

NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND
CUBA:

THE CRITICAL SYSTEMS WHICH INFLUENCE THE PROCESS

A Thesis Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Political Science
Northeastern Illinois University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
In Political Science

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Date August 2017

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ABSTRACT

What explains normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Cuba? The purpose of this thesis is to outline and analyze the causes of normalization between the United States government and the Cuban government. The aim is to find the key actors and factors which contributed to the normalization process to move forward at this point in history and provided the ability to progress. Three separate levels of analysis will be addressed: whether they fell under individual, nation-state, or international system influence on the normalization process. In conjunction with the three levels of analysis, three overarching issues played an extensive role in how each level of analysis would unfold. The key issues surrounded the topics of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, the reforms of President Raúl Castro, and the establishment of democratically elected democracies throughout Latin America. As the research revealed, individual factors showed to have the weakest influence on the process, while both nation-state and international factors displayed a much greater degree of influence. Some influences played a more positive role, attempting to anastomose the relations of the U.S. and Cuba back to a diplomatic state. Other influences were resolved in assuring the U.S.-Cuba relationship would remain bifurcated. Those against a U.S.-Cuba reconciliation appeared to be overabundantly standing on the wrong side of the discussion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Foremost, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my advisor Dr. Sangmin Bae for the continuous support of my Master's study and research; for her professionalism, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense encouragement. Her guidance assisted me during all times of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my Master's thesis.

Besides my advisor, I would also like to convey esteemed thanks to the rest of my thesis committee: Dr. Sophia Mihic and Dr. Marshall Thompson for their encouragement, insightful comments, and challenging questions.

Profound thanks are also due to Mr. Edward Remus, the Information Services Librarian at NEIU for providing me a substantial boost and much needed guidance for streamlining my reference query at the initiation of this endeavor.

I thank my fellow classmates from Northeastern Illinois University in the Political Science program, Alina Guzowska, Jenica Alsip, Jenna Loew, and Marty Pack who provided support and stress relief when times seemed daunting and my efforts were lacking. You all kept me focused and engaged during those turbulent two and a half years of Master's study.

An extremely special recognition goes to all my fellow Army brothers and sisters, most notably SSG Matthew Conley, SSG Brandon Wakeley, and SSG Jamar Williams, for their immediate support of me during this educational journey, and not to be understated the entire Armed Services for the sacrifices and selfless service they make to our great nation in order to keep all Americans safe and free to pursue their ambitions.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family: my parents Lourdes and Guillermo, for giving birth to me and supporting me throughout my life; my brother William for kicking me in the rear-end as a child when I needed steering; and my niece Samantha and my nephew Nicholas for providing me with newfound motivation to pursue my goals and not limit my existence.

~R.J.S

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INTRODUCTION

More than 50 years of time had filled eternity's hourglass, and yet several daunting questions still loomed in the air of curiosity related to nation-state diplomacy in the advanced western hemisphere. The most significant for the inhabitants of the western hemisphere, however, seemed to be a long-standing and drawn-out one: how long would the stalemate relation last between the United States and Cuba? The Cold War was long over and the world was continually moving, in what seemed to be a more positive, collaborative direction. Yet, the ire and hostility which the U.S. and Cuba maintained for one another was not appearing to thaw. That is, until the 17TH of December 2014, when U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro simultaneously announced to the world the renewal of relations between their two nations. There were many forecasts to the amount of benefits both countries would enjoy after agreeing to resume diplomatic relations for the first time since the late 1950s. While the future would have time to develop and unfold, the interests herein were more geared to the reasons which led to diplomatic relations, especially following so many turbulent years. What made diplomatic normalization possible between these two countries? This thesis attempts to outline and analyzes the causes of normalization between the United States government and the Cuban government.

Undertaking qualitatively based research, this thesis seeks to find the causes which led the normalization process to move forward at this point in history and provided the ability to progress. Thus, the dependent variable (DV) is the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. The independent variables (IV) will be addressed

in three separate levels of analysis: whether fell under an umbrella of individual, nation-state or international system influence on the DV. The benefits of separating the levels of analysis into three distinct classifications were to generalize the causes, since they were vastly complex and there was a wide variety contained within the literature. Also, three generalized levels of analysis allowed for theory building, based on the predominant explanations entrenched in some focused distinct issues. The predominant causes available upon initial research of the topic tend to focus on three primary issues: the failure of a policy of hostility provided by the U.S. embargo, Cuban reforms under new President Raúl Castro, and the establishment of democratically elected governments throughout Latin America.

In connection with the failure of a policy of hostility provided by the U.S. embargo, there had been much heated debate as to whether the U.S. embargo had even created a dent in its original objective of “starving communism” out of Cuba. This issue provided the largest dissertation of information when elaborating on the normalization process between the U.S. and Cuba. Taking a closer look at this volatile issue as it related to the three levels of analysis provided guidance for learning more on the matter of “how was normalization being addressed.” Whether each of the levels of analysis were for, against, or indifferent toward the embargo revealed some interesting findings. Scrutinizing the influence which this issue gleaned on each level of analysis provided further theory building assistance.

Moving toward deliberation on the reforms of current Cuban President Raúl Castro, many scholars shared insight on the association between how those reforms are

viewed and the three levels of analysis this research is focused upon. While a vast number of individuals remember the oligarchical leadership style of former Cuba President Fidel Castro, the viewpoints toward brother Raúl Castro were far more varying. While some saw the new regime as a welcome change, yet others saw the difference between the new regime and the old one as very imperceptible. The research conducted here within was primarily focused on how the three levels of analysis were impacted by the reforms in questions.

The third issue to be weighed in conjunction with its effects intertwined with the three levels of analysis was the establishment of democratically elected governments throughout Latin America. As will be demonstrated in the literature review, as most Latin American countries, some of which Cuba had longstanding diplomatic ties, converted their usually extreme Leftist governments to more centrist-right ones, an avenue was created to allow individuals, nation-states, and even international systems to weigh in and lobby their influences in regard to the U.S.-Cuba situation. This thesis attempts to cast a wide reaching net over broad information to allow for the most elucidative analysis.

The primary data to be used are journal articles, books, and periodicals which have attempted to reveal the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The corresponding hypotheses are as follows:

H₁: Individual influence produces a positive effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

H₁₋₀: Individual influence produces no effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

H₂: Nation-state influence produces a positive effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

H₂₋₀: Nation-state influence produces no effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

H₃: International influence produces a positive effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

H₃₋₀: International influence produces no effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

This thesis is structured in a manner where each of the relevant sections were separated into easily discernible headings. Following the introduction, a literature review has been established outlining the pertinent information which was currently available in scholarly works. The major emphasis had been to draw from the available literature to provide assistance with building a theory of how individuals, nation-states, and entire international systems created or failed to create momentum for the normalization process to occur. After the literature review, the main text of the thesis was laid out into the three particular levels of analysis.

The initial and most scant information level of analysis, the individual, was reviewed for notable effects. The overall lack of suitable and defining information was noted due to the majority of reference information focused on nation-states and international system. Also, the research revealed an extreme lack of information available from the Cuban population, most prominently due to the communistic government's desire to control the means of information release. When discussing the

individual influence, the goal was to display how an individual person or a non-governmental group of individuals provided exacting impact on the immediate and direct response by the U.S. and/or Cuban government. These individuals or groups must have played a determined role in leading to changes in the U.S. embargo against Cuba, the reforms enacted by Raúl Castro, and/or related to influencing the establishment of democratically elected governments throughout Latin America.

Moving forward from individuals, the next most discussed level of analysis, the international system, was examined. An international system, for this study, was described as two or more nation-states or larger world governmental organizations which work in unison to provide influence onto an individual nation-state for the betterment of a global region. Once again, the international system was scrutinized based on their involvement with supporting or opposing the U.S. embargo, whether the international system effected Raúl Castro's decision for reforms, and its involvement in establishing democratically elected Latin American governments.

The most dense level of analysis, the nation-states of the world were analyzed. For the purposes of this study, a nation-state was considered to be acting solely, free of any collaboration with another nation-state, since that would create, in the eyes of this study, an international system. The nation-state was addressed at how they had influenced the normalization process based on the three distinct issues at hand, the extent of involvement with changing or maintaining the policy of hostility of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, their causality to Raúl Castro's Cuban reforms, and their role in the establishment of democratically elected governments throughout Latin America.

Upon concluding the exploration of the three levels of analysis, a summary conclusion was produced to include the findings noted within the analysis of the study and to provide further guidance for possible future studies. The ideas and topics for possible future studies to include further investigation into former Cuban President Fidel Castro's possible changes in motivation for dealing with the U.S. Other possible topics for study could include how oligarchs create diminished individual ambition and why a communistic system in theory creates less productive adults and more child-like dependent citizens.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Upon thorough research and analysis of the available academic literature, there was a bevy of information displaying the probable causes of normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, related to individual, nation-state, and international influences. Ritter and Kirk, in their book *Cuba in the International System*, most notably in chapter 1, discuss how Cuba, as early as the mid 1990s, has been moving forward, yet Cuba is lacking “restoration of a mixed market system” (Ritter and Kirk 1995, pg. 11). While the normalization of relations with the U.S. would most definitely depend on some kind of establishment of a free market system, the Cuban government is aware that, “Nationalization is their last bastion of legitimacy” (Ritter and Kirk 1995, pg. 11). Cuba retains the explicit demand that for normalization to continue to move forward, the U.S. and Cuba must make reforms which will secure the national sovereignty of Cuba and other similar nation-states. Cuba believes one of the reforms whose correction is a certainty to forwarding U.S.-Cuba normalization is the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992, which prohibits U.S. subsidiaries from dealing with Cuba and is seen as a direct “affront to Cuban sovereignty.” While on the international field, Ritter and Kirk lay claim that Cuba is a “more sovereign nation whose citizens are more equal.” However, without the increased awareness necessary to drive the vehicle of normalization forward, people will continue to view “commitment to *la patria* (the homeland) as indivisible from loyalty to Fidel” (Ritter and Kirk 1995, pg. 15).

