

# The Cuban Embargo, 1960 - 2015

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá kubánské embargo a analyzuje jeho následky jak pro Kubu, tak i pro Spojené státy americké. Práce dokazuje, že by embargo mělo být zrušeno, protože nespĺnilo své cíle. Na začátku líčí historický vztah mezi oběma zeměmi a stanovuje příčiny embargo. Druhá část je zaměřena na spojení Kuby a Sovětského svazu po ztrátě podpory ze strany Spojených států, pád Sovětského svazu v roce 1991 a situaci na Kubě v devadesátých letech. Následně popisuje legislativní aspekt sankcí, přijaté zákony, které měnili charakter a rozsah jak obchodního, tak cestovního embargo. Jsou zde nastíněny i události, které vedly ke zlepšení diplomatických vztahů. Práce předkládá názory politiků i široké veřejnosti a věnuje se také situaci lidských práv na Kubě, což je opakovaně uváděno jako důvod pro zachování embargo.

Klíčová slova:

Kuba, Spojené státy, Sovětský svaz, obchodní embargo, politika, ekonomika, studená válka, lidská práva, Barack Obama, Fidel Castro, Plattův dodatek

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis examines the Cuban trade embargo and analyses its consequences for Cuba and the United States. The thesis proves that the embargo should be lifted because it has not fulfilled its objectives. Firstly, it details the historical relationship between both countries and determines the causes of the embargo. The second part is focused on the Cuba's alliance with the Soviet Union after the loss of the U.S support, the Soviet's Union fall in 1991 and the situation for Cuba during the 1990s. It then describes the legislative side of the embargo, detailing the laws behind the sanctions which establish the trade and travel barriers. The events leading to the easing of diplomatic relations are given. The thesis also presents the opinions of politicians and the public on the issue of the embargo, and it provides an overview of human rights in Cuba, which is repeatedly mentioned as justification for maintaining the embargo.

Keywords:

Cuba, the United States, the Soviet Union, trade embargo, politics, economy, cold war, human rights, Barack Obama, Fidel Castro, Platt Amendment

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## INTRODUCTION

Starting in 1648, empire slowly gave way to nation-state. With nineteenth-century Romanticism came the idea that unique cultural identities should be embraced and preserved. Cuba was developmentally-delayed in both respects. A Spanish colony for over four centuries, Cuba was liberated by the United States in 1898, only to become an American puppet state. It was not until Fidel Castro's successful revolution in 1959 that Cubans finally gained enough distance from the United States that they truly felt independent, and proud. In response to Cuba's nationalization of American property and strengthening ties with the Soviet Union, the United States declared an embargo against the island nation in 1960, cutting the nation off from the socioeconomic support that it had depended on for over six decades. Cuba then adopted communism and became a staunch ally of the Soviet Union, which supported the island both economically and militarily. When the Soviet Union fell in 1990, aid stopped, and Cuba had no choice but to fend for itself. Reforms followed, but without the support of the Soviet Union, the U.S. embargo really began to hurt the island nation. The United States took a hard line towards Cuba for as long as Fidel Castro was in power, but when illness forced Fidel to hand over power to his brother Raul in 2008, and Raul started making humanitarian reforms, tensions between the United States and Cuba decreased. That same year, Barack Obama became president of the United States, and he supported the reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Cuba. In 2014, such ties were established, and in 2016, the two countries reopened their embassies. Obama also became the first president in 90 years to visit Cuba. Obama and Castro recently called for the U.S. Congress to lift the embargo, but Congress will apparently delay doing so until the identity of the next U.S. president is known.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, Obama has called the Cuban embargo "outdated" and has gone on record to say it has not worked and should be ended.<sup>2</sup> The question is, is he right? This thesis will analyse the embargo's development and effectiveness, and will prove that that the sanctions did not fulfil their objectives, except to hurt Cuba's economy. The embargo certainly did not stifle the spirit

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Korte, "Obama: Cuba Embargo Will Fall under Next President," *USA Today*, Accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2016/03/21/obama-meet-cuban-president-ral-castro/82068258/>.

<sup>2</sup> Jordan Fabian, "Obama: Cuban Embargo 'Outdated' and 'Does Not Work'," *The Hill*, March 14, 2016, Accessed May 3, 2016, <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/272995-obama-cuba-embargo-will-fall-under-next-president>.

of nationalism and strong sense of identity that the Spanish-American War and then the Castro regime helped to instil in the hearts and minds of most Cubans. Of course, the fate of the embargo rests in the hands of the U.S. Congress, but members of Congress listen to their constituents, and if public sentiment, as echoed by Obama, is any indication, then the embargo is bound to end.

## 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Concerning the Cuban embargo, there are many questions unanswered. Among them, who is to blame, the United States or Cuba? The answer is relative. The United States can claim that Cuba was guilty of causing the embargo because of its connection with the U.S. enemy, the Soviet Union. On the other hand, Cuba can claim the United States was guilty because Americans repeatedly intervened in Cuban affairs, with the Platt Amendment, etc. Or maybe both sides were to blame, and it was a domino effect of problems that resulted in over a half century of severed diplomatic and economic relations.

### 1.1 Monroe Doctrine

Russia, Prussia and Austria created a Holy Alliance after the Napoleon Wars. In response, in 1823 President James Monroe issued a proclamation that has since become known as the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>3</sup> The president stated that no European state would be allowed to create a colony on the American continent. Secondly, if any European state would try to apply colonial policy in the western hemisphere, the United States would consider it as a disruption of peace and security. He also proclaimed that the United States would not interfere in European affairs.<sup>4</sup> This doctrine clearly demonstrates a desire to keep and increase control and influence in the western hemisphere.<sup>5</sup> It later would become crucial for American foreign policy.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.2 The Spanish – American War

Cuba was a Spanish colony for more than four centuries. This changed in 1898 when Cuba, with U.S. backing, won its independence. Spain, fearing American expansionism, wanted to decrease Cuba's economic dependence on the United States. Its efforts led to an economic depression, which in turn led to worsening relations between Spain and its colony. Furthermore, fights for independence from European powers were occurring in

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<sup>3</sup> B. George Tindall, and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 190.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, "Milestones 1801 – 1829, Monroe Doctrine," Accessed March 18, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/monroe>.

<sup>6</sup> Tindall and Shi, *America*, 190.

various places in the western hemisphere. The United States warned Spain to solve the economic troubles plaguing the island.<sup>7</sup>

The destruction and sinking of the U.S.S. *Maine* in February 1898 in the port of Havana, which American propaganda erroneously blamed on Spain, led to a brief war between the United States and Spain in 1898.<sup>8</sup> The fighting took place on Cuba, Guam and on the Philippines, another Spanish colony.<sup>9</sup> For the United States, it was not just a fight for the security of Cuba but for the end of Spanish colonization. The Cuban leaders Bartolomé Masó and José Miguel Gómez agreed with U.S. intervention, claiming that the revolution started by José Martí would end successfully.<sup>10</sup> Their predictions proved true, as the Spanish - American War ended in a U.S. victory and Cuban independence. U.S. general Leonard Wood was appointed governor of the island until such time that Cubans could hold democratic elections.<sup>11</sup> However, Cuban independence was not the main goal of the United States. It was just the essential step for the subordination of the island to American economic and political interests.<sup>12</sup> Instead of the independent country, Cuba became the puppet state of the United States.

