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Abstract

The United States of America emerged as a dominant state in the world in the aftermath of WW II along with the USSR. Where the USSR fell and disintegrated in 1991, the USA kept its dominance and control over the world, especially across the American continent. The USA and Cuba had a long co-existing history, things took a strange turn after Fidel Castro took power by throwing Batista out. The USA's trade embargo on Cuba after the event added more fuel to the fire. With the disintegration of the USSR, the American foreign policy towards Cuba remained the same. Although in the 21st century, the Obama administration reviewed the US policy towards Cuba and showed some softness towards the island nation, it didn't make much difference. The main idea behind this research is to explore the theoretical Perspective on US-Cuba relations and give some policy recommendations for improved relations.

Keywords: US-Cuba Relations, Policy

Recommendation, Theoretical
Perspective, Realism

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Abstract

The United States of America emerged as a dominant state in the world in the aftermath of WW II along with the USSR. Where the USSR fell and disintegrated in 1991, the USA kept its dominance and control over the world, especially across the American continent. The USA and Cuba had a long co-existing history, things took a strange turn after Fidel Castro took power by throwing Batista out. The USA's trade embargo on Cuba after the event added more fuel to the fire. With the disintegration of the USSR, the American foreign policy towards Cuba remained the same. Although in the 21st century, the Obama administration reviewed the US policy towards Cuba and showed some softness towards the island nation, it didn't make much difference. The main idea behind this research is to explore the theoretical Perspective on US-Cuba relations and give some policy recommendations for improved relations.

Keywords: [US-Cuba Relations](#), [Policy Recommendation](#), [Theoretical Perspective](#), [Realism](#)

Introduction

USA being the world superpower and a dominant state in the world for the past 75 years since the end of WW-II, view Cuba as a strategically important State for both its foreign policy and national security. Even when Cuba was under Spanish rule, it was still important for the USA in the Western

Hemisphere. The independence of Cuba after the Cuban-Spanish War, Cuba went directly under the influence of the USA. Then until the turning point of Batista's fall at the hands of Fidel Castro Cuba was under dictatorship. While the USA somehow looked for good out of this change of government



after the Cuban Revolution, things did not turn out to be as ideal as the USA hoped them to be.

Castro instead of shaking hands with the USA as the USA had hoped, went straight to USSR for Cuba's political and ideological partner. USSR was already one half of the Bipolar world structure along with the USA back then and was in a cold war along with ideological rivalry with the USA. Castro nationalized all the US businesses on Cuban soil which forced the US to impose a trade embargo on Cuba which stands to date. The next major or probably the most important incident of the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis which further forced the USA to not only impose more strict policies on and regarding Cuba but also take practical steps to topple Castro's regime in the shape of the failed plan known as the Bay of Pigs.

But that failure did not stop the USA from further taking major steps towards Cuba. Where presidents kept changing in the USA, the state departments' policies remained the same. From the Monroe Doctrine to the Roosevelt Corollary, from the Platt Amendment to the Good Neighbor Policy, the USA has always tried to keep Cuba in its Sphere of influence. Whether it is world power dominance or American continental dominance, Cuba has always been strategically important for US foreign policy.

With Cuba, there came many challenges for US national security too. Issues from the Cuban missile crisis to migration, illegal trade to coastal line security, from communism to the promotion of terrorism by Cuba in Latin America, USA has been trying to deal with all the problems in one way or another by strict and different means.

US View of US-Cuban Relations

Fulgencio Batista, a despot, was overthrown by Fidel Castro in January 1959, allowing him to seize power in Cuba. Young and idealistic, Fidel Castro urged his people to overturn a dysfunctional government and an aristocratic community that was separated into the haves and have-nots. He pledged that there would be no government repression and that all Cuban residents would have opportunities. A self-serving tyrant, not a leader who genuinely battled for his people and reform, would come to rule Fidel's Cuba, which would

eventually become a communist republic that has been in existence till today.

Not out of belief in communism but out of disdain for the United States and its "capitalistic ways" and his own self-interest was maintaining power and transforming Cuba into his vision of an ideal state, Castro broke off economic relationships with the US only to replace them with the Soviet Union. When this struggle against Batista is over, a much larger and greater war will begin for me: the war I am going to wage against the United States, he stated in a letter to a close friend in 1958 before defeating the Batista administration. I understand this to be my ultimate fate" (Fontaine, 2000).

The infamous "Cuban Missile Crisis" occurred in 1962 when Castro gave the Soviet Union permission to preposition medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) and incomplete intermediate-range ballistic missile sites (IRBMs) on the island as an organizing base for the first launch capability against the USA. These activities may have started World War III, brought our nation to the verge of nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union, and brought us the closest to a nuclear exchange ever. Following intense discussions between President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev during one of the tensest weeks in our nation's history, the Soviets consented to evacuate their armaments from the island that is just 90 miles from American shores.

The Cuban Refugees-Status Bill was passed in the USA in 1966. By automatically giving them political asylum and eventually, upon request, legal citizenship in the USA, the legislation accords Cuban refugees preferential treatment if they set foot on American land. In the history of America, no other nation has received this preferential treatment. By 1975, Cuban soldiers were battling all over the globe with the assistance of Marxist rebels engaged in battles against Portuguese forces in Angola and Ethiopia.