And while work continues to change the images of the past, the notable reforms addressing the work done to revamp nationalism further illustrates that Cuban leaders

nationalistic point of view, “no longer conjure up the legitimacy it once did” (Ritter and Kirk 1995, pg. 15). Adding to the list of reforms which need further advancement to facilitate the normalization of relations is covered in chapter 16 of Ritter and Kirk’s book. Compensation is a very necessary plateau, which both the U.S. and Cuba need to address. Most notably, the tidings of coming to “terms on whether the U.S. should be compensated for expropriated properties or Cuba to be compensated for damage to the economy by the U.S. embargo” (Ritter and Kirk 1995, pg. 259) play a key role in handling the messiness of the embargo and its effects. Ritter and Kirk reveal this claim as a major factor in the continued potential for U.S.-Cuba relationship bonding. A key factor overlooked in their book is whether the international community will play arbiter in such dealing or simply stand on the sideline as the U.S. and Cuba figure resolutions out on their own accord.

While Ritter and Kirk looked mostly at the international system involvement and nation-state reform, William Leogrande glances more so in the direction of individual involvement in furthering the normalization process. From the outset in “Normalizing U.S.-Cuba Relations,” Leogrande comments that, “even a successful policy shift requires the time, attention, and political capital of senior decision-makers” (Leogrande 2015, pg. 474). He is clearly focused on the two men at the helm of each of these two countries, President Barack Obama for the U.S. and President Raúl Castro for Cuba. President Obama’s reforms were guided from a vision that the U.S. embargo was a “policy of failure” and needed to be reproached. From the U.S. standpoint along with President

Obama, the Cuban-American lobby and Jorge Mas Canosa develop as powerful agents with a sole drive to influence the U.S. foreign policy making apparatus.

Mas Canosa's creation of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) was instrumental in punishing public officials who hinted at policy engagement with the communist Cuban government. While this powerfully influential group seemed destined to maintain a policy of keeping a stranglehold on Cuba's economy for however long the Castros and Communism reigned on the island, over time the tides of change splashed in a uniquely different direction. Whilst, in 1991, 87 percent of Cuban-Americans in the U.S. favored a continuation of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, the newer generations of Cuban-Americans were softening their tone. "By 2014, 71 percent believed the embargo was ineffectual" (Leogrande 2015, pg. 477). Most of the newer Cuban-Americans were also desiring less barriers to be able to engage with family still on the island.

Furthermore in "Normalizing U.S.-Cuba Relations," Leogrande displayed the diminishing barriers. Beginning in 2008, Raúl Castro would formulate reforms to guide the island nation toward change. "Castro repealed a number of government regulations that restricted people's individual freedom" (Leogrande 2015, pg. 484). Raúl led reforms which had increased personal freedoms, such as ability to purchase mobile phones and computers. In 2011, he legalized the sale of automobiles and real estate, with certain restrictions not divulged. And in 2013, the ultimate removal of the *tarjeta blanca* (white card), which was a mandated permission required before Cubans were allowed to travel abroad. Leogrande outlined the various accomplishments of the new regime in the direction of diplomacy with the U.S.

Moving onward to where Ethan Zawatsky and Ashley Gemma's focus lay into the diplomacy of normalization. In their article, "Diplomatic Normalization between the U.S. and Cuba in Light of Recent Changes in U.S. Foreign Policy More Generally", Zawatsky and Gemma bring awareness to the most crucial facet of the U.S.-Cuban normalization process. They reveal, "the only event of serious international consequence [is] the easing of restrictions for Cubans to leave the country" (Zawatsky and Gemma 2015, pg. 7). These authors create a powerful argument for the creation of freedom of movement for Cuban citizens, which has been at the forefront for the call for reforms, alongside human rights issues on the island. President Raúl Castro has moved forward with a few reform changes, namely "release of political prisoners, greater internet access, and decreased suppression of public protests" (Zawatsky and Gemma 2015, pg. 8). The improvements the Cuban government is instilling further the evolution of the nation-state to attempt to reconcile broken ties. Zawatsky and Gemma additionally produce analysis for the course of actions which direct the process of normalization.

In a full-fledged breakdown of the U.S.-Cuban situation, the authors discuss the much needed "policy window" to advance the diplomacy. Zawatsky and Gemma lay out the three "streams" to effect creation of the policy window; they are "problems, policies, and politics." As their article alludes to, the "problem" within U.S. and Cuba is as simple as abnormal diplomatic relations. To attain the prescribed "policy window," the authors glance at the situation from the U.S. standpoint. In policy demands, the U.S. has been holding out for the Cuban government to "abandon its communist institution." If the policies of the Cuban government continue to move in a direction which the U.S. finds

favorable or beneficial for mutual advancement, Cuban politics must continue to forge “greater emphasis on interest groups, public sentiment, and political development” (Zawatsky and Gemma 2015, pg. 16). With the three streams being addressed more so currently, the shifting attitudes amongst Cuban-Americans have been instrumental in contributing to the allowance of the “policy window” to occur.

The “policy window” of Zawatsky and Gemma can be related to a new emerging Cuba looking to reconcile broken ties with the nation-state system. In “Cuba after Communism” by Julia Sweig and Michael Bustamante, the “emerging Cuba might best be characterized as a public-private hybrid with multiple forms of production, property ownership and investment, along with a slimmer welfare state and greater personal freedom...yet a continued one-party rule” (Sweig and Bustamante 2013, pg. 101). Whereas the new leadership of Cuba, as Sweig and Bustamante point to the changes, is still attempting to remain true to the Revolution. The nation-state within Sweig and Bustamante’s point of view is hampered by a double edge sword, reluctant to pursue either side very intensely. One positive revealed in this article is the freedom for Cuban citizens to travel and live abroad, for up to two years, without the danger of losing “bank accounts, homes, and businesses” (Sweig and Bustamante 2013, pg. 102). While this floats on a positive wave from the U.S. prospective, even the probable successor to Raúl Castro, Miguel Diaz-Canel remarks, “Cuba has made progress on issues easiest to solve...what is left are more important choices that will be decisive in the development of the country” (cited in Sweig and Bustamante 2013, pg. 103). Even the Cuban leadership understands the magnitude of the situation, for its survival and the benefit of its citizens.

Sweig and Bustamante elaborated moreover on the current reforms the Cuban nation-state had undertaken. Raúl Castro lamented in 2006, “We reform, or we sink” (cited in Sweig and Bustamante 2013, pg. 103). Moreover, the Cuban government aimed for the Cuban Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to be 50 percent privately held in five years time. The Cuban government also pushed forward cuts of imports, reducing public expenditures, and increasing key strategic investments with international partners. However, more goals to “boost exports, stimulate the economy, and foster a more dynamic domestic market may have some uphill battles, based on economists’ estimations of a very structurally weak infrastructure” (Sweig and Bustamante 2013, pg. 104). The largest hurdle for the Cuban government is the dual-currency system. While the U.S. dollar is sought after, the Cuban “peso” equivalent makes conversion difficult and creates problems within a much needed free market system. The dual-currency system maintained capital wielding tourist consumers in one sector of the island, while at the same time forcing Cuban nationals to remain and function only within their Cuban peso accepted communities. This type of system deprived the flourishing of potential businesses within the heartland of Cuban communities.

Foreign business relations were one way Cuba remained viable. As Daniel Bukzspan outlined, in “Who’s Doing Business with Cuba, Despite Embargo,” the Netherlands and Canada have stood alongside the Cuban government in business matters, in spite of the U.S. embargo. Several foreign nation-states have followed their own sovereign course when dealing with Cuba. Foreign business trade and tourism were the main streams of survival for the Cubans and allowed the island nation to persevere in the

face of the U.S. embargo. Cuban-Americans sought survival for themselves and their kin remaining on the island. As Bukzspan writes, “despite anti-Castro sentiment, many Cuban-Americans still send money to family in Cuba” (Bukzspan 2010).

In addition to the individuals which influence change, Bukzspan outlines one of the strongest positions against the U.S. embargo. As he claims from the words of Daniel Griswold from the Cato institute,

The embargo has been a failure by every measure. It has not changed the course or nature of the Cuban government. Not liberated a single Cuban citizen. Cuban people are more impoverished, without making them one bit more free (cited in Bukzspan 2010).

Bukzspan reveals the importance of both the individual influences and the failure of the embargo as to the effects they create when dealing with the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

Dealing with individual influences is what Mark Lopez and Jens Krogstad explicitly profile in “As Cuban American Demographics Change, So Do Views of Cuba.” They begin to analyze the policies of President Obama toward the Cuban situation. It was essential that “President Obama’s new policies on Cuba opened the doors to establish ties” (Lopez and Krogstad 2014). In conjunction with Obama’s policies, Lopez and Krogstad elaborate on the importance of the Cuban-American lobby to influence change in U.S. foreign policy. As illustrated within the article, although the Cuban-American lobby had been staunchly against relation improvements with Castro’s Cuba, the winds of change have been storming since the early 2000s. In a Florida International University (FIU) poll of Cubans in Miami, Florida, prior to 1997, 78 percent were in favor of

continuing the U.S. embargo against Cuba. However, by 2016, 65 percent had reported wanting to discontinue embargo and improve relations with their home nation-state (cited in Lopez and Krogstad 2014).