### 1.3 The Platt Amendment

After Cuban independence, American forces stayed in Cuba to help with the restoration of public order, schools and hygienic conditions.<sup>13</sup> Negotiations between representatives of both countries made it clear that the Americans wanted to take control of Cuba. American senator Orville Platt presented what came to be referred to as the Platt Amendment to the Army Appropriations Bill,<sup>14</sup> which in 1903 gave the United States permission to protect Cuba's freedom and independence. This resolution prevented Cuba from making agreements with other nations and also allowed the United States to rent land on the island for a military base, which became known as Guantanamo Bay or *Isla de*

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<sup>7</sup> Josef Opatrný, *Stručná historie států: Kuba* (Praha: Libri, 2002), 54-55.

<sup>8</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 55.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 134.

<sup>10</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 135-137.

<sup>11</sup> History, "Treaty of Paris ends Spanish-American War," Accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/treaty-of-paris-ends-spanish-american-war>.

<sup>12</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 55.

<sup>13</sup> Tindall and Shi, *America*, 466

<sup>14</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 55.

*Pinos*.<sup>15</sup> Rent of Guantanamo Bay area for the the U.S Navy base was the one of the source of conflicts in 1960. Cubans were not happy with the Platt Amendment, as it challenged their vision of an independent state, but accepting it would end the American occupation of the island.<sup>16</sup> Many Cubans saw U.S. intervention as an attempt at colonization, but the United States reduced their fears by passing the Teller Amendment, which stated that the United States would establish peace in Cuba and then withdraw its forces, giving power to the Cuban people.<sup>17</sup> In the end, Cuba agreed on the incorporation of the Platt Amendment into its constitution. This lasted until 1934, when it was replaced by another agreement.<sup>18</sup>

#### 1.4 Roosevelt Corollary

On the basis of an issue with Venezuela, the Roosevelt Corollary was established in 1904 as an addition to the Monroe Doctrine. Venezuela defaulted on debt payments to Italy, Britain and Germany, so these states subsequently occupied a Venezuelan harbour.<sup>19</sup> During President Theodore Roosevelt's speech to Congress in December, he presented the suggestion that the United States could serve as a police force in the western hemisphere, tracking the debts of states. In these times, Caribbean states owed money to European creditors,<sup>20</sup> which caused Americans to fear European intervention in the region. The corollary was first applied to the Dominican Republic in 1905. This corollary was just a tiny but important step for the following intervention in Nicaragua or Haiti.<sup>21</sup>

#### 1.5 Truman Doctrine

This 1947 doctrine, as formulated by President Harry Truman, is considered by some scholars as the beginning of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. After the World War II, Truman, speaking to Congress, claimed that "it must be the policy

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<sup>15</sup> Tindall and Shi, *America*, 466.

<sup>16</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 57.

<sup>17</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 138.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Milestones 1899 – 1913, The United States, Cuba and the Platt Amendment, 1901," Accessed March 18, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/platt>.

<sup>19</sup> Ourdocuments, "Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (1905)," Accessed March 14, 2016, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=56>.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Milestones: 1899 – 1913, Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, 1904," Accessed March 20, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/roosevelt-and-monroe-doctrine>.

<sup>21</sup> Ourdocuments, "Monroe Doctrine (1823)," Accessed March 14, 2016, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=23>.

of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”<sup>22</sup> Financial aid of \$400 million was later approved for this effort.<sup>23</sup> U.S. foreign policy then strayed from its previously isolationist course. From this moment forward, Americans became actively engaged in global affairs, in order to support democratic nations under the pressure of communism.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of the doctrine became clear: to stop the spread of communism at all costs.

## 1.6 Bay of Pigs – an attempt at overthrowing the Castro regime

An unsuccessful invasion at the Bay of Pigs, Cuba, took place in 1961. After the overthrow of the Batista regime in 1959, Fidel Castro, the leader of the revolutionary 29<sup>th</sup> July movement, came into power. He became the premier first, then the president. With the new regime came social reforms, criticism of American policies, and heightened bureaucracy. The first reform was a limitation of land ownership, which included also the property of American citizens, a limitation that worsened relations between Washington and Havana.<sup>25</sup> The relations had not been good for a long time. After the Platt Amendment, the United States had intervened in Cuba several times. Cubans, of course, disapproved of such interventions.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the land reform was the turning point of relations. Americans, led by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, decided to depose Castro and establish a new pro-American government.<sup>27</sup>

In 1960, Castro, with the help of Ernesto Che Guevara, renewed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, which were disrupted after the fall of Batista. They agreed on a Russian sugar purchase, in exchange for which Cuba would receive money, oil and wheat. Cuba signed similar contracts with several allies of the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup> Americans owned the refineries on Cuba, and when Russian oil arrived, the refineries refused to refine it. In reaction, Cuba confiscated them. After that, the United States decided to ruin Cuba economically by reducing the sugar quota. Cuba reacted by nationalizing the sugar

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<sup>22</sup> American Rhetoric, “Harry S. Truman – The Truman Doctrine,” Accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/harrystrumantrumandoctrine.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Ourdocuments, “Truman Doctrine (1947),” Accessed March 14, 2016, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=81>.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Milestones: 1845 – 1952, The Truman Doctrine, 1947,” Accessed March 13, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine>.

<sup>25</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 71.

<sup>26</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 149.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

factories, and later American plantations, refineries, and banks.<sup>29</sup> This series of events became the foundation of a conflict lasting more than six decades.

Castro in his speech, the “First Declaration of Havana,” claimed that Cuba could cooperate with other countries and not rely on the help of the United States. By this statement, he supported the opinion of the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, that the Monroe Doctrine is an anachronism. Castro admitted that Cuba would probably accept the help of the Soviet Union in the case of a U.S. attack. The United States naturally did not like Castro’s attitude. It answered by the imposition of an embargo on exports to Cuba in November 1960, and the CIA started to plan the overthrow of Castro.

One year later, the newly-elected president, John F. Kennedy, continued in these plans. He claimed Castro’s cooperation with the Soviet Union was a threat for the whole Latin America and gave his permission for a CIA-planned invasion. The invasion would be carried out by Castro’s opponents, exiles from Florida, with indirect support of the United States. The United States worried about the reaction of the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup> On April 17, 1961, the dissidents landed in the Bay of Pigs with the goal of occupying part of Cuba, but they were defeated. This failure made Castro’s position stronger and increased his hostility towards the United States.<sup>31</sup> It made stronger the position of Cuba as well, as other nations started to admire Cuba a little bit for standing up to the United States. The Bay of Pigs invasion has gone down in history as one of the biggest strategic mistakes of the twentieth century.

## 1.7 Cuban Missile Crisis

The end of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States and a partial embargo were not unexpected, but were the latest in a long series of events. Indicators suggested that a full embargo would come. The severed relations between the countries in January 1961 followed the partial embargo in October 1960 and the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. Afterwards, Kennedy and Khrushchev met in Vienna and engaged in hostile

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>29</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 235

<sup>30</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 74.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Milestones: 1961– 1968, The Bay of Pigs Invasion and its Aftermath, April 1961 – October 1962,” Accessed March 20, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/bay-of-pigs>.

negotiations. Reportedly, Khrushchev tried to intimidate the American president.<sup>32</sup> The meeting did not improve the status quo. Afterwards, the Soviet Union divided Berlin with a wall.