By 1990, Cuba and the USSR are conducting their trade transactions in hard currency. The cold war ended in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union, and Cuba experienced its worst economic meltdown ever. They lost the Soviets' \$8 billion per year (or 70% of their annual import capability) in economic assistance virtually overnight. As a result, Cuba's economy enters a deeper depression.

They lacked trading partners, convertible money, access to foreign exchange markets, and domestic products for export. The 1992 Torricelli Law, which forbade American businesses in foreign nations from trading with Cuba, strengthened the embargo imposed by the United States. The Torricelli Law aimed to exacerbate Castro's isolation and compelled his resignation.

The issue of Cuban refugees was still becoming worse in 1994. Many refugees are arriving in Miami; according to U.S. officials, up to three million of Cuba's eleven million citizens may leave the country if given safe passage. Florida, or America more specifically, does not want another mass migration like the Mariel Boatlift in 1980. The Clinton Administration revokes the preferential treatment that Cubans have enjoyed for the past 28 years and will no longer automatically grant asylum to those who step foot on American soil. Instead, refugees will be detained and put through the political asylum process at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, or in detainment in Miami. Refugees who were apprehended at sea will be returned to Cuba right away.

For the typical Cuban residing on the island, remittances had grown to be one of their main sources of income. Remittances remained amongst the most contentious topics pertaining to the embargo and nevertheless helped the average Cuban citizen financially. Castro converted Cuba's Soviet-dependent economy into a thriving one in just five years. By all accounts, Castro ought to have been overthrown soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but he wasn't. Midway through the 1990s, the US economy was thriving. The stock market had reached all-time highs. Globalization has become a major concern for American society. The political narrative of the United States no longer gave much attention to Cuba and Castro.

When a health issue led Fidel to have surgery in 2006, he already had handed over control to Raul (he still remained active in government affairs). President George W. Bush said Cuba must adopt democracy in reaction to Fidel's departure, stressing that the United States will help the people of Cuba experience the advantages of free. Democrat candidate Barack Obama made this statement while running for president of the United States in 2008: The United States must just

be ready to start making efforts to normalize relations and to relieve the embargo of the previous five decades.

Then the government in the USA also changed and Barack Obama assumed the Oval Office as the 44th president of the United States of America in 2009. Traveling and remittance limitations were loosened by President Obama after being increased by his predecessors. The decision permitted Americans of Cuban descent to give Cubans an unrestricted amount of cash and enabled Americans to visit Cuba for educational and religious objectives. Even though the trade embargo was still in effect, the action was generally seen as the most significant one to date in the normalization of relations. In May 2011, the Cuban government authorized a raft of economic reforms, allowing people to sell and buy lands and cars, increase bank lending, and boost self-employment. Which was widely considered as a notion of change in Cuban policy and welcomed by the US government.

Then came the most important change of policy by the USA not only in the 21st century but also in the US-Cuban relations history. When in 2014 a jailed US intelligence officer was released by Cuba who was convicted and sent to 5 years sentence by the Cuban government in exchange for 5 Cuban prisoners released by USA with the help of Pope Francis after almost 18 months long talks and negotiations. Obama and Raul both announced to restoration of US-Cuban relations after that. Obama reopened the US embassy in Havana. Obviously, this action faced some backlash from Congress. Thus, after 1961, the USA and Cuba reopened their embassies in both nations. However, the Trade embargo remained in place as it could not be lifted without Congressional approval.

With Trump's arrival at the Oval Office, things started to change again as he reinstated the business and travel restrictions again. Although he did not change or break diplomatic ties with Havana. He claimed that Obama's policy was not helping the people of Cuba and was useless. Trump said that until Cuba releases all political prisoners, upholds the rights to assembly and expression, recognizes opposition parties as lawful, and holds free and fair elections, U.S. sanctions won't be withdrawn. Business executives and lawmakers in

the United States have opposed the decision, arguing that it will further alienate Cuba and deteriorate its political and economic position. Leaders in Cuba said that the modifications "contradict the majority support" of Americans. New direct flights from the USA, routes of cruise ships, and hotel projects were not affected by the regulation. Even during the era of Joe Biden, the policy of the USA remained the same as was during the era of Trump. In fact, the USA again designated Cuba as a Terrorism Sponsor.

Cuban View of US-Cuban Relations

There is a famous term of Franklin D. Roosevelt often quoted by scholars "Neighbourliness" (Capio, 1997). But seems like this has been long forgotten by the US policymakers when it comes to making policy regarding Cuba. The relations between the US and Cuba hold a strategic and key role and position in the regional security of the Americas. Both states have been bitter adversaries of each other for one reason or another. But one thing that has always been constant is ideological clashes. Where the USA is promoting democracy and Human Rights protection across the world, Cuba after the Cuban revolution of 1959, has been following communism and allegedly violating human rights within its territories. Fidel Castro laid the stones to such bitter relations as he starved more for his own power than for the betterment of the Cuban people. Rest was sealed by the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis world was almost on the brink of the first nuclear war in the world when USA and USSR missiles were ready to be launched and were pointing at each other. This has led US-Cuban relations to the brink too.