“The Cuba Opening: American Foreign Policy meets Reality” by Ted Carpenter advances the ideas of policy failure are the major contributor to a stifling relationship with the neighbor to the south. The U.S., under the Obama administration, was realizing “the suffocating Wilsonian approach to U.S. diplomacy may finally be weakening” (Carpenter 2014). With a strangle-hold in place by the U.S. for the majority of the Communist Revolution’s reign, the world and ultimately the U.S. were coming to terms with this failed approach. The newly implemented Obama approaches would steer the U.S. and Cuba into new and potentially exciting endeavors. “[Thus] ending a counterproductive approach in overall U.S. foreign policy, which lasted more than a century, [since the implementation by President Wilson]” (Carpenter 2014). While driving nation-state reform, the Obama led interventions sought to dismantle the main barrier between once amicable partners. Since the Obama reforms have been rolled out, Carpenter sees great opportunity for “thousands of Cuban exiles and their families in the U.S. [to] have powerful incentive to travel back to the island for both business and personal reasons” (Carpenter 2014). Building the bridge between the U.S. and Cuba is essential for furthering both individual ideology and nation-state diplomacy.

The nation-state diplomacy being promulgated by both countries stands to be a beacon of light for the rest of the world. Claire Felter depicts in her article, “U.S.-Cuba Relations” from the Council on Foreign Affairs, that as early as 2009 Cuban President

Raúl Castro “began to liberalize parts of Cuba’s state controlled economy, including decentralizing agriculture sectors, relaxing restrictions on small business, liberalizing the real estate market, and expanding permission to travel abroad” (Felter 2107). As these reforms have been noted earlier in the paper, Raúl Castro seems to be aware of the individual citizen and nation-state government implications toward change. So much it seems, even polls in Cuba have resulted in “97 percent of Cubans [on the island] think normalization is a good thing” (Felter 2017). The most notable issue to these results was there were only 1,200 respondents, and of those respondents “75 percent stated they had to be careful what they say in public” (Felter 2017). Based on such revelations, although the accuracy of the poll may have been fruitful, this report questions the validity of the findings based on the Cuban citizenry’s trepidation of the communist party retaliation. Alas, that appeared to be a minute outpouring of support for normalization. Felter insists, however, Raúl Castro is moving the island-nation forward toward diplomacy with the U.S., especially looking in the direction of a more decentralized government. “U.S.-Cuba Relations” expands the promotion of a greater free market system by displaying that from 2009-2013, self-employed workers on the island nearly tripled.

While the Council on Foreign Affairs article by Felter provided some contemporary elaboration of the current state of Cuba under the leadership of now President Raúl Castro, Jeffrey Goldberg was able to make known some interesting elucidations from then President Fidel Castro. In his article posted in *The Atlantic*, Goldberg was able to release new insight into the mind of the former Cuban leader. In 2010, Fidel revealed to Goldberg “the Cuban model doesn’t even work for us

anymore” (Goldberg 2010). In a profound moment of retrospection, the former communist dictator acknowledged the problems which most presumably caused the Cuban nation-state to flounder. The two most telling incidents, which all but contributed to issues in U.S.-Cuban relations and now looked to be a driving force to move the normalization process, were the Cuban missile crisis and an overly centralized government.

During recollection of the Cuban missile crisis, Fidel willingly admitted he had “misplayed a crucial moment in the Cuban missile crisis...asking Khrushchev to nuke the U.S.” (Goldberg 2010). With the Cuban nation-state applying external pressure to the U.S., with assistance from the former Soviet Union, it shows a trying time for two former partners in relations. For the Cuban missile crisis was the beginning of the U.S. embargo, and all but the end of the U.S.-Cuba relationship at it was known. Additionally, Fidel’s acknowledgement about a too overly centralized government shows the reluctance for change of one leader may have been the main ingredient in the caldron of dismantling relation between two prior allies. Hence, the new administration is looking profoundly at correcting a policy whereas observing “the ‘Cuban model’ has much too big a role in the economic life of the country” (Goldberg 2010). With these revelations at an early time period, prior to Obama and Raúl Castro’s intervention to normalize relations, they display how the wheels of change began turning into the adoption of new policies and greater outlooks for a renewed partnership.

While partnerships renewed were the central tenet of Goldberg’s article, there were many partnerships which allowed Cuba to remain afloat during more than a half-

century. “Vicinity Matters: Cuba’s Reforms in Comparative Perspective” by Ricardo Torres Perez opens the involvement of third party nations, not involved with or wanting anything to do with the U.S. embargo. Lacking attention to the individual component of the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, Perez’s primary focus is the inducements of the nation-state to change and the involvement of other international sovereign nations to economically sustain Cuba. While Cuba began and has maintained its allegiance to a host of diverse nations which follow the influence of centrally planned economies (CPE) and ally themselves to ideologies which focus on “low levels of external openness,” they have been more open to the decentralization of government. Perez creates discussion on how Cuba in the international community has made, and is continuing to make, adjustments to “trade patterns, industrial organization, and ownership structure” (Perez 2016). Even though Cuba has maintained trade relations with Western Europe, Asia, Canada, and Latin America, it seems to continue to deduce that relations with the U.S. stand to benefit the island nation immensely.

Also clarified within “Vicinity Matters,” although international relations are of greater concern for the survival and growth of the Cuban system, Raúl Castro’s administration, in particular, more and more understands the changes which are made within the nation-state presumably stand to be the largest benefit for its own survival and growth. Along with the influences of international partners, within the nation-state the Cuban leadership look to “provide a framework for economic and political support, reduce income disparities and ideology, and elimination of economic isolation from the rest of the world” (Perez 2016). As the focus continues to gain momentum, the external

international community and the internal nation-state government seem to be working together to evolve the Cuban system to a place of greater participation, within and without.

In spite of the growing affection for the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, the story most academics continue to visit is that of the U.S. embargo, albeit many individual Cuban-American groups carry a large influence as well. In “Washington’s Irrational Cuba Policy” by Lisa Weinmann, there are an abundance of depictions of the failure of the U.S. embargo together with an analysis of how individual lobby groups shaped and are shaping the normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations. As noted by Weinmann, the U.S. policies toward Cuba, have been in direct correlation with the Florida lobby agenda and politics. The U.S. embargo has been clearly labeled “the most stringent in U.S. history.” Making its mark on both the U.S. and Cuban legacy, the U.S. embargo, as Weinmann labeled it, “were both sides playing a dangerous game of chicken, while at the same time deepening cooperation and trying to limit practical disputes” (Weinmann 2004, pg. 22). The U.S. embargo shone a small portion of Weinmann’s research.

The much larger piece maintained focus on individual causation. The most prominent, in her estimation, was that of former U.S. President Bill Clinton. In 2000, before leaving office, President Clinton “signed the Trade Sanctions Reform Act, which lifted the ban on food sales to Cuba” (Weinmann 2004, pg. 25), effectively setting the wheels in motion to allow the U.S. and Cuba to find common ground on relation normalization. Clinton’s actions created a vessel for the likes of today’s émigrés whom,

according to United Nations statistics, carry or send cash back home at a rate of over one billion dollars per year (Weinmann 2004, pg. 26). The cultivation of U.S.-Cuban relations in the early 2000s also allowed the likes of Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo to repatriate back to Cuba after living in the U.S. for 14 years. Menoyo's repatriation was driven "to nurture a legal and homegrown regime opposition on the island" (Weinmann 2004, pg. 27). In similar fashion to Menoyo's non-governmental efforts, two U.S. based agricultural companies, Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill have been leading efforts to allow food sales, agricultural interests, and travel to Cuba. Expansion of a free market had been acquiring support early and from many facets of interested parties.

As interests go, Lars Schoultz, in "Washington's 4th Interest," tackled the most important nation-state interest the U.S. contained as motivator to ending the embargo against Cuba, uplifting the Cuban people. Schoultz claimed "ending the embargo fell under the categories of security, economic trade, and domestic policy" (Schoultz 2009, pg. 141). Security, the least of the U.S. concerns, lagged behind economic trade and domestic policy as a strong influence with the U.S.. On economic issues, the U.S. and Cuba must deal with the nationalized business dilemma which evolved from the revolution and was in much need of a remedy. These nation-state dilemmas, however, had not completely thwarted a U.S.-Cuban relationship. Per Schoultz, the U.S. and Cuba have been involved in poultry trade since 2001 and the increased trade market involvement was a point of contention more than appeasement for the Cuban-American lobby. Schoultz did maintain that the fourth interest, "uplifting the Cuban people," had

begun to melt the displeasure which the Cuban government and the Cuban-American lobby garnered for one another.

William Leogrande produced abundant literature on the topic of the U.S.-Cuba relationship and the toll of economic restrictions. In “A Policy Long Past its Expiration Date: U.S. Economic Sanctions against Cuba,” Leogrande addressed further the effects of the U.S. embargo and its necessity to be removed. Lavishing in the announcement from President Obama and Raúl Castro on 17 December 2014 (as most now refer to it D17), Leogrande noted the importance of the steps put in place to allow both the U.S. and Cuban people to “resume people to people educational and cultural exchanges and engage Cuba in bilateral talks on issues of mutual interests” (Leogrande 2015, pg. 957). This article acknowledged the lack of benefits displayed by the embargo, calling it “the policy of economic denial[,] an outdated approach and with no other nation joining the U.S. in imposing sanctions” (Leogrande 2015, pg. 958). Leogrande profiled how the lack of support showed it was only time which would create the necessary policy window to approach this special case.