Then, in the autumn of 1962, an American spy plane located Soviet missiles in Cuba. At the end of October, the United States took measures, which according to Khrushchev, brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. This exaggerated statement was intended to place the blame for the Cuban Missile Crisis squarely on the United States. This time, however, negotiations between Kennedy and Khrushchev were successful. The United States promised not to invade Cuba and to remove its missiles from Turkey, if the Soviet Union would withdraw its missiles from Cuba. The agreement later led to the Limited Test Ban Treaty of September 1963.<sup>33</sup> This agreement could be considered as the important step in the issue of the testing of nuclear weapons. It prohibited the testing of weapons underwater or in the atmosphere.

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<sup>32</sup> Tindall and Shi, *America*, 190.

<sup>33</sup> ProCon, "Should the United States Maintain Its Embargo against Cuba?," Accessed April 4, 2016, <http://cuba-embargo.procon.org/>.



## 2 SITUATION AFTER THE EMBARGO

The embargo began in November 1962. It applied to all American exports except food and medicine. The supposed justification was the nationalization of the American oil refineries by the Cuban government without any compensation, which was a reaction to America halting its sugar purchases from Cuba.

### 2.1 Cuban response

After the United States imposed the embargo, Cuba had to look for other states willing to help them. Thanks to the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, Cuba turned to the U.S. enemy for aid. Cuba needed to choose an economic model, and its new ally convinced them to choose Soviet socialism. Many experts were invited to Cuba to provide advice, particularly from Eastern Europe.<sup>34</sup> The Caribbean island also could not rely on American technology, so it turned instead to Soviet technology. The plan, however, was not successful because Cubans preferred American high-quality machines and chose to repair older American technology than buy new but inferior Soviet technology. So as to improve its economic prospects, Cuba then focused on increasing the literacy of its citizens. Its alphabet campaign proved successful, but it was just the first step in a long process to educate Cubans, thereby making them more productive.<sup>35</sup> Cuba also negotiated for a 53 million-dollar delivery of food and medicine in exchange for American captives.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.2 Early Cuban-Soviet Relations

After the revolution, some Cubans tried to escape from Cuba. They were mostly intellectuals who did not agree with the movement towards socialism and communism. These people fled to the United States, mostly to Florida, which was the closest state to Cuba and which already had a sizeable Cuban minority. Flights between Cuba and the United States were stopped, so the only possibility was to go by boat. In 1965, Castro allowed Cubans to immigrate to the United States on the condition that they give all of their property to Cuba.<sup>37</sup> This was an easy way for Cuba to gain assets, including buildings

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<sup>34</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 239.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 267-68.

for institutions. The American president Lyndon Johnson signed the Cuban Adjustment Act, which enabled Cuban refugees to arrive in the United States without any documents.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.3 Real friendship

The break-even point for Cuba came in 1968, when the Soviet Union accomplished the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia as a reaction to an unacceptable policy relaxation there. Castro expressed support for the invasion, which was resoundingly denounced elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> Castro's expression of support endeared Cuba to the Soviet Union, which in turn brought modernization and mechanization to Cuba in the late 1960s. Cuba, under the influence of the Soviets, started to focus once again on sugar production. The Soviets agreed to large purchases of Cuban sugar, the production of which became the backbone of the Cuban economy. In the 1970s, Cuba attempted to increase sugar production, but it was never able to meet Soviet demands.<sup>40</sup>

The friendship with the Soviet Union brought advantages to Cuba. First, the money from sugar sales was used on health care and education. Second, the Soviet military protected Cuba, which allowed the Castro regime to focus on development instead of security. Third, the Soviets supplied Cuba with goods, including regular deliveries of the oil.

President Jimmy Carter changed Cuban-American relations. He considered reopening the embassies of both countries. Young Americans stopped caring about the nationalized estates, and Cuba seemed like a good investment for them. But in this matter, Castro stated he would not sign anything that would lead to the humiliation of Cuba, even if it would bring the end of the embargo. Because Cuba was controlled by the Soviet Union, it was not possible to renew trade with the United States. According to a 1962 U.S. law, the easing of restrictions was not possible as long as Cuba was under the control of another state. But in 1979, Cuba began allowing American visitors (except for CIA agents and terrorists), and Castro also eased restrictions on travels abroad for Cubans. These agreements caused an increase of visitors to Cuba and increased revenues. Moreover, it allowed Cuban-Americans living in the United States to give money to their Cuban relatives. There were

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<sup>38</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 270.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

some secret negotiations between Washington and Havana. But all the hopes failed because of the civil war in Angola. There were 3 movements fighting for independence. Cuba supported the left-wing movement of leader Antonio Agostinho Neto, while the United States secretly supported another one, headed by Holden Robert.<sup>41</sup>

The second exodus of Cubans to the United States started in 1980 when Castro again allowed Cubans to freely leave the country. This led to a mass migration, and Carter was forced to limit Cuban immigration to only 3,500 people.<sup>42</sup> He offered open arms to refugees seeking liberty. Americans generally disliked the poor, non-white, non-English-speaking immigrants from Cuba, that filled American prisons afterwards, and the migration became just one more reason to dislike the Carter administration.

Cuba's economy did not fare well. After good times during the second half of the 1970s, sugar production decreased and the market price went down as well. Because Cuba's economy relied on sugar, the country went into debt. Moreover the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev indicated during a visit to Havana that deliveries would be stopped and said that the Soviet Union would end donations to the island. The brother of Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, was in charge of the Cuban military, and Gorbachev told him not to count on help from Soviet forces. It was evident that the fall of the Soviet Union was coming. Castro anticipated this and began preparing. He made changes in 1986, focusing on local production. These changes lessened the blow of the demise of the Soviet Union early in the next decade.

## 2.4 The fall of the Soviet Union and a Cuban crisis

The fall of the big empire in 1991 was predicted, as indicators of the fall were obvious; events in Eastern Europe were the beginning of the end and gave hope to exiles in Miami. In 1990, the Soviet Union stopped oil deliveries to Cuba and military forces were withdrawn. Cuba's economy was disturbed because Cuba was dependent on the Soviet Union, which was under pressure from the United States. Gorbachev restored Soviet-American relations<sup>43</sup> and instituted domestic reforms through "perestroika" and "glasnost." Washington asked the Soviets to end Cuba's support. Cuba had to find a substitution for

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<sup>41</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 314.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 332-33.

<sup>43</sup> Tindall and Shi, *America*, 760.

the Soviet Union. It turned to the international market, but payments were to be made in U.S. dollars,<sup>44</sup> which was problematic for the isolated country.

