

THE HISTORICAL CUBA-U.S. DISCORDANCY FROM THE THEORETICAL OUTLOOK OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the main features of the relationship between Cuba and the United States (U.S.) since the nineteenth century to the present. The essay analyses the confrontation between these two countries from the theoretical view of International Relations (IR). The aim of the paper is to demonstrate that the nature of the Cuba-U.S. discrepancies during the Cold War is not confined to the ideological controversy of the East/West relations. Despite the changes that have taken place in world politics during the 1990s and the hopes which opened with the Obama administration, the design of U.S. policy towards Cuba has scarcely changed after the end of the Cold War. On the other hand, the revival of the Wilsonian ideas alleged in the mainstream IR literature does not take into account the special case of the Cuba-U.S relations. Regardless of the current trend to stress international institutions and to sort out conflict within the framework of international agreements, the Cuban problem remains as a national interest matter for the U.S. The historic sequence of the Cuban issue in American politics lend support to the argument that while within the academic discipline of International Relations there is a trend to consider the current period as a proof of the end of realism, the wires which lead the American political behaviour towards Cuba are still under the influence of old-fashioned national interest, the rational choice program and the U.S. dilemma of a superpower being challenged in its own hemisphere.

Keywords: Cuba-U.S. confrontation, IR Theory, national interest, rational choice, Monroe Doctrine, Helms-Burton Act

Introduction

Despite the changes that have taken place in world politics during the 1990s and the hopes that opened with the Obama administration, the design of U.S. policy towards Cuba has scarcely changed after the end of the cold war.

The central aim of this article is to explain the nature of current U.S.

policy, and show that this is due to a series of factors that are beyond the current process of increasing world interdependence and the so called globalisation.

In tackling this, certain repercussions are evident for International Relations (IR) theory. The focus of the paper is not the IR theory, though where relevant, certain comments will be drawn.

Rather than being driven by ideological concerns, the current U.S. policy towards Cuba has an ancestral design that can be traced back to the 19th Century. Thus the article will take the Monroe Doctrine from the last century as a starting point and will conclude with the Helms-Burton Bill of 1996.

This basic idea of continuity in the motivation of U. S. policy will provide an overarching structure for the essay. The paper will give a major weight to Bill Clinton's years in the White House for two main reasons: First, there is an important contradiction evident in the fact that while those years have been marked by dramatic changes in world politics, surprisingly U.S. policy towards Cuba over that period did not confirm any significant adjustment. Second, it is important to contest the false perception according to which Democrats have been perceived as having a less aggressive position towards Cuba than Republicans when in office.

Given that a central aim of this article is to demonstrate the enduring significance of historic rather than contemporary reasons in explaining the Cuban issue in current us politics, only the last pages will concentrate on the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations.

Therefore, we present a brief historic background of Cuban-American relations since the last century to the triumph of the revolution in 1959, divided in three periods for methodological reasons: a) the specific application of the Monroe Doctrine and the theory of the *ripe apple* in the 1820s and henceforth up to Cuban independence; b) the period 1898-1902 with the U.S. occupation of Cuba and the imposition of the Platt Amendment; c) finally, the period 1902-1958 of the so called "pseudo republic" controlled by American interests and the conditions that led to the Revolution.

Then the paper analyzes the situation after the Cuban revolution of 1959 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and presents different factors of that new era in Cuba-U.S relations, in order to show their different sides. From the American embargo and its conjuncture explanations (the Cuba's challenge to American power by the process of expropriations, Cuban support to revolutionary movements in Latin America in the 1960s, the Cuban military presence in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, the alleged status of soviet satellite that threatened U.S. interests) to the Cuba's official discourse naming American politics as destabilizing.

Finally, the article focuses on the situation beyond the cold War, when there is no longer a Soviet Union, when Cuban troops are nowhere to be found abroad and, rather than a lifting of the embargo, we have seen the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (Torricelli Act) and its reinforcement with the Helms- Burton Bill (Cuban Liberty and Solidarity Act) becoming law in 1996. Special attention will be given to the current American argument to maintain the embargo: democracy and the situation of human rights.

In spite of the more or less chronological ordering of the text, it is neither a Cuban history nor a history of Cuban relations with the U.S., but rather a cluster of the most remarkable events which explain the current particularities from the outlook of the international relations theory.

IR Theory and the Cuban Issue

The historic sequence of the Cuban issue in American politics lend support to the argument that while within the academic discipline of International Relations there is a trend to consider the current period as a proof of the end of realism, the wires which lead the American political behaviour towards Cuba are still under the influence of old-fashioned national interest, the rational choice programme and the U.S.dilemma of a superpower being challenged in its own hemisphere.

This is partly because the Cuban challenge has remained realistic, and because the U.S. has failed in its treatment of this challenge during more than five decades. Special attention will be given to the American argument, from Clinton to Obama, to maintain and even reinforce the embargo: democracy and the situation of human rights.

With the exception of only a very few authors, Cuban literature associated with the topic, both the one which has been written inside the country and the one written by Cuban exiles, has traditionally been marked by ideological and political concerns. Because of the academic nature of this exercise, the author's personal point of views have been enriched basically with a framework of an Anglo- American literature, in order to avoid reiterative ideological dimensions.