A special case is exactly what Lana Wylie discussed in her article, “The Special Case of Cuba.” Wylie sets her analysis paradigm on the intervention of Canada and its special relationship with Cuba. Wylie disclosed, following the implementation of U.S. embargo, Canada and Cuba retained a close relationship, noting “Havana and Ottawa ties were never severed” (Wylie 2012, pg. 661). Maintaining a relationship grounded firmly around trade, tourism, and regional support affirmed Cuba’s belief in its own survival, holding tightly to the ideologies of the Revolution which guided its leaders. As time

moved forward, however, despite Canada's advocacy for Cuba to be included in the regional international organizations, the U.S. embargo denied such a move. But as the U.S.-Cuba thaw continued to expand and Raúl Castro initiated greater liberalization measures, "Obama remarked willingness to engage in productive dialogue with Havana" (Wylie 2012, pg. 665). As the two nation-states negotiated, with the support of the Canadian government in tow, it was becoming more apparent that Cuba was "considered an important country in the region and well respected by other Latin American and Caribbean states" (Wylie 2012, pg. 672). With these regional affiliations and partnerships, the U.S. looking more inwardly, primarily at Obama's behest, noticed the longstanding ties with Canada have displayed the benefits of normalized relations with the island.

Even with discussions advancing, more is to be said of the effects of the embargo. "Letters from Cuba: To Embargo or Not" by Michael Totten continues on the theme of the "ineffective" product of the U.S. embargo. Even with the embargo firmly in place, Totten revealed "the U.S. is Cuba's fifth largest trading partner, behind Venezuela, China, Spain, and Brazil" (Totten 2014, pg. 32). The continued efforts of both countries looking to work and play well together, mask the larger debate of when is the time for the U.S. embargo to be completely dismantled. Yet, even with the dismantling of the U.S. embargo, Totten reaffirmed the more grave debate, that even though the embargo does harm the Cuban economy, "the bankrupt communist system inflicts far more damage" (Totten 2014, pg. 32). Totten went on to elucidate that fear of change is a natural occurrence for most individuals, but

Cuba is ruled by a group of old men who fear change more than old men almost anywhere else in the world, with the possible exceptions of North Korea, Iran, and Saudi Arabia...The [Cuban] people are sick to death of being cut off from the greater North American region, which they had always belonged to before Castro (Totten 2014, pg. 33,36).

The Cuban-American lobby has a voice in the U.S. foreign policies toward Cuba. Unfortunately, as Totten eludes to, the Cuban people lack the stance to further their own best interest and “without vast reforms, Cuba could become a Caribbean China” (Totten 2014, pg. 37).

Antonia Rodiles, in “Change by Attrition: The Revolution Dies Hard,” explored the nature of the reforms promulgated in Cuba under the new leadership of Raúl Castro. The new Castro’s expectations were a variation of the old Castro’s regime and dictums. While some in the Castro cabinet saw a need for economic reforms to bring Cuba forward in its own ideology, Raúl Castro, while attempting to address small business reforms and whether to utilize Venezuelan oil subsidies, wanted to bring Cuba in the ‘neo-Castroism’ era to an adequate level. The problem which Rodiles broached was that the new Castro was “naming ‘new’ figures to fill senior government post utilizing pasts of the *ancien [former]* regime” (Rodiles 2013, pg. 23). The question thus remained, was the new Cuban leader truly making change or simply producing the illusion of change. Rodiles carved a wedge in the anticipation of diplomacy normalization between the U.S. and Cuba. Another large voice continuing to scream for Cuba to enter the international community was the democratic international community itself, decreeing in support of a “campaign called ‘For Another Cuba’, which was demanding the ratification and

implementation of the UN covenants on human rights as a first step in transitioning to [a possible] democracy [and] the only path to solving the Cuban dilemma” (Rodiles 2013, pg. 24).

While individual, nation-state and international influences have played supplementary roles in the reforms Cuba wishes to instill to forward diplomatic relation normalization with the U.S., some of the influences on Raúl Castro’s decision making may stem from the downfall of his political allies. Initially the Cold War dismantled Cuba’s largest and most powerful military and financial ally, in the former Soviet Union. More recently, despite support from Canada and most of Latin America, the shift away from the leftist movement, known as the Pink Tide, seemed to have finally caused a toppling of an ideology, at least in some fashion. In “What Happened to the Pink Tide?” article by Kyla Sankey, “the balance of power has slowly shifted back towards the Right, with popularity and efficacy of the left-wing governments rapidly diminishing” (Sankey 2016). Currently, Cuba seemed more destined to be considered a Pink Tide country, even this move would vastly differ from its far Left ideology. As a Pink Tide country, the world saw the “emergence of left-wing government leaders focused on challenging neo-liberalism, standing up as anti-imperialists, yet leaving basic structure of capitalism intact” (Sankey 2016). It was not until the mid 2000s, when the four major countries, Argentina, Bolivia, Venezuela, and Brazil, showcased political instability, which eventually led to “doubts of their governments’s futures” that the Pink Tide displayed the beginnings of the shift. These unexpected shifts in the largest countries in the Pink Tide

nation definitely played a role and took a toll on how the future of Cuba would be propelled.

INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCES

Following the literature review of available information, and having undertaken a thorough analysis of that information, this thesis will begin theory building surrounding the three levels of analysis. Prior to diving directly into the first level of analysis encompassing the individuals purported to have been influential in the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, a brief overview of what the actual level of analysis entails is provided. Describing the individual level of analysis, this thesis peers into “the personality, perceptions, choices, and activities of individual decision-makers and individual participants” (Mingst 2008, pg. 57). Under individual influences, the research also focused on other actors, such as non-governmental organizations, which produced pressure and sway onto both the U.S. and Cuba.

Although the least abundant informational level of analysis toward the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, individual influences were still able to be divided into the three broader issues which carried the breadth of most of the information found in the current literature. Those issues to be discussed within the individual influences are the U.S. embargo, President Raúl Castro’s reforms, and the establishment of democratically elected governments in Latin America. While the nation-state influences and the international system influences were covered in more detail than the individual influences, some of the most important elements could definitely be attributed to individual influences. For instance, President Obama, Cuban President Raúl Castro, and Cuban-American lobbyist Jorge Mas Canosa were prominent figures in the individual influences level of analysis. Mr. Mas Canosa was instrumental

in building the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), or also known as the Cuban-American lobby, which provided endless pressure from Florida and Washington D.C. to assure the Cuban situation was being handled fairly and that no undue advantages were granted to the Castro regime. The individual investment of President Obama, Cuban President Raúl Castro, and the Cuban-American Lobby with Mr. Mas Canosa were vital pieces to raising the interest of policy engagement between these two neighboring countries.

In so far as Leogrande creates an important image of the crucial persons involved in the U.S.-Cuba normalization relationship process, he goes further to address the effects of the U.S. embargo and its necessity to be removed. As previously alluded to, Leogrande noted the importance of the steps put in place to allow both the U.S. and Cuban people to “resume people to people educational and cultural exchanges and engage Cuba in bilateral talks on issues of mutual interests” (Leogrande 2015, pg. 957). It is displayed that both nations leaders were aware of the importance of personal interaction amongst citizens of different nations and ideologies, but each made claims in varying forms about the embargo. President Obama had strongly alluded to the need for communication between the two countries. While the embargo remained a thorn in the relationship’s side, he did not allow that to get in his way of creating dialogue with Cuba.

President Obama understood what so many were not understanding, or choosing not to understand. Even though lifting the embargo would require Congressional endeavor and, as Ellis pointed out, “[would] likely prompt a major partisan political conflict” (Ellis 2014), it appeared to be the most necessary step in strengthening regional

Latin American ties. With Cuba maintaining such a strategically advantageous location in the Caribbean, President Obama was quite aware of the importance relations with Cuba were toward the “geo-politics of Latin America” (Ellis 2014).

On the island-nation, Cuban President Raúl Castro vehemently asserted the embargo was the largest issue hanging over the diplomatic attempts to normalize relations. Even though, as the embargo remained in place, many steps moving forward were occurring in lessening the distance between the U.S. and Cuba. As far back as 2000, then President Bill Clinton signed the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TRSA) which allowed for removal of agriculture and medical sanctions. As Weinmann reported, the TRSA allowed for companies such as Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill to establish food sales with our Caribbean neighbor to the south. In conjunction with the establishment of food sales to Cuba, soon after Cuban-Americans were allowed to remit money to their relatives on the island. A much necessary boost to aid in the mending of wounds, which the Cuban population was recovering from since the embargo had been in place.

In further elucidation from Weinmann’s reports of the advances made toward removal of the embargo and binding ties with Cuba, Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, a Cuban born citizen who spent most of his life in the U.S. was allowed to repatriate to Cuba. As mentioned previously, he began a “legal and homegrown regime opposition” campaign, although, the true results of Mr. Menoyo’s intervention may not be found out for some time, especially with the ongoing lack of reporting coming from the island. At least, there was positive involvement on many levels, including both sides, the U.S. and Cuba.

