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Summary

This affirmative case argues that the United States should lift its economic embargo on Cuba.

There are three main reasons why allowing trade, travel, and economic engagement with Cuba is a good idea:

First, the existing restrictions on trade limit the amount of medical goods that are available in Cuba – which has created a public health crisis.

Second, the embargo has strengthened the regime by allowing the Cuban government to scapegoat the United States for suffering of its people – improving economic conditions in Cuba would allow its people to focus on asserting their rights.

Third, the embargo is extremely unpopular and gets in the way of the United States’ ability to co-operate with Latin America – the ability to co-operate with Latin America is essential to work out solutions to several problems like nuclear proliferation and global climate change.
Glossary

Raul Castro – is a politician and leader of the Communist Party of Cuba.

Embargo/Sanctions – are trade restrictions put in place against target countries with the aim of discouraging certain behaviors like human rights violations or military build-up.

Economic engagement – is a foreign policy strategy which seeks to increase ties between countries through economic interaction.

Public health – is the result of an organized effort of a society to improve the health and life-span of its people.

Moral obligation – a sense of duty or priority imposed by moral standards.

Totalitarianism – is a political system in which the state holds total authority over its society and seeks to control all aspects of public and private affairs.

Human rights – basic, fundamental rights to which every person is entitled because they are human beings.

International relations – the relationships that dictate interactions between countries, their governments, and their people.

International influence/Soft Power – the ability of a nation persuade other nations to adopt changes by modeling good behavior, rather than the use of force or coercion.
Contention 1 is Inherency:

Despite small changes, United States maintains an embargo that bars most economic activity with Cuba.

Guzmán, Emmy award winning journalist, 2013
(Sandra, "Jay-Z and Beyoncé’s trip to Cuba isn't the problem, the embargo is," CNN, May 8, Online: http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/07/opinion/guzman-beyonce-jay-z-cuba/index.html)

The few but very influential pro-embargo lobby have put a stranglehold on a lucid discussion surrounding Cuba. Five decades of failed policy later, our nation is being held hostage unable to have a cogent discussion on anything Cuba-related. The U.S. embargo has not and will not work. Put in place in 1962 by President John F. Kennedy, the policy is stuck in a time warp that has nothing to do with modern-day reality. The most enduring embargo in modern day history is a remnant of a Cold War past when the Soviet Union was the enemy and the world was on the brink of nuclear war. The thinking was that financial sanctions, which included a ban on travel by American citizens, would collapse the island economy and force people to revolt against Fidel Castro. Over the years, these sanctions have been eased or toughened depending on political winds. In 1992, disgraced New Jersey Rep. Robert Torricelli was behind one the cruelest acts which banned, among many things, food and medicine sales to Cuba and prevented Cuban-American families from sending cash to their relatives. These were tough times and seeing many friends and families suffer because they couldn't visit their elderly mothers more than once every three years, or being prevented from sending them needed supplies, was very painful. Restrictions have eased under President Barack Obama but there is still a major ban. Enter Jay Z and Beyoncé. It's 2013 and we need to debate Cuban policy earnestly. Members of Congress must stop the cowardice around the issue and stop humoring the delusions of passionate folks stuck in the 1960s for political votes and favor. The pro-embargo folks are ignoring the policy's epic failure and fail to recognize that U.S. policy has played into the hands of the Castro brothers, who have sinisterly used it to make the case to their people that if Cuba is starving and the island economy can’t grow, it’s because of this U.S. policy.
Contention 2 is Public Health:

The embargo restricts the flow of medical goods and creates financial strains that threaten to collapse the Cuban healthcare system.

Xinhua News, 2012

Cuban medical authorities said on Tuesday a 50-year trade embargo imposed by the United States has severely undermined the country’s healthcare system. Cuban hospitals suffer restrictions in acquiring imported medical consumables and medicine, advanced medical technology and latest scientific information, officials said. The public Institute of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery, where thousands of people receive free medical care every year from international specialists, is financially strained by the embargo. We must find alternatives that sometimes include purchasing from distant markets, buying from third parties, which means higher prices for these products," said Director of the institute Dr. Lorenzo Llerena. He added some equipments were simply unattainable, "because they are manufactured in the United States." The embargo has caused Cuba a loss of more than 200 million dollars in the medical sector alone by 2011, representing a significant impact on the tiny Caribbean nation, according to official figures. John Rhodes, a patient, told Xinhua that Cuba had made a great effort for the benefit of all its citizens. "It provides us free medicine across the country, which is highly expensive around the world," he said, adding "due to the U.S. embargo, sometimes we do not have all the raw materials and tools to solve certain problems immediately."
These strains contribute to massive loss of life in Cuba – we have a moral obligation to lift the embargo.

Eisenberg, former Professor Emeritus of Social Medicine and Psychology at the Harvard Medical School, 1997

Thus, three unusual outbreaks of medical conditions -- neuropathy, self-inflicted disease, and injuries caused by rioting -- stemmed from U.S. economic sanctions. The sanctions may be aimed at Fidel Castro, but the victims are the ordinary citizens of Cuba. Castro looks as well fed as ever. Economic sanctions afflict civilians, not soldiers and not the leaders of autocratic societies. Yet the United States continues to employ such sanctions against dictators (or at least those dictators it suits present policy to condemn). When the sanctions are applied, they are all-encompassing. The interdicted trade with Cuba includes visits by medical delegations and the mailing of medical journals such as this one. Whom do medical journals empower, dictators or doctors? Can freedom be defended by suppressing information any more than by interrupting food supplies or drugs? Iraq is an even more disastrous example of war against the public health. Two months after the end of the six-week war, which began on January 16, 1991, a study team from the Harvard School of Public Health visited Iraq to examine the medical consequences of sanctions imposed after the armed conflict. The destruction of the country’s power plants had brought its entire system of water purification and distribution to a halt, leading to epidemics of cholera, typhoid fever, and gastroenteritis, particularly among children. Mortality rates doubled or tripled among children admitted to hospitals in Baghdad and Basra. Cases of marasmus appeared for the first time in decades. The team observed "suffering of tragic proportions. . . . [with children] dying of preventable diseases and starvation." Although the allied bombing had caused few civilian casualties, the destruction of the infrastructure resulted in devastating long-term effects on health. An international group supported by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) carried out a more comprehensive study five months later by interviewing members of households selected to represent the Iraqi population. The age-adjusted relative mortality rate among children in the eight months after the war, as compared with the five years before the war, was 3.2. There were approximately 47,000 excess deaths among children under five years of age during the first eight months of 1991. The deaths resulted from infectious diseases, the decreased quality and availability of food and water, and an enfeebled medical care system hampered by the lack of drugs and supplies. The Cuban and Iraqi instances make it abundantly clear that economic sanctions are, at their core, a war against public health. Our professional ethic demands the defense of public health. Thus, as physicians, we have a moral imperative to call for the end of sanctions. Having found the cause, we must act to remove it. Continuing to allow our reason to sleep will produce more monsters.
Contention 3 is Government Repression:

