9 WAYS

FOR US TO TALK TO CUBA
& FOR CUBA TO TALK TO US

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The Center for Democracy in the Americas
PRAISE FOR 9 WAYS

“Cuba ceased being a security threat to the United States over a decade ago. The rest of the world has changed during that decade. Yet, U.S. policymakers remain wedded to a series of dated policies that cry out for a fresh approach. This report offers concrete ideas which could yield benefits to both sides of the Florida Straits and help bring a close to sixty years of distrust and animosity.”

John J. “Jack” Sheehan is a retired United States Marine Corps general. He was Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic for NATO and Commander-in-Chief for the U.S. Atlantic Command (1994-1997)

“As a rafter who left Cuba many years ago, as a citizen soldier who fought in Iraq, as a Cuban-American who loves our country, I urge President Obama to read this report and follow its advice. If he would close Guantanamo and open up Cuba to all Americans, he can change history and help our country live up to its highest ideals.”

Sgt. Carlos Lazo
Bronze Star winner, Operation Iraqi Freedom

“This 9 Ways report is a road map for not just ending the embargo but also for engaging the Cuban people, sending a hopeful signal to Latin America, and showing the world that this White House is under new management. This is exactly the kind of change we elected Barack Obama to make.”

Donna Brazile
Political strategist, adjunct professor, author, and syndicated columnist
9 Ways
For US to Talk to Cuba and
For Cuba to Talk to US

THE CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS
THE CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS (CDA) is devoted to changing U.S. policy toward the countries of the Americas by basing our relations on mutual respect, recognizing positive models of governance in the region, and fostering dialogue particularly with those governments and movements with which U.S. policy is at odds.

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For this document, CDA sponsored a group of independent authors, varied in viewpoint and background, to write on a vital foreign policy issue: U.S.-Cuba cooperation. The 9 Ways report compiled and produced by CDA for publication, and available on its website, reflects the independent thinking and contributions of each of these authors. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained in this publication are solely those of each of the contributing authors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or positions of CDA.

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Praise for 9 Ways

“Our current policy toward Cuba is simply wrong and has led to little else except restrictions on the freedoms of U.S. citizens. Instead, a more effective approach would be to allow contact with American society and our values, as this report effectively argues.”

—Congressman Jeff Flake (R-AZ)
Principal sponsor of legislation to remove restrictions on travel to Cuba

“If one purpose of American foreign policy is to urge all countries to respect the rule of law, why does the U.S. embargo against Cuba stop my law school from talking to the law faculty at the University of Havana about our legal systems? It makes no sense. That’s why recommendations like restarting academic exchanges, as this report suggests, offer the right way forward to reform and rationalize U.S. policy toward Cuba.”

—Hon. Kurt L. Schmoke
Dean, Howard University School of Law;
former Mayor of Baltimore

“When I visited Cuba as a Member of Congress, it was obvious to me that U.S. policy was a failure that was contributing to human suffering, dividing families and denying opportunities for U.S. and Cuban citizens. The core point of 9 Ways is exactly right: if we sell Cuba more food, exchange more ideas, and encourage travel in both directions, we’ll break this deadlock that has outlived the Cold War and ten American presidents, and put U.S.-Cuba relations on a more positive and productive course.”

—Hon. Cal Dooley
President & CEO, American Chemistry Council
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When 2008 ended, and leaders from thirty-three Caribbean and Latin American nations met in Brazil and called for an end to our embargo against Cuba, this report took on a special urgency.

The nations of the Americas have never challenged our Cuba policy with such clarity or unanimity. And they are not alone. Our allies in Europe, Asia, and Africa condemn the embargo every year. Growing majorities of Americans — even in Miami, Florida — want the policy changed. There are great expectations, here and around the world, that President Obama will make history by ending this failed and futile policy once and for all.

But even if the case for normalizing relations is overpowering, the obstacle that has always stopped progress still seems overwhelming. These two governments don’t trust each other. And how could they? Washington and Havana have been shouting at each other, talking past each other, and, most of all, threatening each other, for fifty years.

If our politicians and diplomats can’t even conduct a simple dialogue that builds trust between them, real progress — and, ultimately, reconciliation — will be impossible.
We know how to get that conversation started. The Center for Democracy in the Americas has spent most of the last decade bringing Cuban and American politicians together.

Our Freedom to Travel campaign has led more than thirty delegations to Cuba, enabling Republicans and Democrats, five Senators and twenty-eight Representatives, and thirty Congressional staff to visit the island, many for the first time.

Some were harsh critics of Cuba, communism, and the Castros. Others knew our policy failed and had sullied America’s image in the region. But nearly all were astounded by the openness of the Cuban people, and the increasing willingness of Cuban officials to talk frankly — often aggressively — about the most divisive issues that separate our systems and societies.

Every delegation we’ve taken to Cuba has returned to the United States believing in direct engagement. They only ask: How can this process be formalized?

That is the aim of this report. We recruited an exceptional team of experts to identify problems in their fields especially where Washington and Havana have mutual interests in finding solutions for them.

In their essays, our authors tell remarkable stories about a rich fabric of shared concerns and a long history of collaboration — such as joint medical research that predates the Spanish-American war; fence talks between Cuban and American soldiers on Guantanamo; overflights by U.S. hurricane hunters to predict extreme weather; piece-meal partnerships between our Coast Guards. They also show how often politics intruded and stopped real progress in its tracks.

Our writers then offer a succession of proposals for cooperation in military affairs and law enforcement, health research and hurricane preparedness, energy development and migration policy, commerce and academic exchange, and for reuniting Cuban families — to build trust back into the U.S.-Cuba relationship. Most of these ideas require nothing more than political will to implement them.

We’re not recommending talk for its own sake. Cooperation in these fields will give political leaders in both countries the confi-
idence they need to close this fifty-year chasm of mistrust, so we can finally engage in the difficult negotiations that will bring this conflict to an end.

This is how President Obama can break the diplomatic deadlock with Cuba.

Of course, the last defenders of the embargo will try and stop him. They’ll disparage the very idea of talking to Cuba. They’ll call it capitulation to communism. They’ll warn Obama: “If you talk to the Castros today, they will deceive you or embarrass you tomorrow.”

For them, Cuba is a problem without a solution. But they’re wrong.

For more than a generation, American soldiers and scientists, academics and activists, never stopped trying to keep the conversation going, and they overcame the resistance of American policy and domestic politics to build productive relationships with their Cuban counterparts.

Now is the time for their government to join them. It is time for us to talk to Cuba.

This is the course that President Obama should follow. Set aside the Cold War hatreds and the rhetoric; and step by step, let a free exchange of ideas lead to normalized travel and trade, and then offer the United States and Cuba the chance to live together as neighbors.

Were he to take this step, the impact would be dramatic, and not just on the island. Ending the embargo would be an unmistakable signal to Latin America that the United States will no longer view the region through the Cuba lens, and it will also send a powerful message that our nation is ready to embrace this world not as we found it in 1959 but as it exists today.
United States-Cuba policy, after enduring fifty years as an unresolved standoff, has finally and formally reached the end of its usefulness. Now at this defining moment, a new American administration has the opportunity to devise a new policy toward Cuba, one that elevates authentic U.S. interests and emerging global realities over obsolete ideology.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, the U.S. committed itself to a “no use of force” policy, agreeing not to invade Cuba militarily. U.S. strategy has instead used a strict and unyielding economic embargo — the only policy tool available aside from covert operations — to create conditions that would lead people within Cuba to rise up and overthrow the government of Fidel and Raúl Castro, and replace it with a democratically-elected government.

The U.S. regime change goal toward Cuba persists, but any objective observer would have to conclude that the strategy has failed.

Ten U.S. presidents have come and gone and the revolutionary government of Cuba is still in command. It is hard to think of an instance in U.S. political history when economic sanctions alone have precipitated regime change, particularly from within a hostile country. Sudden, radical political change from within Cuba is, at best, highly unlikely.
U.S. economic sanctions have, however, exacted a considerable cost on Cubans and on us. A report from Cuba’s government to the United Nations estimates that the U.S. embargo since its inception has cost Cuba more than $93 billion.\textsuperscript{2} As detailed extensively in this report, the embargo takes food off the table in Cuban homes and makes access to certain medical care significantly more difficult for the Cuban people. For these reasons and others connected to them, our nation has paid a dear price for the embargo in the form of a diminished global image and reduced moral standing in the eyes of the world. We have been denounced by resolutions voted in the United Nations General Assembly for seventeen consecutive years; most recently, the vote was 185-3 against the U.S. embargo.\textsuperscript{3}

For its part, the Cuban government has pursued an equally single-minded strategy for the past fifty years. Fidel Castro’s focus has been on asserting Cuba’s autonomy and ending foreign domination. Against a changing context of world affairs, his goal has been to safeguard the revolutionary government he founded, consolidate Cuban security, and maintain the integrity of the Cuban political system while improving health care and education for ordinary Cubans. His methods — and now his brother’s — have changed over time from embracing the assistance of the Soviet Union, to accepting other lines of economic and political assistance, most recently from China and Venezuela.