On a more controversial measure, the Cuban-American lobby continued to press the U.S. government to maintain the embargo in place, until such time as Cuba agreed to denounce communism or established more concessions in the revitalizing of diplomacy between the U.S. and Cuba. The lack of support for the embargo in some arenas showed it was only time which would create the necessary policy window to approach the removal. Yet the Cuban-American Lobby, with the fervor of Mr. Mas Canosa, strived to make the negotiations as grueling as possible.

Aside from former President Obama, the individual with the greatest eagerness of U.S.-Cuba relations reaching a more normalized plateau was Cuban President Raúl Castro. His words, “reform or sink” stood as the calling for a new direction for a nation which had the potential to be even larger in the Latin American leadership spectrum than its past paltry existence. As Leogrande outlined, Castro’s call for removing the embargo was but a foreshadow to the more impressive reforms which were preparing to be unleashed. After Fidel Castro stepped aside from power and his brother Raúl looked to cast his own mold, Raúl Castro would formulate reforms which would start the island nation down a path of concerted change. Exalted as the great moderator, Raúl’s reforms had increased personal freedoms, such as ability to purchase mobile phones and computers. In 2011, he legalized the sale of automobiles and real estate, with certain restrictions not divulged. And in 2013, the ultimate removal of the *tarjeta blanca* (white card), which was a mandated permission required before Cubans were allowed to travel abroad.

While his goal for 2018 was to have 50 percent of Cuba's GDP in private hands, as revealed by Sweig and Bustamante, it seemed the greater reforms were still to be publicized. As the timetable in Figure 1.1 below displayed, Raúl Castro's years in power seemed to be preparing Cuba for a greater, brighter, and more accepting future. Surprisingly to some, most of the reforms outlined in this thesis, took place well before the discussions with the U.S. for reestablishing diplomatic ties ensued. Even though some further significant reforms may be pending with the new regime, Raúl Castro has made concerted efforts to begin the beneficial process for his country.

Figure 1.1 **Raúl Castro's power timetable**



(SOURCE: Digital Journal, 2016)

Over and above the individual influences, there remained the influences levied by non-governmental organizations. The most notable being the Cuban-American population within the borders of the U.S. This strong bonded community originally maintained rock solid against any semblance of U.S. cooperation toward the Cuban

government. Many stood in support of the Brothers to the Rescue organization, which provided overwatch in the caribbean for fleeing Cubans, during the 80s and 90s. Even as droves of Cuban-Americans were united in 1996, when Fidel Castro openly admitted to shooting down a non-aggressive cessna providing overwatch for fleeing Cubans from the island (Hermanos 2002), the cold reality of time has created a thawed effect toward those harsh sentiments. As cited in the 2016 Florida International University study (refer to Appendix A for further details.) of Cuban-Americans living in Miami and their views of U.S. policies toward Cuba, 64% supported the new policies the U.S. government had established in regard to Cuba (cited in Lopez and Krogstad 2014).

The individual influences garnered toward the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba remained minuscule in comparison to nation-state and international influences, yet some of the most important information regarding the effects from former President Obama and current Cuban President Raúl Castro were elucidated in great revelations. Moreover, with the advancement of the process to normalize diplomatic relations again, whether it be for establishment of a legacy or other more altruistic ends, both President Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro made a historical mark on this noteworthy event. Additionally, during the last 20 years, Jorge Mas Canosa, with CANF, and Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, unearthed the true impact individuals and their dedications were able to generate.

NATION-STATE INFLUENCES

As a level of analysis, this research sought to follow the pattern established with the individual influences on normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. Dealing next with the nation-state influences, this thesis shall provide the foundational aspects to define how a nation-state is categorized as one of the levels of analysis. Adhering to the guidance laid out in *Essentials of International Relations*, the nation-state within the confines of this research abide by the definition provided there within. Categorically, the researched nation-states met the following objective terms:

1. Must have a territorial base, a geographically defined boundary.
 2. Within its borders, a stable population must reside.
 3. There should be a government to which this population owes allegiance.
 4. Has to be recognized diplomatically by other states.
- (Mingst 2008, pg. 99)

Additionally, the utmost clarity for defining the nation-state was followed. In principle, our nation-states were in line with the premise, “the foundation for national self-determination [and] the idea that peoples sharing nationhood have a right to determine how and under what conditions they should live” (Mingst 2008, pg. 101).

As mentioned, the most abundant and relevant topic related to the nation-state influences on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. This next portion will divide the nation-state influences into the three broader issues, which carried the breadth of the information found in the current literature. The issues to be discussed within the nation-state influences are the U.S. embargo, the reforms of Cuban President Raúl Castro, and the establishment of democratically elected governments in Latin

America. With so much information surrounding the three issues within this level of analysis, this thesis focuses on the most relevant information.

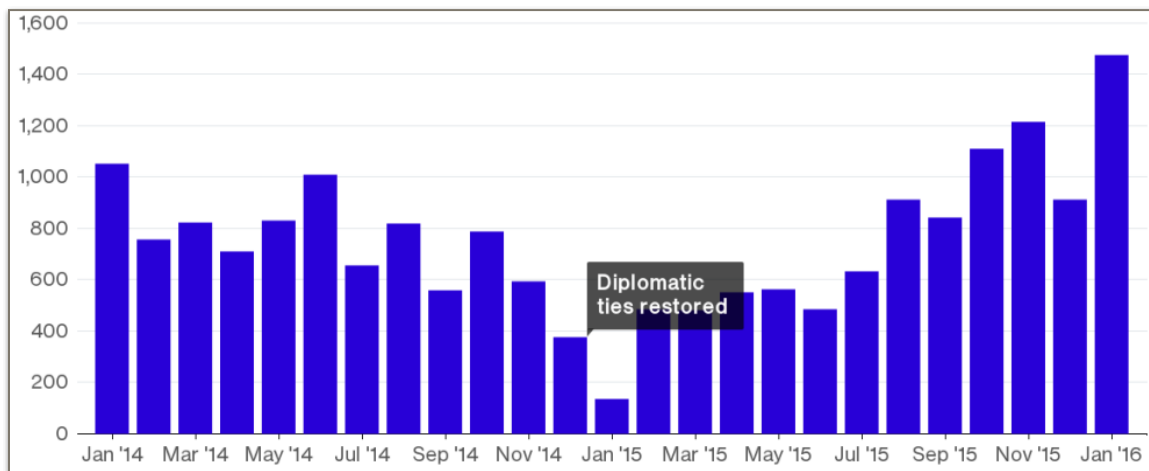
The most prevalent issue, when discussing how the U.S. and Cuba moved forward with renewed diplomatic relations, surrounded the area of the U.S. embargo and how both the U.S. and Cuba, as well as other nation-states, addressed that issue. When it comes to the U.S and Cuba, both were concerned with assuring they were able to secure national sovereignty, for themselves respectfully and for their neighboring countries, which looked to each of them to be pivotal leaders in the region. While the U.S. had maintained a powerful hegemony on the entire planet for the greater part of the Cuban revolution, which spanned back to the late 1950s, in the eyes of the western hemisphere, also known as the Americas, there was a growing realization that both nations needed to interact with one another if the region was to flourish as a whole. While the U.S. maintained its assertion that the embargo would stay in place until Cuba repaid its debt to U.S. businesses, which were nationalized by Fidel Castro in the early 1960s. The Cuban government laid claim to the compensation the U.S. owed the island-nation for the “effects of the embargo” (Ritter and Kirk, 1995).

Both nations have softened their diatribes about compensation, but the Cuban government held firm on another point of contention, the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992. And up until 2015, this act was a major hurdle in allowing the U.S. and Cuba to re-mend old wounds. Since the Cuban Democracy Act originally stated, “The President should encourage countries that conduct trade with Cuba to restrict their trade and credit relations with Cuba in a manner consistent with this Act” (Ritter and Kirk, 1995), the

tensions between the two nations seemed to be unrepairable. With the passing of the Free Trade with Cuba Act of 2015, however, the tensions were being relieved and more of an opening was created for normalization to move forward. Not only had the political speeches of President Obama and President Raúl Castro of 17 December 2014 provided a foundation, but the actions of the U.S. were moving the process into view of “uplifting the Cuban people.”

As the Free Trade with Cuba Act appeared to be another step toward the complete removal of the U.S. embargo, the Cuban government was undertaking some of its own reforms; to show the U.S. and the rest of the free world it too was looking to play an active role in the improvement of relations. Of the many reforms which Zawatsky and Gemma reveal in their article, the most pivotal within the context of influencing nation-state relations with the U.S. were “release of political prisoners, decreased suppression of public protests, and a more decentralized government” (Zawatsky and Gemma, 2015). And while also professing for increased internet and reconciliation of broken ties, the largest obstacle seemed to be whether the Cuban government would uphold the changes they were declaring. As displayed in Figure 2.1 below, although the release of political prisoners may have taken place initially with the restoration of diplomatic ties, the increase in arbitrary detentions may place decreased momentum to the normalization process, especially with the unknown agenda toward Cuba of the current U.S. administration.

As exchanges of views continued in regard to where the eventual embargo debate would equilibrate, there were a number of nation-states whose very interaction with Cuba

Figure 2.1 **Arbitrary detentions in Cuba**

(SOURCE: Capitol Hill Cubans, 2016)

created a scurry for the U.S. to take action. As Ellis remarked, “in the post Cold War-era, both China and Russia have provided the Cuban government with some support” (Ellis 2014). While the U.S. wanted to continue to advocate for democracy in the region, the last thing they would want to happen would be for the currently wavering communist Cuban regime to receive further support from a non-western hemisphere partner. Such support could lead to additional friction between the two neighboring nations and could create a strain on U.S.-China and U.S. Russia relations. Ellis continued to remark, “Cuba [could] permit Russia to reopen the Cold War-era signals intelligence collection facility near the Cuban town of Lourdes” (Ellis 2014). While the Cold War had been over for some nearly 30 years, such a concession for the Russian government would move the U.S. to take action.