Despite claims of progress, Castro’s government continues to violate the political and civil rights of Cuban citizens

Brewer, CEO of Criminal Justice International Associates, 2013

(Jerry, “Political Change in Cuba so that everything remains the same,” May 6, Online: http://www.mexidata.info/id3612.html)

The most discussed world critique, beyond the misery and decades of economic failures of Castro rule and their professed world revolution, is in the well documented record of human tragedy and the abysmal human rights record. Since the early days of Fidel Castro’s rule, essential freedoms of association, assembly, movement and expression have been withheld from the people of Cuba, and many citizens who dared to take a stand against the revolutionary oppression have been beaten, tortured, imprisoned and/or killed. This record has been passed on in a sort of diabolical rite of passage to Raul Castro, who has tiptoed in perceived progress. Reportedly under his watch the Cuban government released "more than 125 prisoners in 2010-2011," but since 2012 the number of political prisoners has reportedly increased. In January 2013 the Havana-based Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN), estimated that Cuba "held at least 90 political prisoners, compared to an estimated 50 in April 2012, and more than 200 estimated at the beginning of 2010." What vociferously trumpets these charges and abuses is a report from March 2012 by Amnesty International, maintaining that "the Cuban government wages a permanent campaign of harassment and short-term detentions of political opponents to stop them from demanding respect for civil and political rights." It appears clear from these numbers and the record that the release of political prisoners in 2011 has shown no changes in the Cuban regime’s human rights policy. What is clear, pursuant to those voices that escape censorship by this Communist-run island’s secretive citadel of power, is a continuance of constant surveillance, intimidation, harassment, and acts of repudiation against citizens who dare to speak out and demand change.
These violations are reprehensible – the United States has an obligation to promote political change

Navarro, former ambassador the UN Human Rights Commission, 2002
(Ana, “Defending Repressed Cubans,” April, Online: http://www.sigloxxi.org/Archivo/repressed.htm)

During 2001, repression has increased in Cuba. For the last 43 years, the basic human rights of the Cuban people have been violated. Cubans do not have political rights because Castro and the Communist Party, the only legal party, have absolute power. Those who peacefully have tried to promote changes have ended up in prisons. For the Cuban people, there is no justice. The fundamental democratic precept of judicial independence is not valid. Judges are chosen by the Communist Party based on their political integration and commitment to the regime. Closed-door and summary trials are frequently held. The common citizen has no protection against the regime’s violence. People under arrest are held incommunicado indefinitely. The police and the armed forces, too, are politicized; they beat, arrest and even murder those who protest against the lack of rights. In Cuba, the "Rapid Response Brigades," armed with sticks and iron bars and dressed as civilians, attack human-rights advocates to give the impression to the international media that "the common people" spontaneously clash with opposition groups. The political prisoners suffer the most. They are confined in cells with highly dangerous common prisoners who attack them, with the guards’ tacit approval. Political prisoners also are denied medical attention as a form of punishment. Cubans are afraid to tell their suffering. Few dare speak out; the price is high. Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet, a dissident, has been beaten and arrested many times. He is still in prison. Freedom of the press is suppressed totally. All mass media belong to the government, and there is no possibility of expressing a dissenting opinion in the media. Cuban authorities brag about their education and health systems. But they fail to mention that students must participate in pro-government activities to be able to attend universities or technical schools. Or that students who don’t sympathize with the government are expelled. Or that workers who disagree with regime policies are fired from their jobs. The repression in Cuba is such that distributing the Declaration of Human Rights is classified a "counterrevolutionary activity," which is enough to earn a Cuban a beating from the police or paramilitary brigades. The human-rights violations perpetrated by the Cuban government are inexcusable. We, the countries that believe in freedom and live in democracy, should not abandon the people of Cuba.

Thus, we propose the following plan:

The United States federal government should end its embargo on Cuba.
Contention 4 is Solvency:

Lifting the embargo would alleviate Cuban suffering and allow Cubans to focus on the fight for liberty.

Perez, professor of history & director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010


But if the administration really wanted to do something in the national interest, it would end the 50-year-old policy of political and economic isolation of Cuba. The Cuban embargo can no longer even pretend to be plausible. On the contrary, it has contributed to the very conditions that stifle democracy and human rights there. For 50 years, its brunt has fallen mainly on the Cuban people. This is not by accident. On the contrary, the embargo was designed to impose suffering and hunger on Cubans in the hope that they would rise up and overturn their government. "The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support," the Department of State insisted as early as April 1960, "is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship."

The United States tightened the screws in the post-Soviet years with the Torricelli Act and the Helms-Burton Act -- measures designed, Sen. Robert Torricelli said, "to wreak havoc on that island." The post-Soviet years were indeed calamitous. Throughout the 1990s, Cubans faced growing scarcities, deteriorating services and increased rationing. Meeting the needs of ordinary life took extraordinary effort. And therein lies the problem that still bedevils U.S. policy today. Far from inspiring the Cuban people to revolution, the embargo keeps them down and distracted. Dire need and urgent want are hardly optimum circumstances for a people to contemplate the benefits of democracy. A people preoccupied with survival have little interest or inclination to bestir themselves in behalf of anything else. In Cuba, routine household errands and chores consume overwhelming amounts of time and energy, day after day: hours in lines at the local grocery store or waiting for public transportation. Cubans in vast numbers choose to emigrate. Others burrow deeper into the black market, struggling to make do and carry on. Many commit suicide. (Cuba has one of the highest suicide rates in the world; in 2000, the latest year for which we have statistics, it was 16.4 per 100,000 people.)

A June 2008 survey in The New York Times reported that less than 10 percent of Cubans identified the lack of political freedom as the island's main problem. As one Cuban colleague recently suggested to me: "First necessities, later democracy." The United States should consider a change of policy, one that would offer Cubans relief from the all-consuming ordeal of daily life. Improved material circumstances would allow Cubans to turn their attention to other aspirations. Ending the embargo would also imply respect for the Cuban people, an acknowledgment that they have the vision and vitality to enact needed reforms, and that transition in Cuba, whatever form it may take, is wholly a Cuban affair. A good-faith effort to engage Cuba, moreover, would counter the common perception there that the United States is a threat to its sovereignty. It would deny Cuban leaders the chance to use U.S. policy as pretext to limit public debate and stifle dissent -- all to the good of democracy and human rights. And it would serve the national interest.
Cuba has an outstanding healthcare system – the only obstacle to effective care is a lack of equipment & supplies that are unavailable due to the embargo.