It all began when the Cuban revolution came, and Fidel Castro and his gang of guerrillas overthrew President General Fulgencio Batista's government on January 1, 1959, after years of planning and several failed attempts, the USA, which had backed Castro by putting an arms embargo on Batista's administration in 1958, quickly accepted the new rule, despite reservations about the rebels' killing of over 500 pro-Batista followers and Castro's growing communist aspirations. Castro paid a visit to the United States, viewing Washington landmarks and visiting with Vice President Richard Nixon, all while dressed in

his signature olive green fatigues. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the two countries to join forces, and it was never again replicated. By 1960, Castro's administration had confiscated private property, nationalized dozens of corporate entities along with some local subsidiaries of US companies, and slashed US exports in half in just two years. With the exception of medicines and agricultural goods, President Eisenhower responded by establishing restrictions on trade. Instead of opposing "Yankee dominance," Castro increased trade with the Soviet Union.

The United States retaliated by severing all diplomatic connections, and the two nations have spoken through Switzerland since then. On Feb. 7, 1962, President John F. Kennedy declared the everlasting blockade just days after ordering a cargo of 1,200 Cuban cigars for himself, and the country, whose economy was based on the consumption of American-made goods, became a relic of the past within several decades. Where the entire world is now inclining toward Cuba, the USA is standing still when it comes to Cuba and foreign policy toward it. The policy of strict Trade embargo towards Cuba. Seems like they have not forgotten and forgiven Cuba for the 1962 missile crisis. Now that there should be harmony between America and its neighbor especially Cuba, when the USSR is gone, the USA is far from such chemistry. The USA is in the same old mentality that it had during the Cold War. Colonel Ralph. Capio has called America as half-mad (Capio, 1997).

The USA has consistently believed that it is a stronger nation that must defend neighboring lesser nations. They initially intervened and freed Cuba from Spanish colonization before maintaining authority over it since it was deemed incapable of running independently. The United States also thought it was its responsibility to establish a democratic system in Havana. In the wake of the Sept. 11th of 2001, attacks, the United States of America's foreign policy was altered. A fresh National Security Strategy of the USA was presented by President Bush. The fundamental tenet of such a policy had been that Washington, as the ideal example of a constitutionally organized nation, has a responsibility to teach other nations to democratic norms and propagate its message. The ideal type of government to advance basic

humanity and international society was thought to be democratization. Cuba had been among the nations that required assistance from the USA and was in trouble due to communist dictatorship.

Cubans, in contrast, didn't view the United States as their rescuer. They saw the States as yet another colonizer who had taken control of their country without granting them independence or autonomy. Castro also believed that he needed to liberate Cuban United States hegemony. Havana has indeed been influenced by the United States since the beginning of the 20th century, and Castro wished for the United States to cease any involvement in the Island. As per constructivist theory, a country's "life, liberty, and property" and its "collective self-esteem" are its national strategic interests. The United States exactly stole that from Cuba. The strategic interests include the pursuit of sovereignty and economic prosperity. Both had been too loosely governed by Havana, which led to the uprising of Castro (Capiro, 1997).

And the USA had not enthusiastically embraced the insurrection of Fidel Castro when it was successful. Additionally, the United States began to perceive Cuba as an issue of national security as early as it united with the Communist USSR. Communism previously controlled Havana, and they have now formed an alliance with the biggest USA foe. The country was economically isolated by the United States for more than five decades as a response to aggression. It wasn't in the best interests of the USA to normalize the ties until the communist danger vanished. Despite the fact that danger subsided with the fall of the USSR, isolationist foreign policy persisted for the next 25 years till the Obama administration.

The Cuban-US relations remained complex even during the Trump era as were before in the past. America is a democratic state while Cuba follows a Socialist ideology. This has been the core reason for contention. Although during the Obama era, there were some positive upgrades, they were back to cold during the Trump era. The past 50 and more years have been full of ups and downs, When Castro took over Cuba, America took it as a national security threat and started to take action. Trump before assuming the office, had given this notion that he is a pro-embargo American. His stance didn't change during his campaign, even

though he had been accused by Hillary Clinton of making a number of deals in Cuba during 1998 but Trump had denied all the allegations.

Research Question

1. Which Theoretical perspective elucidates the US-Cuban relations on the large ground?

Methodology

Research methodology gives legitimacy and keeps track of research, it becomes important in the conduct of research. It keeps the research detailed and effective. This research is qualitative in nature and has tried to find out the answer to the question and objectives drawn in the text accordingly. Since research is a systematic form of drawing out knowledge about a particular topic, the research methodology becomes a core tool for maintaining that research according to the norms of social sciences. Thus, this research is conducted according to the rules of social sciences. The realism theory has been applied to the empirical findings of the research as it suits the topic in the appropriate manner. The research is conducted using secondary data. The data is obtained from books and already published articles targeting the topic. Thus, many research papers, books, articles, and interviews of USA and Cuban officials are studied as the literature in order to have extensive knowledge about the topic to draw out appropriate conclusions.

Literature Review

Below are the books and articles that have been studied and reviewed to get a broader view of empirical points of view.

"Bridging the Divide: Strategic Measures to Enhance US-Cuba Relations in the 21st Century", is a research work of the time that deals with US-Cuba relations. In this article, different measures have been elaborated to enhance US-Cuba relations in the 21st century. (Jazab-ur-Rehman, Akhtar, Gill, & Mustafa, [2024](#)).