Moreover, the discipline of IR where actually exists the mainstream debate between realist and liberal scholars, is, above all, an Anglo-American invention and, therefore, to approximate the analysis of the Cuban issue within the framework of that theoretical debate requires the use of this a literature.

It's important to contest the predominant American view on issues like intervention and human rights and a sort of geopolitical approach must be done throughout the whole paper in order to evaluate the Cuban issue as likely to be, if not the most discrepant issue, at least, the more permanent point of discrepancies within the Euro-American relations beyond the Cold

War.

Between intervention and self-determination: the core of the challenge

The impact of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and its influence on the American foreign policy has had important repercussions on the IR literature. Issues like the embargo and the Cuban missile crisis have been drawn upon in several theoretical approaches during the last five decades. The Cuban-American confrontation is an issue quite often associated with the impact of the Cuban Revolution and its challenge to the American hegemony in the Western hemisphere.

The American policies towards Cuba since the triumph of the Revolution have been seen through the lens of such a challenge with its correspondent ideological connotation during the Cold War and therefore within the framework of the East-West antagonism.

However, the consistency of American policies towards Cuba can be seen as far back as the beginnings of the 19th century, notwithstanding the changes brought about by the Cuban Revolution. Despite the different means, the aims of American policy towards Cuba have scarcely changed since last century and the framework of the current confrontation is somehow the reflection of a relationship which is linked to almost the whole history of both Cuba and the U.S.

Before 1959 there was a long period of interventionist policy which can usefully be divided in several stages. So we will outline the most important stages in U.S.-Cuba relations before the triumph of the Revolution in order to demonstrate that the current post Cold War confrontation is explained better by historic factors rather than by ideological ones.

At the same time, we aim to prove that though the current discrepancies within the western powers concerning the Cuban dilemma are highlighted due to the extemporary American behaviour in the 1990s and in the 21st century, they are by no means a result of the recent history but the reflection of almost two hundred years of history, of rivalry between the goals of intervention and self-determination.

Three different momentums characterize the Cuban-American history of cause-effect around diverse types of interventionist policies before 1959: a) during the years of the Spanish colonial control over Cuba; b) between 1898 and 1903 with the Cuban independence of Spain and the establishment of the so-called permanent Treaty and c) since 1903 to 1959, during the period of the so-called Republic of Cuba.

From the original thirteen British colonies, the United States of America became the enormous territory that they are nowadays by different methods of expansion and acquisition, from purchase to the more diverse violent ways of annexation. Cuba, both due to its geographical situation and

also because of the weakness of the Spanish metropolis, has been a tentative target ever since. Thomas Jefferson considered that "the Island of Cuba ... would be an easy conquest" (Simons, 1996: 164).

In 1762, just a few years before North American independence from Britain, as an extension of the European Seven Years War to the overseas territories, the British occupied Havana. Though the British ruled Havana only for a year, the occupation had lasting effects on the future development of Cuba as well as on Cuban-U.S. relations and might be considered a prelude to the current British-American discrepancies concerning the Cuban dilemma. At the end of the Seven Years War, Spain recuperated Havana from Britain. Havana was given back to Spain in exchange for Florida. Despite Florida's territory is several times bigger than Havana, in 1763 Havana was largely more important than Florida due to its strategic position in the western hemisphere and because of the intense commercial activity of Havana's Harbour.

The temporary British presence in Havana broke the traditional Spanish monopoly of trade, and henceforth the Spanish rulers were compelled to accept administrative reform and liberal trade. Geoff Simons argues that "such developments would bring benefits to the Cuban economy", because Cuba's trading rights were expanded and as a result of that "by 1798 the volume of American trade with Cuba surpassed the Cuban-Spanish commerce" (Simons, 1996: 165,167).

The Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed in 1823 and while it has often been considered as one of the first expressions of the principle of non-intervention only in international law, "the Monroe Doctrine was a partial doctrine of non- intervention" (Thomas, 1985: 23).

It might be argued that in fact the Monroe Doctrine was a path to guarantee North America's right of intervention in the rest of the Western hemisphere as long as it "was based on the assumption that the two regions shared common interests which the northern power had the right to interpret" (Percy, 1981: 8).

Theoretically, as far as the Monroe Doctrine declared that the United States would see any European interference in Latin America as a hostile act against the United States, the Monroe Doctrine is the basic foundation of the slogan 'America for the Americans'. However, in practice, the Monroe Doctrine has appeared to some to stand for only the whole of America for the Northern Americans.

In the concrete case of Cuba, the Monroe Doctrine has a specific complement which is not usually taken into account in the literature of International Relations. In 1823, the same year that President Monroe proclaimed his doctrine, his Secretary of State and later president of the

United States, John Quincy Adams formulated the principle of the 'ripe apple'.

Adams stated that "there are laws of political as well as of physical gravitation (...) and if an apple, severed by a tempest from its native tree, cannot choose but to fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self- support, can gravitate only towards the North American Union, which, by the same law of nature, cannot cast her off from its bosom" (Pérez, 1995: 108-109).

Thus, despite their apparently contradictory foundation on non-intervention and intervention respectively, both the Monroe Doctrine and the theory of the apple are simulations, they complement one another and have marked the line of the U.S. attitude toward Cuba henceforth.

American interests in Cuba since the 19th century have been a sort of combination of different historic factors which include economy, culture and the belief in the manifest destiny. On the other hand, Realism in American politics towards Cuba combined with pragmatic determination has been present even before *realism* became a general thinking in American foreign policy.