Randall, MD in internal medicine from Indiana University, 2000

(Judith, “Does the US Embargo Affect Cuban Healthcare?,” Journal of the National Cancer Institute 92:12, Online: http://jnci.oxfordjournals.org/content/92/12/963.full)

“These hospitals were all well staffed with very qualified physicians, highly committed and knowledgeable in their fields,” he said. He was pleased to find, too, that Cuban health care, tertiary care included, is free and available for everyone. But he also found that, because of the embargo, “the management of patients can be difficult” due to a lack of such items as bone-marrow aspiration needles and high-dose formulations of cytosine-arabinoside and shortages of antibiotics, equipment, current textbooks, and basic medical supplies. Variations on the above themes are not hard to find. Under a program called MEDICC (http://www.medicc.org), students working toward health sciences degrees in the United States and Canada spend 4 to 8 weeks in Cuba taking courses in their fields and doing clinical rotations mentored by local physicians. They often return from the experience to report that universal precautions are not observed in Cuba; for example, the precious few rubber gloves available are reserved for surgical procedures, and, just as cars in Cuba are likely to be vintage models, things like anesthesia and x-ray machines are, too.
Cuba’s doctors are increasingly strained. Physicians return from years abroad because they must, both contractually and to avoid repercussions for their relatives in Cuba. They then must accept whatever assignments the government gives them, including sometimes years of service in a remote village, a Havana slum, or a sparsely populated tobacco growing area. Many doctors and nurses leave the health-care system altogether, taking jobs as taxi drivers or in hotels, where they can earn CUCs. In February 2010, seven Cuban doctors sued the Cuban and Venezuelan governments, charging that the mandatory service they had performed in Venezuela in exchange for oil shipments to the Cuban government constituted "modern slavery" and "conditions of servilism for debt." Large numbers of defections among doctors, meanwhile, have caused the Cuban regime to cut back on physician placements to some countries, such as South Africa.
The embargo is comparatively worse than engagement – it punishes international actors that trade with Cuba and US technology is essential to health.

Amnesty International, international organization promoting human rights, 2009
(“The US Embargo Against Cuba,” Online: http://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/amr250072009eng.pdf)

Even so, the U.S. embargo of food and the de facto embargo on medical supplies, has wreaked havoc with the island’s model primary health care system. During the first three decades of the embargo, the export of medicines was allowed for “humanitarian” reasons only. In 1992, with the passage of the CDA, the sales of medicines were exempt from the embargo. However, access to medicines became virtually impossible for Cuba. Every export of medicine required that “the President of the USA certify, through on-site inspections approved by the President, that all components of a shipment of medical products to Cuba were used for the purpose intended.”

The tightening of the US embargo during the 1990s exacerbated the economic crisis in Cuba as the country had lost the economic support from the Soviet Union. This affected the capacity of the Cuban health system to deliver to the population the same standards of health care as before the economic crisis. The Resident Coordinator for the Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System reported in the UN Secretary-General’s 2008 report on the impact of the US embargo: “Goods, services or technologies produced by the United States or covered by United States patents or containing any element produced or patented by the United States are not available to Cuba. This includes medicines, medical equipment and other products under the category of humanitarian assistance, even when such products are purchased through multilateral cooperation.”

The CDA contains provisions for its enforcement outside the USA, resulting in severe limitations to Cuba’s access to an international supply of medicines and medical equipment. Furthermore, the expansion of US pharmaceutical companies in the last three decades has limited the number of companies able to export their products to Cuba without facing penalties from the US government. The Helms-Burton Act penalizes non-US companies and nationals for trading with Cuba. Although commercial opportunities are available to Cuba throughout the rest of the Americas, Europe, Asia, and elsewhere, the Helms-Burton Act has an inhibiting effect on non-US medical companies, therefore limiting Cuba’s access to medicines, medical equipment and technologies. In the health care sector in particular, Cubans are denied the latest generation of equipment and medicine, available in some cases only from US companies or at prohibitively high prices through third countries. For instance, the World Health Organization reported “lack of diagnostic materials and equipment, replacement parts, surgical supplies and drugs hinders the operations of emergency services and care for patients in serious condition. The resources for treating patients who need this type of care, adults and children alike, are limited. In the case of patients with psychiatric disorders, state-of-the-art drugs are unavailable.”
The embargo restricts free flow of agricultural goods from US – these are key to Cuba’s recovery from natural disasters and food shortages


Trade levels between Cuba and the U.S. could reach $5 billion annually by removing the trade embargo, resulting in a boost to American agribusinesses while also helping to alleviate hunger among Cubans. A policy environment open to international trade and investment is a necessary ingredient to sustain higher rates of economic growth and to promote political freedom through exposure to new technology, communications, and democratic ideas (Griswold, 1; Sachs and Warner). Allowing Cuba to more freely import U.S. food is a means of lowering domestic prices and increasing incomes of the poor, food availability and domestic production. U.S. companies will introduce new technologies and production methods, while raising wages and labor standards as a result of trading with Cuba. The additional creation of wealth will help to advance social, political, and economic conditions independent of the governing authorities in Cuba. The most economically open countries today are more than three times as likely to enjoy full political and civil freedoms as those that are relatively closed (Griswold, 1). Lifting certain trade restrictions would assist Cuba in its efforts to recover from the damage caused by its recent hurricanes. If the U.S. exempted construction equipment and agricultural machinery from the Cuban trade ban through regulatory action, the Cuban people could benefit from the loosening of restrictions without overhauling the entire embargo.
Answers to: Wealth from engagement goes to regime

[ ]

Lifting the embargo is a prerequisite for democratization – Castro blames social problems on the US and economic prosperity will go directly to Cuban citizens.

Griswold, director of the Cato Institute’s Center for Trade Policy Studies, 2009

(Daniel, The US Embargo of Cuba Is a Failure," CATO, June 15th, Online:
http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-embargo-cuba-is-failure)

Advocates of the embargo argue that trading with Cuba will only put dollars into the coffers of the Castro regime. And it’s true that the government in Havana, because it controls the economy, can skim off a large share of the remittances and tourist dollars spent in Cuba. But of course, selling more US products to Cuba would quickly relieve the Castro regime of those same dollars.¶ If more US tourists were permitted to visit Cuba, and at the same time US exports to Cuba were further liberalised, the US economy could reclaim dollars from the Castro regime as fast as the regime could acquire them.¶ In effect, the exchange would be of agricultural products for tourism services, a kind of “bread for beaches”, “food for fun” trade relationship.¶ Meanwhile, the increase in Americans visiting Cuba would dramatically increase contact between Cubans and Americans. The unique US-Cuban relationship that flourished before Castro could be renewed, which would increase US influence and potentially hasten the decline of the communist regime.¶ Congress and President Barack Obama should act now to lift the embargo to allow more travel and farm exports to Cuba. Expanding our freedom to travel to, trade with and invest in Cuba would make Americans better off and would help the Cuban people and speed the day when they can enjoy the freedom they deserve.

¶
Economic prosperity will erode Castro’s base – it’s a prerequisite to peaceful transition.