Cuba started to be compared with Haiti, as among the poorest countries in the western hemisphere. The whole world expected the fall of the Castro regime. Throughout Cuba, riots occurred, resulting in increased regulations. The main factors of the crisis were decreasing profits from sugar production and decreased imports. Cuba implemented a rationing system for goods and set limitations on electricity, gas and water.<sup>45</sup> The crisis forced Cuba to legalize the American dollar in June 1993,<sup>46</sup> which definitely hurt Cuba's pride. As another step, Castro allowed some forms of private enterprise. This decision went against communism, although Castro still refused capitalism. He called the reforms "developing socialism" and claimed they were necessary to maintain the standard of living.<sup>47</sup> The third reform was the founding of *Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa* – an agriculture cooperative, which used the land possessed by Cuba. Farmers were given a right to use the land and owned the agricultural produce.<sup>48</sup> A new Cuban declaration was passed in 1991, which enabled the direct election of deputies chosen from a government-approved list of candidates. The declaration contained fewer links to Marxism-Leninism,<sup>49</sup> which increased hopes for a democracy in Cuba. The economy of Cuba then re-oriented itself towards tourism.<sup>50</sup> But as one scholar warned, "the Cubans updating their system ... doesn't necessarily mean they're going to go to capitalism."<sup>51</sup>

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States increased restrictions against Cuba and further tightened the embargo.<sup>52</sup> President Clinton banned the transfer of financial aid from Cuban-Americans to their relatives on Cuba. Personal and professional travel to the island was also prohibited.<sup>53</sup>

As a result, many Cubans desired to leave the island. President Clinton feared another mass migration because he remembered the consequences of the first wave of migration

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<sup>44</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 344.

<sup>45</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 81.

<sup>46</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 363.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>50</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 84.

<sup>51</sup> Wharton, "U.S.-Cuba Relations: What Will Be the Next Stage?," Accessed October 14, 2015, <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/u-s-cuba-relations-what-will-be-the-next-stage/>.

<sup>52</sup> Opatrný, *Stručná historie států*, 84.

during Jimmy Carter's term. He wanted to avoid the same mistakes as his predecessor and he cancelled the Cubans' automatic right for asylum. This meant that if the refugees were found in international waters, they would be returned to Cuba.<sup>54</sup> Castro predicted the migration would be large, and he hoped that the United States would be forced to make compromises. And it did. The United States had to open a temporary camp for Cuban exiles at Guantanamo Bay. In September 1994, Cuba and the United States made an agreement. The United States promised to issue 20,000 visas for Cubans, while Cuba promised to prevent future migrations.<sup>55</sup>

## 2.5 Events of the 1990s

In the late 1990s, two events influenced the Cuban-American question. First, it was the 1998 visit to communist Cuba by Pope John Paul II. The Pope somewhat surprisingly accepted an invitation from Havana. Americans hoped this visit would wake up political movements within Cuba and lead to the end of the communist regime. John Paul II pointed out that the Cuban-American conflict divided families.<sup>56</sup> He then discussed the settlement of Cuban exiles in Florida, blaming the Cuban government for their migration. Finally, he noted that no country can live in isolation, which was a criticism of the United States, which was isolating Cuba.<sup>57</sup>

The second event was a dispute over the asylum of a Cuban boy, Elian Gonzalez. In 1999, he and his family attempted to raft to Florida. The raft sunk and most of the family died, including his mother, but Elian was rescued by American fishermen and brought to Florida, where he was remitted to the custody of relatives. The boy's father was in Cuba and petitioned for his return. The United States granted the petition, but the Florida relatives refused to allow Elian to return to communist Cuba. U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno intervened and gave the father a visa so that he could travel to Florida and collect his son. Ultimately, Elian Gonzalez was removed from his family's house by force and reunited with his father, who then took him back to Cuba. Elian grew up in Cuba, blaming

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<sup>53</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 372.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>55</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 371.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

the United States for his mother's death, arguing that the embargo led to Cuban suffering, which forced Cubans to flee their homeland.<sup>58</sup>

## 2.6 Castro – a leader of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Fidel Castro, the long-time leader of Cuba and the epitome of the Cuban revolution, is a character who evoked respect during the second half of <sup>the</sup> twentieth century and nowadays as well. The head of the revolutionary 29<sup>th</sup> July movement took over Cuba in 1959 and lived through difficult times with his country. Nowadays, in the time of democracy and liberty in the countries of First World, people condemn any form of dictatorship. Why should we respect this dictator, who led the island into communism?

In comparison with the superpowers of the twentieth century, Castro has presented long-lasting stability. He could be compared with the British Queen Elizabeth II, who has reigned for over 64 years. Castro ruled Cuba for 49 years before entrusting the island to his brother Raul. While Castro ruled, the United States had 9 presidents and the Soviet Union had 5 First Secretaries of the Communist Party.

The Cuban dictator created the Cuban identity by the revolution and maintained it throughout the century. This national identity probably helped Cuba get over its isolation, the economy limitations set on it by the United States, the pressure of exiles, and the biggest crisis in the early 1990s. In spite of many attempts to overthrow him from the U.S. side, like the Bay of Pigs Invasion, he led Cuba until 2008, when his health forced him to hand over power to his brother. Nevertheless, his relationship towards the United States stayed negative just for the many U.S. attempts to overthrow him. He demonstrated his dissenting attitude when he expressed to the Obama's visit in 2016.

## 2.7 Fate of Guantanamo

Guantanamo Bay was rented to the United States under the Platt Amendment. During the disagreements at the beginnings of 1960s, the future of the U.S Navy base was unsure. Back then, Castro threatened that the Navy would be expelled, but he knew that the United States would use this as an excuse to depose him. So he cut off the water supply to the base, but this did little good, as the United States just developed its own infrastructure at

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<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Latson, "Elian Gonzalez, 15 Years Later," *Time*, November 25, 2014, Accessed April 15, 2016, <http://time.com/3594675/elian-gonzalez-history/>.

the base.<sup>59</sup> During the 1990s, the base served as a camp for refugees, mostly Cubans, which wanted to immigrate to the United States during the Mariel's boatlift<sup>60</sup> (second exodus). After the terrorists attack in September 11, 2001, it became a prison for terrorists, Taliban or al-Quaeda members or Muslim fundamentalists.<sup>61</sup> But many humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International or the International Committee of the Red Cross have condemned this detention camp. They are protesting against the torture practices that took/take place there. The Organizations of American States and the European Union are against it too. Obama promised the closure of the camp, but the matter was delayed by Congress because Congress does not want the terrorists sent to American prisons.<sup>62</sup> Members of Congress think that the closure Guantanamo camp could endanger the national security. Nevertheless, the closure of the prison is probably just the question of time, because of international pressure to do so.

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<sup>59</sup> Lily Rothman, "Why the United States Controls Guantanamo Bay," *Time*, Accessed May 3, 2016, <http://time.com/3672066/guantanamo-bay-history/>.

<sup>60</sup> Haney, J. Patrick, and Walt Vanderbush, *The Cuban Embargo: The Domestic Politics of an American Foreign Policy*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 97-98.