Their aims have yielded an adult literacy rate of almost 100 percent, an infant mortality rate that is the lowest in Latin America and a Cuban life expectancy of 77.7 years.\textsuperscript{4} However, these improvements have come at a high and increasingly unsustainable cost. Even Cuba’s current president Raúl Castro admits\textsuperscript{5} the balance of reduced living standards and liberties in exchange for social gains is a trade-off that is not sustainable. For the older generation of Cubans, sacrificing for the good of the Revolution may have been a rallying cry, particularly when reinforced by the constant threat — real or politically amplified — of U.S. domination, but it is not sufficient for the younger generation of Cubans. The island’s population is shrinking by a migration of
young people to opportunities elsewhere. The current Cuban “business model” isn’t up to the challenge of its people’s desire for a better life. A country that imports more than 80 percent of its food, leaves 50 percent of its arable land fallow, and depends on Venezuela for 90 million barrels of oil per day needs a serious business model re-think.

At the same time, America’s policy toward Cuba deserves no less a thorough re-think. A closer look at the embargo leads to the conclusion that its design and application make little to no sense.

Consider this anomaly. For an embargo to be effective, logically it seems, it would have to be enforced by a large and unified number of nations; otherwise, it’s not an embargo — it’s a sieve. While the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba is arguably the most restrictive set of sanctions applied by the U.S. to any nation in the world, America is the only nation applying this embargo to Cuba. The U.S. does not engage in diplomatic relations with Cuba, but more than 180 nations do. Tourism on the island from other nations has grown substantially as an industry. The number of tourists grew from 340,000 in 1990 to more than 2,300,000 in 2005, with the majority coming from Canada, Italy, the United Kingdom, Spain and Mexico. Recovering from the departure of the Russians at the end of the Cold War, Cuba was able to fashion an economy that grew as fast as any in Latin America. Allies and adversaries alike do business with Cuba, selling everything from telecommunications equipment to agricultural products.

Furthermore, the embargo is designed to “punish” Cuba; in fact, it appears to punish the United States in a number of significant ways injurious to the larger national interest. One of the most significant is energy policy, an issue that cuts across both economic and national security concerns. Cuba has staggering offshore reserves of oil and gas. In order to explore and recover these energy resources, Cuba has signed concessions with several foreign oil companies, including Repsol (Spain), Norsk Hydro (Norway), ONGC (India), PdVSA (Venezuela), Petronas (Malaysia), PetroVietnam (Vietnam), and Petrobras (Brazil). China has focused on onshore oil extraction in the Pinar del Rio province. But at a time when the U.S. Congress has evidenced a new
willingness to reverse a long-standing ban on offshore drilling, 9 Ways authors Amy Myers Jaffe and Ronald Soligo point out that our sanctions ensure that we are the odd man out in this obvious opportunity for exploring new energy resources.

Also, while the embargo is designed to inflict pain on the Cuban government, U.S. companies and ports which stand ready to do business with Cuba are also victims. Markets and economic opportunities are being left for companies in other countries eager and ready to fill the void left by U.S. policy. One estimate, included in Jake Colvin’s essay on commerce, suggests that ending the embargo could mean $1 billion in U.S. sales of manufactured goods, agriculture, and services supplied to Cuba.11

To the extent that the U.S. strategy toward Cuba has an operating theory, it is the two-part approach of punishing the Cuban government through the embargo while appealing to the Cuban people through communications efforts to peel the public and government apart. In fact, the U.S. strategy has proved counterproductive. Throughout history, the Cuban people have resisted all attempts by outsiders to dictate to them their own best interests. While the Cuban people may wish for the freedoms they associate with the United States, at the same time they do not accept outsiders forging opinions for them on Cuban political affairs.12 The U.S. embargo has furthermore provided the Cuban government with a convenient excuse for its own failures: economic shortcomings on the part of the Cuban government and its system can be laid at the door of America’s policy. America is the excuse on which the Cuban government can always rely.

The current global economic and political context is marked by enormous uncertainty, turbulence, and unpredictability. We live in a dangerous and unstable world. New economic competitors from the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) are challenging the United States, changing both the global economic equation and the global balance of security. How does the U.S. policy toward Cuba fit into this larger game? Surprisingly, the United States has continued to pursue a strategy that pushes Cuba closer to nations that America
regards as either unfriendly (Venezuela) or increasingly competitive (China). The U.S. embargo has, understandably, forced Cuba to diversify trading partners, and expand its participation in the international economy. Meanwhile, the U.S. seems insistent on playing a smaller game in its embargo of Cuba, rather than a larger game in international, economic and security matters.

Most remarkable is the inconsistency of the American embargo of Cuba as it has been implemented. The embargo against Cuba is the strictest applied by the United States anywhere in the world. It has been in place the longest. It is the principal policy tool the United States has to produce regime change in Cuba. But here is the stunning reality: since 2001 Cuba has purchased more than $2 billion in agricultural products from the United States.\textsuperscript{13} The United States ranks fourth behind Venezuela, Spain, and China as a main source of imports for Cuba, accounting for 6.2 percent of imports in 2005, after going as high as 8.5 percent in 2003.\textsuperscript{14}

The U.S. policy toward Cuba has been driven by history and habit; it is sadly out of touch with the context of the times and equally out of touch with reality; it is internally inconsistent and flawed in its intent and application. The embargo stands uniquely crafted as bad economics, bad business, bad national security strategy, and bad global politics. There is no credible argument that defends this policy as serving any definition of U.S. national interests.

The question also arises whether America’s aims for Cuba, however unattainable, even make sense in the context of today’s new reali-
ties. To ask the question this way is to change a sober discussion of U.S. policy conducted in traditional diplomatic terms into a realization that our policy toward Cuba is a head-shaking, “lost in the fun house,” hall-of-mirrors set of practices that make little or no sense. They are inconsistent in theory and erratic in application.

For instance, Cuba is considered a terrorist threat whereas North Korea, despite sporadic pursuit of nuclear weapons and threatening behavior toward its Asian neighbors, today is no longer deemed a terrorist state.

The U.S. is willing to operate normal, conventional economic relationships with Libya, Venezuela and a host of other nations around the world whose political motives are suspect and whose practices are often incompatible with U.S. democratic values.

Even better are the examples of China and Vietnam. We have ambassadors in both capitals. We promote tourism to both countries. In the case of China, we depend on their financial strength to finance the U.S. national debt. Although the people of China and Vietnam live under governments in communist systems, and China has engaged in objectionable human rights violations, neither their systems nor their methods have prevented the U.S. from a normal exchange with both nations. But under our policy, we consider both Cuba’s communist government and economy unacceptable systems. They are so much worse than other communist countries that they alone are worthy of our continued, but futile system of sanctions.

The U.S. operates a substantial diplomatic Interests Section in Havana with a large staff and representation. However, its members cannot travel inside Cuba, meet with Cubans, engage in fact-finding activities, or operate as normal U.S. “eyes and ears” in Cuba. The U.S. has people on the ground — but they are prevented by U.S. policy from doing their jobs.

Our Cuba experience reminds us that embargoes and sanctions are dull instruments — a reality that both liberals and conservatives in the American political landscape have recognized in nations where the U.S. sought to exert pressure. The U.S. is left with no
credible explanation for how an economic embargo would actually lead to regime change. We simply cling to it as if history left us no other option.

For a variety of reasons, the U.S.-Cuba relationship appears to have arrived at a strategic inflection point. A strategic inflection point is the time when companies — or countries — have a chance to rethink the needs of the moment and the demands of the future. They come infrequently and once gone cannot be recaptured. The time for America to re-aim its goal, strategy, and policies toward Cuba is now. The last such opportunity came when the Soviet Union left Cuba — but the U.S. chose not to take advantage of that moment. There is no way to predict when the next opportunity will come.

The Obama administration enters office unburdened by the baggage of history. President Obama speaks eloquently to Americans of balanced principle and pragmatism. His election owes no debt to the hard-core anti-Castro Cuban community that has driven so much of U.S. policy in the past — a community that is undergoing its own demographic changes, with a younger generation who have different attitudes toward what is possible and even desirable in terms of U.S. policy toward Cuba.

On Cuba’s side of the equation, there is considerable evidence of evolved thinking. Cuba is saddled with a twin dilemma: a rapidly graying group more than sixty years old represents a big demographic slice of the population — more than 20 percent — and places more demands on the country’s social and economic system. At the same time, young people make increasingly loud and public calls for a better quality of life. Generational change is bringing new demands and new perspectives. Younger Cubans have a different outlook as to what constitutes the good life.