Cuba is the longest Caribbean island and its infrastructure was quite advanced for those times; for example, the railroad was introduced in Cuba earlier than in Spain despite the fact that Cuba was the colony and Spain the metropolis. However, the infrastructure and Cuba's privileged geographic situation in the middle of the so-called USA 'backyard' were not the determining factors in American interest rather the latter revolved around Cuba's economic role.

American interest in Cuba in the mid 1800s was not only a political concern but an alternative forced by economic facts. Cuban imports and exports in 1840-1850 were more dependent on the U.S. than on Spain, despite Cuba being a Spanish colony.

The production of sugar was historically linked with Cuban-American relations even during the times of the Spanish Colony. In the U.S., the development of capitalism was looking for markets and raw materials and after the civil war the conditions were created for "strong between United States big business and the country's foreign policy" (Pearce, 1981:9)and, therefore, the logical step would be the overseas expansions. On the other hand, there were three predominant trends in Cuban political thinking in the 19th century: *independentista*, *autonomista* and *anexionista*. The last of these (the annexation) means the future of Cuba becoming a new star in the flag of the American Union.

The period of the civil war in the United States coincides with the emergence of the Cuban nationality. The classification of the anti-Spain movements in the Cuban colony is done according to historic parameters.

Autonomists had importance before the formation of the Cuban nationality because no national or patriotic feeling existed yet, whereas once such a process was over then *independentista* becomes the predominant trend and in 1868 the armed struggle against the Spanish power started.

However, annexation continued on as an important sentiment partly because of the American encouragement to acquisition of Cuba and partly due to a supposed idea of Cuban incapability for self-governance.

Even though the debate on slavery was strong in the U.S. before the civil war, the U.S. government made many attempts to purchase the island of Cuba despite it being a slave territory. At the same time, conspiracy in favour of annexation amongst the important Cuban elites was taking place. However, despite the economic obstacles of slavery, Spanish rulers did not allow slaves' emancipation due to political reasons. As the Spanish General Governor of Cuba pointed out, emancipation "would put an end to the only means of preventing the island's falling to annexationists" (Pérez, 1995: 12).

American Intervention

Once different ways of incorporating Cuba into the North American Union had failed and Cuban patriots had once again initiated the War of Independence, the U. S. decided to declare war on Spain and occupied Cuba in 1898.

Much evidence has been presented by Cuban and Spanish historians to confirm that the *Ejército Mambí*¹⁰⁸ had already won the war for independence when the U. S. intervention took place. In fact, "the contribution of the Cuba population to the country's war of independence, which had been going on for some time before the United States entered it, was subsequently written out of history and the United States declared it had 'liberated' Cuba" (Pearce, 1981:9).

Prior to the American intervention, the U.S. Undersecretary of War, J. C. Breckenridge, declared of Cuba:

"...we must clean up the country, even if this means using the methods Divine Providence used in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We must destroy everything within our cannon's range of fire. We must impose a harsh blockade so that hunger and its constant companion, disease, undermine the peaceful population and decimate the Cuban Army" (Simons, 1986: 185).

¹⁰⁸The *Ejército Mambí* was the Cuban army fighting for independence, first during *La Guerra de los Diez Años* (The Ten Years' War, 1868-1878), and then during *La Guerra de Independencia* (1895-1898).

Therefore the general opinion in the IR literature that there was a Spanish-American War might be contested, because in fact there was the Cuban independence war against Spain and then the American intervention.

As Breckenridge himself sums up about the war in Cuba "our policy must always be to support the weaker against the stronger, until we have obtained the extermination of them both, in order to annex the Pearl of the Antilles"(Simons, 1986: 186).

Robert F. Smith notes that "Cuban nationalist historians were especially angry over the fact that the United States had taken over their War of Independence and named it the Spanish-American War" and he argues that "this side of Cuban nationalism has been poorly understood in the United States, but perhaps we can imagine a similar reaction if, in a world dominated by France, the French had called the American Revolution the Franco-British War, had relegated George Washington to the level of bushwhacker and baggage carrier and had retained a permanent naval base at the Brooklyn Navy Yard" (Smith, 1968: 57).

The four years period (1898-1902) that followed the end of the war, with the presence of a U. S. governor of the island, had a decisive incidence over the future history of Cuba and its relations with the United States. It marked the first of a continuous series of U.S. military interventions in Cuba before 1959. In that period, the rules of a pseudo-republic that Cuba would be were designed. Perez argues that "independence was a crushing disappointment for many patriotic leaders"(Pérez, 1995: 213).

The Cuban Constitution of 1901 was born with major defects from the perspective of self-determination. It contained the Platt Amendment¹⁰⁹ as an appendix. According to the Platt Amendment, the U.S. reserved and retained the right of intervention for the preservation of the Cuban 'independence' as well as the possibility of maintaining military bases in the island. Even today, Cubans argue that the American presence in the base of Guantanamo in Cuba goes against all the international legal norms and violates Cuban sovereignty (Ricardo, 1994).

In 1903 the Platt Amendment was incorporated into the Permanent Treaty. The latter, under the supposed idea of reciprocity, would result in the economicdependence being an official agreement, whereas the Platt Amendment would condition the abortion of Cuban self determination wishes.