Perez, JD from Yale Law School, 2010

However, Washington’s policy for the last fifty years has focused almost exclusively on the political situation (i.e., free and fair elections). This myopic approach has ignored the possibility of doing an end-run around Castro’s political recalcitrance by simply giving the Cuban people (and government) an offer they can’t refuse: economic success. As long as the political arena remains the battlefield upon which Washington and Havana wage their ideological war, there will always be stalemate. Transitions from other Cold War-era governments demonstrate that economic liberalization helped facilitate political liberalization. In Poland, the labor unions flourished before political parties were finally established after the fall of the Soviet Union; in Russia, mass privatization paved the way for moderate political freedoms; in Vietnam, the government started to embrace market-based reforms in the mid to late-1980s; and finally, in China, an unmistakably capitalist society has emerged, although elections have still not been held. Cuba will be no different. In early 2009, the Cuban government approved the largest land distribution since the revolution when it handed out 45,500 land grants to the private sector. Another reason economic reforms are likely to precede political reforms is that the population seems hungrier to see an economic respite after decades of austerity. This may also be a result of their belief that the Cuban regime will try to maintain its monopolistic grip on politics for as long as possible, even if it loosens its grip on the economy. When Raul Castro began his version of a "listening tour" around the island he also initiated a series of debates. During one of these town hall meetings Ricardo Alarcon, the leader of the National Assembly as of April 2009, was barraged with questions that focused on the economy - specifically Cuba’s dual-currency system. Although such intimate private-public participation has been rare on the totalitarian island, once the window of opportunity was opened, a burst of activity flowed through. Reloading the diplomatic cannon by encouraging economic reform, rather than focusing on political reform, would represent a more dynamic approach to U.S.-Cuban relations.
Answers to: Conditions Improving Now

[ ]

Human rights conditions in Cuba have continued to deteriorate under the new government of Raul Castro

Miami Herald, 2013

The State Department’s latest report on human-rights practices effectively puts the lie to the idea that the piecemeal and illusory changes in Cuba under Gen. Raúl Castro represent a genuine political opening toward greater freedom.¶ If anything, things are getting worse. The report, which covers 2012, says the independent Cuban Commission on Human Rights and Reconciliation counted 6,602 short-term detentions during the year, compared with 4,123 in 2011. In March 2012, the same commission recorded a 30-year record high of 1,158 short-term detentions in a single month just before the visit of Pope Benedict XVI.¶ Among the many abuses cited by the 2012 report are the prison sentences handed out to members of the Unión Patriotica de Cuba, the estimated 3,000 citizens held under the charge of “potential dangerousness,” state-orchestrated assaults against the Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White), the suspicious death of dissident Oswaldo Payá and so on.¶ As in any dictatorship, telling the truth is a crime:

Independent journalist Calixto Ramón Martínez Arias, the first to report on the cholera outbreak in Cuba, was jailed in September for the crime of desacato (insulting speech) and remained there until last week.¶ The regime is willing to undertake some meek economic reforms to keep people employed. It has even dared to relax its travel requirements to allow more Cubans to leave the country if they can get a passport.¶ Both of these are short-term survival measures, designed as escape valves for growing internal pressure. But when it comes to free speech, political activity and freedom of association — the building blocks of a free society — the report is a depressing chronicle of human-rights abuses and a valuable reminder that repression is the Castro regime’s only response to those who demand a genuinely free Cuba. Fundamental reform? Not a chance.
Advantage Add-on: US/Latin American Relations (1/2)

Relations with Latin America are at an all-time low – lifting the embargo on Cuba is a key starting point to spur cooperation on global problems.

Perez, JD from Yale Law School, 2010

In order to effectively employ soft power in Latin America, the U.S. must repair its image by going on a diplomatic offensive and reminding, not just Latin America’s leaders, but also the Latin American people, of the important relationship between the U.S. and Latin America. Many of the problems facing Latin America today cannot be addressed in the absence of U.S. leadership and cooperation. Working with other nations to address these challenges is the best way to shore up legitimacy, earn respect, and repair America’s image. Although this proposal focuses heavily on Cuba, every country in Latin America is a potential friend. Washington will have to not only strengthen its existing relationships in the region, but also win over new allies, who look to us for "ideas and solutions, not lectures." n5 When analyzing ecosystems, environmental scientists seek out "keystone species." These are organisms that, despite their small size, function as lynchpins for, or barometers of, the entire system’s stability. Cuba, despite its size and isolation, is a keystone nation in Latin America, having disproportionately dominated Washington’s policy toward the region for decades. n6 As a result of its continuing tensions with Havana, America’s reputation [*192] in the region has suffered, as has its ability to deal with other countries. n7 For fifty years, Latin American governments that hoped to endear themselves to the U.S. had to pass the Cuba "litmus test." But now the tables have turned, and the Obama Administration, if it wants to repair America’s image in the region, will have to pass a Cuba litmus test of its own. n8 In short, America must once again be admired if we are going to expect other countries to follow our example. To that end, warming relations with Cuba would have a reverberating effect throughout Latin America, and would go a long way toward creating goodwill.
Strong relations with Latin America are necessary to minimize the impact of multiple global threats like nuclear proliferation and global warming.

(IAD is a think tank hosting 100 leaders and experts from the US and Latin America, “Remaking the Relationship: The United States and Latin America,” April, Online: http://www.thedialogue.org/PublicationFiles/IAD2012PolicyReportFINAL.pdf)

In addition to economic and financial matters, Brazil and other Latin American nations are assuming enhanced roles on an array of global political, environmental, and security issues. Several for which US and Latin American cooperation could become increasingly important include: As the world’s lone nuclear-weapons-free region, Latin America has the opportunity to participate more actively in non-proliferation efforts. Although US and Latin American interests do not always converge on non-proliferation questions, they align on some related goals. For example, the main proliferation challenges today are found in developing and unstable parts of the world, as well as in the leakage—or transfer of nuclear materials—to terrorists. In that context, south-south connections are crucial. Brazil could play a pivotal role. Many countries in the region give priority to climate change challenges. This may position them as a voice in international debates on this topic. The importance of the Amazon basin to worldwide climate concerns gives Brazil and five other South American nations a special role to play. Mexico already has assumed a prominent position on climate change and is active in global policy debates. Brazil organized the first-ever global environmental meeting in 1992 and, this year, will host Rio+20. Mexico hosted the second international meeting on climate change in Cancún in 2010. The United States is handicapped by its inability to devise a climate change policy. Still, it should support coordination on the presumption of shared interests on a critical policy challenge. Latin Americans are taking more active leadership on drug policy in the hemisphere and could become increasingly influential in global discussions of drug strategies. Although the United States and Latin America are often at odds on drug policy, they have mutual interests and goals that should allow consultation and collaboration on a new, more effective approach to the problem. Even as Latin America expands its global reach and presence, it is important that the United States and the region increase their attention to reshaping regional institutions to better align them with current realities and challenges and to make them more effective. The hemisphere's institutional architecture is in great flux, and there is growing need for decisions about priorities and objectives.
US influence in the region is at an all-time low – restoring them is key to avoid multiple global threats.