To respond to these competing demands, Raúl Castro, since assuming power as Cuba’s president, has given a succession of speeches calling for structural changes in the Cuban economy to increase efficiency and production, and has taken steps to make the government smaller and more efficient.
Agricultural reforms have been instituted to increase domestic production and begin the process of substituting imported foodstuffs for Cuban agricultural products. In 2008, Raúl Castro announced both agricultural reforms and the relaxation of regulations on the importation of DVD players, VCRs, game consoles, auto parts, and TVs.\textsuperscript{15}

None of this constitutes a dramatic repudiation of the past or even the promise of dramatic political and economic change; the government of Raúl Castro is firmly in control of the work and lives of the Cuban people.

However, this fifty-year cycle may have run its course. Each country has its own singular goal and strategy, but at this defining moment, as the context changes, we need to ask, how will those strategies change as well?

Change within Cuba will certainly come within the existing system.\textsuperscript{16} The United States therefore needs to adopt a strategy and policies that amplify and support the change within Cuba toward greater freedom and respect for human rights, and that serve and support larger American economic and political interests.

To do that thoroughly, coherently, and correctly will require the U.S. to untangle an incoherent thicket of legal and regulatory sanctions that do not fit the current context and do not serve U.S. interests. Because much of the current intellectual and political mess has been enacted by the Congress into law, it will take corrective action by the Congress to fix it, action that should start by repealing the ban on legal travel to Cuba by all Americans.

That said, there are a number of immediate actions that can be taken by the President to set the country on a humane, sensible course to advance U.S. interests, promote social, economic and political change within Cuba, and make sense in the context of larger global issues.

This collection of essays identifies immediate steps that the Obama administration can promote to build confidence and cooperation between the two countries, including: remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism; cooperate on military affairs and law
enforcement; loosen terms for agricultural sales to Cuba by American producers; exchange knowledge in health, science, weather forecasting, and civil preparedness; re-open avenues for people-to-people contacts; increase the monetary amount Americans can send family in Cuba; advance cultural and academic exchanges for greater mutual understanding; and develop a new diplomacy without preconditions.

These confidence-building measures represent positive steps in themselves — but they can do a lot more. Cooperation with Cuba in these practical areas will make it easier for us to engage in the larger, more existential discussions that can never and will never take place while the regime change agenda so dominates our diplomacy. We have to take an entirely different course.

One model for such a revised policy exists in the approach to Cuba taken by the European Union; it consists of a three-part policy: encourage improvement in human rights standards; support a transition to a market economy; improve the standard of living of the Cuban people through economic engagement.

While the United States would never adopt as its own the policies of the European Union, this approach, which combines the pragmatism of the present with optimism for the possibility of change in the future, strikes a realistic note that fits the context of the moment.

The last time a United States Senator was sworn in as President, in the midst of the Cold War, he said let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate. As true as John Kennedy’s words about Russia were in 1961, they speak with even greater truth about Cuba in 2009. This is Barack Obama’s chance to make them live and work for the United States today.
A scant ninety miles off our shore lies Cuba, a relic of the past, a reminder of the Cold War, mired in “old think.”

Cuba is not alone in old think.

United States policy toward Cuba resembles all those fifties-era Chevys and Fords that continue to drive the streets of Havana. Much like those vintage cars, our policy needs spare parts and a tune-up to continue running. Today Cuba is in transition, moving toward a post-Fidel world. A U.S.-led infusion of new thought, policy and retrofitted “spare parts” can help Cuba become a friend (maybe not a good one, but a friend nonetheless) vice continuing its role of antagonist.

One of those reworked parts must be a dialogue between the Cuban armed forces, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR), and the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) division of the U.S. military based in Miami. Building on the marginal relationships our respective militaries are now permitted will enhance confidence and cooperation between the two governments. From the perspective of national security and national interest, we profoundly need that accordance, for three related reasons.
Cuba needs an alternative to Venezuelan or Russian influence. The reemergence of a bullying Russia, expanding its reach into the Western Hemisphere through its relationship with Venezuela and its volatile president, Hugo Chávez, gives notice that we must swiftly reexamine and alter our policy toward Cuba.

Second, Hurricanes Gustav, Ike, and Paloma devastated Cuba during the 2008 hurricane season. The small island is one major hurricane away from a natural disaster of epic proportions that would drive a flood of refugees toward the United States. Today, we are ill-prepared to deal with the migration or with the humanitarian relief required. The U.S. government and our charitable sector supported relief efforts in the Asian-Pacific in 2004. Could we turn our backs and do nothing in Cuba if they suffered the same level of devastation we saw in the Pacific’s Tsunami disaster?

Finally, a friendly Cuba could be a very productive participant in combating twenty-first century security threats including international terrorism, narco-terrorism, natural disasters and mass migration.

Two of my predecessors at SOUTHCOM, retired Generals Charles Wilhelm and Barry McCaffrey, visited Cuba post-retirement, met with Fidel, and left saying a fresh approach in our security policy was needed. Both saw no signs of weapons of mass destruction and believe the Cuban military is not a threat to the United States.

I agree.

We have ignored Cuba far too long. General Wilhelm once called the island a “47,000 square mile blind spot in our security rearview mirror.”¹ Our national policy toward Cuba, to encourage democracy and the overthrow of Fidel’s communist government through sanctions, has failed miserably.

As my good friend Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky once said, Fidel outlived ten U.S. presidents and until he became ill, he looked better than all of them as they left office.

An improved and enlightened Cuba policy begins with dialogue at every level of our government, including the military. A small group of Miami-based Cuban-Americans would call such a dialogue “appease-
ment.” But the politically charged appeasement canard simply doesn’t wash. Confrontation and sanctions don’t work. Talking, working out differences, and coming to some common ground benefits both sides.

A fresh beginning starts with repealing Helms-Burton, otherwise known as The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act. The Council on Foreign Relations also calls for the repeal of Helms-Burton.2 The 1996 legislation prohibits relaxation of the U.S. embargo and related restrictions unless or until a democratically elected government is in power or a transition government without Fidel or Raúl Castro is established. Helms-Burton disallows SOUTHCOM from opening any form of dialogue or communications with FAR or the Cuban government. Helms-Burton simply must go away before we can have any form of meaningful, advanced military-to-military relationship with Cuba.

A notable exception is the monthly face-to-face, across the fence discussions with FAR at Guantanamo. In the near term, we should expand on the exceptions and use them as the foundation of our military-to-military dialogue, learning more about FAR capabilities and teaching them about ours. We should also expand U.S. Coast Guard presence and communications with the Cuban Border Guard in our mission in Havana. The more we learn about each other, the quicker we will begin to overcome the Cuban perception that we seek to invade or overthrow the regime. We should also conduct joint training exercises to improve Search and Rescue (SAR) and other operational capabilities. These and other confidence-building measures will serve to grow our military-to-military relationship.
Cuba has long understood the relationship between drug transit nations and drug use in those countries. Simply put, drug transit nations become drug using nations. Cuba wants neither drug use nor the lawlessness that comes with the drug trade. For that reason they have worked with us to interdict drugs bound for the U.S. We should look for every avenue to build on this cooperation. We should work out protocols for greater intelligence sharing about narco-trafficking. The agency responsible for drug interdiction is Joint Inter-Agency Task Force, South (JIATF-S). Located in Key West, Florida, JIATF-S collects, fuses, and analyzes intelligence to conduct drug interdiction operations against a tireless, determined narco-enemy. All of our law enforcement, intelligence and military agencies are part of JIATF-S, including many representatives from Caribbean and Latin American allies. These partners are fire-walled from sensitive U.S. intelligence, and there is no reason a Cuban FAR or Border Guard representative could not also be a part of this drug fighting team. As confidence building improves and procedures are established, Cuba could be a proactive and very useful interdiction ally in the war against narco-trafficking.

Once normalized relations begin again with Cuba, the issue of sovereignty over Guantanamo will require negotiation. In an improving relationship with Cuba, the subject of Guantanamo is unavoidable. With the demise of the Vieques bombing range in Puerto Rico, the military justification for continued U.S. presence in Guantanamo fades. We have long ago lost the rationale for its naval use as a coaling station. We can begin that discussion in the near term by conducting more frequent, substantive, and higher level fence meetings. This would serve as one more assurance to the Cubans that we are serious about building a meaningful relationship beneficial to both sides.

I would like to highlight three areas of potential substantive U.S.-Cuba cooperation to start, that I also believe can take place with either a fully democratic Cuba or one moving away from repression and toward more democratic processes. After all, we participate with
China — hardly a poster child for Jeffersonian democracy — on a myriad of fronts.