China and Russia were not the only two adversaries of the U.S. to stir the diplomacy discussions between the U.S. and Cuba. Ellis added, “the United States provides the dying Cuban leadership with a path to declare victory and preserve the legacy of the revolution” (Ellis 2014). Especially, with all the turmoil which took place

with Venezuela, Cuba's longstanding "brother-in-arms." The Venezuelan government remained ultra-influential to the Cuban government throughout the span of the embargo. The decaying Venezuelan economy provided the U.S. an entryway to create discussion for diplomacy and reiterate the importance of mutual support in the Caribbean region. Both the Castro's, previously Fidel and currently Raúl, understood the issues which were arising in the wake of Venezuela's downfall. President Obama's administration seized the opportunity to capitalize.

While President Obama's administration seemed poised to further the normalization of relations, removal of the embargo may have a long journey, if the Cuban government's purported changes are viewed as capricious and detrimental to human rights. As had been the issue throughout much of Latin America during the "Pink Tide," the U.S. had shown itself to play hardball with neighboring countries who did not allow for democracy. As Zawatsky and Gemma also point out, the U.S, Cuba and some other Latin American nations have had "abnormal diplomatic relations" due to being on opposing sides of democratic viewpoints. Most distinctly, when troubles arose in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Venezuela and they displayed doubts of their governments' future, the U.S. pressed these nations to stand behind the U.S. led interdiction for Cuba to "abandon its communistic institutions." Venezuela was one of the nations which stood most firmly by Cuba. Maintaining its oil subsidies to Cuba (Rodiles 2013), Venezuela looked to show the U.S. the importance of each nation maintaining its own national sovereignty and not being pressured into undesired change.

In expanding further the nation-state influences, the importance of securing one's own national sovereignty led the U.S. and Cuba to make concessions toward the normalization process. As mentioned earlier, the U.S. and Cuba have been involved in poultry trade since 2001. Also, Cuba placed a goal assuring the Cuban GDP would be 50 percent in private hands within five years (Sweig and Bustamante 2013, pg. 103). The Cuban government also wanted to push forward cuts of imports, reducing public expenditures, and increasing key strategic investments with international partners. Notable partners included Canada and the Netherlands, both of whom remained earnest economic and strategic investment partners for as long as the embargo had been in place.

Following analysis of the issues of the U.S. embargo, President Raúl Castro's reforms, and the establishment of democratically elected governments in Latin America which in-turn created some momentous nation-state influences on the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba, there is still much work to occur. Although the initial difficult portion of at least coming to the negotiation table transpired and the signs initially looked positive for the U.S. and Cuba to return to full diplomatic relations, there were still many unanswered questions of which direction the new U.S. administration would follow. Not to diminish, the impending change of Cuba's leadership in 2018, after current President Raúl Castro prepares to take his leave from power. This obviously encourages future studies to assess the future fervor of where the U.S and Cuba want to steer the pages of history.

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM INFLUENCES

During extrapolation on the international system, the research stayed connected to Mingst's description. As such, "a system is an assemblage of units, objects, or parts united by some form of regular interaction" (Mingst 2008, pg. 81). The international system here within went "with the supposition that people act in regularized ways and that their patterns of interaction with each other are largely habitual" (Mingst 2008, pg. 82). More importantly, this thesis is on the basis of the notion that international systems were where "various actors communicate, they consent to common rules and institutions, and recognize common interests" (Mingst 2008, pg. 82). The establishment of international system's criteria allowed for unfettered discourse on the matter at hand.

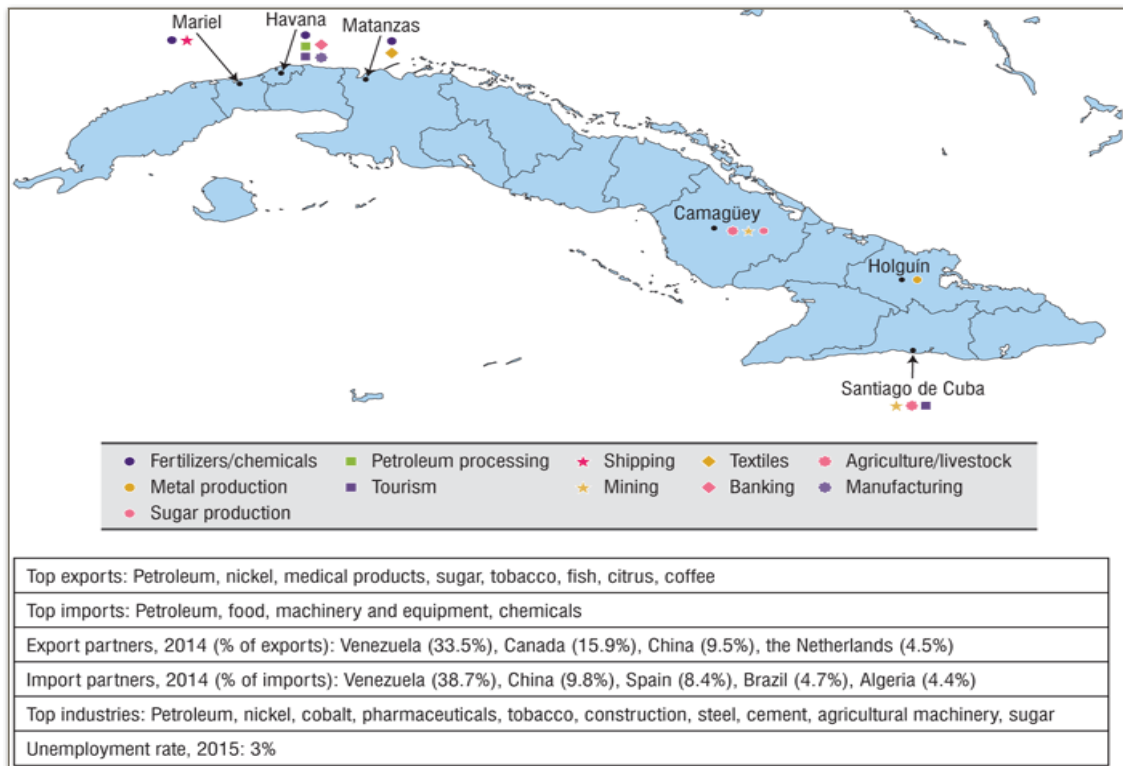
Looking back, the nation-state influences created a muddled outlook on where diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba may lead, however, the international systems of the world fabricated influences which held strong bonds and carried even stronger weight in the international community. The international systems displayed undaunted focus and drive to produce regional as well as worldwide synergy. The influences outlined by the international systems led a grand directive on the issues of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, Raúl Castro's economic and political reforms, and the establishment of democratically elected governments throughout Latin America. Even though the literature was a bit more scant about international system influences on the normalization process between the U.S. and Cuba, the nucleus depicted a tighter wound central core, especially on the issue of the embargo.

On the issue of the U.S. embargo of Cuba, there were extensive lists of organization which felt the “failure of hostility by the U.S. embargo against Cuba” created a void in the Caribbean region and stood as the sole hinderance to these two nations, along with their allies, in bringing much needed stability to the entire Americas. Organizations such as Amnesty International, the United Nations, the Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Organization of American States stipulated the embargo is an “affront to Cuba’s national sovereignty” (Bukzspan, 2010). Albeit having support for national sovereignty from these international organizations aided Cuba in maintaining long-standing business matters involved in trade and tourism with Canada, Mexico, and the Netherlands, along with more recent trading partners to include Venezuela, China, Spain, Brazil, and even the U.S. (refer to Appendix B for more information about U.S.-Cuba interactions.)

The Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) produced the gravest obstruction to U.S. growth in the geopolitical Caribbean region. Mostly pioneered by Venezuelan influences, these international systems stood as a direct affront to U.S. interests in the region and dissuading favor with the Cuban government. As Ellis disseminated, these systems were geared to “further strategic benefit of undercutting the arguments of the U.S. and [bonded] regimes for building up alternative organizations that excluded the U.S.” (Ellis 2014). As the “policy window” became available with the troubles of Venezuela and the dissipation of the “Pink Tide,” the U.S.

was provided an opportunity to build its own bond with the Caribbean nation and further strengthen diplomatic normalization process with Cuba.

Figure 3.1 **Cuban resources 2014/2015**



(SOURCE: Business Researcher, 2015)

As illuminated in Figure 3.1, the business partners which had assisted Cuba in staying somewhat afloat, did so in rebellion to the U.S. embargo and displaying a method for the U.S. itself to join in the reunification of a former ally and closest Caribbean neighbor. Although these nations supported the revolutions agenda and gave solvency to the regime, as Totten revealed “the communist system inflicts far more damage [than the U.S. embargo]” (Totten, 2014). And while the U.S. embargo remained the largest obstacle for normalization of relations even on the international scale, the international systems provided ever mounting pressure for new Cuban President Raúl Castro to exert impact in the manner of reforms.