The Spanish metropolis had lost political power but Cuban citizenscould find neither a determining role in the economy nor the political capacity for decisiveness. As Perez (1995: 213) has pointed out, "the United

¹⁰⁹The U.S. Secretary of War, Elihu Root, redacted a draft about the future relation with Cuba. Such a draft was presented to Senator Oliver H. Platt who modified it and it was enacted by the Congress in 1901 and became known as the Platt Amendment.

States capital overwhelmed the local economy”. As a result of that, there was not possibility of diversification in the Cuban economy and the monoculture of sugar cane established the rules of Cuban dependence on United States.

Big Stick and Dollar Diplomacy

Theodore Roosevelt had been considered an American hero during the military intervention in Cuba and was the first American President elected in the 20th century. His foreign policy towards the Caribbean and Central America is known as ‘big stick’ and, in fact, concerning Cuba the big stick was the baptism of the new republic, combined with the Roosevelt Corollary which pretended to be an adaptation of the Monroe Doctrine to the new times. The Roosevelt Corollary declared U.S. intervention openly as far as Roosevelt “believed that unless the U.S. took a line, Britain or Germany probably would” (Thomas, 1971:476). In virtue of that the second military intervention in Cuba occurred from 1906 to 1909.

William Howard Taft, successor of Roosevelt, introduced the “dollar diplomacy” in foreign policy which is considered as a counterpart to the “big stick”. However, both policies complemented each other. Therefore, the threat of intervention and marines waiting for the order to land in Cuba was permanent and they so did in 1912 while, at the end of his presidential period, Taft declared:

"The day is not far distant when three Stars and Stripes at three equidistant points will mark our territory: one at the North Pole, another at the Panama Canal and the third at the South Pole. The whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally" (Pearce, 1981: 17).

The name of Woodrow Wilson is very often associated in the literature of IR with the principles of liberalism because of his role in the creation of the League of Nations, the importance he conceded to international organizations and his belief in mutual understanding between nations. According to the Wilsonian view of world politics, international institutions would have a bigger weight in decisions and events due to the possibility of sorting out conflicts within the framework of international agreements.

However, concerning Cuba his eight years in office were one more expression of realism and military occupation. In 1917, U.S. marines landed in Cuba just one month before the U.S. declared war on Germany, but the marines remained until 1923, long after the end of the war.

With the republican governments in the U.S. in the 1920s the dependence went on increasing. In the 1920s, sugar continued to be the key for Cuba-U.S. relations and "with over 60% of the industry in U.S. hands and

the U.S. taking 95% of the crop, Cuba was primarily represented by U. S. businessmen and particularly by U.S. bankers" and therefore "Cuban sugar became the shuttlecock of U.S. internal political and economic policy"(Thomas, 1971:557). It is quite ironic that Elihu Root, who was Secretary of War during the first U.S. military intervention in Cuba and who drafted the Platt Amendment, was the representative of the sugar companies in Cuba during the 1920s.

The U.S. rejected the formulation of the Sixth Conference of American States in Havana in 1928 which attempted to proclaim that "no State has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another"(Thomas, 1985: 25). Such behaviour was the remaining reflection of the Platt Amendment. However, an important moment in the Cuba-U.S. relation before World War was the aborted Cuban revolution of 1933.

The popular movement against General Machado was general in 1933 when the U.S. Ambassador Sumner Welles started a special mission to obtain Machado's resignation, asking for a "forceful and positive action by the government of the U.S. (...) in order that our prestige both here and in the rest of the continent may not be seriously prejudiced" (Thomas, 1971:619). Intervention was not necessary due to the popular action against Machado and a revolt within the Cuban army. The revolution of 1933 did not fulfil people's hopes but one year later, as part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's policy of New Deal, the Platt Amendment was abolished. In fact, neither the Platt Amendment nor the permanent Treaty of 1903 was necessary to maintain U.S. control over Cuba, since the economy was in U.S. hands.

The situation remained similar during the 1930s and 1940s, with Cuban governors in the service of the United States. It reached the climax after the *coup d'état* of Fulgencio Batista in 1952. Corruption and violence reached their highest levels in Cuban history and the U.S. tolerance of and friendship toward the Batista regime were the main guarantee for its continuation in power despite its lack of domestic popularity. Robert F. Smith argues that "by the 1950s Cuba contained many of the elements that students of social movements have identified as characterizing a society pregnant with revolution" (Smith, 1968: 58). However, the most important point was that the revolutionary movement against Batista was able to crystallize the opposition. On January the first, 1959, Batista abandoned the island and a new era in Cuba-U.S. relations began.

As we have seen, for the American domination of Cuba since 1898 to 1959 *realpolitik* acted in a sort of combination of military intervention, permanent threat and financial and economic control. On the other hand the main feature of Cuban internal politics during the period was the presence of puppet government supported and used by the U.S. in order to maintain its

goals of domination. However, as Wayne Smith has pointed out “the failure of U.S. policy in Cuba prior to 1959 was a reflection of much wider deficiencies in U.S. decision making” (Smith, 1987: 37).