First, SOUTHCOM conducts an annual exercise, PANAMEX, with participating allies focusing on the defense of the Panama Canal. Begun in 2002 with only the U.S., Panama, and Chile, PANAMEX has grown into a robust exercise of some fifteen to twenty participants and broadened its scope beyond merely canal defense. The inclusion of Cuba in PANAMEX would both demonstrate Cuba’s desire to be a productive partner in the region and increase operational capabilities with the Cuban military across a wide set of military missions.

Second, SOUTHCOM sponsors an annual exercise focused on humanitarian relief called Fuerzas Aliadas Humanitarias (FA-HUM). The 2008 FA-HUM exercise was in Comasagua, El Salvador. The command post exercise is designed to build cooperation in disaster response between allies and includes military and non-military participants. FAR has great experience and capability in this vital operational area that could assist others in improving their skills. In addition, working with them would greatly improve our interoperability so that we can be of immediate assistance should a major natural disaster strike Cuba. Until now, the Cubans have spurned our offers of assistance, but there will come a day when they will want and require our help. We need to be prepared to respond.

Last, SOUTHCOM has sponsored Human Rights Initiative (HRI) since 1997 to gain consensus among military allies in the area of human rights. HRI is a perfect mechanism for improved U.S.-Cuba relations. SOUTHCOM is the only U.S. Unified Command with an office dedicated to building and perpetuating human rights among allied militaries. SOUTHCOM has been influential in assisting several Latin American militaries move from propping up dictatorships to supporting democratically elected governments. As Cuba moves toward a more open and freer society, their military will have to evolve. SOUTHCOM will be a vital, irreplaceable partner in this evolution.

My successor at SOUTHCOM, General John Craddock, along with Major Barbara Fick, authored a much needed, thoughtful, and candid
discussion of U.S.-Cuban security cooperation. Written for *Cuban Affairs Electronic Journal* and entitled “Security Cooperation with a Democratic and Free Cuba: What Would It Look Like?” it is a must read for anyone interested in the transformation of our moribund Cuba policy.\(^3\) Heavily caveated so as not to be seen as going against accepted U.S. policy, General Craddock’s paper discusses the points I make here and many more as a way ahead for our U.S.-Cuban military relations. Though General Craddock suggests that nothing can occur until Cuba is free and democratic, I believe in beginning a dialogue now. Working on mechanisms that benefit both sides, we can assist in the transformation of Cuba that began with the governmental transition.

SOUTHCOM’s annual budget is less than one-quarter of one percent of Defense Department annual revenues, yet the Command plays a major role throughout the Caribbean and Central and South America assisting militaries in support of their democratically elected leaders. We get a lot of bang for our buck out of SOUTHCOM, and given new direction it can be of invaluable assistance in moving U.S.-Cuba policy forward.

After traveling to the island post-retirement, USMC General Charles Wilhelm’s and Army General Barry McCaffrey’s discussions and writings have furthered our understanding of the need to alter and improve our government’s policy vis-à-vis Cuba. They began an informal dialogue that needs continuation. Through the auspices of the Council on Foreign Relations, I have offered to begin a dialogue along similar lines with Raúl Castro. My bags are packed. It is time to replace old think and overhaul the engine of our relationship with Cuba and the Cuban people.
The U.S. coast and the island of Cuba are geographically only ninety miles apart, sharing the narrow Straits of Florida. Both nations are vulnerable to the scourge of illegal drugs and to global criminal networks; both have a stake in maintaining a healthy environment; both have to respond to natural disasters. In addition, the U.S. has a strong national interest in countering global financial crimes, especially those that may contribute to terrorist activities.

One could reasonably expect, given these common interests, the U.S. and Cuba would have a robust dialogue in these seemingly neutral, apolitical areas of interest. But this is not the case, and the lack of functional relationships that would permit dialogue puts our national interests at risk.

Rather, interaction between U.S. and Cuban government entities has been strictly circumscribed by the two governments with diplomats posted at the respective Interests Sections tightly managing the few functional relationships that have existed. Only rarely have government agencies maintained “bureaucrat-to-bureaucrat” or “operator-to-operator” relationships. Notable among these exceptions are the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Weather Service, the
U.S. Coast Guard, and the monthly military Guantanamo fence line talks.

Historically, during some of the darkest times of the Cold War, the U.S. saw a national interest in building practical relationships with our adversaries in certain fields. Those contacts gave us insight and understanding about our adversaries, and allowed the U.S. to pursue a number of commonly held objectives. When the Soviet Union subsequently fell, the exposure of communist bureaucrats to their capitalist counterparts offered an alternative model of governance to look to. Preparations for a transition in the way the U.S. and Cuba deal with each other are required now. Our mutual interests and close regional association demand it. The U.S. will need to develop mature and meaningful relationships, and those begin with confidence-building measures.

The functional relationships between the National Weather Service and the Federal Aviation Administration with their counterpart agencies are limited to very specific interchanges regarding routine air traffic control and hurricane tracking. The military-to-military fence line discussions in Guantanamo, though limited to common local issues, do decrease local tensions and misunderstandings.

The most well-established functional relationship between the two governments exists between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Cuban Border Guard, which maintain operational contact at varying levels.

In the early years of the Castro regime these communications were generally limited to the exchange of information concerning Search and Rescue (SAR) cases. The original mechanism to communicate was an old Teletype machine. However, between the late 1970s and 2000, there have been at least four meetings between the U.S. government and the Cuban government to iron out protocols for communication, with one of the early meetings establishing fax as the preferred method. This made communication much easier, but the U.S. Department of State still required that any non-routine fax be pre-approved by the Department before it was sent. As drug smuggling became more prevalent and sophisticated, the U.S. Coast Guard pushed for
operational communications that included exchanging information on suspected smuggling operations in or near Cuban waters. In the early 1990s, the U.S. Coast Guard finally received permission to communicate with Cuba concerning a suspected smuggling vessel, the “Thief of Hearts.”

For many years, a Miami-based group of Cuban-Americans, “Brothers to the Rescue,” had routinely flown private planes on missions over the waters to look for and help guide rafters and other maritime travelers to Florida from Cuba. In 1996, Cuba shot down two “Brothers to the Rescue” airplanes in the Straits of Florida for allegedly violating Cuban airspace. As a consequence of the shootdown, Cuban-American groups organized “freedom flotillas” of private boats to sail to the edge of the Cuban territorial sea and scatter flowers, shoot flares, or engage in other similar activities. The Cuban government, understandably sensitive about sovereignty, dispatched patrol boats to the same vicinity as the flotillas.

Both governments were worried about the local matter escalating into an international incident. The U.S. Coast Guard spearheaded the U.S. government’s efforts to ensure that this did not happen by meeting with flotilla organizers, coordinating other U.S. resources to monitor events, and dispatching a U.S. Coast Guard officer to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana to coordinate with the Cuban Border Guard. In the process, the professional relationships between the two operational organizations, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Cuban Border Guard, was strengthened.

With smuggling, flotillas, and maritime migration as a backdrop, the U.S. Coast Guard proposed that the U.S. Department of State meet with the Cuban government on measures that would ease the operational entities’ coordination and communication. In 1999, at meetings held in Havana, the U.S. and Cuban governments agreed to permit telephone calls between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Cuban Border Guard, to establish protocols for the two agencies’ vessels to communicate by radio at sea, and for the U.S. to assist the Border Guard in certain drug cases. The agreement called for a U.S. Coast
Guard Liaison Officer (CGLO) to be posted at the U.S. Interests Section in Havana.

To date, there have been five consecutive CGLOs posted to the U.S. Interests Section — all of whom had and have remarkable access to visit facilities and experience good relationships with their Cuban Border Guard counterparts. CGLOs have even been able to facilitate the resolution of certain other law enforcement issues. By all accounts, this particular operational relationship is fulfilling expectations and meeting both countries’ national interests.

Those few current functional relationships are born of necessity. Outside of a handful of diplomats, military officers, and the five U.S. Coast Guard officers that have been posted in Havana, U.S. government employees have no idea who their Cuban counterparts are or how to contact them. To even initiate contact between a U.S. agency and its Cuban counterpart would require facilitation by the respective Interests Sections, a cumbersome, ineffective process discouraging any long-term relationship. Though Cuban envoys might have an advantage in identifying key persons in the U.S. government, American and Cuban bureaucrats have no personal histories to build on should an international political crisis require contact.