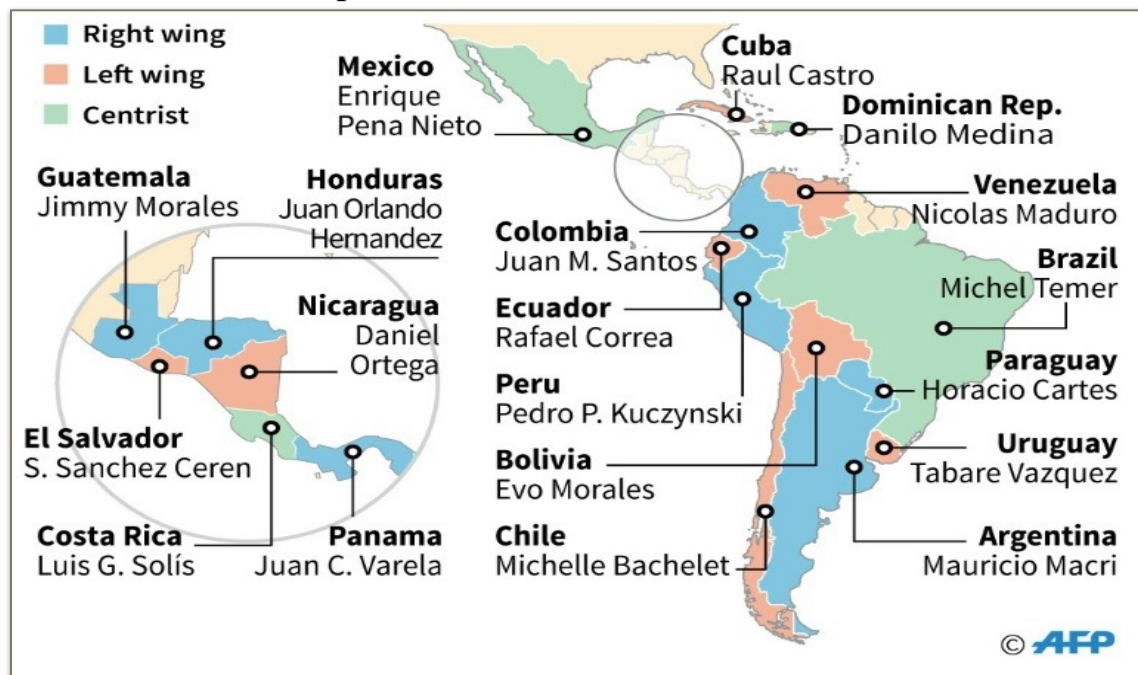
While Raúl Castro was considering new reforms, the advent of the Pink Tide realignment must have played a role in his decision to pursue discussions with the U.S. for normalizing diplomatic relations. As Perez noted, “trade relations with Latin America, western Europe, Asia, and Canada [may have] provided a framework for economic and political support” (Perez, 2016). Yet, Cuba was failing in the basic government tenet, support for and from its people. As the Cuban people were still dealing with rationed food supplies and below standard medical facilities, Raúl Castro must have been feeling the weight of attempting to remain economically and politically isolated. A venture with regaining diplomacy with the U.S. must have seemed a powerful signal for his international brethren.

With all the increased support the international systems were attempting to provide to the island-nation, Raúl Castro must have had focus on assuring his revolution could begin to align with the UN covenant for Civil and Political Rights in line with the Rodiles’ campaign “For Another Cuba.” As more outspoken systems called for improvements on human rights and treatment of dissidents, the Cuban regime was weighing whether the revolution was headed into a different direction or if the Cuban model could survive with sufficient investments from international partners. The international community was pressuring both the U.S. and Cuban governments to find solutions, for as mentioned earlier, Cuba remained the only communist institution in the western hemisphere.

The cost of attempting to change from a revolutionary mindset to a collaborative one, had ostensibly manifested itself into a “never say die” mentality, which was arduous

to reshape. Yet, as Castro witnessed his stronghold of support, which was the Pink Tide, dissolve politically and economically, the founding of new democratic nations in Latin America grasp ahold of the regimes vaulted belief and shook disruptively. Since Cuba was attempting some new campaigns with the change in regime leadership, the “public-private hybrid” system was revealed as a major shortcoming for the island-nation. Although more liberties now existed, such as property ownership, rights to self-employment, and free travel abroad, the revolution’s direction was veering very waywardly opposite from its supportive assemblage within the Latin American Pink Tide. The steadfastness to adhere to the original revolutionary moment, in particular, posed the most friction to the normalization of relations between the U.S and Cuba.

Figure 3.2 **Political map of Latin America**



(SOURCE: Gobari Report, 2016)

As Figure 3.2 illustrated, as of 2016, all of Cuba’s valued relationships in Latin America had given up on extreme-leftist ideologies and renewed their countries’ determinations to work on building democratic endeavors, while attempting to maintain

some semblance of socialistic institutions. All Cuban allies, notably Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, have either become centrist or now follow right-wing ideologies, all except Venezuela. Based on the current economic issues plaguing the close Cuban political and economic ally, it remains to be seen how much longer Venezuela can adhere to their steadfast determination to maintain radical leftist ideologies alive. The Venezuelan situation most definitely presents itself for an interesting follow-up study to examine their resultant future, especially if the normalization of relations for the U.S. and Cuba continue to positively move forward.

In revisiting the international system influences on the normalization process between the U.S. and Cuba, the research observed the variety of influences which took place in both nations. While the U.S. embargo stood as the most disruptive force in the diplomacy process, there were reforms incidents and other Latin American nation related incidents which provided overwhelming impact. The pressure which the international systems exuded over the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba appeared to evoke a large amount of importance. The process of normalizing relations displayed the incredulous demeanor most had taken in regards to that process moving forward. What remains to be seen is the verifiable evidence of the outcomes which the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba may create on the world stage.

CONCLUSION

Looking back as an overview, this research was conducted to ascertain the critical actors and factors which played in an influential capacity or are playing in an influential capacity in the normalization process between the U.S. and Cuba. At the onset this thesis set out to study three levels of analysis in order to determine which, if any or all, were contributory or hinderances in the process of reinstating diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Cuba. To recap, the three levels of analysis put forth in this study were individual, nation-state, and international systems of influence. While analyzing and probing the three levels, each was examined in relations to the foremost issues which were deemed to be playing a critical role in conjunction with the normalization process. These three issues were surrounding the policy of hostility of the U.S. embargo, the reforms of new Cuban President Raúl Castro, and the establishment of democratically elected governments in Latin America. Insofar as this study would gleam, the three critical issues were closely related to the amount of influence they imparted upon the three levels of analysis. The research findings were as follows.

In determining the individual actors whom influenced or are influencing the normalization process between the U.S. and Cuba, this study was able to reveal a number of key individuals. Most notably, former U.S. President Obama and current Cuban President Raúl Castro were the two most influential individuals, within government, whom created a moment to maneuver through the diplomacy “policy window” to allow progress of relationship building. In the face of bullish opposition, these two very

influential individuals went against the established grain to provide diplomacy, between these two neighboring countries, a fighting chance.

While both had their independent stances of how to handle the embargo, which at times put them at odds, they were still able to find commonality of interest for their respective nations. In a further example of finding commonality, Presidents Obama and Raúl Castro found an alignment in their agreement with reforms taking place in Cuba. Raúl Castro's reforms for lifting Cuba's travel ban, liberalizing the economy, and allowing increases in the area of self-employment were catalysts to forming the initial stages of a bond between President Obama's and Raúl Castro's ideologies. Although positive interactions were taking place between President Obama and Raúl Castro, the same could not be said for the influences of others, to include the Cuban-American lobby led by Jorge Mas Canosa.

Since the embargo had been in place and for as long as they had a voice, the Cuban-American lobby led by Jorge Mas Canosa had been fighting to assure the U.S. government would not provide the Cuban government with any undue concessions. Mr. Mas Canosa, however influential during the initial phases of the embargo and tensions of relations with the U.S. and Cuba, had not been able to maintain the same standing of influence within the community. The polls revealed the growing sentiment of the population to reestablish relations between the two countries. In regards to Raúl Castro's reforms, Mr. Mas Canosa remained staunch on his belief that it was essential to "tighten sanctions against Havana" (Leogrande 2015, pg. 478). The research revealed examples of positive and negative influences from individuals toward the normalization of relations

process between the U.S. and Cuba, however, no examples were able to be attained in respect to the Cuban population.

While the research was able to unearth the attempt of Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo to influence the diplomatic process from the island-nation, there was no available information as to whether, or to what extent, he was successful. Moreover, the Felter article of 1,200 respondents was the only information able to be ascertained in regard to where the Cuban citizenry stood on the matter of diplomacy. The tangible information discoverable in regard to Felter's assertion appeared to lack validity due to the overarching pressure encroached by the Cuban government against the island-nation's citizenry.

In weighing the analysis of the available information in regard to H_{1-0} : Individual influence produces no effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, this thesis found it failed to reject the null hypothesis on this matter. Lack of substantive information produced an inability by the research to make a claim as to whether the individual influence did or did not contribute to the normalization of relations process between the U.S. and Cuba. It should be noted, however, in a more contemporaneous moment, current President Trump appeared to be prepared to commit to a prior campaign promise, which would tighten and possibly reverse the effects of the normalization process.

Next, the research analyzed the second level of analysis, the nation-state influences. Considering the multitude of information available surrounding nation-state influences on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, the daunting task

of sifting through such a large array in pertinent information provided for compelling results. At the apex of influence lie those espoused from the U.S. and Cuba inherently. The amount on interest both of these countries held and are holding in regard to rebuilding diplomatic ties was vast and concerted. While some in the U.S. still hold ill-will toward the island-nation due to past indiscretions against U.S. owned businesses, there does not remain sufficient animosity to withhold negative tidings between the two countries. Although the embargo still remained a point of contention, it now seemed more of a joint debate on how to remove this regulatory “wall,” in order to allow more cultural and economic relations between the American people and the Cuban people.