Perez, JD from Yale Law School, 2010


Third, the Obama Administration ignores Latin America at its own peril. Latin America's importance to the United States is growing by the day, and cannot be overstated. While the issue of U.S.-Cuba relations is obviously of smaller import than many other issues currently affecting the world (i.e., the ailing economy, climate change, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), addressing it would also involve correspondingly less effort than those issues, but could potentially lead to a disproportionately high return by making regional cooperation more likely. In order to confront any of the major world issues facing the United States, Washington must find a way to cooperate with its neighbors, who generally view U.S. policy toward Cuba as the most glaring symbol of its historic inability to constructively engage the region. These three reasons combine for a perfect storm: to the extent that a healthy U.S.-Cuban relationship would mean a healthier U.S.-Latin America relationship, the former should be pursued with an unprecedented vigor, one that has been absent for the last fifty years. Aside from the strategic importance of this issue, addressing these concerns might also prevent more serious problems in the future. Although the chances of a post-Castro Cuba becoming a failed state are slim, the threat is nevertheless real. If the state were to collapse, the island could plunge into civil war, face a humanitarian crisis, become a major drug trafficking center, experience a massive migration to Florida, or endure a combination of each. However, a new and comprehensive policy toward Cuba can help prevent these nightmare scenarios from materializing. There is no doubt that America's diminished image in Latin America means that it will face additional difficulty when trying to accomplish its regional goals. To address the issues confronting the United States vis-a-vis Latin America (i.e., drugs, the environment, trade, labor and human rights), Washington must restore its heavily damaged image and regain its place as the region's trendsetter and leader. Resolving America's "Cuba problem" is a low-cost/high-reward strategy that would inject new energy and credibility into America's image.
Cuba is the key to restoring relations – it is a symbolic issue.

The Washington Post, 2009

Eliminating the Cold War-era ban would be largely symbolic, because Cuba has shown no sign of wanting to return to the OAS, the main forum for political cooperation in the hemisphere. But the debate shows how central the topic has become in U.S. relations with an increasingly assertive Latin America. The wrangling over Cuba threatens to dominate a meeting of hemispheric foreign ministers, including Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, scheduled for Tuesday in Honduras. “Fifty years after the U.S. . . . made Cuba its litmus test for its commercial and diplomatic ties in Latin America, Latin America is turning the tables,” said Julia E. Sweig, a Cuba scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations. Now, she said, Latin countries are "making Cuba the litmus test for the quality of the Obama administration’s approach to Latin America." President Obama has taken steps toward improving ties with Cuba, lifting restrictions on visits and money transfers by Cuban Americans and offering to restart immigration talks suspended in 2004. But he has said he will not scrap the longtime economic embargo until Havana makes democratic reforms and cleans up its human rights record. Ending the embargo would also entail congressional action. Obama is facing pressure to move faster, both from Latin American allies and from key U.S. lawmakers. Bipartisan bills are pending in Congress that would eliminate all travel restrictions and ease the embargo.
Lifting the embargo on Cuba is the key to improve the United States’ relationship with Latin America

Goodman, editor for Bloomberg’s coverage of Latin America, 2009

When Barack Obama arrives at the fifth Summit of the Americas this week, Cuba will be at the heart of the U.S. relationship with the rest of the hemisphere, exactly as it has been for half a century. While Latin American leaders split on many issues, they agree that Obama should lift the 47-year-old U.S. trade embargo on Cuba. From Venezuelan socialist Hugo Chavez to Mexico’s pro-business Felipe Calderon, leaders view a change in policy toward Cuba as a starting point for reviving U.S. relations with the region, which are at their lowest point in two decades.

Obama, born six months before President John F. Kennedy imposed the embargo, isn’t prepared to support ending it. Instead, he’ll seek to satisfy the leaders at the April 17-19 summit in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, with less ambitious steps disclosed by the administration today — repealing restrictions on family visits and remittances imposed by former President George W. Bush. That would mesh with his stated goal of changing the perception of “U.S. arrogance” that he attributed to his predecessor in his sole policy speech on the region last May. “All of Latin America and the Caribbean are awaiting a change in policy toward Cuba,” Jose Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Washington-based Organization of American States, said in an interview. “They value what Obama has promised, but they want more.” The policy changes unveiled today also include an expanded list of items that can be shipped to the island, and a plan to allow U.S. telecommunications companies to apply for licenses in Cuba.

Symbolically Important

Cuba, the only country in the hemisphere excluded from the 34-nation summit, is symbolically important to the region’s leaders, many of whom entered politics under military regimes and looked to Cuba and its longtime leader Fidel Castro, 82, for inspiration and support. Even though most countries shun the communist policies of Castro and his brother, now-President Raul Castro, the U.S. alone in the hemisphere rejects diplomatic and trade relations with the island. “Cuba represents a 50-year policy failure in Latin America and that’s why it’s so important for Obama to address it now,” says Wayne Smith, a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington, who headed the State Department’s Cuba interest section in Havana from 1979-1982. “Unless Obama wants to be booed off the stage, he better come with fresh ideas.”
Answers to: Other Factors Hurt US/Latin American Relations

[  ]

[  ] Latin America is receptive to American influence – the plan is a step in the right direction.

Grandin, Professor of History at New York University, 2010

It is easy to imagine an improved U.S. diplomacy toward Latin America, designed, not to advance a set of altruistic ideals but, merely to defend its interests—broadly defined, to mean stable politics and economies that are, open to U.S. capital and commodities—and, to achieve what those in the liberal wing of, the foreign policy establishment have long, advocated: a maximization of U.S. “soft power.” Harvard’s Joseph S. Nye defines soft power, as “the ability to get what you want through, attraction rather than coercion,” through an, enhanced understanding and utilization of, multilateral institutions, mutually beneficial policies, cultural exchanges, and commercial relations. There are no immediate threats to the U.S. in Latin America. A majority of the region’s, political elite—even most of its current governing, leftists—share many of the same values, the United States claims to embody, even, more so following the election of the first, African-American president, who is wildly, popular in Latin America. As a result, there, is no other place in the world that offers, U.S., president Barack Obama the opportunity to, put into place the kind of intelligent foreign policy that he and his closest advisors, such, as United Nations (U.N.) ambassador Susan, Rice, believe is necessary to stop the hemorrhaging, of U.S. prestige—one that would both, improve Washington’s ability to deploy its many, competitive advantages, while removing key, points of friction.
Answers to: No US/Cuban Trade

[     ]

[     ] The financial incentive for trade and the risk of worse sanctions as a punishment will motivate Cuba to trade with the US.

Perez, JD from Yale Law School, 2010

These first few steps would then allow the United States to begin by engaging Cuba in a multi-lateral framework. The model can mirror the six-party talks held with North Korea, which provide a structure for direct American engagement with the North Korean government. n87 The Cuban government will likely participate since the United States has so much to offer, including the reduction of sanctions, various security guarantees, the promise of normalized relations, and an eventual end to Cuba’s isolation. Combined with these carrots, the United States will also have the stick of increased sanctions, and a reversion back to diplomatic isolation.
Answers to: Cuba Controls Imports

[ ]

[ ] Even if money goes to the Cuban government, it encourages change in behavior.