The most practical approach is a selective exchange of liaison officers and expanding contact at international meetings by inviting Cuban bureaucrats and operators to select U.S. meetings and allowing U.S. experts to attend conferences hosted by Cuba. The U.S. and Cuba have common concerns and mutual national interests in the following focus areas:

- **Law Enforcement.** While the CGLO at the U.S. Interests Section has been able to expand his portfolio in some cases to include facilitating interaction between U.S. law enforcement agencies and their Cuban counterparts, more could be done by formalizing the CGLO’s role in facilitating law enforcement cooperation and perhaps expand the “law enforcement liaison section” at the U.S. Interests Section appropriately. Potential areas of low controversy
would include facilitating contacts for agents of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Marshals Service, and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (Note: While direct U.S.-Cuban interaction with the FBI may be difficult to achieve at first; perhaps some counterterrorism issues could be addressed through trusted CGLOs.) The U.S. certainly has a national interest in establishing global standards for financial transactions and should actively try to build functional relationships with Cuban counterparts in this area. The U.S. could accept a Cuban liaison officer in one or more of these areas, starting with the U.S. Coast Guard.

- **Crisis Management.** Against the backdrop of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. has learned a lot about crisis and response management. It is possible that the U.S. and Cuba may have to respond to a future catastrophe together. As each country understands how the other operates and the more closely respective procedures align, the more effective a common response will be. In addition to allowing crisis management experts from Cuba to attend selected U.S. conferences, it would be beneficial to include Cuba in regional or national terrorism preparedness exercises such as “Top Official” (TOPOFF), which already includes representatives from the international community.

- **Environment.** Over the years, there have been a number of academic relationships established in various areas of environmental research. These joint research efforts should be encouraged and
expanded to include functional relationships as well. The Environmental Protection Agency should seek out areas of common concern and focus on multinational conferences to begin to build these functional relationships. The U.S. Coast Guard could also broaden its interests to “marine environmental protection” and establish with Cuban environmentalists a bilateral response protocol for major spills in the Straits of Florida — especially as Cuba develops offshore oil fields. The same is true concerning fisheries management and protection of the marine environment. Issues such as water quality, reducing air pollution, and disposal of toxic waste are also politically neutral areas where the countries can build relationships.

- **Port and Transportation Security.** While the two countries are a long way from open trade and travel now, when normal commercial trade is re-established between them, the U.S. will have a particular national interest in ensuring that Cuban ports shipping or transshipping goods to the U.S. have adequate security measures. The U.S. currently does not have contact with or even know the identities of members of the Cuban government responsible for those matters. Again, the U.S. Coast Guard is in the right position to begin the dialogue on port security and safety, and could potentially facilitate its sister Homeland Security agency, the Transportation Safety Administration, in initiating an exchange of ideas on aviation security.

The current low level of trust and high level of friction between the U.S. and Cuba is counter to our collective national interests. U.S.-Cuba relations may evolve glacially but inevitably. At some point, a crisis event will occur that will require intense dialogue between the two nations, during which the U.S. will need to understand as much as possible about Cuba’s bureaucracy. Building functional relationships between individuals and agencies with shared interests is essential to be ready for that day.
“Instability” is the focal point that drives nearly all debates on U.S.-Cuban migration. Senior U.S. officials watch for it — the U.S. Director of National Intelligence monitors Cuba closely for upheavals that may lead to a migration crisis — while Cuban officials, concerned that U.S. actions will cause turmoil, accuse U.S. officials of violating migration accords to create instability on the island.

Instability, however, is not something that has to be watched for, worried over, or surreptitiously created. It already exists. Instability defines, structures, and drives the U.S.-Cuban relationship — one that is beset by rumors, propaganda, and manipulation. The current challenge for U.S. policymakers is to forge stability and avoid unwise steps that spiral into a crisis. Historically, cooperation between the two governments has usually followed migration crises rather than preceded them. After fifty years of tragic consequences, it is time to reverse this trend; the sole course of action to do so is for the U.S. and Cuba to cooperate to prevent migration crises.

† Raúl Castro has claimed Cuba has surprised those “who were wishing for chaos to entrench and for Cuban socialism to collapse.” See: Manuel Roig-Franzia, “Cuba’s Call for Economic Détente; Raúl Castro Hits Capitalist Notes While Placating Hard-Line Party Loyalists,” Washington Post, July 27, 2007.
Stabilizing migration between Cuba and the United States calls for changes in the way Cubans are treated under the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966. Along with the economic embargo, the 1966 Act is one of the longest running sources of antagonism. At its inception, the 1966 Act made more sense. It responded to the presumption of persecution in Cuba at the height of revolutionary change and granted Cubans, unlike other nationalities, legal permanent residency (a “green card”) after only one year’s presence in the United States. The special treatment encouraged Cuban refugees to adjust quickly to the United States, supporting the U.S. government’s efforts through extensive programs to cushion South Florida from the financial burden of resettling waves of new refugees. Today, however, the Act has the effect of encouraging illegal departures and disorderly migration.

Current U.S. policy works within a larger regional backdrop in which Cuba shares economic pressures similar to its Caribbean neighbors: it struggles to maintain long-term growth, and against poverty, limited consumption, and, increasingly, the visible inequality between wealthy tourists and the local populace. Such disparity results in steady illegal departures throughout the region, but this disorderly and often dangerous outflow does not necessarily signal political upheaval. One of the most common migration mistakes over Cuba is the U.S. failure to anticipate a level of “normal” flow, apart from bilateral relations. That misconception and perhaps purposeful misunderstanding can cause policy missteps. The U.S. and Cuba must build a stabilizing legal framework to head off a crisis, recognizing that any misunderstanding of each other’s intentions is a serious menace. U.S. policies that have regime change as their first priority prevent cooperation on essential issues and cause harm to desired transitions in Cuba. Preventing crises will depend on the willingness of both governments to understand what to expect and participate with each other in activities that serve both countries.

The Cuban Adjustment Act fosters this misunderstanding and serves as an incentive for Cubans to take great risks — by crossing the Florida Straits by raft or small boat, or risking money and life via human smug-
gling routes. According to U.S. investigators, smugglers typically are not paid until they deliver their Cuban passengers to dry land, after which the Cuban Adjustment Act guarantees their legal status. In short, the U.S. government encourages migrants to take unnecessary risk by offering a unique and exceptional reward unavailable to any other nationality. For many families trying to reunite with their relatives, it also makes the potential dangers of smuggling a little more acceptable.²

Unfortunately, cooperation in anti-smuggling operations, which had been one of the few areas of joint action, stalled and succumbed to suspicions between the two governments. Only in the last year or so have U.S. federal authorities increased enforcement against smugglers who bring Cubans into South Florida. These efforts reveal how a cooperative strategy could make a critical difference. Investigations show that many smugglers themselves are Cuban migrants who recently crossed the Florida Straits. The smuggling industry is loosely fragmented and poorly organized, but driven by lucrative profits — up to $60,000 a trip. Joint U.S.-Cuba law enforcement actions could save lives and significantly check what is still a nascent rather than sophisticated underground industry.

Recent statistics show that human smuggling from Cuba increased during the last five or six years, following similar trends throughout the Caribbean.³ The Cuban flow expanded into new routes through Mexico’s Yucatán Peninsula, which mixed Cubans with Central American migrants heading by land to the Texas border. Smugglers also turned to “go-fast” boats that, until recently, could outrun most Coast Guard vessels. Increased enforcement off the coast of Mexico has Cuban migrants showing up in places in the Eastern Caribbean where they have not been seen before.
A recent agreement between Mexico and Cuba offers a constructive start for the region. It calls for increased cooperation between the Mexican Navy and the Cuban Border Guard on smuggling and illegal migration, and establishes terms for which Cuban citizens in Mexico without proper legal status would be returned to Cuba. With the U.S. Coast Guard also cooperating with the Mexican Navy in the Yucatán Channel, a broader regional agreement would help all countries prepare and participate in heading off smugglers adapting and searching for new routes and means.

Paradoxically, one of the most significant potential missteps that could trigger a U.S.-Cuban crisis could result from U.S. efforts to prepare for exactly such an event.

The nightmare scenario that U.S. planners use today to prepare for a migration crisis recalls the events of the 1980 boatlift from Cuba’s Mariel harbor. The chaotic, spontaneous boatlift across the Florida Straits brought 125,000 Cuban citizens without screening into the United States in only a few months. The episode nearly provoked a U.S. military response and caused such domestic turmoil that President Carter attributed his reelection defeat in part to the public’s reaction to the migration crisis.

Both governments made significant policy missteps in the midst of the crisis. The roots of the crisis in Cuba involved an excessively harsh halt to several years of free market experimentation. Domestic protest spilled into the streets in Cuba in ways rarely seen since the Revolution. But it was only after the U.S. stepped in to comment on the unrest and invite Cuban citizens to leave the island that the Cuban government took full advantage, turning the problem northward. Opening the border to families from Miami sending boats to pick up relatives, Cuba’s government released tens of thousands of prisoners and hundreds of mental patients who also took the ninety mile trip to Florida.

U.S. officials believe another boatlift could result from political instability in Cuba, and have developed a migration emergency plan, Operation Vigilant Sentry, to pre-empt the presumed central lesson of Mariel: uncontrolled outflow. The plan’s premise, as one U.S. official reports, is
“[I]f there are signs of a mass migration … the Coast Guard plans to set up a perimeter around Cuba”⁴ to intercept migrants and immediately return them to Cuba, in hopes of discouraging more departures.