As nation-state influences related Raúl Castro’s reforms, the involvement of a number of countries appeared to place the U.S. on notice that diplomatic relations with Cuba were to be of utmost importance. Since Raúl Castro’s reforms were driving Cuba toward improvement of more privately held GDP, cuts on imports and public expenditures, and increasing economic and strategic investment partners, the nation-state players were placing their bids to be the instrumental party or parties. In this case, Canada, China, the Netherlands, and even Russia were proposing being aligned with Cuba for the betterment of those party’s involved. The research displayed these other countries were playing a critical role in galvanizing the U.S. in their own region of the western hemisphere.

Likewise, the changing toward democratically elected governments in Latin America moved the U.S. to address whether it wanted to be overcome in its own backyard by other neighboring countries. As these left-wing governments were moving

toward centrist ideologies, their goals of economic advancement alerted the U.S. of the occurring shift in regional power, if the U.S. were to maintain its stance on Cuba. Argentina, Brazil, and even Venezuela were attempting to extract the economic and strategic benefits of the U.S.-Cuba situation. Therefore, in regard to H₂₋₀: Nation-state influence produces no effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, this thesis found it could reject the null hypothesis on this matter. Whereas some countries were intervening on the behalf of the Cuban population, others were intervening as an affront against the U.S. hegemony and attempting to curtail the U.S. influence on the planet.

In the final level of analysis, this thesis analyzed the international system influences on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. In analyzing the available literature and the corresponding effects which each issue displayed toward international system influence, a vast capacity was extracted. All of the international systems displayed countervailing positions regarding the issues addressing the U.S.-Cuba relationship. Amnesty International, the United Nations, and the Council on Foreign Affairs, to name a few, approached the issue of the U.S. embargo as one of dire circumstances. While they all stood firm in the advocacy for better human rights in Cuba, they also stood pat in regard that the U.S. embargo remained an affront to Cuba's national sovereignty and should be removed immediately, even though in Totten's estimation, as mentioned earlier, "the communist system inflicts far more damage [than the U.S. embargo]" (Totten, 2014).

While the embargo remained the largest point of contention throughout this study, Raúl Castro's reforms presented another compelling issue working within the international system influences. As Sweig and Bustamante revealed, the investment from international partners, and from the disclosure of Perez, elimination of economic isolation, the U.S. had to respond to the ever-growing possibility of the need for re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba. If not simply for geopolitical measures, then to display to the international organizations the U.S.'s willingness to be more inclusive of all polities. The very gesture of the U.S. to emit more inclusive policies, created major effects, in conjunction with the U.N. covenants, for those who campaigned "For Another Cuba."

Although the initiation of a new Cuba appeared to be gaining momentum, international systems such as the Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) sowed an undermining cause. They may have been successful in their ambitions were it not for the dismantling of the Pink Tide. As more democratically elected governments were established in Latin America, it provided the U.S. its own recourse to encourage Cuba to the negotiating table. Hence, based on the finding of this thesis toward H_{3-0} : International influence produces no effect on the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, there was overwhelming position to reject the null hypothesis. The findings within divulged the importance of outside actors, especially substantial and well organized, to assert influence on a process between two independent sovereignties.

Upon completion of this research, this thesis enabled the analysis to find the boundless and comprehensive influences which were regarded as contributory factors in the normalization of relations process between the United States of America and the island-nation of Cuba. On final analysis, both the nation-state influences and international system influences revealed many aspects of positive influence on the normalization process, regardless of whether the intervening actors intentions were for or against normalization. Whereas the individual influences were unclear whether they created a positive, negative, or had no effect on the process. Although some individual influences showed positive intentions, and other individual influence showed negative intentions, the overarching results revealed to be underwhelming. That being said, with a movement to undermine the exploits of former President Obama, current President Trump's possible decision to reverse some, if not all, of President Obama's diplomatic interventions with Cuba, may reveal President Obama's actions to be more beneficial and influential than originally analyzed.

In closing, some influences played a more positive role, attempting to anastomosis the relations of the U.S. and Cuba back to a diplomatic state. Yet, other influences were resolved in assuring the U.S.-Cuba relationship would remain bifurcated. Those against a U.S.-Cuba reconciliation appeared to be overabundantly standing on the wrong side of the discussion. Only time will show the further movement of the diplomacy efforts, however, especially with changes occurring in both country's leadership. It took over 50 years to arrive at this point, remains to be seen how much longer the strain can endure.

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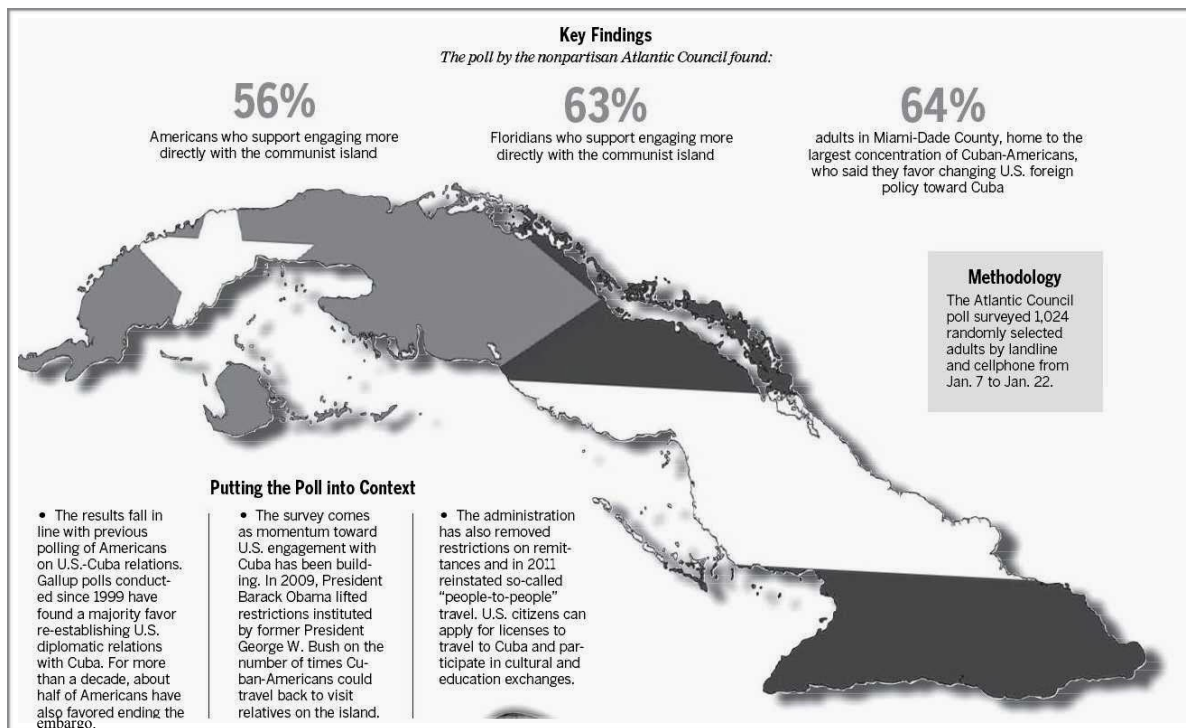
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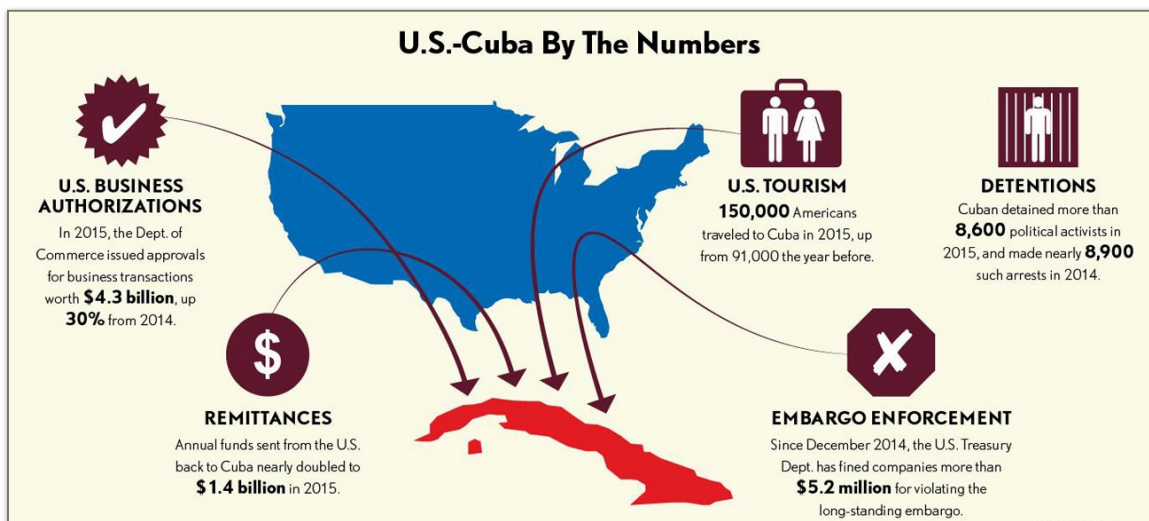
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Appendix

Figure A.1 **Cuba Embargo poll facts**



(SOURCE: Atlantic Council, 2014)

Figure A.2 **U.S./Cuba infographic**

(SOURCE: Council on Foreign Affairs, 2017)