Perez, JD from Yale Law School, 2010

As discussed above, any major reform in Cuba should first begin in the economic sector, as opposed to the political sector. The Cuban government will likely accept foreign investment and introduce elements of private ownership into its economy long before it releases its stranglehold on politics and holds free elections. Although the first stage of economic reform has already begun, this stage can end at a moment's notice. Policy performance matters, and nothing breeds success like success. Therefore, the U.S. should design a policy that helps ensure that these initial reforms are successful. Success of reform will breed more reform and an increased demand for a different economic environment. In this way, an initial aperture’s success will punch a hole in the Cuban government’s ability to restrain economic activity while maintaining credibility. While Cuba introduces these financial reforms, the U.S. should resist calls to strengthen the economic sanctions, and should instead respond to any economic opening on the island with more bilateral trade opportunities. By engaging Cuba economically, rather than isolating it politically, the U.S. could help link an entire generation of Cubans to the capitalist world.
Most of Cuba’s problems stem from the embargo – trade will improve conditions even if the regime still exists.

Franks, South American correspondent for Reuters, 2012

Both the United States and Cuba would benefit if Washington would lift its longstanding trade embargo against the island, but U.S. President Barack Obama has toughened the sanctions since taking office in 2009, a top Cuban official said on Thursday. The embargo, fully in place since 1962, has done $108 billion in damage to the Cuba economy, but also has violated the constitutional rights of Americans and made a market of 11 million people off limits to U.S. companies, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez told reporters. “The blockade is, without doubt, the principal cause of the economic problems of our country and the essential obstacle for (our) development,” he said, using Cuba’s term for the embargo. “The blockade provokes suffering, shortages, difficulties that reach each Cuban family, each Cuban child,” Rodriguez said. He spoke at a press conference that Cuba stages each year ahead of what has become an annual vote in the United Nations on a resolution condemning the embargo. The vote is expected to take place next month. Last year, 186 countries voted for the resolution, while only the United States and Israel supported the embargo, Rodriguez said. Lifting the embargo would improve the image of the United States around the world, he said, adding that it would also end what he called a "massive, flagrant and systematic violation of human rights."
Answers to: Disadvantages Outweigh

[   ]

[   ] Structural violence caused by economic sanctions outweighs other international threats like war and terrorism.

Mueller and Mueller, Senior Fellow at Cato Institute and Assistant Professor of Comparative Military Studies at the School of Advanced Airpower Studies at Maxwell Airforce Base, 1999 (John and Karl, “Sanctions of Mass Destruction,” Foreign Affairs, May/June, pages 43-53, ProQuest)

THE DANGERS posed by chemical and biological weapons, like those from rogue states and international terrorism, are often exaggerated, and for the most part still merely theoretical. They have been blown out of proportion in the quest for things to be alarmed about in a relatively safe post—Cold War world. By contrast, the dangers posed to human well-being by comprehensive economic sanctions are clear, present, and sometimes devastating, yet they have often been overlooked by scholars, policymakers, and the media. It might help if severe economic sanctions were designated by the older label of "economic warfare." In past wars economic embargoes caused huge numbers of deaths. Some 750,000 German civilians may have died because of the Allied naval blockade during World War I, for example, a figure that does not include embargo-related deaths in Austria, Turkey, and Bulgaria or German deaths between the end of the war and the lifting of the blockade upon the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Fewer than two million people, by comparison, have been killed by aerial bombing in all the wars of the twentieth century combined. During the Cold War the effect of economic sanctions was generally limited because when one side imposed them the other side often undermined them. Thus the U.S. economic embargo on Cuba was substantially mitigated for decades by compensatory Soviet aid. But in the wake of the Cold War, sanctions are more likely to be comprehensive and thus effective in causing harm if not necessarily in achieving political objectives. So long as they can coordinate their efforts, the big countries have at their disposal a credible, inexpensive, and potent weapon for use against small and medium-sized foes. The dominant powers have shown that they can inflict enormous pain at remarkably little cost to themselves or the global economy. Indeed, in a matter of months or years whole economies can be devastated, as happened in Haiti in 1991 and Serbia in 1992.
Cuba already exploits its environment as a tourist attraction – the centralized government has squandered its natural resources.

Connell, Research Associate at the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 2009
(Christina, “The U.S. and Cuba: Destined to be Environmental Partners,” June 12, Online: http://www.coha.org/the-us-and-cuba-an-environmental-duo/)

For Cubans and foreigners alike, the beaches of Cuba constitute the principle tourist attraction in the country, but even these have not escaped wasteful government exploitation. The famous beaches east of Havana have been the victims of sand removal for use by the Cuban government in the construction industry. In addition to coastal destruction, like many of its Caribbean neighbors, Cuba faces deforestation, over-cultivation of land and compaction of soils due to the use of heavy farm machinery and strip mining. These practices have resulted in high salinity in soils and heavy land erosion. Furthermore, poor water quality in freshwater streams has affected the wildlife habitat, which is in turn influenced by runoff from agricultural practices, erosion due to deforestation, and sedimentation of freshwater streams. Cuba must act in a responsible manner to stop environmental degradation and preserve its tourist industry as an early step to salvage its inert economy. The environmental degradation that began during the colonial era has transcended time as a result of Castro’s political and economic paradigm. Only in the last 40 years, with the development of the Commission for the Protection of the Environment and the Conservation of Natural Resources (COMARNA), has Cuba begun to address growing environmental concerns. COMARNA consolidated all of the agencies with environmental responsibilities, as a step towards giving them the power to influence all environmental issues. Although COMARNA was all-inclusive, it lacked independent authority, so its activities achieved few tangible results. The sad fact was that the centralized agency only succeeded in aiding the state in squandering resources.
Cuba Already Exploits its Environment

[ ]

Castro already uses his authority to over-ride environmental considerations.

Connell, Research Associate at the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 2009
(Christina, “The U.S. and Cuba: Destined to be Environmental Partners,” June 12, Online: http://www.coha.org/the-us-and-cuba-an-environmental-duo/)

In many parts of the country communism has inadequately acted as a seal to preserve elements of Cuba’s past as the centralized government prohibited private development by not giving special permission. A **number of tourist resorts already dot the island, but Cuba has been largely exempt from mass tourist exploitation due to frozen relations with the U.S. Although the island remains underdeveloped, Fidel Castro has used his unchecked power to back policies, which have been heedless to environmental considerations, thus damaging some of the island’s pristine ecosystem that once defined the island.** Roughly the size of Pennsylvania, Cuba is the largest Caribbean island, and **if preservation and conservation measures are planned and carried out in a cognizant manner, it could become a paradigm for sustainable development at the global level.** The Obama administration’s recent easing of travel restrictions on Cuban Americans visiting relatives on the island **could be of immense importance** not only to Cuban families, but also to the **preservation of Cuba’s unique and increasingly threatened coastal and marine environments.** Such a concession on Washington’s part would mark a small, but still **significant stride in U.S.-Cuba relations,** yet the travel restrictions still remain inherently discriminatory. The preposterous regulations that allow only a certain category of Americans into Cuba signify only a meager shift in U.S. policy towards Cuba.
Cuban Tourism Rates already High

Cuba’s tourism rates are already growing rapidly.

