and promoting Human rights. There will also be a focus on combatting human trafficking, narcotraffic, protecting the environment and immigration. Another goal of these new regulations is to enable the Cubans to access to private property, information and to facilitate exchanges between the two nations.





Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, n.d. Web. June 2016.
<http://www.cfr.org/cuba/timeline-us-cuba-relations/p32817>.

However, some experts say that Cuban-American relations will still be limited because of Cuba’s close ties with China and Russia. Those alliances are very important for the small nation, so the government will have to ensure the renewed relations with the USA do not harm them. Shortly after the March 2016 visit of Obama to Cuba, Chinese nationalist paper Global Times warned the Cuban state of the antecedents of the USA in Latin America. Another problem highlighted by experts is the fact that the Cuban Communist party does not attach the same importance to Human rights as the USA is supposed to. This, in contrary to the mentioned alliances, limits the actions of the American government, if they wish to stay true to the values they represent in the eyes of many.

Cuban population in the USA

According to the MPI (Migration Policy Institute), around 2 million Cuban immigrants, or Cuban “exiles”, were living on american soil in 2013. Cuba is the origin of one of the largest groups of immigrants in the USA, and most of the Cuban population is concentrated in the state of Florida. Cuban immigration to the USA is a decades old phenomenon, starting just after the coup. The first Cubans to migrate to the USA were the elite of the country, an educated and wealthy group. Therefore, Cuban immigrants stand apart from the rest of the hispanic population because of they have a higher income, a better education and an active

involvement in politics. This is why the Cuban population residing in the USA has always been an important lobby group in presidential elections: the “exiles” are some of the biggest donors to political campaigns and most of the population is in Florida, a swing state. Their political influence helped maintain the embargo, because of their historical opposition to the Castro regime. However, in recent years, opinions have shifted towards negotiation.

Cuban immigration to the USA

The immigrations laws have been adapted to this special case, through the CAA (Cuban Adjustment Act) passed in 1966 after an influx in Cuban immigration to the USA. This agreement allows Cuban immigrants who have resided on American soil for more than a year to receive a permanent residence permit. Following another surge of immigration in the early 1990s, the two countries signed the first Cuban-American Immigration Agreement in 1994. This agreement aimed at creating a framework for a legal and monitored immigration. In addition to the 1994 agreement, another agreement was signed in 1995, and representatives of each country meet on a regular basis to discuss immigration. The general policy that is applied in most cases is the “wet feet-dry feet”. This means that if an immigrant is intercepted by US marine patrols before reaching the American shores, “wet feet”, he will be deported back to Cuba. However, if an immigrant reaches American soil, he has “dry feet”, he can take the legal and administrative steps to reside there, according to the CAA. Illegal immigration is considered a crime under Cuban law. However, immigrants who are deported back to Cuba are protected from any charges, unless they committed a crime prior to their failed attempt.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

USA (United States of America)

The USA has recently restored their diplomatic ties with Cuba, when it had been separated during the Cold war. The USA used to have fruitful trade with Cuba, and Cuba was prospering from their tobacco and sugar industries. However, the USA saw this as an opportunity and after several years of negotiations, the USA got to handle Cuban affairs. This is also when the USA obtained Guantanamo bay. Following the Cold war, the embargo on Cuba was tightened even more, causing huge deterioration of relations and trade. Things

changed since the time Obama was elected as president of the USA, the ties between the two countries have changed. Obama reduced restrictions placed upon Cuban travel, and met with the president of Cuba, to restore their diplomatic ties. However, it must be noted that the tight embargo between the nations still exists.

Cuba

Cuba had a flourishing industry for tobacco and sugar, and was prospering greatly from the trade between them and the USA. However, when Fidel Castro took over Cuba and converted it into a communist rule, Castro imposed taxes on American imports, and made ties with the Soviet Union. In retaliation the USA placed large embargoes as well as cutting off diplomatic ties. After continually increasing the embargo and restrictions on Cubans, the USA arrested 5 Cuban counterintelligence officers, while they were supposedly committing espionage. This in 2014 led to the restoration of ties, as the USA had a 'prisoner swap,' as two American soldiers were swapped for the five Cuban officers. From then on the ties have gotten increasingly better, as travel bans have been released and Cubans have more leeway in entering and immigrating to the USA.