<sup>61</sup> Jeannette L. Nolen, "Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp: United States Detention Facility, Cuba," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Guantanamo-Bay-detention-camp>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3 RULES OF THE EMBARGO

According to Amnesty International, “the embargo on Cuba is the most comprehensive set of US sanctions on any country, including the other countries designated by the US government to be state sponsors of terrorism.”<sup>63</sup> The sanctions have been influenced by several laws, which have changed to meet the needs of the time. The first law was passed in 1917. The Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA) enabled the President to limit the trade with any country, but only “in the time of war.” The bill was amended in 1933 by adding the words “the time of national emergency,” to be determined by the President.<sup>64</sup> But under the TWEA, only Cuba is facing sanctions from the western superpower. This bill constituted permission for imposing subsequent sanctions on Cuba; the United States justified that as a result of national emergency. Two bills followed in the 1960s.

The first restriction came in 1961 and was called the Foreign Assistance Act. It prohibited giving assistance to all communist countries and banned any country from helping Cuba as well. A tough bill regulated the import of Cuban goods and U.S. export to Cuba.<sup>65</sup> The next legislation emerged soon after. In 1963, the United States issued the Cuba Assets Control Regulations (CACR). In CACR, the United States declared their aim – “to isolate Cuban government economically and deprive it of U.S. dollars”.<sup>66</sup> It meant limitations of commercial transactions and travelling were imposed. Travelling restrictions were relaxed again during the term of Jimmy Carter and subsequently further regulated by George W. Bush.

The situation in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was influenced by the passing of two American laws – the Cuban Democracy Act also known as the Torricelli Act, and the Helms-Burton Act. Both of them were turned against Cuba and extended the trade embargo. The Cuban Democracy Act was signed by George H. Bush in 1992, the Helms-Burton Act by Bill Clinton in 1996. The Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 focused on Cuba’s democracy. The goal was to damage Cuban trade. Americans predicted that the damage would significantly help to end Castro’s government. The law banned American

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<sup>63</sup> Amnesty International, *The US Embargo against Cuba: Its Impact on Economic and Social Rights* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2009), 5, Accessed December 12, 2015, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/amr250072009eng.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



corporations and their subsidiaries to trade with Cuba, and vessels were prohibited to load and unload in Cuban harbours. Under this law, the American president had the power to cancel the trade embargo. The requirement was to maintain human rights and perform free elections under international control.<sup>67</sup>

The next law, the Helms-Burton Act, was passed in 1996, albeit after some hesitation from Bill Clinton. Its intention was to discourage international investors and put the Cuban issue into the hands of the Congress instead of the president.<sup>68</sup> Originally, Clinton did not want to sign it, but was persuaded to do so after some American planes were shot down over the Straits of Florida<sup>69</sup>. Americans were banned from helping Cuban refugees. However, particularly Cuban exiles from Miami searched for Cubans escaping the island by creating rescue groups. One of them, Brothers to the Rescue, owned planes which they used for searching for refugees. But many times they stayed too long in the Cuban airspace, which Cuba of course did not like and warned the Americans it would shoot the planes down. Brothers to the Rescue did not take the warning seriously and in 1996 Cubans shot down two of their planes. The United States reacted by signing the Helms-Burton Act.

The law concerned the validation of Cuba and promised the United States would do so provided the Americans compensated the U.S. for estates nationalized before the revolution. Moreover, the bill contained a Title III which included third parties into the Cuban-American conflict. According to this amendment, anybody who used estates originally owned by Americans could be prosecuted by the American Courts. This statement raised a lot of discontent and the United States became a target of criticism from the rest of the world. European Union countries deemed this step as a violation of international justice and a barrier of trade. The conflict led to complaints being made to the World Trade Organization. To calm the situation, Clinton passed an appendix which guaranteed the president would not enforce the Title III, with the condition the appendix be approved every six months. Both of the subsequent U.S. Presidents postponed it. In the new millennium, the United States passed the last bill regulating Cuban sanctions. The Trade Sanctions Reform and the Export Enhancement Act passed in 2000, starting to ease the trade relations. It allowed the sale of agricultural products and medicine for

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<sup>67</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 375-6.

<sup>68</sup> Amnesty International, *The US Embargo against Cuba*, 12.

humanitarian purposes, and by 2002 the United States became Cuba's main supplier of agricultural commodities.<sup>70</sup> A good example<sup>71</sup> is the U.S. export of food in 2001, when Cuba was hit by hurricane Michelle and needed help. Currently, there are several bills promoting the easing of the restrictions or lifting the embargo in Congress, such as The Free Trade with Cuba Act, The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act or The Cuba Reconciliation Act.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Wayne S. Smith, "Our Dysfunctional Cuban Embargo," *Orbion* 42, no. 4 (September 1998): 537, Accessed December 5. DOI: 10.1016/S0030-4387(98)80003-3.

<sup>70</sup> Amnesty International, *The US Embargo against Cuba*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> BBC, "Timeline: US-Cuba Relations," Accessed December 11, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-12159943>.

<sup>72</sup> Amnesty International, *The US Embargo against Cuba*, 12.

## 4 HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA

Cuban attitude to human rights is a frequently discussed topic. The non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch makes annual reports about situations in more than 70 countries around the world, including Cuba. In the 2014 report, it outlined the situation in Cuba. According to this report, Cuban government abused human rights in many ways.

Arresting of individuals occurs daily. By this measure, the government tries to avoid public political debates, protests or marches. Despite that, activists still protest. For example, Obama's visit this year presented a great opportunity for people to express their opinions. Hours before Obama's arrival, Cuban police arrested about 50 demonstrators.<sup>73</sup> Among them were members of the group Damas de Blanco – Ladies in White.<sup>74</sup> This group is formed by female relatives of political prisoners and the government deems it to be illegal. Similar situation occurred six months ago during the visit of the Pope Francis. Detained people were subsequently threatened or isolated and one of them claimed he had his ribs broken.<sup>75</sup> After the agreement with the United States, many political prisoners were released. However, they continue to be persecuted. The 2014 Report informs about the increasing number of short-term arrests of defenders of human rights.<sup>76</sup> Protesters call for many reforms, including free elections and freedom of expression or assembly.

For Cuban citizens, freedom of expression is limited. People who criticize the regime face public humiliation or repressions, such as the termination of employment.<sup>77</sup> The government controls all media and the information coming from the rest of the world is regulated as well. Internet access is available only in big cities like Havana or Santiago de Cuba, and people in more distant areas are completely cut off. Due to the limited Internet access, only few Cubans have an opportunity to read independent websites. These websites are often hacked into, for example, the independent online newspapers of Yoani Sanchez. Readers who accessed the journalist's webpage were transferred onto a website criticizing

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<sup>73</sup> *Daily Mail*, "Women Dragged Kicking and Screaming from Democracy Protest in Cuba as 50 Anti-Castro Demonstrators are Arrested Just Hours before Obama's Arrival in Havana," Accessed April 20, 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3502099/Women-dragged-kicking-screaming-democracy-protest-Cuba-50-anti-Castro-demonstrators-arrested-just-hours-Obama-s-arrival-Havana.html>.