The plan calls for a massive operational deployment and an unprecedented public relations campaign designed to convince Cubans to stay onshore. But the U.S. strategy leaves the Cuban regime with few policy options to avoid escalation of a crisis. Bottling up the flow of refugees in the streets of Havana leaves the average Cuban citizen in the middle of a dangerous standoff, and does little to resolve whatever upheaval inside Cuba gave rise to a Mariel-style exodus. Strategically, Operation Vigilant Sentry does not solve key underlying problems and could even stand in the way of preemptive cooperation.⁵

The 1994 Migration Agreement, a step taken only after a migration crisis,⁶ set the stage for developing a more stable understanding of the Cuban outflow and led to more appropriate U.S. responses. In particular, the Agreement recognized officially a normal non-political level of emigration from Cuba that resembled the family and economic-induced migration from countries throughout the region. Negotiators agreed to an expected, normal number of annual departures. The Agreement also promoted binational parallel and joint cooperative activities to reduce disorderly movements from spinning out of control and becoming mass events. The Cuban government agreed, for instance, to patrol its borders and notify the U.S. Coast Guard about illicit departures from the island. The two governments agreed to a process of returning those intercepted at sea back to Cuba without repercussions.

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⁴ As an emergency response plan, Operation Vigilant Sentry has several admirable features: an interagency command structure, asset mobilization, and forward-thinking preparation of the Guantanamo base.

⁵ The balsero — or rafter — crisis was spurred by the collapse of Soviet sponsorship of Cuba, and its subsequent scarcity of food and other staples. Early attempts to thwart escapees and blame the U.S. was followed by the Castro government threatening to unleash another mass exodus (similar to the Mariel crisis in 1980). See: Daniel de Vise and Elane de Valle, “Cuban Balseros Helped Change the Political Flavor of Florida,” Miami Herald, August 3, 2004.
But rather than building on a gradually stabilizing legal framework in advance of a new crisis, in 2004 the U.S. government under President George W. Bush reversed course. It imposed stricter limits on family visits, cash remittance flows, travel, and professional exchanges to the island. The rationale was to withhold from Cuba’s communist regime valuable financial assets taken through taxes or local expenditures of U.S. dollars.

Ironically, family remittances are one of the only sources of support for Cuban households that confer semi-independence economically and socially from Cuban authorities. In this limited space of personal independence rests the seeds of liberty. Though relatively small, remittances allow family members a greater range of choice about their daily activities. By restricting remittances, U.S. authorities undermine their own goals, depriving families of simple survival benefits and the support they need to be less dependent on the Cuban state.

In the same vein, suppressing family visits heightens the likelihood of a migration crisis. In today’s transnational world, migration is a normal social endeavor. If there were no sanctions, Cuba would resemble countries such as Mexico and the Dominican Republic with a substantial share of its population dependent on family members earning wages in the United States. Even under current constraints in Cuba, rare visits with parents and relatives are more than personal — they also provide income vital to household survival. Absent these stabilizing and predictable resources, Cuban families need to find alternate means of support. Migrating northward, if and when they can, is one of those alternatives.

In the U.S., migration out of Cuba is often projected through the prism of politics. For example, the head of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana interpreted an increase in migration as popular reaction to Raúl Castro’s succession to power: “The numbers continue to rise — that’s the response of the Cuban people. Why do so many people want to leave the country?” Rather than political confrontation through aggressive plans and warnings, however, the strategic challenge is to find alternatives to Cuba’s internal problems becoming U.S.
problems. The U.S. goal should be to prevent decisions that raise the migration issue to a high level national security concern.

Specific migration policy reforms would be a start. Greater opportunities for family visits and remittance flows, reform of the Cuban Adjustment Act, joint anti-smuggling operations, and a reinvigorated exchange of professionals would help reduce the systemic instability that drives out-migration. Perhaps more importantly, reforms would expand information flow between the countries. Increased transparency and mutual understanding would reduce the extent to which migration remains a central impasse between the U.S. and Cuba.

A first step: reinstitute temporary visits across the Florida Straits in both directions. Temporary visits could be organized through various visa regimes. If abuses exist with academic and professional exchanges, as the Bush administration alleged, alternate exchange activities organized through respected institutions could be easily arranged. Undoubtedly, temporary visas would help to depoliticize migration processing.

Next, the U.S. needs to work with its regional partners to incorporate Cuba into the broad framework for addressing migration problems. The arguments for and against visa and travel restrictions have been played out repeatedly since the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Charges and countercharges of process manipulation cause recurring tensions between the governments and must be corrected.

As part of these regional changes, the United States also needs to reform the Cuban Adjustment Act. The United States now has better ways to assist asylum seekers and humanitarian cases than the blanket procedures of 1966, including principles and procedures that apply to all nationalities. A modern U.S. asylum system provides protection from persecution through case-by-case review, and contains mechanisms for returning, if appropriate, those interdicted on land or sea to their country of origin.

Repeal of the Cuban Adjustment Act would also put an end to the so-called wet foot/dry foot policy. The policy emerged in the early 1990s as a way to respond to the rafter crisis without repealing the
Cuban Adjustment Act. The compromise developed new rules on whether a person could be returned to Cuba or not depending on whether their interdiction occurred at sea or on land. Interdiction at sea (wet foot) meant that the Cuban migrant was not yet covered by the Cuban Adjustment Act. Once on land, the outdated law prevailed. At the time, the compromise introduced a system of return to Cuba for those who were interdicted at sea and helped to bring the Cuban government a step closer toward a normal legal framework by decriminalizing out-migration. It also moved U.S. policy toward treating all nationalities equivalently. Today, as part of a common, cooperative regional migration framework, both Cuba and the United States could complete these earlier moves.

Still, while bilateral and multilateral reforms will be enormously helpful, they will not be enough. The time has arrived for a new vision of U.S.-Cuban relations. U.S. intelligence officials have put their finger on the force that will propel future change. The key is “going to be the fourth generation in Cuba” who are “thinking new thoughts” and “asking hard questions.” Of course, generational change is not unique to Cuba. Generations of Cubans resettled in the United States are also waiting and watching them, hopeful of change but not clear on what it will bring. As both sides wait, opportunities are being lost. Behind current preparations for a migration crisis is a failure to imagine a new, stable Caribbean region. Both states will have to make serious reforms, internal and external, that recognize a normal migration policy reflecting realities of poverty, family interdependence, and regional vulnerabilities.

Despite a degree of “instability,” migration flows are part of normal, healthy international relations. They fuel economic cooperation, stimulate vibrant exchange of business skills, and inspire citizens of the region through exchanges, visits, and educational partnerships.

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1 National Intelligence Director Mike McConnell added, “And what my concern is, there’s going to be some instability in that process.” See: Pablo Bachelet, “U.S. Alerted to Cuba Migration, Chávez Weapons,” February 27, 2008.
Region-wide migration can become an instrument of innovation and change. Regional engagement will replace decades of stalemate and provide a new generation of Cubans with reasons to work constructively with the United States, and lend new generations of Americans more insight into Cuba. A safe — and more stable — movement of peoples throughout the region gives hope for an end to fifty years of tragic consequences.
A close working relationship in the field of medicine existed with the United States and Cuba for over a hundred years, until the mid-twentieth century. The top twenty medical graduates of the University of Havana, for example, routinely attended residency programs at U.S. hospitals in the fifty years before the Revolution. In 1924, Cuba and the United States were among the twenty-one nations that founded the Pan American Health Organization. There was also modest research collaboration between U.S. medical schools and Cuban counterparts, especially on tropical diseases. The first half of the twentieth century saw close medical collaboration between the two countries with medical organizations in Cuba maintaining close ties to comparable groups in the U.S.

U.S. actions after Cuba’s Revolution in 1959 caused that collaboration to degenerate severely, however, particularly over the last two decades.

Cuba’s sophisticated medical leadership, unique in the developing world, dates back several centuries. The University of Havana, established in 1734, had one of the first medical schools in the hemisphere. Cuban physician, scientist and social reformer Tomas Romay y Chacon, a public health advocate, secularized medical education, strengthening its scientific basis, and introduced widespread vaccination against
smallpox. A century later, Carlos Finlay, the son of European émigrés, who received his medical degree in Philadelphia, led the fight against yellow fever, the major health affliction of Cuba and Central America, by advocating his belief that mosquitoes spread the disease. Finlay worked with the U.S. occupation forces in Cuba following the war of independence with Spain and subsequently launched a campaign that in two years virtually eradicated the disease in Cuba.