"Embargo and Engagement: Assessing the Landscape of US-Cuba Relations" is an article that was published in the Research Journal for Societal Issues. This research explains the different phases of US-Cuban Relations from a historical perspective. Ties between the US and Cuba have

been discussed historically in detail in this article. (Jazab-ur-Rehman, Nawaz, & Mustafa, Embargo, and Engagement: Assessing the Landscape of US-Cuba Relations, [2023](#)).

"US-Cuba Relations: Security Implications for the Region in the 21st Century" This research examines US-Cuban Relations in a security Perspective. It has been concluded that it has a large impact on the region while two nations are confronting each other. (JAZAB-UR-REHMAN, ANWAR, WAKIL, ARSHAD, & MUSTAFA, [2024](#)).

"Cuba: An American History" by Ferrer ([2021](#)) narrated that in 1961, he described how, when the Cold War was at its peak, the United States cut bilateral agreements with Cuba, where a monumental uprising had seized power just three years earlier. It is a superb and recent book. The confrontation lasted for more than 50 years, spanning the administrations of 10 American presidents and Fidel Castro's fifty-year dictatorship.

"The Evolution of US-Cuba Relations in the Trump Era" by Ting ([2019](#)), narrated that the Trump Administration had adopted a series of aggressive actions since assuming office in 2017, all of which aimed to undermine the political legacy of Obama with Cuba. In order to ensure the long-term viability of the peaceful resolution and financial prosperity, the Cuban government took a rational and constructive interactive session with Washington.

"US-Cuba Relations: Charting a New Path" by Rosen & Kassab ([2016](#)) elucidated that This textbook explores the evolution of the foreign policy of the USA regarding Cuba, highlighting turning points and current tactical changes. Re-establishing diplomatic ties with Cuba, which were formally cut in January 1961, was a significant reversal in American foreign policy.

"Understanding US-Latin American relations: theory and history" by Williams ([2012](#)) and this author explores the relationship between the United States and Latin America from chronological, modern, and philosophical angles. Williams explains the lasting foundations of Theories of International Relations and gives students the intellectual skills to understand inter-American interactions by using instances from the

different and more immediate past by fusing the past with concepts.

"United States-Cuban relations: a critical history" by Dominguez & Prevost ([2008](#)) elucidated that the way that Cuban and USA ties examine this protracted and turbulent relationship sets new standards for the people. The overarching strategy, which reflects the political science backgrounds of both scholars, focuses less on the historical background than many previous books and more on the extensive study of patterns and trends that have characterized the two nations' lengthy association. According to Prevost and Dominguez, happenings on the island are a major influence on the policy of the USA towards Cuba. The authors show how the policy of the USA changes in response to events and observed realities on the island, from the American engagement during the Cuban War for independence to the most contemporary modifications in the aftermath of the Powell Commission.

"US-Cuba relations: revisiting the sanctions policy" by Giscard ([2002](#)), stated that the USA slapped trade embargoes on Havana in October 1960, creating a very antagonistic and dangerous Marxist government that is the subject of the book. As Cuba forged ties with the Soviet Union, it started to pose a real threat to American military and geopolitical interests. Limitations helped the Cold War achieve many of its goals, particularly the control of the Communist regime in that region of the continent. Despite this, it was unable to topple Castro's government. Once the USSR collapsed in 1989, Cuba's access to Communist funding was cut off. Cuba's ability to endanger the national security of America quickly disappeared because its economy had grown so dependent on USSR financial aid and logistical support.

US-Cuba Relations Through the Lens of Realism

The topic of US-Cuban relations is a broad one and requires a deeper understanding of it with the implementation of realist theory here as the ties between the two states have been stained since Cuban independence. US view of Cuba has always been realistic as it stands at an important location being only a few miles away from the island. Here

in this chapter realism has been discussed as per the requirement of the topic.

Realism

The concept of realism has evolved throughout the years, offering many perspectives by concentrating on particular elements of the global community. Whereas idealism was defeated by the ideology of realism in the wake of World War II. It remains feasible to locate its historical roots in the works of Hobbes, Machiavelli, and Thucydides. Below are the realist pillars and basics:

- States, not organizations or people, are the primary players within the global sphere.
- International anarchism, or the absence of a world government with the authority to impose obligatory judgments on all nations, is what distinguishes the global order.
- As they strive to further their own objectives and goals, the players are logical and self-centered.
- Nations strive to maintain their dominance or existence in the global order (Donnelly, [2005](#)).

The idea of an anarchic world is crucial because governments compete for dominance and are unable to rely on anyone else to protect them from potential foreign aggression. As a result, nations work to increase their power in military aspects. Which has an impact on how secure the world is seen to be. For instance, neighboring governments are indeed very inclined to be uneasy if one state develops its military power. Since no one can be certain of the motives of the other party, this issue is only tied to the security conundrum. States attempt to avoid strikes upon themselves as a result of this insecurity, and as a result, they work to expand their ability to restrain the acts of other nations. (Tang, [2009](#)).