<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2015: Cuba, Events of 2014," Accessed April 1, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/cuba>.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

her.<sup>78</sup> Internet access presents an important issue. According to the American president, access to online information is crucial. It offers different opinions which help to develop one's potential. Hillary Clinton has stated that she believed the right to access the Internet constituted a human right.<sup>79</sup> In addition, although Cubans are able to use social media such as Facebook, pages with undesirable content are blocked. The Cuban government has blamed the United States for a bad level of telecommunication services claiming the embargo is the cause. Obama has reacted by involving the American Google, which should extend Cuba's access. This improvement would ease the situation, but if the Cuban government continues to impose many limitations, improved access will not help.<sup>80</sup>

Otherwise, travel restrictions have also partially eased. Cuban authorities have allowed its citizens to exit the country without having to apply for visa which was necessary before. But exiled citizens continue to be banned from visiting their relatives in Cuba. By doing that, the government intentionally divides the families. In spite of all these violations, Cuba is a member of the United Nations and together with other countries makes decisions on human rights issues. Perhaps surprisingly, it votes for the prevention of detailed investigation of human rights in the world and disapproves the focus on human rights abuse in many countries, including North Korea, Syria or the Ukraine.<sup>81</sup> Despite of its membership, it does not respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights announced by the United Nations, which besides other rights, calls for the freedom of movement in Article 13.<sup>82</sup> But Cuban exiles are not allowed to visit their Cuban families. Another example is Article 9 which prohibits the arbitrary arresting of citizens. However, according to the report of Human Rights Watch, such practice happens daily.<sup>83</sup>

Spreading real democracy throughout the still communist Cuba seems to be an ongoing task. But dissidents and many others have high expectations of 2018, since it was

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<sup>78</sup> Human Rights Watch.org, "World Report 2015: Cuba, Events of 2014."

<sup>79</sup> Wired, "Obama Implores Cuba to Bring the Internet to the People," Accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.wired.com/2016/03/cuba-obama-internet/>.

<sup>80</sup> BBC, "Cuba Internet Access Still Severely Restricted," Accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-35865283>.

<sup>81</sup> Human Rights Watch.org, "World Report 2015: Cuba, Events of 2014."

<sup>82</sup> United Nations, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

<sup>83</sup> Human Rights Watch.org, "World Report 2015: Cuba, Events of 2014."

previously announced that in this year, the current leader Raul Castro would step down.<sup>84</sup> They believe, as does the rest of the democratic world, that with a new leader, Cuba could turn to democracy.

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<sup>84</sup> Watts, Jonathan, "The oppression is high': Cuban police break up protest ahead of Obama's visit," *The Guardian*, March 20, 2016, Accessed April 20, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/20/cuba-obama-visit-anti-castro-protesters-clash>.

## 5 THE FUTURE OF THE EMBARGO

Contrary to his predecessor George W. Bush, the current American president endeavours to improve diplomatic ties with Cuba. Barack Obama has made a great contribution in this matter. He had already engaged in this topic during his candidature and claimed that “greater openness with Cuba will hasten democratic change of the communist island nation.”<sup>85</sup> It was he, together with the Cuban leader Raul Castro, who after more than 50 years renewed full ties with the country. In July 2015, both countries opened embassies in their respective capitals.<sup>86</sup> The American democrat took several steps to change the previous situation.

Most of the changes came during Obama’s second term. Firstly, Cubans were allowed to work in the United States and be paid by American companies. There have been some changes in the telecommunications as well. American citizens can now send money to their relatives in Cuba, and thanks to changes in banking, they also can pay for services their relatives might use.<sup>87</sup> The White House has enabled the Cuban-Americans to aid their family members. Nevertheless, the matter does not end with financial aid. Another advantage has brought a partial lifting of travelling limitations. Americans with families in Cuba are allowed to visit them anytime, and trips for educational and religious purposes are also permitted. On the request of America, Cuba released more than 50 prisoners. This act could be considered as a definite effort on the Cuban side. Reportedly, Pope Francis’ visit in Cuba (2015) further improved the state of affairs.<sup>88</sup> It was the second time the Pope visited Cuba, thus influencing the Cuban-American relations. Both countries are obviously interested in their reciprocal relationship, which is a good sign.

The most recent act of the current American president is the visit to Cuba in March 2016. After 88 years, he followed in the footsteps of Calvin Coolidge, who visited Havana in 1928.<sup>89</sup> Coolidge was the last president that visited Cuba before the embargo. Obama’s

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<sup>85</sup> NPR, “Obama Eases Limits on Cuba Travel, Remittances,” Accessed April 10, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103030021>.

<sup>86</sup> CFR, “CFR Backgrounders, U.S.-Cuba Relations,” Accessed April 10, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/cuba/us-cuba-relations/p11113>.

<sup>87</sup> NPR, “Obama Eases Limits on Cuba Travel, Remittances.”

<sup>88</sup> CFR, “CFR Backgrounders.”

<sup>89</sup> RealClearPolitics, “Obama to Make History, Push for Change in Cuba,” Accessed April 9, 2016, [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2016/03/20/obama\\_to\\_make\\_history\\_push\\_for\\_change\\_in\\_cuba\\_130036.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2016/03/20/obama_to_make_history_push_for_change_in_cuba_130036.html).

visit caused a stir and revived the topic concerning the Cuba's isolation.<sup>90</sup> He himself called his visit a "historic" one.<sup>91</sup> During the visit he met not only with the Cuban president Raul Castro, but also with dissidents.<sup>92</sup> By this meeting the American leader showed he was interested in the topic of human rights in Cuba. It is quite clear that the meeting fulfilled its purpose, although probably only partially, because there still are some doubts about human rights exercised in that country. At the press conference, Castro was asked a question about Cuban political prisoners. The fact that Castro even answered this question signifies the progress that has been done. However, his answer proved important. To a question whether Cuba had political prisoners he implied that if Cuba had had any such prisoners, he would have dismissed them. Obama said that both countries should forget the past and focus on the future.<sup>93</sup> Castro's attitude at the press conference indicated that he had agreed with the ending of the embargo, but did not want to confront certain taboo topics.

A statement from the Cuban ex-leader, Fidel Castro, should be mentioned. Obama had not made arrangements to meet up with him during the two-day visit, prompting Fidel Castro to make a statement that Cuba did not need any help from the American Empire.<sup>94</sup> When we consider his statement, there is a grain of truth in it. Cuba demonstrated its strength when it survived hard times at the beginning of the embargo. It managed to find a new economic model and new suppliers, albeit mostly from the Soviet Union countries, it survived food and money shortages. What is more, it gained independence and respect and still exists, with its economy being stronger than ever. That is something we should appreciate.

But Obama's presidential term is coming to an end and a question of who will succeed him has arisen. The next presidential elections are due in the autumn of 2016. Three out of the five presidential candidates are mostly for easing the relations with Cuba. According to

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<sup>90</sup> Damien, Cave, "With Obama Visit to Cuba, Old Battle Lines Fade," *New York Times*, March 26, 2016, Accessed April 10, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/world/americas/with-obama-visit-to-cuba-old-battle-lines-fade.html>.

<sup>91</sup> Dan Roberts, "Obama lands in Cuba as first US president to visit in nearly a century." *The Guardian*, March 21, 2016, Accessed March 31, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/20/barack-obama-cuba-visit-us-politics-shift-public-opinion-diplomacy>.

<sup>92</sup> Nolan D. McCaskill, "Obama meets with Cuban dissidents," *Politico*, March 22, 2016, Accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/03/obama-meets-cuban-dissidents-221095>.

