

PMESII-PT OVERVIEW OF CUBA
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The United States trade embargo on Cuba and the policy of isolation is a remnant of the Cold War, having almost no effect on the Cuban government over the last 50 years. The recent diplomatic negotiations between the Obama administration and the Cuban government portray the possibility of a policy shift toward a renewed relationship. Ending the embargo would benefit both the United States and Cuba economically and has the potential to bring democracy to Cuba. This paper will provide analysis of the embargo through the operational variables of PMESII-PT as well as the strategy outlined in the 2015 National Security Strategy (NSS).

The operational variable of time is important when trying to understand the policy of the United States on Cuba for the last 50 years. Following Fidel Castro's overthrowing of US backed President Fulgencio Batista in 1959, the new Cuban government established the first Communist government in the Western hemisphere, sought close relations with The Soviet Union, and seized American property in Cuba. President Eisenhower responded signing a partial embargo and cutting off diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1960.¹ In 1961 President Kennedy approved a plan to train and arm Cuban exiles in an attempt to overthrow the government but the "Bay of Pigs" invasion failed and drove the Cubans further into Soviet arms. On February 3, 1962, President Kennedy signed Proclamation 3447 which blocked all trade between the U.S. and Cuba.² The last major event was the Cuban missile crisis; in which The Soviet Union built nuclear missile sites in Cuba, causing a diplomatic standoff between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Following the events of the early 1960s diplomatic and economic isolation became the policy toward Cuba.³ The recent meeting between President Obama and Raul Castro was the first major meeting between the two countries in more than 50 years and portrays renewed efforts in changing relations. It also shows President Obama's desire to promote a fully democratic hemisphere and advance the new opening to Cuba as outlined in the NSS.⁴

Damaging and disrupting the Cuban economy was the desired goal when the embargo was first put into place. Cuban officials have stated that with inflation the embargo has cost the Cuban government more than one trillion dollars in losses.⁵ The Cuban economy managed to thrive throughout the Cold War but after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 the Cuban economy lost \$4-6 billion in subsidies annually and even now the Cuban standard of living is lower than before the Soviet collapse.⁶ The Cuban economy is so stagnant that American remittances to Cuba in 2012 are estimated to be around \$5 billion which outperformed its four major economic sectors; tourism, nickel, pharmaceutical, and sugar exports.⁷ Cuba is not the only one to suffer though, American losses through the embargo average around \$1.2 billion annually and ending the embargo could create as many as 6,000 jobs in the U.S. and development in Cuba could be profitable as well with Cuba's large nickel and oil deposits.⁸ By ending travel restrictions the U.S. could also fuel private sector growth through tourism and Cuba's tourism industry could flourish once again. Ending the embargo would open markets for U.S. goods and services and advance a trade agenda to create American jobs and shared prosperity which is in line with the NSS.⁹

The politics of Cuba are extremely important as Cuba has the only communist government in the Western Hemisphere. According to the Cuban constitution, Cuba is an independent socialist republic that is controlled by the Cuban Communist Party of which Fidel and Raul Castro have been the head of since the revolution.¹⁰ Being a socialist government around 75 percent of the labor force is employed by the government and maintains strict control over the economy and the average Cuban citizen.¹¹ In the past the embargo has been used as a political tool by the Cuban government to maintain control over the country. The embargo has been blamed for economic difficulties when in reality it has been the failed policies of the

communist government.¹² By ending the embargo the U.S. could effectively remove the veil and show the Cuban people that it is not the fault of the United States for the poor economic condition of the country. Renewing trade between the U.S. and Cuba could plant the seed of democracy into Cuban citizens. Trade not only increases the flow of goods and ideas but also, development in Cuba would create a large middle class which is the backbone of democracy.¹³ With Raul Castro not seeking reelection in 2018 and by ending the embargo, it is possible to influence the Cuban people through open trade and tourism and promote the ability of the Cuban people to determine their future freely as stated in the NSS.¹⁴

Information in Cuba is extremely limited and the Cuban Government tells the people what it wants them to hear. Cuba also has some of the most restrictive laws on free speech in Latin America; the Cuban constitution allows free speech only if they “conform to the aims of a socialist society.”¹⁵ The government also controls all broadcast media, until 2009 private citizens were not authorized to own computers or access the internet without government authorization.¹⁶ The Cuban government has a tight grip on information in the country because they are trying to maintain control over their citizens. Cuban citizens have to rely on pirate radio stations in the U.S. for outside information. By ending the embargo and opening up Cuba for tourism and business it will become increasingly difficult for the Cuban government to maintain a tight control on all of information that flows in and out of the country. New ideas and thoughts will be brought to the country on a daily basis, and with the increased travel it would be possible for the U.S. to influence and change another facet of Cuba for the better. With more access to information Cuban citizens will be able to make more informed decisions which will be especially important for the next election; giving the U.S. another opportunity to promote democracy in Cuba.