After Cuba won independence, politically powerful cultural associations were established there to promote the interests of immigrants from the different Spanish regions such as Asturias, Galicia or Catalonia. Each region’s association provided its members a pre-paid health care system with private hospitals and clinics. By 1934, roughly 36 percent of Havana’s population was enrolled in one of these programs, called “mutualismos.” By the mid-1950s, high quality medical care from largely U.S.-trained physicians was available to Havana’s wealthy elite and another million individuals enjoyed health care of varying quality from the mutualismos, but roughly 83 percent of mostly urban poor and rural Cuban citizens had essentially no access to medical care.

From his earliest public statements, Fidel Castro promised health care as a central way in which his Revolution would change the lives of Cuban people. Castro wanted social equity in the health care system and particularly to provide basic medical services to those in rural areas. But during and after the Revolution, 3,000 of Cuba’s 6,000 doctors left the country.

Over time, the government added twenty-one new medical schools to just one that existed prior to the Revolution, added dozens of rural hospitals, and subsequently 450 community health centers, called “polyclinics,” were established throughout the country. By the early 1980s, 30,000 family doctors worked with the polyclinics, bringing primary health care to every citizen. Today, there are over 60,000 physicians in Cuba and around the world.

Cuba managed these changes in the face of unprecedented sanctions by the United States. Though already restrictive, the U.S. added
food and medicine to its embargo against Cuba in 1964 — violating the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In no other instance has the U.S. included food and medicine in its embargoes against other nations and it inflicted considerable suffering on ordinary Cubans. Among its many impacts: it prevented access to medical equipment such as pacemakers and certain cutting-edge antibiotics and anti-cancer drugs still under U.S. patent.

The embargo, in fact, spurred Cuba over time to develop its own thriving pharmaceutical industry with a large domestic market and significant export sales to the developing world. Cuba also made a major investment in critical biotechnology medical research following a visit in 1980 from Dr. R. Lee Clark of the M.D. Anderson Hospital of Dallas, Texas. Cuban researchers trained with Dr. Clark and counterparts in Finland, Japan and Britain. Today, these Cuban scientists are among the world leaders in this field.

In 1988, vital legislation sponsored by U.S. Representative Howard Berman exempted from the embargo the exchange of textbooks, medical journals, printed materials and other intellectual properties. The amendment allowed Cubans to obtain and publish in U.S. medical journals, and granted full access to the National Library of Medicine. It also facilitated U.S. non-governmental organizations to provide the latest textbooks and journals to Cuban medical schools and other institutions.

Up until the early 1990s, direct interaction and collaboration between the health and medical communities in Cuba and the U.S., although informal and poorly organized, operated largely unrestricted despite the embargo. Although the regulations varied over different U.S. political administrations, Cuban medical experts were allowed visas to attend scientific meetings in the U.S. and American academics could typically travel to Cuba and work with Cuban colleagues. Cubans were periodically able to spend extended periods in the U.S. for post-graduate study.

But in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (also known as the Torricelli Act) and the
Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996 (commonly referred to as Helms-Burton) were passed by Congress. Both contained provisions that placed extraordinary pressure on Cuba’s health care system; these included more forceful U.S. sanctions against pharmaceutical companies, especially U.S. subsidiaries in Europe; licensing provisions that further prohibited the sale of drugs to Cuba; restrictions on ships visiting Cuban ports, affecting delivery of heavy medical equipment such as X-ray machines and food for which air-freight costs are prohibitive; and other restrictions that targeted Cuba’s scientifically and financially successful biotechnology sector.

Because these actions on medicine and food were a violation of international law, policymakers wanted to understand the embargo’s impact on ordinary Cuban citizens. In 1997, an extensive and highly detailed study under the auspices of the American Association for World Health (AAWH), “Denial of Food and Medicine: The Impact of the U.S. Embargo on Health and Nutrition in Cuba,” drew worldwide attention reporting the ban led to malnutrition, poor water quality, lack of medicines and equipment and limited access to medical information.

Deprivations persist to this day. Cuba is unable to get film for mass-screening mammography machines, and cannot offer patients American-made cardiac pacemakers, nor an essential drug for treatment of a form of infant heart defect, or certain HIV/AIDS drugs.

The North American health experts who participated in the AAWH study held the unanimous view, however, that Cuba had developed a remarkable primary health care system, and exposure to it would be a valuable experience for U.S. medical students.

In 1997, Havana-based journalist and Cuba health expert Gail Reed and I founded the not-for-profit organization, Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba (MEDICC), in order to build a health bridge to Cuba by providing opportunities for U.S. medical students to spend a six-week elective working with family physicians in Cuba.

Between 1997 and 2004, 1,500 American students from 114 medical schools and schools of public health made this journey. Some
public health students, nurses, and physicians in residency programs were also able to go. Delegations of policy makers and senior medical specialists and educators visited the country on a regular basis. In addition to the MEDICC program, some U.S. medical schools also maintained independent relations with Cuban health institutions. A number of philanthropic non-governmental organizations arranged for shipment of medical supplies to Cuba. Groups interested in seeing and learning about the Cuban health care system also visited. MEDICC publishes the only English-language, peer-reviewed journal dealing with Cuban medicine and health care, *MEDICC Review*.

Following the devastation in Central America caused by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, Cuba opened the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) which provided free medical education for students from nations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. In return for a free education, students agree to practice in deprived or medically under-served areas of their countries. Then-President Fidel Castro also offered 500 tuition-free scholarships to African-American and Hispanic-American students from poor backgrounds in the U.S. At present, there are more than one hundred U.S. students getting their medical degrees at ELAM and several who have graduated are now in residency training programs back home. This offer by the Cuban government represented a $100 million subsidy of the U.S. medical education system.

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, however, Cuba’s presence on the U.S. State Department’s “State Sponsors of Terrorism” list again restricted health collaboration. It became impossible for Cuban medical experts to obtain visas to visit the U.S. for any reason. Then, during the run-up to the reelection campaign of President George W. Bush in 2004, U.S. Treasury Department regulations were tightened even more making it impossible to send U.S. medical students to Cuba for elective courses of limited duration.

Besides imposing hardships on the delivery of health care in Cuba, U.S. sanctions isolate us from the benefits that we could otherwise
obtain. Cuba’s first-rate medical research and primary health care sector have developed important drug innovations and produced positive outcomes in life expectancy and infant mortality.

While the U.S. tends to target its international health efforts toward specific disease conditions such as HIV/AIDS, polio, TB or malaria, Cuba’s Institute for Bioengineering and Biotechnology is one of the world’s leading centers for the study of recombinant DNA. The Institute produces significant quantities of interferon at relatively cheap cost for the treatment of viruses and certain cancers. The facility also makes streptokinase, a vital treatment for heart attacks, at a fraction of the cost in the U.S. and sells it cheaply to developing countries with limited health budgets.

Cuba has further developed a vaccine for hepatitis B and makes the world’s only vaccine for meningitis B. While 300 Americans die of the disease each year, a licensing arrangement has been stalled by onerous and difficult to implement conditions, even after a hard-won Bush administration capitulation allowed the Cuban vaccine in the U.S. Several anti-cancer products have been developed at Cuba’s Center for Molecular Immunology including nimotuzumab, for use against a form of brain cancer in children, as well as a vaccine that appears effective against a form of lung cancer. Treasury Department licenses have been issued to allow two U.S. companies to collaborate with Cuba in further research on these products but again, with severe restrictions.

Cuba is the world’s largest producer of epidermal growth factor, a key tool in the treatment of burns and ulcerative colitis. Cuba has collaborative research projects using the product on patients in
Japan, Scandinavia, and Britain with scientists of those countries. Only one American researcher has been allowed to obtain epidermal growth factor from Cuba and his use of it has been restricted to research on animals.

More than 30,000 Cuban health professionals currently work in sixty-two countries on public health matters and stand as the largest state contributor to the global health effort. Cuba’s doctors work in remote, under-served rural areas. They helped start nine medical schools and two nursing schools in Equatorial Guinea, Guyana and other nations suffering serious health personnel shortages. Cuba advocates making available primary health care for all people.

There have been instances in recent years in disaster situations where Cuban and U.S. health personnel worked together spontaneously on the ground for the good of the victims regardless of their governments’ policies. A collaborative program between the U.S. and Cuba in developing countries could have a dramatic impact globally in improving the health of millions of people.

Cuba has a well-deserved reputation around the world for its disaster relief program. Any time there is a natural disaster anywhere in the world, Cuba is among the first nations to respond and is often among the most generous: 2,000 health personnel to Pakistan after the earthquake of February 2004; 500 doctors to Indonesia following the tsunami of January 2005. By working together, Cuba and the U.S. could strengthen and transform the world’s ability to respond to disasters.

In recent years, Cuba’s medical and health care systems have moved forward dramatically, creating a range of exciting opportunities for expanded collaboration. Three important steps, however, need to be taken.