Piccone, senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, 2012
(Ted, “Cuba is Changing, Slowly but Surely,” Brookings, Jan 19, Online: http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2012/01/19-cuba-piccone)

One area where Cuba seems to be moving in a positive direction is tourism. From 1990 to 2010, the estimated number of tourists has risen from 360,000 to 2.66 million. In addition, thanks to President Obama’s decision to allow Cuban-American families to visit the island and send remittances as much as they want, Cubans have received over 400,000 visits and roughly $2 billion from relatives in the United States. These are proving to be important sources of currency and commerce that are helping families cope with reduced subsidies and breathe life in the burgeoning private sector. A walk through crowded Old Havana, where construction crews are busy restoring one of the Americas’ great colonial treasures, offers compelling evidence that Cuba can be a strong magnet for Europeans, Canadians, Chinese and—some day—hundreds of thousands of American visitors. And Pope Benedict’s visit in late March will shine an international spotlight on a Cuba slowly opening its doors to the world, yes, but more importantly, to an increasingly vocal and confident Catholic Church intent on securing a more prominent and relevant place in Cuban society.
Tourism Good for Cuba’s Economy

[ ]

Tourism is essential to Cuba’s economy.

Havana Journal, 2006

In the middle of a growing shortage of supplies, tourism became Cuba’s salvation thanks to its rapid development. When talking about the benefits of tourism, we are obliged to acknowledge its dynamic contributions in hard currency, its role as a major source for employment and as the driving force behind the activities of another group of industries. Considered as the oil of 21st century, tourism has become the salvation for many countries’ economies, including Cuba which has incorporated it in its strategy for the national recovery since last decade with successful results. This audacious step has been rewarded by a steady increase of profits in the 90s. Today, tourism has become the mainstay of Cuban economy.
Tourism Good for Cuba’s Economy

Lifting the embargo to allow for tourism is essential to prevent a Cuban economic collapse.

Havana Journal, 2006

Due to the economic war of US against the island along the past 45 years, Cuba’s losses are estimated at over $82,000m. US interventionist and extraterritorial policy has greatly affected socially and economically the island, a banned territory for any US citizen. “It’s true that so far Washington has ignored the United Nations’ call for the lifting of the blockade against Cuba, but we will not despair,” said Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Perez Roque who has talked on the progress Cuba would experience if the US stopped its aggressive policy. “For example, if Cuba received five million US tourists per year, that would represent extra income of more than $7,000m,” pointed out Perez Roque. Without the scourge of the US blockade, tourism in Cuba could take nearly $576m during the first year. In addition, the island could take another extra $70m per year from a half million tourists traveling by cruisers. Each seven days some 80 cruisers navigate around the Cuban archipelago. Tourism is vital for the revival of the island’s economy, that’s why US successive administrations since 1959 have implemented a number of measures and laws aimed to reduce Cuba’s national income. That’s why the US government has banned its citizens to visit the island even when this new regulation violates the US constitutional law on free movement.
Economic engagement with Cuba is essential to protect their environment, and would set a model for sustainable development in other countries.

Connell, Research Associate at the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 2009
(Christina, “The U.S. and Cuba: Destined to be Environmental Partners,” June 12, Online: http://www.coha.org/the-us-and-cuba-an-environmental-duo/)

The 50-year-old U.S. embargo against the island has resoundingly failed to achieve its purpose. Obama’s modifications fall short of what it will take to reestablish a constructive U.S.-Cuba relationship. **Cuba’s tropical forests, soils, and maritime areas have suffered degradation as a result of harmful policies stemming from a Soviet-style economic system. Cuba’s economy could be reinvigorated through expanded tourism, development initiatives and an expansion of commodity exports, including sugarcane for ethanol. U.S. policy toward Cuba should encourage environmental factors, thereby strengthening U.S. credibility throughout the hemisphere. An environmental partnership between the U.S. and Cuba is not only possible, but could result in development models that could serve as an example for environmental strategies throughout the Americas. The U.S. has the economic resources necessary to aid Cuba in developing effective policy, while the island provides the space where sustainable systems can be implemented initially instead of being applied after the fact. Cuba’s extreme lack of development provides an unspoiled arena for the execution of exemplary sustainable environmental protection practices.**
Cuba Embargo Affirmative
AT: Oil Drilling DA

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Cuba is Already Drilling for Oil

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Cuba is already drilling for oil – companies from Russia and Norway are circumventing the embargo.

Orsi, Associated Press correspondent in Cuba, 2012
(Peter, "Oil Rig Arrives off Cuba for New Exploration," Dec 15, Online: http://bigstory.ap.org/article/oil-rig-arrives-cuba-new-exploration)

A Norwegian-owned platform arrived in waters off Cuba's north-central coast for exploratory drilling by the Russian oil company Zarubezhneft, authorities said Saturday, renewing the island's search for petroleum after three failed wells this year. Drilling is to begin "in the coming days" and take six months, according to a notice published by the Communist Party newspaper Granma. The depth of the project was given as 21,300 feet (6,500 meters). State-run oil company Cubapetroleo said in the announcement that the Songa Mercur rig, owned by Songa Offshore of Norway, was inspected to make sure it contains less than 10 percent U.S.-made parts. That allows the companies involved in the drilling to avoid sanctions under the 50-year-old U.S. embargo against Cuba.
The embargo stands in the way of effective disaster management – it prevents spill technologies and experts from being mobilized.


An oil well blowout in Cuban waters would almost certainly require a U.S. response. Without changes in current U.S. law, however, that response would undoubtedly come far more slowly than is desirable. The Coast Guard would be barred from deploying highly experienced manpower, specially designed booms, skimming equipment and vessels, and dispersants. U.S. offshore gas and oil companies would also be barred from using well-capping stacks, remotely operated subsimibles, and other vital technologies. Although a handful of U.S. spill responders hold licenses to work with Repsol, their licenses do not extend to well capping or relief drilling. The result of a slow response to a Cuban oil spill would be greater, perhaps catastrophic, economic and environmental damage to Florida and the Southeast. Efforts to rewrite current law and policy toward Cuba, and encouraging cooperation with its government, could antagonize groups opposed to improved relations with the Castro regime. They might protest any decision allowing U.S. federal agencies to assist Cuba or letting U.S. companies operate in Cuban territory. However, taking sensible steps to prepare for a potential accident at an oil well in Cuban waters would not break new ground or materially alter broader U.S. policy toward Cuba. For years, Washington has worked with Havana on issues of mutual concern. The United States routinely coordinates with Cuba on search and rescue operations in the Straits of Florida as well as to combat illicit drug trafficking and migrant smuggling. During the hurricane season, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) provides Cuba with information on Caribbean storms. The recommendations proposed here are narrowly tailored to the specific challenges that a Cuban oil spill poses to the United States. They would not help the Cuban economy or military. What they would do is protect U.S. territory and property from a potential danger emanating from Cuba. Cuba will drill for oil in its territorial waters with or without the blessing of the United States. Defending against a potential oil spill requires a modicum of advance coordination and preparation with the Cuban government, which need not go beyond spill-related matters. Without taking these precautions, the United States risks a second Deepwater Horizon, this time from Cuba.
Cuba is already making plans to drill oil – US engagement is key to ensure environmental safety.