An aspect of Cuba that has suffered the most from the embargo is the infrastructure of the island. In 1959 Cuba was one of the most advanced countries in Latin America, but almost none of the infrastructure has been updated or maintained since the revolution. Many of the roads were paved before 1959 and sewerage systems built by American companies before the revolution could not receive replacement parts.¹⁷ The issue of infrastructure creates a unique opportunity for the United States. If the embargo is lifted the United States would be able to assist in the development and maintenance of Cuban infrastructure as well as help grow it. The infrastructure could be used as a tool to continue to thaw relations between the two countries, provide an opportunity for the United States to project influence into the country, and bolster economic growth and development as outlined in the NSS. By assisting in the development of the country it would be possible to influence public opinion, promote democracy, create business opportunities for U.S. companies, and increase the quality of life for Cubans.

The socialist aspect of the Cuban government has had some benefits for the Cuban people. With a population of more than 11 million, Cuba maintains a 99.8 percent literacy rate and a 3.1 percent unemployment rate, with education being virtually free.¹⁸ Not everyone benefits though as many in rural areas suffer from poverty with almost no access to physical commodities. Many farmers struggle and numerous women rely on prostitution to make a living.¹⁹ The embargo has also caused problems in the past with social programs trying to assist the Cuban people. An example of this was in January 2011, when the U.S. government seized more than \$4.2 million from the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria because they were going to assist Cuba.²⁰ If the U.S. is going to follow the strategy defined in the NSS by eliminating extreme poverty and promoting sustainable development then the government needs to end the embargo and put a stop to inhibiting the social development of Cuba.

The physical environment of Cuba is important as how it relates to U.S. support during natural disasters. The terrain of Cuba is mostly flat with hills and mountains to the south east. The east coast is subjected to hurricanes from August through November and averages a major hurricane every other year.²¹ In the past the embargo has gotten in the way of providing assistance to Cuba during natural disasters. This is especially evident in 2001 during Hurricane Michelle, when the U.S. became part of a reluctant deal to sell food to Cuba for humanitarian reasons after the hurricane. The United States required the Cuban government to pay cash up front and in that year became Cuba's number one food supplier.²² If the embargo ended, the United States would never have to consider sending aid to Cuba after a natural disaster. The U.S. would be able to provide assistance immediately and would not require restrictions such as cash up front. By ending the embargo and providing assistance during natural disasters free of restrictions, the U.S. would see Cuba as a partner and promote a prosperous, secure, and democratic Western Hemisphere.

The last operational variable is the military. During the Cold War the Cuban Military might have been formidable against a U.S. invasion of the island. But since the Soviet Union's collapse the Cuban Military has suffered from severe economic and logistical support and a lack of replacement parts has severely hindered operational readiness.²³ In fact a report by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency in 1998 stated that Cuba's military is defensive in nature and poses no threat to the United States or any other country in the region.²⁴ If the embargo was ended and relations between the United States and Cuba were normalized, the Cuban government would have no need to continue to spend on its military, since its biggest rival in the region would now be its economic partner. The Cuban government would be able to put the money towards a better use such as improving the infrastructure or improve other economic sectors to further

promote trade and eventually bring more prosperity. By ending the embargo the U.S. would be able to end the idea of hostilities for Cuba and promote a prosperous, secure and eventually democratic Western Hemisphere.

When considering all of the operational variables of PMESII-PT and the NSS it is easy to understand why ending the embargo would benefit the United States as well as Cuba. Over the last 50 years the embargo has failed to stop the Cuban government and has merely made the average Cuban Citizen suffer. It is time to put the past behind the U.S. and Cuba and begin a renewed relationship. Through this renewed relationship I believe that the U.S. will have more influence in the Cuban government and economy than 50 years of isolation ever had. It will also benefit the U.S. economy by creating jobs and increasing trade. Through this increased trade ideas would also be traded and would hopefully lead toward democracy. It is time to end this decade's old policy and bring Cuba into the 21st century by promoting a prosperous, secure, and democratic Western Hemisphere while promoting the ability of the Cuban people to determine their future.

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- ⁵ Portia Siegelbaum. "Cuba: US Embargo Causes \$1 trillion in losses," Last modified September 14, 2011, Accessed April 14, 2015, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/cuba-us-embargo-causes-1-trillion-in-losses/>.
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