The Cuban challenge during the cold war

The Soviet Union and the rest of the former communist states of Eastern and Central Europe countries emerged from international conflicts that have involved several countries, i.e. World War I and World War II. However, the Cuban Revolution of 1959 was not a result of an external pressure but an authentically national social movement. This is an important element which should be taken into account to explain the survival of the Cuban social project, beyond the diagnosis of many international scholars since the 1990s who failed to predict it because they had failed to understand Cuban international dynamics from 1959. Cuban communists did not lead the process nor was the revolutionary movement Marxist-Leninist as it's assumed in an important part of the IR literature. As Robert F. Smith (1968: 67) has noted, "rigid Russian-style communism, with its disregard for personal existence, is not at home in Cuban culture, and it is unlikely that it ever will be".

The events which occurred during the two first years of the revolution within the framework of Cuba-U.S. relations would determine the future design of Cuban international position. In a quite superficial manner, many IR scholars and international analysts considered that Cuba was a simple satellite of the Soviet Union, condemned to break down once the Soviet supply disappeared. The important point is to comprehend how a country with a western culture and traditionally dependent on the U.S. became a Soviet allied and a challenge to the U.S. hegemony.

Because of the national sentiment some of the very first measures encouraged by the revolution were agrarian reform and thereby the nationalization of foreign companies, most of them from the U.S. The U.S. response was both economic warfare and encouragement of CIA activities in a variety of ways. The U.S. failed in their different attempts to overthrow the revolution, but the consequences went beyond the boundaries of Cuba-U.S. confrontation. While the deterioration of relations with the U.S. deepened, nationalist sentiment was reinforced and in those conditions the communist bloc appeared as the solution for Cuba's survival.

After Texaco, Shell and Standard Oil refused to refine Soviet petroleum, the Cuban government announced the nationalization of foreign refineries. It is important to understand the incidence of miscalculation in U.S. design of their Cuban policy over the course of the events in Cuba, because previously the nationalization policy was concentrated only on agrarian concern, basically sugar and cattle lands.

Diplomatic relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union had been interrupted in 1952 in the anti-communist Cold War atmosphere of the Batista's dictatorship. They were re-established in May 1960. Two months later, President Eisenhower decided to suspend the sugar quota totally. The Cuban response was more nationalization which included sugar mills, petroleum assets and banks. On October 13, 1960, the U.S. government proclaimed an economic embargo according to which all U.S. exports to Cuba would be prohibited except medicines and foodstuffs. This was an electoral year in the U.S. as it would be in 1964 when the embargo was extended further to include medicines and foodstuff.¹¹⁰

The culmination of tensions was reached on January 3, 1961, with the U.S. decision to suspend diplomatic relations. The presidency of John F. Kennedy began in these circumstances and with the inherited Eisenhower's CIA plan to invade Cuba. The plan had been orchestrated under the Republican administration. However, Democrats had to face the defeat of the Bay of Pigs. After the breakdown of diplomatic links and on the eve of Bay of Pigs invasion the Cuban government proclaimed its intention of becoming a socialist state. From a left-wing oriented social movement the Cuban revolution became a defender of communist ideology as a result of the U. S. failure to cope with the challenge to its hegemony. Wayne Smith argues that "Castro saw the Soviets as allies but not as ideological soulmates" because "anti-American Castro was, in spades, but that had not carried him to an acceptance of the socialist model" Smith, 1987: 53).

Thus the initial Cuban revolutionary movement with strong nationalist and anti-U.S. feelings was transformed into a socialist revolution, but without abandoning its main goal of self-determination. As Perez (1995: 326) has pointed out "the North American attempt to use economic coercion first to force Fidel Castro into moderation and subsequently to remove him from power failed to achieve the desired results. On the contrary, the internal strength of the government increased and its relations with the socialist bloc expanded".

¹¹⁰In more than fifty years of the Cuba-U.S. confrontation, there is the perception that democratic administrations have been less hostile than republican ones. This is partly because of Kennedy's inheritance and also the rapprochement achieved during Carter's years compared with the belligerence which characterized the administrations of Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan and both of the Bush. Even though the Carter administration could be considered the most favourable to mutual understanding, some signals had been seen under Ford. However, the reinforcement of the embargo was brought about under Johnson and the Clinton administration wasn't less hostile even though it has inherited from the Republicans the atmosphere of the end of the Cold War. Some new signs have been seen in the Obama administration; however, in addition to traditionally discordant points, there are new disagreements with the imprisonment in Cuba of an American USAID subcontractor and the U.S. refusal to release three spies who are considered heroes in Cuba.

Simultaneously, the U. S. was carrying out a process of international pressure in order to isolate Cuba. Such a process culminated with the suspension of Cuba from the Organization of American States (OAS) and thereafter all the Latin American states (with the sole exception of Mexico) decided to sever diplomatic relations with Cuba. As Jean Stubbs has noted, while the U.S. sought to isolate Cuba they “certainly precipitated the island's entry into the mainstream socialist camp” (Stubbs, 1989: 4).

On the other hand, Tad Szulc considers that "the Cuban Revolution has irrevocably altered the relationships between Latin America and the United states, both in terms of the new Latin American posture and attitudes toward the Colossus of the North and in terms of the United States response to them through new philosophies such as the Alliance for Progress” (Szulc, 1968: 70).