Undoubtedly, the international structure incorporates certain aspects of the state of nature that Hobbes articulated in his work 'Leviathan'. In fact, all men are equal, in such a state, engage in anarchism, and are ultimately motivated by competitiveness, stoicism, and pride. Every individual tries to ensure his own survival, and as a result, he aims to collect without restriction all he requires to accomplish this. Hobbes makes it

very clear that everyone aspires to rule everyone else and that is the reality.

The reality mentioned above along with the key characteristics of a state results in "a war of all against all" where "each man is a wolf to another man". Although Hobbes explicitly recognized and acknowledged that the depiction is quite extreme and that this scenario has never arisen in history, the three premises are nonetheless extremely intriguing and should be taken into consideration by scholars of realist thought (Hobbes & Missner, [2016](#)).

Because it highlights the connections between both the dominant element and its subordinates, the hierarchy idea is also important. According to structural realist Waltz, in a hierarchical situation, actors – especially smaller states tend to follow the strongest player since doing so serves their primary objectives of reducing damages and maximizing advantages in the anarchic world order. For example, during the period of the Cold War, Cuba made sure to receive the USSR's financial and military assistance to prevent the USA from assaulting its borders and to deal with the consequences of the United States' embargo over Cuba, accordingly (Donnelly, 2005).

Polarity is an additional important term. Nations must possess the following qualities to also be regarded as power lines: population size, natural resources, economic power, and capability, military might and force territory, and geography. The global order and system were bipolar for almost fifty years during which time the globe was split into two significant political blocs (capitalist and communist), each ruled by the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991 resulted in a unipolar world, with the USA remaining the sole superpower militarily which remains significantly stronger compared to other countries (Waltz, [1979](#)).

According to structural logic, Unipolarity causes instability because strong states desire to band together to counterbalance the dominant Nation. Russia has indeed been making efforts to weaken the USA's global dominance since 1995 by fortifying connections with erstwhile Soviet partners like Cuba, which will be discussed further in the research. The Putin Doctrine is based on this

objective because Russia wants to expand its area of influence and create a multipolar world to counterbalance the United States of America (Bain & Mollinedo, 2016).

Even if China is growing to be a significant economic force, the US and Russia are still in it. Some assert that because the stronger part cannot be challenged by anybody else, the unipolar world promotes better steadiness as compared to Multipolarity. In fact, a multipolar world (with four or five powerful states) resembles competing marketplaces, according to Schweller, but systems with only three powers are more monopolistic or have monopolies and oligopoly tendencies (Schweller, 1996).

Furthermore, under a bipolar system, disagreements on the perimeter of the global community are less probable to put it in jeopardy than they would be in a multi-polar one, as the globe saw during the First and Second World Wars. Waltz had already made the argument that there isn't a clear answer to the question of whether bipolar and multipolar systems are stable because the nations are heavily affected by both the structure itself and various external factors, some of which can have a significant impact on the consequences and outcomes. The results aren't always established by the structure (Donnelly, 2005).

Since nations are the sole participants in the global system, as has already been explained before, traditional realists downplay the significance of international organizations. Regardless of the fact that organizations operate domestically and have the capacity to unite disparate groups, Snyder emphasizes that this doesn't occur globally due to the system's anarchical structure and the ensuing battle for dominance. Additionally, collaboration has a very limited role because states prioritize their particular national objectives over shared benefits. Instead, they choose to increase their influence and power and cooperate with weaker adversaries in order to triumph over them.

Classical realists have generally asserted that morality and ethics must always be disregarded while making foreign policy since the anarchy in the world system is a setting wherein nations compete for dominance. Words of Morgenthau

clearly narrates and depicts this point of view: "The concept of interest defined in terms of power... saves us from that moral excess and that political folly". It is important to emphasize that such a claim would be both exaggerated and untrue: in reality, states frequently take ethical qualms into consideration as, for instance, international law incorporates moral requirements or because pressure from domestic and worldwide public opinion public sentiment may be imposed on nations (Fukuyama, 2006).

Nations might justify morality and ethics even when there is no fear of using power involved; for instance, nations can participate in humanitarian efforts to help the poor and suffering, but they may also pursue political goals like enhancing their standing in the global community. By accomplishing this, they can give their upcoming (political) activities greater credibility in the eyes of people.

Structural Realism

International relations theory was significantly impacted by Kenneth N. Waltz's famous work, *Theory of International Politics*. According to Waltz's formulation of structural realism, the anarchic structure and the allocation of capacities are strong inducers and restrictions that lead to "homogeneity" in the conduct of nations. According to Waltz, the structure of the global system or polarity fluctuates depending on the distribution of abilities. International relations are anarchist rather than hierarchical, comprised of functionally related components. Waltz is capable of explicating regularly occurring international structures and results, including balances of power, the propensity of various power distributions for battle, and the formation of alliances repeatedly, by assuming that states "at a minimal level, pursue their own survival" and are socialized to replicate one another (Waltz, 1979).