China

China had a surprisingly large impact on the decisions made by Fidel Castro, and Cuba in the 20th Century. When Castro came to power, he made strong ties with both Russia and China. When considering ties, Castro didn't want to jeopardize the strong ties with Russia or China, and therefore acted in the way that they did. But China also had other incentives. They created the strong ties with the Cubans in order to gain vital influence of Chinese products in Latin America. Thus boosting the economy, and hindering their competitor-the USA.

Russia

Cuba's relationship with Russia is even more Anti-America than their ties with China. Russia aimed to combat international isolation, and decided to open their doors to Cuba. After removing 90% of Cuba's debt, the Russian had large investments in oil and agriculture in Cuba. However, the Russians have even more going for them, making them vital for Cuba's

economic survival in the future. Furthermore, Cuba are almost trapped in this China-Russia-Cuba tie, as restoring ties with the USA, would seem like a major betrayal to their historic alliance.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
January 1, 1959	Cuban revolution- Fidel Castro and guerrilla fighters, gain control of Cuba
1960	Cuba begins trade with the Soviet Union, taxes on American imports placed. US implement almost full embargo, halting the sugar industry
April 17, 1961	Bay of Pigs invasion: USA sends CIA to overthrow Fidel Castro
February 7, 1963	Full embargo announced
1966	Cuban Adjustment Act (Reform on Cubans in the US)
1994	Cuban-American Immigration Agreement (second version in 1995)
March 12, 1996	Helms-Burton Act passed, tightening the embargo, and further cutting ties between the two nations.
September 12, 1998	5 Cuban counterintelligence agents arrested in America
February 24, 2008	Raoul Castro becomes president of Cuba
2009	Obama lifts travel restrictions between Cuba and America
December 17, 2014	USA and Cuba look to restore diplomatic ties
February 2016	Flights to and from Cuba announced

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events



The UN hasn't been greatly involved. Their attempts to help aid this issue, however, have all been aimed at lifting the massive embargo placed upon Cuba. There have been 24 attempts in resolutions, to end the heavy and unfair embargo placed on Cuba, and yet the USA have not fully lifted this embargo. Furthermore the Cuban delegation has continuously requested the Security Council to stop aggression from America, and remove their harsh embargo.

Here is the last resolution where there was an overwhelming majority in favor.

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, 30 July 2015, (A/70/120)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The UN have made numerous attempts to remove the massive embargo placed on Cuba, however, the USA have not been very cooperative. This embargo causes huge travel restrictions, massive loss of trade and loss of business for Cuban producers. However in all of their attempts, UN resolutions have not been able to create any results, and the USA have not budged very much. All of the US presidents until President Barack Obama, made no attempt to restore the ties between the two nations, the aim was to sever the ties even more. However, Obama has been taking initiative since 2008 to help restore the ties. Obama quickly removed the travel restrictions in 2008, allowing more Americans and Cubans to leave and enter both countries.

Since then both Raúl Castro and Obama have been seeking to restore their ties. The embargo has been reduced slightly and both presidents are having discussions as to how their ties are, going forward.

Possible Solutions

It is clear that a huge attempt is needed to restore the ties that were once prosperous, between these two nations. From an economic standpoint, it would definitely be beneficial for both nations to restore these ties, as not only would it increase trade, but also allow for both nations to experience their domestic industries. Solutions that create an incentive or some form of transaction to the USA, for removing the embargo would be ideal, for both nations. In this scenario the USA would be getting something in return, for example, a percent of Cuba's sugar industry, and Cuba would once again be allowed to fully trade. Also allowing Cuban people to move in and out (more freely) of the US. Another option is the use of force, from all nations around the world and further help from the UN. Another resolution could be made, that helps both nations, or demands that the USA relieve this embargo, perhaps including incentives into that.

The UN definitely needs to play a larger role in this issue, perhaps getting the Security Council involved. However, It cannot entirely depend on them and therefore the leaders of both nations have to hold more talks and conferences, to build a relationship again and come to some sort of agreement.

Another route is through awareness. If people become more aware of the situation they will become more understanding, and thus may reconsider and have a stance of their own. Thus setting up lessons on this issue in school, communities and workplaces could benefit both countries, in understanding the other side of the story, and the other perspectives. This would ensure a better future, as events like these would not occur with prior knowledge.

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