However, it might be argued that there was nothing new in Kennedy's philosophy of the Alliance for progress but a continuation of the U.S. policies to Latin America whenever there is a challenge to hegemony. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had developed the New Deal and the policy of "Good Neighbour" three decades ago, when the feeling against the U.S. was increasing in Central America and the Caribbean. And so did George Bush thirty years later with the "Initiative for the Americas" when he inherited declining U.S. prestige from Ronald Reagan.

The issue of the alleged Cuban threat on behalf of the Soviet Union, because of its involvement in Latin America, conditioned the U.S. position toward Cuba under the administrations of Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford. During the last year of Ford there appeared a new element which would arise strongly during the periods of Carter, Reagan and Bush father: the Cuban military presence in Africa, first in Angola and later in Ethiopia.

Even though the Carter administration was willing to dialogue and some improvement was actually obtained, normalization was never reached. In fact, the government of Carter maintained a predisposition to dialogue not only with Cuba but with different problems all over the world. Perhaps Carter was the only U.S. president during the Cold War who was able to understand that Third World problems were not necessarily a result of the East-West confrontation. However the African issue became the new obstacle presented by U.S. officials for not going on the process of mutual understanding with Cuba.

Wayne Smith argues those uncertainties in Carter's foreign policy were the cause of the failure in Carter's presidential re-election campaign in 1980. Concerning the Cuba n case, those uncertainties were somehow expressed in a combination of carrot and stick policy. He considers that Carter's "willingness to open a dialogue with Cuba showed not only sincere humanitarian concern but also a fine political prescience". However, "the

president also quickly displayed the penchant for contradictory signals and policy incoherence that came to characterize his presidency" (Smith, 1987: 102-103).

During the Carter period, agreements were achieved on different issues. Simultaneously two interests-sections were opened in 1977, the Cuban one in Washington and the one of the U.S. in Havana. Although there was not official diplomatic relations, the offices of both interests sections started acting as such. American prisoners were released in Cuba and four Puerto Rican nationalists held in U.S. jails since 1954 were freed after Cuban solicitude. Agreements were reached concerning maritime boundaries and fishing rights as well as on air-hijacking. On the other hand, however, naval manoeuvres took place in Guantanamo Base, spy overflights increased and tension augmented when soviet interceptors MIG-23 arrived in Cuba and the Soviet military training centre, which had been in Havana for a long time, became the focus of U.S. attention. Moreover, though the channels for negotiations existed the U.S. refused to stop the sea-hijacking and kept on receiving hijackers and 'rafters' (*balseros*) in the U.S. Such a situation led to the Mariel episode and the biggest sealift ever when about 125 thousand Cubans arrived in the United States.

Jorge Domínguez has pointed out that "the 'Cuban question', including migration, has been salient for U.S. policy since 1959"... "Ideological and strategic factors, linked to the East-West rivalry, best explained why the United States accepted so many Cubans, often setting aside aspects of the US immigration law" (Domínguez, 1992: 84-85); however, it might be argued that the negative outcome of such a policy for the United States has been anything other than the result of its miscalculation, because it had already been demonstrated that neither the East-West rivalry nor ideological and strategic factors are behind the will of the mainstream of Cuban immigrants.

It is worth noting that for general U.S. foreign policy the Cuban case has always had implications and has reflected the contradictions between the *realpolitik* design and the U.S. international commitments. "Since 1961, no American president has dealt sensibly and effectively with the Cuba problem. Most have refused to deal with it at all. In several cases, our failure to devise an effective Cuba policy has had consequences far beyond the context of U.S. Cuban relations. The Bay of Pigs was Kennedy's saddest hour" (Smith, 1987: 285). Accordingly, Smith (1987) argues that Kennedy only regained the confidence of the Western alliance one year later because of the way he handled the Cuban missile crisis. In 1979 there was again a loss of confidence within the Western alliance with the Carter administration when the Soviet-brigade issue in Cuba was inappropriately handled and

(together with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), therefore, the SALT II Treaty could not be reached, which meant the death of the hope of detente.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, Reagan came with the hard-line views of *realpolitik*. Those views could not tolerate the Torrijos-Carter Agreement on the Panama Canal, nor the Revolutions in Nicaragua and Grenada, nor the revolutionary movement in Guatemala and El Salvador. Therefore Cuba would be responsible for it all and the target on which to impose what Hofstadter (1967) has called the "paranoid style" and David Brion Davis (1971) identifies as "the fear of conspiracy".

The two Reagan administrations were globally characterized by a visceral anti-communism and they coincide with the period when a bigger amount of Cuban troops were in Angola and thereby that was the most conflictive point. However, the U.S. decision to initiate the broadcasting of an Anti-Cuban radio station with federal funds (several U.S. radio stations had so done since the 1960s but privately) in 1985 and the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983 were important in the augmentation of hostility.

The Reagan administrations also coincided with the early years of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, and that fact somehow suggested to the U.S. officials that pressure could be exercised in order to facilitate changes in Cuba as well.

During the process of changes in the U.S.S.R, for the U.S administrations (Reagan and Bush) the Cuban situation was merely conceived of as an East-West issue. The U.S. even attempted to bring about the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola by asking this of the Soviet Union and disregarding the fact of a Cuban-Angolan sovereign compromise with historic roots which had nothing to do with the U.S.S.R.