The two conflicting schools of structural realist theory, Offensive and defensive realism, which are descended from Waltz's structural realism theory, have contrasting tenets and recommendations for public policy. Jack Snyder was the one who coined the terms "aggressive" and "defensive" realism in his original work *Myths of Empire*. The function of the international system which is anarchic or even

if it drives nations to optimize their security or to increase their influence and power is one difference between these two types of realist theory. A further contrast is whether expansions and conquests are profitable, and much more broadly, what causes pathological state conduct such as over-extension, self-encirclement, and rapid expansion. A last difference is whether or not nations are motivated purely by security-seeking conduct or by revisionist intents, which are at least presumed to be the case. (Snyder, [1992](#)).

Security is rare for offensive realists as they starve for power. Because of the anarchic structure of the international system, nations are compelled to maximize their portion of global power and choose dominance over parity in order to boost their survival chances. Becoming the hegemon is every big power's overarching goal. According to this logic, a state with more strength and power will be more unlikely to become a subject because weaker nations would be deterred from opposing bigger and more powerful states. It is clear in John Mearsheimer's work that "states quickly understand that the best way to ensure their survival is to be the most powerful state in the system" (Mearsheimer, 2001).

When the advantages exceed the drawbacks, great countries are forced to pursue aggressive, competing, and expansionist strategies because they are unsure about the objectives of other nations and the anarchic structure of the global order. Particularly, since objectives just aren't apparent and a nation can turn into something more belligerent later, almost all of the powerful states assume perhaps the worst assumption and thus boost their power via expansions, which sparks intense rivalry and competition. Furthermore, offensive activities are frequently accomplished and victory frequently compensates for offensive realists (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Security is the core aim and plentiful for defensive or positional realists. The term defensive positionalists was created by Joseph Grieco in his work "Cooperations Among Nations" (Grieco, 1990). Big and powerful nations aim to maintain the current balance of power using primarily defensive tactics in order to maximize their protection. According to defensive realists, the international order only seldom provides

benefits for expansions and generally urges nations to take modest and constrained actions to protect their safety, security, and existence. Since they will elicit security concern and counteracting conduct, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and expansion to maximize power via predominance and prevalence are regarded as counterproductive since they will obstruct the nation's efforts to improve security. As written briefly by Christopher Layne, "states balance against hegemons" (Layne, [2006](#)).

These two opposing interpretations of realism bring up the following issues: What does anarchy entail, and does the international system's anarchic nature promote nations to prioritize increasing their security or their power? Is there enough security in the global system or not? Would the international system promote predominance, restricted participation, or offshore balancing among nations? Does the international order promote status quo states to engage in hostile behavior towards other great powers? How much security is needed and how much authority do states want? Do conquering and geographical expansions bring about positive results or negative ones? What about instances of self-defeating consequences like overextension, self-encirclement, and overextension (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2008)? How do offensive and defensive realists account for these?

Offensive Realism

The idea that states want to maximize power and those nations are tenacious searchers of influence and power is shared by offensive realist scholars and classical realists (including Thucydides, E.H. Carr, Arnold Wolfers, and Hans Morgenthau). In particular, "nations extend their political objectives overseas when their comparative power is increased," according to classical realist scholars (Zakaria, [1999](#)). It is asserted by Thucydides in "The Melian Dialogue" that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" (Thucydides, [1982](#)).

According to Morgenthau as well as other classical realist philosophers, human ambition for power is the root of conflicts, aggressiveness, imperialism, and warfare. As a result, governments are predisposed to act violently toward each other. Because of the inherent human desire to rule

others, there is a constant fight among nations and countries. (Morgenthau, 1955). It is not human nature but in fact, the anarchic nature of the international system that acts as an invisible hand that shapes and shoves all the major powers to starve for maximization of their power and dominance at all levels including domestic and international.

States are strongly enticed and powered by the international order to explore ways to supplant competing states in influence and power in order to gain influence. As Robert Gilpin argues, "As the power of a state increases, it seeks to extend its territorial control, its political influence, and/or its domination of the international economy" (Gilpin, 1981).

The greatest method for a nation to boost its likelihood of surviving in a state of anarchy is by becoming a state that is the most powerful as per offensive realists. States maximize, prominence, power, and resources. Basically, a nation with greater authority than another is more secure. Although Mearsheimer, in comparison to Gilpin, believes that only regional hegemony, such as the United States are feasible because of geographical limitations like the halting force of water, offensive realists contend that the framework of the anarchic international system strongly encourages states in their relentless drive to maximize power with the eventual aim of evolving into a world superpower (Lemke, 2004).

Expansion, according to offensive realists, encompasses assertive international investment, and military and political policies to tip the scales of power, seize opportunities to enhance one's authority, obtain power at the cost of other nations, and destabilize perceived enemies via precautionary military conflicts or "delaying tactics" to impede their rise (Organski, 1968).

Only a foolish nation, according to Mearsheimer, would forego the possibility of becoming the regional superpower in the system because it believed it had an "appropriate amount" of authority. Because many other forces will seize the chance if a state chooses not to attempt to broaden its dominance and passes up the chance to do so. As a result, a large power seeks to become the regional power rather than an equal among its fellow great powers. Nations will constantly

struggle with one another for power since the aim of states is to maximize power (Zakaria, 1998).