<sup>93</sup> CNN, "Fidel Castro Blasts Obama's Trip: Cuba Doesn't Need 'Empire' for Anything," Accessed April 9 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/28/politics/cuba-fidel-castro-blasts-obama-trip/>.

the Democratic Hillary Clinton, easing restrictions on Cuba would support Cuban society to “keep pressure on the regime.”<sup>95</sup> Bernie Sanders’ point of view, also Democratic, is similar to Clinton’s; he claims that maintaining the embargo “is counterproductive.”<sup>96</sup> The outspoken Republican Donald J. Trump has expressed: “The concept of opening with Cuba is fine. I think we should have made a stronger deal.”<sup>97</sup> This brief and clear statement as well as Clinton’s opinion show that we could expect progress in diplomatic ties and Cuba could live to see the full lifting of embargo should one of these candidates be elected. Nevertheless, a different situation would come if Ted Cruz or John Kasich wins. Kasich has yet to express himself on this matter, while according to Cruz “...the United States should calibrate any relaxation of sanctions directly to the cessation of their repression and human rights violations.”<sup>98</sup> The next American president will have a great influence on this question, as Obama has already demonstrated.

## 5.1 Public verdict

There is a great discussion on this topic and the opinions of both the American politicians and its citizens diverge. Officials and citizens of other countries are taking part in the dispute too but their opinions will be discussed later. First of all, we must examine the results of a survey performed by the Pew Research Center, published in July 2015.

### 5.1.1 The Pew Research Center Survey

The Pew Research Center conducted a survey about the issue of the Cuban-American relations. The survey was conducted in January and July 2015, and the collected data was subsequently compared. The research examined several questions, in particular opinions of political parties and citizens, while also focusing on their sex, age, race and education. The results have shown:

- increasing support of renewed ties between both countries

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<sup>94</sup> CNN, “Fidel Castro Blasts Obama's Trip: Cuba Doesn't Need 'Empire' for Anything.”

<sup>95</sup> ProCon, “Should the United States Maintain Its Embargo against Cuba?,” Accessed April 9, 2016, <http://2016election.procon.org/view.answers.election.php?questionID=002040>.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.



- Republicans were less supportive than Democrats in the question of restoring ties<sup>99</sup>
- Generally, American citizens wanted to renew the relations (73 %) or to end the trade embargo (72 %), the most forthcoming were college graduates and young people from 18 to 29 years. Conversely, the largest disapproval was expressed by people under 65 and people with a high school level of education or less<sup>100</sup>

The research has shown that there was an increasing trend for the approval of restoration of the Cuban-American diplomatic ties or a full lifting of the trade embargo. The increase is visible in every single part and indicates that Americans have forgotten the old grievances. The democratization of the island which would come with the end of embargo<sup>101</sup> is considered to be main result of the American positive and friendly attitude.

Another research conducted by this center focused on the opinions of the citizens from Latin America. This opinion poll shows that Latin Americans believe in a more democratic Cuba and they are for the end of the trade embargo.<sup>102</sup> This survey was conducted in the spring of 2015, throughout Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Peru and Mexico. The strongest approval has come from Chile (79 %), Argentina (78 %) and Venezuela (77 %). The most optimistic view on Cuban democratization was expressed by Argentina, followed by Chile. Nevertheless, this research has also shown that Latin Americans do not trust the Cuban leader Raul Castro in international affairs.<sup>103</sup>

### 5.1.2 Arguments in discussion

What are the arguments of the opponents and supporters of the U.S. trade embargo? Some of them support the economic reasons, some arguments stem from history. Let us start with the supporters of the embargo. They claimed Cuba had not fulfilled the

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<sup>99</sup> Pew Research Center, "Growing Public Support for U.S. Ties with Cuba – And an End to the Trade Embargo," Accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/07/21/growing-public-support-for-u-s-ties-with-cuba-and-an-end-to-the-trade-embargo/>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Pew Research Center, "Latin Americans Approve of U.S. Re-establishing Diplomatic Ties with Cuba," Accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/07/21/latin-americans-approve-of-u-s-re-establishing-diplomatic-ties-with-cuba/>.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

conditions defined in the 1990's in the Torricelli's Law, adding that lifting the embargo before the conditions are fulfilled would show the United States as weak.<sup>104</sup> This claim signifies the need of the United States to come across as a powerful state, it could be a reference to Roosevelt's Corollary. However, the United States is a superpower, and in the past, there were just two superpowers competing for supremacy in the world. Nowadays, there is Great Britain or China too, and the United States has to be careful about its image abroad. But is it necessary to compete today?

Some supporters of the embargo are also concerned about the reaction of Cubans should the embargo be lifted – according to them, it could arouse aggression.<sup>105</sup> This claim is supported by arguments that Cubans have made attempts at softening the embargo. In addition, the embargo helps the U.S. government to keep pressure on Cuba, while allowing help for Cuban citizens at the same time.<sup>106</sup> There is also an opinion that lifting the embargo would not solve the problem. Because of the communist regime, there are no private enterprises, so if the United States cancelled the embargo, it would not help Cuban citizens only the Cuban government<sup>107</sup>. This takes us to the previous thought that the U.S. government could help Cuban citizens without having to cancel sanctions. Many people are concerned about the successor of the present leader Raul Castro. Judging by the last meeting between Obama and Castro, it could be said that in spite of the communist attitude, the younger of the Castro brothers is more open to the reforms.<sup>108</sup>

In the chain of arguments, there is one that cannot be taken into account. Supporters of the embargo claim that Cuban-Americans, who are supposed to understand this topic, support the embargo. On the other hand, the opponents claim something similar – that the Cuban-Americans would highly appreciate if the embargo were lifted. It is hard to see where the truth lies, but the Elian Gonzalez case played into the hands of the opponents to

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<sup>104</sup> ProCon, "Should the United States Maintain Its Embargo against Cuba?"

<sup>105</sup> ConnectUS, "12 Significant Pros and Cons of the Cuban Embargo," Accessed April 15, 2016, "<http://connectusfund.org/12-significant-pros-and-cons-of-the-cuban-embargo>."

<sup>106</sup> ProCon, "Should the United States Maintain Its Embargo against Cuba?"

<sup>107</sup> ConnectUS, "12 Significant Pros and Cons of the Cuban Embargo."

<sup>108</sup> Biography, "Raul Castro Biography, Military Leader, Cuban President (1931–)," Accessed April 9 2016, "<http://www.biography.com/people/raul-castro-183536>."

the sanctions. After Gonzalez was returned, the effort to normalize relations between Cuban-Americans in Miami increased.<sup>109</sup>

Maintaining the embargo is supported particularly by anti-terrorism fighters, who say that Cuba should be penalized in this way for its support of terrorism. However, this argument cannot be taken into consideration because Cuba has strengthened its counterterrorism laws and the United States has removed Cuba from the blacklist under the easing of the restrictions.<sup>110</sup> This act was one of the significant steps in the U.S. policy towards Cuba. Another opinion states that Cuba does not respect human rights and the embargo is a punishment for that.<sup>111</sup> Clearly, the United States has the upper hand. Yet another argument concerns Cuba's reluctance to negotiate with the United States.<sup>112</sup> This claim should be also discussed. The recent visit of the American president in Havana showed that the situation was different, that Cuba made some steps forward and was definitely willing to negotiate. We could also consider questions regarding the political prisoners at the press conference. It is possible that some of the arguments for the maintaining of the embargo are old and not likely to hold. Some of them are legitimate, in line with the American beliefs, such as the strong image of America. On the other hand, when we take recent events into consideration, certain arguments seem like relics of the past.