The Monroe doctrine started with advice to the Russian Empire concerning Alaska and continued drawing the attention of other European powers to the importance of non interference in the problems of the western hemisphere. It seems as if ever since the U.S. has preferred to discuss Latin American issues with Russians rather than with Latin Americans. The tendency to discuss Cuban problems with the Soviets instead of with Cubans was somehow a great obstacle to the likelihood of improving relations between the two countries. It functioned in 1962 during the missile crisis because indeed there was a considerable Soviet responsibility for that fact, but Cuba did not feel comfortable being kept away from any talks regarding

¹¹¹The U.S. "sought the withdrawal of a Soviet unit which had been there for years, which posed no conceivable threat to the U.S., and which [the U.S.] had not the slightest possibility of evicting", *ibid*. Wayne Smith was third Secretary in the U.S. embassy in Havana until Cuba-U.S. relations were reversed in 1961. After the U.S. Interests Section was opened in Havana, he was Head of the U.S. Mission there from 1979 to 1982 when he resigned due to disagreement with the Reagan's administration.

its future. The Cuban feeling and desire of self-determination has been always much higher than the U.S. governments realised.

During the period of Bush in the White House, the subject of Cuban troops in Angola continued to be the U.S. pretext to maintain the embargo. However, Eckstein remarks that "when Castro brought his troops back in the latter 1980s, President Bush merely changed the criterion for terminating the embargo: he insisted on competitive multiparty elections" (Eckstein, 1994: 200).

During the Cold War American governments did not accept the fact of the Cuban Revolution because of their realist perception of foreign policy rather due to ideological concerns. It was that non-acceptance which led Cuba towards the Soviet bloc.

Misunderstanding beyond the end of the cold war

In his electoral year 1992 Bill Clinton was sympathetic to the Cuban Democracy Act in order to win the support of the right wing of the Cuban American and Cuban exiles community which rather than support such legislation had somehow promote it. However, Clinton did not win in the State of Florida where the majority of Cuban Americans with the right to vote have been traditionally republicans. This is in spite of the fact that his presidential campaign had got an important financial contribution from the powerful Cuban American National Foundation (CANF).

The Cuban Democracy Act was enacted by the U.S. Congress in October 1992 under the basic idea that once the communist bloc had disappeared and thereby Cuba could not receive the traditional aid, it was necessary to apply greater pressure in order to augment its vulnerability. This is a typical example of listing possible alternatives in the rational choice model. The end was supposed to be the fall of the Cuban government.

It has been argued by a study-group conference sponsored by the Stanley Foundation that "the end of the cold war transformed Cuba from what was mainly a U.S. foreign policy issue into a one that has become increasingly domestic [because] the key concern is not longer Soviet expansion in the Western Hemisphere but rather uncontrolled immigration into the United States from Cuba" (Stanley Foundation, 1995:11). However, such an approach must be contested from two different viewpoints; first, the transformation from a foreign policy issue to a domestic one is not an outcome of the end of the cold war, as it has been a feature of the Cuba-U.S. relations throughout their confrontation, partly due to the American geopolitical conception and partly due to the enormous influence of Cuban-Americans in the United States, a long time before the end of the cold war. On the other hand, it has been precisely after the end of the cold war when immigration from Cuba to the United States has ceased to be uncontrollable;

in fact, only several years after the end of the cold war has an agreement been reached in such a matter (US-CUBA JOINT COMMUNIQUE ON MIGRATION) and the traditional U.S. policy of encouraging *balseros* to go to the U.S. in precarious and risky conditions has been changed for a more reasonable one (*wet feet-dry feet policy*), with its respective increase of the human trafficking.

Once the collapse of the Soviet Union did not provoke the fall of the Cuban government, intensification of the embargo was initiated. Senator Jesse Helms and Representative Dan Burton were the charged with the task of proposing a new alternative and the result was the Helms-Burton Bill (Cuban Liberty and Solidarity Act-LIBERTAD). After being enacted by the Congress on March 12, 1996, the Helms-Burton Bill was signed and ratified by President Clinton on March 26 that year.

The Helms-Burton Bill is the condensed expression of the U.S. hegemonic principles after the cold war, though it reinforces the basic historic core of the U.S. embargo since it was proclaimed in 1960 until the Cuban Democracy Act Of 1992, According to this new legislation, the embargo is not only a Cuba-U.S bilateral confrontation. It introduces the category of ‘trafficking’ with U.S. property to name the action of third countries companies with are trading with or investing in Cuba on areas or sectors that used to be American property before 1959 (including the properties of former Cuban nationals who became American citizens).

Eighteen years after the promulgation of that Act, Cuba has demonstrated its capability to survive, though with very heavy social costs. Therefore the Helms-Burton Bill has resulted ineffective. On the other hand, the Act also proposes the opposition to Cuban membership in international financial institution which is a way of clearly denying the alleged trend to liberal-institutionalism which characterizes IR after the end of the cold war. Some scholars some scholars have noted the incongruity between the liberal discourse and the position towards Cuba, even in the Obama administration: “While the embargo has been through several legal iterations in the intervening years, the general tenor of the U.S. position toward Cuba is a hardline not-in-my-backyard approach to communism a la the Monroe Doctrine. The official position is outdated, hypocritical, and counterproductive” (Hanson, Batten & Ealey, 2013).