For Mearsheimer, geography, especially the restraining influence of water means that no nation can establish world dominance, in contradiction to Gilpin and other dominant offensive realist thinkers. The utmost a great power could do is establish itself as a regional superpower, the only major power in that region of the world, and perhaps even rule over a neighboring area that is reachable through the land. States that accomplish dominance in the region work to stop major powers in other territories from duplicating their success; they verify ambitious or prospect hegemony in other regions out of concern that a rival great power that rules its own region will be an extraordinarily powerful adversary that can cause trouble in the apprehensive great power's territory. In order to balance each other's influence, regional hegemony desire that there should be a minimum of two big powers in other areas (Mearsheimer & Alterman, 2001).

This debate of offensive realists is given a modest variation by Fareed Zakaria's state-centered realism theory. He contends that leaders will strengthen the power of the state rather than national power whenever possible. "When chief decision-making officials see a relative gain in state power," as stated by the author, "nations seek to broaden their political interests around the world." As a result, the expansion will enable leaders to mobilize harvest and achieve a greater quantity of national power (Zakaria, 1998).

Defensive Realism

Both offensive and defensive realism thinkers arrive at differing conclusions on the international system's anarchy. Offensive realists contend that the anarchic nature of the world forces governments to increase their dominance, strive for supremacy in an unending war for supremacy, and expand their territory. Defensive realists think that anarchy motivates nations to pursue protective, reasonable, and constrained policies. Conflicts are occasionally unavoidable, according to defensive realists, for instance in the situation of belligerent nations, whenever their sovereignty is in danger, when they feel vulnerable, or when their disagreements are insurmountable (Walt, 1997).

A subset of realism known as defensive realism maintains that chaotic characteristics of the international order don't always increase the likelihood of warfare. According to this concept, security must be increased by the employment of tools including deterrence, diplomacy, arms control, disarmament, and negotiations (Nguyen, 2014). The greatest method to prevent and minimize confrontations is to take defensive or pre-emptive action. As Waltz said, "The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their position in the system" (Waltz, 1979).

Because of US counter-revolutionary attacks throughout the Cold War, as will be argued in the research, Cuba always has worked to maintain its stance, or more specifically, to keep its communist regime undamaged, while the Vatican continued to pursue Havana's involvement in the international stage to maintain its authority on the island as it has generally been vulnerable there. Both systemic and state-level results in terms of foreign policy are susceptible to structural determinants. Firstly, the ideas of anarchy and the stability conundrum continue to be crucial. Secondly, structural variables including the availability of natural resources and raw materials, proximity to other areas, and the balance between offense and defense might make the security conundrum worse in specific situations. The influence of structural factors on the likelihood of cooperation and conflict outweighs the aggregate power distribution which is determined by the material capabilities that each nation in the international order possesses (Taliaferro, 2001).

Thirdly, policymakers' impressions and estimates can significantly affect a nation's foreign policy, particularly when the balance of power is uncertain, and they are unable to receive accurate data and information. Lastly, a nation's international conduct may be affected by the boundaries of its domestic policies and actions (Taliaferro, 2001).

Defensive realism views collaboration differently from classic realism. States are not malicious by nature, even though it might be difficult to judge their objectives and intents due to their mutability on the one side. In fact, states may work together if there is less confusion about their objectives and some level of confidence is built

through assurances and guarantees in the international order. (Tang, 2009).

Reassurance is a strategy for fostering greater teamwork and, consequently, confidence between or among the stakeholders. Additionally, it enables simultaneously communicating the good intentions of each participant to the other party and understanding how that party will react to this transparency and its goals. Because simple reassurance could've been viewed as suspicious activity, the beginning of a bilateral relationship needs to be slow and include some endeavors at reassurance (part of a reassurance plan). The essential requirements must be fulfilled for a state to make a reassurance attempt: it must have good motives, be confident in its decisions, and harbor some skepticism regarding the motives and intentions of the other state (Tang, 2009).

A reassurance campaign is typically a component of a bigger goal, such as reconciliation, which typically takes place after a conflict or a particularly difficult period, for two former adversaries, such as Cuba and the USA. It might be said that cooperation is a cumulative activity because the goal is to put aside conflicts of interest in order to achieve shared objectives (Keohane, 2005).

Reassurance isn't always an indication of goodwill, nevertheless, as the tactic could be employed by one component to deceive the other into thinking it really is secure. It's indeed important to understand the indications sent by the separate components. Reassurance is pricey and dangerous. Price is incurred when a message is sent, and danger is incurred when the other part overlooks or ignores the message, but in order to gain from others' collaboration, one must take the chance of being defrauded by the other reluctant component (Tang, 2009). In politics, nothing is usually accomplished without a price. The bilateral ties are most likely to strengthen if the other nation responds positively to the reassurance endeavor; nevertheless, if the attempt is unsuccessful, the relationships may remain the same or deteriorate even more than before as a consequence.

How are the assurance procedures made in a broad sense? Tang asserts the existence of three primary approaches:

- With words: in order for the words to appear more convincing to the listener, they must be spoken in unison. Words must, for instance, shatter a barrier, highlight the value of collaboration, communication, and negotiation in problem-solving along with diplomacy, and lessen past hostilities in order to be successful and effective.
- With acts that are non-military: the originator must modify the prior principles that were against the other component and make a few tiny compromises to it. Both parties must also start or intensify their reciprocal interactions and collaboration.
- With military deeds: Without jeopardizing its strength in the incident of defensive strategy and deterrence, one party, can halt the deployment of weapons and soldiers and decrease its (offensive) military and attacking ability and capability. Both parties could even choose to establish fresh institutional arrangements aimed at enhancing defense cooperation and limiting significant security contests (Tang, 2009).