And why should the embargo end? One reason may be that it is a relic of old times, of the Cold War Era. It is true that at that time Cuba was maintaining a friendship with the Soviet Union, which could represent certain danger for the United States, but those days are gone. Cuba is not a threat anymore. Other opponents of the embargo claim it failed to achieve the intended goals.<sup>113</sup> Things are done for some purpose, we expect certain goals and when we do not reach these goals, we are often angry or dissatisfied, we want a change. That is the example of the United States. The embargo has not achieved its intended goals, therefore it should be lifted. There is another argument that relates to this

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<sup>109</sup> NPR, "How The Battle Over Elián González Helped Change U.S. Cuba Policy," Accessed April 20, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/06/28/417716173/how-the-battle-over-eli-n-gonz-lez-helped-change-u-s-cuba-policy>.

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Chapter 3: State Sponsors of Terrorism Overview," Accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2014/239410.htm>.

<sup>111</sup> Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2015: Cuba, Events of 2014," Accessed April 1, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/cuba>.

<sup>112</sup> ProCon, "Should the United States Maintain Its Embargo against Cuba?"

matter. It is the opinion of the Democratic Bernie Sanders, supported by many others. The embargo is counterproductive. It does more harm than good. It harms both the U.S. and Cuban economies, which could both benefit from free trade. Some people claim it does not harm Cuba's government, only the citizens, and that was not its original purpose.<sup>114</sup> The embargo was essentially intended as a penalty for the Cuban government.

Many people claim that the United States policy towards Cuba should not differ from those they have towards other countries that violate human rights, such as China or North Korea.<sup>115</sup> These people are convinced that the United States must have the same policy for all of these countries. For example, Americans are not allowed to travel to Cuba but are allowed to travel to China. Neither there are any limitations, which is a paradox. The United States votes for democracy and liberty and it itself prohibits its citizens to travel to Cuba. As previously mentioned, although the Cuban-Americans understand the reasons for the embargo well, they think it does not have the intended effect. In addition, this bilateral policy does no good to the U.S. image.

According to the opponents of embargo, it is possible to spread democracy throughout Cuba only when free trade is allowed. They think that it is not possible to proclaim democracy in an isolated state. Others critics think that lifting the embargo would force the Cuban government to face problems they caused and not only blame the United States as is the common practice.<sup>116</sup> They claim the Cuban regime has made a lot of mistakes and that the United States is blamed for them instead of the Cuban government.

The fact that the rest of the world condemns the restrictions can be considered as a strong argument for the U.S. to consider its superpower image. The opponents say the embargo creates bad international reputation for the U.S. and does not correspond to their democratic practices.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, the General Assembly of the United Nations has condemned the embargo, the European Union is set against it, the Inter-American Commission on human Rights insists on lifting the sanctions. According to the organization, the sanctions strongly influence the human rights of Cuban citizens.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> ConnectUS, "12 Significant Pros and Cons of the Cuban Embargo."

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> ProCon, "Should the United States Maintain Its Embargo against Cuba?"

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Amnesty International, *The US Embargo against Cuba*, 5.

## 5.2 Maintain or lift?

The previous chapter presented the pros and cons of the U.S. sanctions. With regard to the above arguments, the embargo should be lifted. There are several legitimate arguments why the sanctions should be cancelled. The United States imposed embargo with the goal of isolating Cuba. The plan was to isolate Cuba, get rid of communism and spread democracy. But instead of protesting, Cuba established relations with America's enemy, which made the United States angry. From that moment, the Cuban issue became a part of the Cold War conflict. The United States wanted to protect the countries involved from communism with the Truman Doctrine. So it imposed embargo on Cuba. That would have been fine. But why did it not sanction other communist countries, such as China? The answer is clear; China was not under the control of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the United States managed just a part of the plan – isolation, but this move had an impact on the human rights, civil liberties and the mood of the society in the whole of Cuba. The Cuban-American conflict was influenced by the relation of the United States and the Soviet Union. The U.S. rancour of Cuba grew with the deepening friendship between Cuba and the Soviet Union. But the Cold War Era ended a long time ago.

The rest of the world does not agree with the sanctions. Many of the organizations and important international groups disapprove of it and want a change. The UN General Assembly has expressed its opposition along with The Inter-American Commission on human Rights. Furthermore, the sanctions are counterproductive. The regulations harm both economies which could cash in on the trade, while having to lose out on a lot of investment opportunities. There is also the humanitarian issue. The set of prohibitions regarding travelling and financial support divides families, as pointed out by the Pope. Some relatives emigrated, some stayed in Cuba. The exiles settled in Miami would certainly appreciate visiting their relatives in Cuba.

## CONCLUSION

The embargo has lasted over 50 years and has evolved to meet the times. For the United States, it was an evil made necessary by the Monroe and Truman Doctrines. The intention of the embargo was to isolate Cuba economically, which would lead to the collapse of Fidel Castro's regime. After that the United States would establish a new government in Cuba, one with a pro-American attitude. However, the embargo was only partially successful. The Americans isolated Cuba from the rest of the world and damaged it economically as was intended, but it did not manage the breakdown of the Castro and communist regime. Castro proved remarkably resilient, even leading Cuba out of an economic crisis in the 1990s.

Cuba showed courage in standing up to the United States. It finally got out from under the United States in 1959, but the price was quite high. The island had to depend on Soviet aid, and it had to adjust after this aid stopped in 1990. All of these obstacles, Cuba overcame. But to survive, the Castro regime had to repress human rights. For this reason, many supporters of the embargo argue for maintaining it. The sanctions are, for them, Cuba's punishment for repression. Although Cuba is a member of the United Nations, it violates several aspects of the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For example, Cuba does not respect Article 13 about freedom of movement, as it prohibits exiles from visiting. It also violates Article 5, which forbids torture or cruel treatment.<sup>119</sup> Of course, in this regard, even the United States is guilty, as it tortures prisoners at its Guantanamo prison camp in Cuba.

From the attitudes of the current leaders of both countries, Barack Obama and Raul Castro, the long-standing conflict is most likely to be resolved. Obama's historical visit to Cuba in spring 2016, his expressed desire to close Guantanamo, and the easing of travel limitations to and from Cuba are signs of goodwill from the U.S. side. Cuba still has human rights issues, but it argues that the United States does too. Maybe Cuba is afraid of becoming an American puppet state once again. After the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States held sway over Cuba for six decades, and Cubans, a proud people, do not want history to repeat itself. The United States has reassured Cuba that it wants a partner, not a colony, but Cuba will have to trust the United States and let down its guard.

Undoubtedly, the solution will take some time, but the American President predicts the embargo will end within the next decade.<sup>120</sup> For this to happen, lines of communication must remain open, and trade and travel barriers must be removed.

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<sup>119</sup> United Nations, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” Accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

<sup>120</sup> Korte, “Obama: Cuba Embargo Will Fall under Next President.”

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