The way the missile crisis of 1962 was managed is quite often referred to by IR scholars as an example of application or rational choice. Despite the Cuban issue was not merely a superpower concern due to the special nature of the U.S. relations with Cuba throughout history, in fact that crisis is used as a laboratory for explanations of IR theories and methods basically because it was the first possibility for the superpowers to measure each other after the Soviet Union showed its nuclear capability.

However, nowadays it is worth questioning whether the rational choice programme is being efficiently used by the United States towards Cuba and if the ends justify the means whatever both of them are.

Having analyzed the main historic and current characteristics of the U.S.-Cuba relations, we can draw nine general conclusions:

Conclusion

First, the end of the cold war has not meant the end of the Cuban-American confrontation. Bipolarity was an exceptional world division brought during the cold war as a result of the European multipolar system which had prevailed since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. In such a context, the inclusion of the Cuban problem in the American agenda of the East-West confrontation as its reflection in the western hemisphere was exceptional as well.

Second, this exceptional nature is explained by the fact that, beyond the ideological discrepancies, American policy towards Cuba since 1959 is simply a continuation of the historic view of the “natural gravitation” grounded in *the ripe apple theory*. Even the main stream ideas in IR might benefit from recognizing that regarding Cuba-U.S. relations, the cold war is not over yet. If we go deeper in the analysis we can conclude that the reason why the U.S. maintains a cold war style policy towards Cuba is basically because that style fits the assumptions that have characterized American behavior for a long time, even several decades before the cold war. However, as Cuba has provided leadership for third world countries, the Cuban challenge is not beyond the traditional U.S. interpretation of the Cuban problem. The East-West confrontation was a temporary one and is already over, whereas the lack of equilibrium between North and South is much deeper and permanent. As the North-South confrontation still remains, Cuba continues as a challenge to the U.S. hegemony.

Third, in the 19th century the U.S. was interested in solving the dilemma of regional hegemony and thereby the Monroe Doctrine was crucial to American foreign policy, whereas in the 21st century the U.S. is facing the dilemma of global hegemony and the paradoxical increase of interdependence and liberalization. The design of the US’s Cuban policy is within the paradox and therefore the Helms-Burton Bill seems to be out of the international context. The Monroe Doctrine was only about regional hegemony, while the Helms-Burton Bill has a global target, aimed and achieving acceptance of the American rule¹¹².

¹¹² The Amato- Kennedy Bill, which attempted to punish possible investors in Iran and Libya, was also within that global logic of the U.S. foreign policy.

Fourth, concerning Cuba, the Helms-Burton Bill does not differ from the *ripe apple theory* except in two basic points: first, the U.S. is now a superpower and therefore the connotation of its policy might reach a world design; second, instead of waiting for the moment when the apple becomes ripe, the method consists in a premeditated attempt to kill the three by denying water, and punishing those who might be interested in watering it.

Fifth, the alleged loss of importance of the concept of nation-state does not apply in the U.S.-Cuba relations. There has by no means been a shift in the approach to Cuban concerns in the U.S. and, therefore, the realistic paradigm in IR is the only able to explain the U.S.-Cuba relationship in terms of hegemony and the self determination challenge. The Cuban behavior for more than fifty years has been a challenge for American hegemony, but neither a threat nor a hazard for the U.S. national interests. In this sense, the Helms-Burton Bill fulfils the requirements of the realistic paradigm and the rational choice program.

Sixth, with the current intensification of the process of globalization and interdependence, the American efforts to promote the expansions of liberal economics are in contradiction with its policy towards Cuba. On the other hand, the revival of the Wilsonian ideas alleged in the mainstream IR literature does not take into account the special case of U.S.-Cuba relations. Despite the current trend to stress international institutions and to sort out conflict within the framework of international agreements, the Cuban problem remains as a national interest matter for the U.S. Therefore, the U.S. continues opposing the reincorporation of Cuba in the Organization of American States and in other international institutions. Moreover, even though several United Nations resolutions have condemned the embargo, the logic in the U.S. politics remains within the principle of not accepting the Cuban challenge to their hegemony but still using such an economic weapon as a response.

Seventh, in the post cold war period the western alliance does not have the same meaning that it used to have. Therefore NATO is becoming an old-fashioned instrument of the cold war and American presence is no longer needed while Europe is looking for its own space. In this context, Europe is now able to challenge the U.S. foreign policy. The Cuban case is a source of misunderstanding and disagreements within the Atlantic alliance.

Eighth, during the last fifty-five years the economic, financial, academic and political influence of the Cuban community in the U.S. has acted over the U.S. administrations as a sort of boundary where the Cuban issue becomes a domestic one rather than a foreign policy concern. The pressure of the right wing of the Cuban community has contributed to reinforce the realistic approach and has influence the decision making from electoral prospective.

Ninth, the argument of lack of democracy and violations of human rights in Cuba is acting only as a pretext. That argument is less important than international finances and U.S. domestic politics. The U.S. has traditionally supported regimes which have violated human rights all over the world. Furthermore, there is the same political system in Cuba, China and Vietnam and, nevertheless, the U.S. has lifted the embargo in Vietnam and has increasing economic relations with China. There are two reasons to explain the different treatment of Cuba. First, China and Vietnam are countries with populations several times bigger than Cuban population and therefore those countries represent a very important market for U.S. capital. Second, the Chinese and Vietnamese communities in the U.S. do not have the strength that the Cuban community has. And that reality has prevailed since the Eisenhower administration to the Obama's.

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