The US-Cuba reconciliation demonstrates the principles of the second bullet point since both nations are stepping up their bilateral cooperative relations to address problems like crime, drug trafficking, and natural disasters. America is also continually shifting its previous policy towards Cuba. For instance, Cuba was taken off the US list of countries that sponsor terrorism in 2015. This Step is proof of the defensive realism of the USA towards Cuba during the Obama era (House, [2016](#)).

Conclusion

The Relationship between the US and Cuba has witnessed different phases of ups and downs. It was all fine up until the Cuban Revolution of 1959. With the rise of Fidel Castro in power, there came a hike in antagonism towards the USA when Castro nationalized all the Cuban foreign assets imposed heavy taxes on US imports, and started inclining towards the USSR. These activities of Castro really rang the bells for the US policymakers. They planned the Bay of Pigs by enforcing 1400 Cuban exiles to overthrow the Castro regime which didn't succeed. Then the USA shifted its policy and enforced an embargo on Cuba right before the

Cuban missile issue which dented Cuba and its economy to a considerable extent. While the relations deteriorated over the next decade, a small window of hope enlightened the dark room of these relations with diplomatic sunshine in 1977 when President Jimmy Carter came to an agreement with Castro and resumed diplomats in a limited manner. This did not last long as Cuba was constantly facing pressure from its people and the world, especially the USA, and finally, Cuban actions in the Americas were noticed and were taken actions against in the form of being labeled as a State sponsor of Terrorism by the United States of America. Then the USA tried to maneuver the Cuban people against the Cuban government by launching a Radio service for the Cuban people. But then came another huge turn in events when the USSR disintegrated and Cuba lost billions of dollars' worth of aid and trade from the USSR. From here on, the United States got the chance to play openly and freely and kept tightening its grip on Cuba. This was further aided by the Helms-Burton Act of 1996. Now the USA trying hard to shift Cuba into a more democratic State by putting pressure on elections and freeing the press.^{21st} century was no different and this cat-and-mouse play went on. Cuba looked for new alliances that it could not find and the USA kept pushing Cuba to the corner until 2009. Obama came into government and renegotiated many terms with Cuba and eased the path towards a more diplomatic and peaceful solution to the problem, especially in his second term.

Recommendations

Since Biden is the office now and he made a few policy changes in 2022, his administration should endeavor to fully execute the policy adjustments, but more action is required to fulfill Biden's election pledge to resume negotiations with Havana.

Proper Response to Migration

One of the biggest influxes of Cuban immigration to the United States occurred in 2022, when around 233,000 persons, or about 2 percent of Cuba's population as a whole wanted to travel to the USA. Officials from the United States and Cuba met in April and November 2022 to review the execution of the bilateral migration agreements in response to

this dynamic, which led to various adjustments in U.S. policies towards Cubans. These included Cuba accepting deportation flights, the CFRP program being reinstated, and a rise in the number of immigrant visas handled at the American Embassy in Havana. There are no indications that the exodus from Cuba is going to slow significantly. The United States Customs and Border Protection encountered a total of 29,872 Cuban migrants in just the month of October 2022. This is a five-fold increase in interactions from October 2021. During the COVID-19 pandemic, sanctions imposed by the United States, and the island's economic difficulties were pushing people to leave the country, the Biden administration could also take certain immediate steps to ensure an appropriate response to migration, such as:

- Start accepting non-immigrant visas at the Embassy of the United States in Havana for anyone who wants to go from Cuba to the United States in a meaningful way, such as students, businesspeople, musicians, researchers, families, and more. Since 2017, Havana has only been able to process a small number of visas, forcing petitioners to fly to American embassies abroad.
- Reactivate the Refugee Section, which oversees the Cuban United States Refugee Admission Programme.
- new invites for the CFRP Programme are to be sent out.
- To respond to Cuban migration by land and sea in a humane manner, implement protection-sensitive migration management systems.

Remove Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list

The Trump administration added Cuba to the State Sponsors of Terrorism list maintained by the United States State Department just days before President Biden assumed office on January 20, 2021. But Cuba cannot be classified under the legislative definition of a state supporter of terrorism, and it has not fundamentally altered its behavior since President Obama ordered an intelligence review in 2015 that found Cuba no longer deserved on the terrorist list. In an effort to influence international ties between the United States and Cuba at the start of Biden's presidency, it is thought that Trump administration officials decided to add Cuba to the list. The inclusion of Cuba on the SSOT list significantly restricts international investment and adds more barriers to providing humanitarian relief.

Re-engage diplomatically with Cuba

The twenty-two bilateral treaties negotiated between 2015 and 2017 between the two nations were the subject of extensive discussions before President Trump cut off diplomatic ties with Havana. The majority of these agreements are still in force but have not been put into practice. President Joe Biden has reopened discussions on migration since taking office and given Cuba some limited technical help in addition to humanitarian relief. Nevertheless, the government ought to reopen discussions on a number of other topics of common concern, such as the agricultural sector, climate change, and environmental preservation.

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