Pinon, research fellow at the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University, 2010 (Jorge, and Robert Muse, “Coping with the Next Oil Spill: Why US-Cuba Environmental Co-operation is Critical,” Brookings Institute, May 18, Online:
http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2010/5/18%20oil%20spill%20cuba%20pinon/0518_oil_spill_cuba_pinon)

While the quest for deepwater drilling of oil and gas may slow as a result of the latest calamity, it is unlikely to stop. It came as little surprise, for example, that Repsol recently announced plans to move forward with exploratory oil drilling in Cuban territorial waters later this year. As Cuba continues to develop its deepwater oil and natural gas reserves, the consequence to the United States of a similar mishap occurring in Cuban waters moves from the theoretical to the actual. The sobering fact that a Cuban spill could foul hundreds of miles of American coastline and do profound harm to important marine habitats demands cooperative and proactive planning by Washington and Havana to minimize or avoid such a calamity. Also important is the planning necessary to prevent and, if necessary, respond to incidents arising from this country’s oil industry that, through the action of currents and wind, threaten Cuban waters and shorelines. While Washington is working to prevent future disasters in U.S. waters like the Deepwater Horizon, its current policies foreclose the ability to respond effectively to future oil disasters—whether that disaster is caused by companies at work in Cuban waters, or is the result of companies operating in U.S. waters.
Businesses Don't Want to Drill Around Cuba

[ ] The bureaucratic nature of the Cuban government deters prospective drilling operations.

White, JD from the University of Colorado School of Law, 2010


Additionally, Cuba’s ability to cultivate a flourishing oil industry depends on Havana’s *willingness to reduce bureaucratic obstacles to investment on the island*. Writing in the Journal of Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems, Daniel Erikson of the Washington, D.C., policy organization The Inter-American Dialogue describes the sizeable institutional and bureaucratic hurdles facing foreign investment in Cuba: **Cuba remains a rigid communist state with a centrally controlled economic structure**, a workforce with uncertain habits, low per capita income, and high levels of external debt. Canadian and European investors in Cuba cite numerous difficulties related to red tape, arbitrary treatment by Cuban regulators, interference in hiring decisions, and questionable labor practices. Accordingly, while Cuba’s potential oil reserves have drawn willing investors, the extent to which drilling in Cuban waters thrives depends upon overcoming these infrastructural, administrative, and bureaucratic obstacles. China’s recent replacement of Havana’s relic “camel” buses may provide the best analogy of what is required to update and expand the infrastructure necessary for drilling. The example suggests that Cuba lacks the means or initiative necessary to expand and modernize existing infrastructure on its own, but welcomes foreign capital to accomplish those objectives. Whether that capital arrives is, at this stage, speculative.
Oceans are Resilient to Disasters

Kennedy, professor of environmental science at Maryland, 2002
(Victor, “Coastal and Marine Ecosystems and Global Climate Change,” Online: http://www.pewclimate.org/projects/marine.cfm)

There is evidence that marine organisms and ecosystems are resilient to environmental change. Steele (1991) hypothesized that the biological components of marine systems are tightly coupled to physical factors, allowing them to respond quickly to rapid environmental change and thus rendering them ecologically adaptable. Some species also have wide genetic variability throughout their range, which may allow for adaptation to climate change.
Cuban Oil Won’t Reduce Dependence on Middle East

Cuba doesn’t have enough oil to alter US dependence on Middle East oil supplies – there’s only a risk lifting the embargo will result in technological exchanges that improve safety.

Benjamin-Alvarado, Professor of Political Science at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2010
(Jonathan, Cuba’s Energy Future: Strategic Approaches to Cooperation, Brookings Institute publication)

At present Cuba possesses an estimated 4.6 million barrels of oil and 9.3 TFC (total final consumption) of natural gas in North Cuba Basin. If viewed in strictly instrumental terms—namely, increasing the pool of potential imports to the U.S. market by accessing Cuban oil and ethanol holdings—Cuba’s oil represents little in the way of absolute material gain to the U.S. energy supply. But the possibility of energy cooperation between the United States and Cuba offers significant relative gains connected to the potential for developing production-sharing agreements, promoting the transfer of state-of-the-art technology and foreign direct investment, and increasing opportunities for the development of joint-venture partnerships, and scientific-technical exchanges.
Dependence on Middle East Oil Undermines US Leadership

Oil dependence undermines strategic US leadership.

Electrification Coalition, a nonpartisan group of energy industry leaders invested in policy change, 2009
(“ELECTRIFICATION ROADMAP: REVOLUTIONIZING TRANSPORTATION AND ACHIEVING ENERGY SECURITY,” Electrification Coalition Report, November, p. 30.)

The importance of oil in the U.S. economy has given it a place of prominence in foreign and military policy. In particular, two key issues related to oil affect national security. First, the vulnerability of global oil supply lines and infrastructure has driven the United States to accept the burden of securing the world’s oil supply. Second, the importance of large individual oil producers constrains U.S. foreign policy options when dealing with problems in these nations.

A crippling disruption to global oil supplies ranks among the most immediate threats to the United States today. A prolonged interruption due to war in the Middle East or the closure of a key oil transit route would lead to severe economic dislocation. U.S. leaders have recognized this for decades, and have made it a matter of stated policy that the United States will protect the free flow of oil with military force. Still, policy alone has consistently fallen short of complete deterrence, and the risk of oil supply interruptions has persisted for nearly 40 years. To mitigate this risk, U.S. armed forces expend enormous resources protecting chronically vulnerable infrastructure in hostile corners of the globe and patrolling oil transit routes. This engagement benefits all nations, but comes primarily at the expense of the American military and ultimately the American taxpayer. A 2009 study by the RAND Corporation placed the ongoing cost of this burden at between $67.5 billion and $83 billion annually, plus an additional $8 billion in military operations. 33 In proportional terms, these costs suggest that between 12 and 15 percent of the current defense budget is devoted to guaranteeing the free flow of oil. Foreign policy constraints related to oil dependence are less quantifiable, but no less damaging. Whether dealing with uranium enrichment in Iran, a hostile regime in Venezuela, or an increasingly assertive Russia, American diplomacy is distorted by our need to minimize disruptions to the flow of oil. Perhaps more frustrating, the importance of oil to the broader global economy has made it nearly impossible for the United States to build international consensus on a wide range of foreign policy and humanitarian issues.