One, remove Cuba from the State Department’s “terrorism list.” The designation exists for domestic political reasons, undermines our efforts to deal with real terrorist threats, and obstructs legitimate professional interchanges with Cuba.

Two, lift 2004 politically-timed restrictions on educational trips to Cuba specifically aimed at preventing U.S. medical students from
studying there. Re-establish collaborative health education opportunities for U.S. medical students and other health professionals. Allow Cuban health professionals to visit the U.S. for professional meetings, consultations with colleagues, and educational opportunities.

Three, suspend trade restrictions on food, medicine, and medical equipment sales to Cuba to bring the U.S. in compliance with its international treaty obligations, and be consistent with its traditional humanitarian values. While it has been legal to sell food to Cuba since 2001, the process is beset with unnecessary and unwieldy restrictions.

No benefit is derived from restricting health and medical collaboration between the U.S. and Cuba. Removing restrictions would directly help the people of both countries and send a strong message to Latin America and the rest of the world that the U.S. has returned to its fundamental ideals.
U.S.-Cuba: The Case for Business

Jake Colvin

Cuba is at an economic crossroads. It is recovering from a series of hurricanes and tropical storms that according to the Cuban government inflicted upwards of $9 billion worth of damage to its homes, crops, infrastructure, industry, and investments. At the same time, Cuba’s President Raúl Castro is gingerly moving to implement economic restructuring. These dual tasks of recovery and reform are keys to Cuba’s future.

Thanks to the U.S. trade embargo, American businesses are largely precluded from participating in Cuba’s multi-year, multi-billion dollar plan for revitalization and reinvestment, and are excluded from positively impacting Cuba’s economic reforms. Beyond the benefit to American business, greater economic engagement would also help the Cuban people and improve our image in Cuba and throughout Latin America.

Prior to the Cuban Revolution, the United States and Cuba had strong economic links. In 1942, the U.S. Department of Agriculture noted “with no other country does the U.S. have as close economic ties as with Cuba.” In 1958, the United States was responsible for nearly seventy percent of Cuba’s exports and about the same percentage of its imports. Cuba was the seventh largest market for U.S.
exporters, particularly for American farm producers. Bilateral trade deteriorated rapidly after President Eisenhower ended diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1961, and vanished after President Kennedy expanded the embargo on the island in 1962.

Nearly forty years later, in 2000, the U.S. Congress passed the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA), the first significant exception to the embargo. The Act exempts from the embargo commercial sales of agricultural and medical products to Cuba, permitting U.S. farmers to sell food to Cuba’s government within certain parameters. Though the Bush administration made payment terms governing these sales more restrictive, U.S. exports have grown to nearly $500 million per year.¹

TSRA has provided important opportunities for American farmers. The United States is now Cuba’s largest source of foreign agricultural imports, and was the thirty-third largest export market for America’s farmers in 2006.² Cuba is America’s twelfth largest market for wheat, the eighth largest market for chicken, and the third largest market for rice. American farmers believe that Cuba eventually could become the number one foreign market for U.S. rice.

Beyond agricultural exports, however, American businesses are largely absent from Cuba. Sanctions put American businesses and agriculture exporters at a global disadvantage in a nearby and natural market for U.S. goods and services.

While the United States remains on the sidelines, other countries are increasingly active in Cuba. China, which has embarked on a worldwide policy of securing natural resources in exchange for economic aid, has signed accords with Cuba that will likely dramatically increase trade. Trade with China more than doubled in 2006 to $1.8 billion. Trade with Venezuela rose to $2.6 billion in 2006 from $2 billion in 2005.³ Together, the two countries account for 35 percent of all of Cuba’s trade.⁴ Cuba imports transit, intercity and urban buses from China. Cuba has also inked a deal with China for 4,500 pickup trucks — a market the U.S. auto industry might like to pursue right about now.
Cuba is diversifying its international commerce and expanding business relations with nations across the globe, including Brazil, Vietnam, Turkey, South Africa, Canada, Spain and Mexico. In October 2008, Cuba signed an agreement to renew ties with the European Union, which had formally lifted its diplomatic sanctions against Cuba in June.

On the investment side, as part of a national economic strategy, Cuba’s government is encouraging foreign participation in the energy, minerals and tourism sectors. Already, Cuba produces around half of its domestic petroleum needs and is looking to become increasingly self-reliant to reduce its dependence on Venezuela’s energy supplies.

Foreign energy companies including Spain’s Repsol and Malaysia’s Petronas have received concessions to develop Cuba’s oil fields. Cuban officials have said they welcome foreign participation in the energy sector, including from the United States. They note the proximity of American firms and their vast experience and expertise in deep-sea offshore oil production. While American oil companies are frozen out of exploration, they are watching carefully.

In addition, as Cuba continues to develop its energy sector and allows nations like China and Venezuela increasingly broad access to its economy and natural resources, the United States should consider the implications for American business as well as U.S. national security. Discussions with China’s oil firm Sinopec could lead to exploration and drilling close to the Florida coast. Failure to engage Cuba economically will hand over the field entirely to our competitors.

American businesses will not be sitting on the sidelines forever. As U.S. companies and entrepreneurs begin to size up the Cuban market, one thing immediately evident is the difference between trade and investment opportunities with Cuba.

Increasing trade with Cuba would be a relatively straightforward prospect for the United States. The two countries have already proven they can trade together with American farmers leading the way. U.S. agricultural exports to Cuba reached nearly $500 million in 2007 — a remarkable achievement given restrictions on travel to and from
Cuba, the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and the strict payment and delivery terms for U.S. farm products. (Cuba can only buy U.S. farm goods if they pay cash in advance before receipt, or with a letter of credit from a third country’s financial institution.) American producers, meanwhile, need time, and sometimes legal help, to obtain authorization from the U.S. government to sell to Cuba. These practices slow the trade process, as well as place extra costs on American exports to Cuba.

Expanding and facilitating trade would benefit the United States economically, particularly in sectors like agricultural machinery, construction equipment and chemicals where Cuban import demand is high. American technology could also ensure that Cuba’s efforts to develop offshore oil patches in the Gulf of Mexico are done in an environmentally-sustainable way. With human rights groups looking over their shoulders, U.S. businesses in Cuba would guarantee proper wage, labor and environmental standards. Trade also provides additional opportunities to engage the Cuban government and Cuban people on economic development and reform, resulting in deeper levels of contacts and, potentially, to a political rapprochement.

It is important to note that President Obama has the authority to alter these trade rules via the licensing authority contained in the Cuban Assets Control Regulations, which state that the President may authorize transactions with Cuba “by means of regulations, rulings, instructions, licenses, or otherwise.” Liberalizing trade and related transactions — whether to allow imports of some Cuban products like agricultural goods or more exports of American — would not require an Act of Congress.

Expanding American investment in Cuba is another story. Outstanding settlement claims going back to Cuba’s Revolution are roadblocks to U.S. companies which are unlikely to invest in the face of legal uncertainty. Cuban foreign investment laws would also deter American investment even if claims were to be settled. Cuba’s current approach to joint ventures and other foreign participation agreements would likely discourage American investors, who value trans-
parency, rule of law and more favorable investment terms than the Cuban government is likely to offer. That said, a member of the younger generation, a Cuban official with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told me, “If there was normalization, it would have a serious impact on how Cuba manages its economy. There are a number of factors that could change.”

U.S. policy toward Cuba may be “ridiculous,” as George Shultz told PBS’s Charlie Rose last year, but it is not high enough on the list of priorities for U.S. policymakers to commit the kind of time and energy required for full and immediate normalization of ties. But signals are important, and there are a number of initial steps that could lay the groundwork for future trade relations.

First, help Cuba rebuild from the storms. While the Cuban government seems congenitally opposed to American aid, the President and Congress could help Cuba rebuild by changing the terms of the U.S. embargo. The United States could exempt agricultural machinery, heavy equipment and construction materials via a simple federal register notice establishing new exceptions to the Cuba sanctions program. The United States could also authorize direct U.S. banking services with Cuba, which are currently prohibited, in order to facilitate these sales.

Second, loosen travel restrictions. Immediate repeal of the restrictions on travel and people-to-people exchanges would be a welcome step. Complete repeal of travel restrictions would allow U.S. citizens — including American business executives and entrepreneurs — to get to know the Cuban people and the Cuban market. (Repeal would also take a burden off of the Treasury and Homeland Security Departments, which could redirect the resources that currently go to administer and enforce prohibitions on travel by American citizens, to investigating more urgent threats like al-Qaeda and Iran.) Since repeal of the travel ban would likely require an Act of Congress, the President should enlist the help of key members, including chairs of the relevant committees and House and Senate leadership. The White House should work with American business organizations and mod-
erate Cuban-American groups to make a strong case for repeal. Dialogue with Congress and action on the travel ban could pave the way for a broader discussion about the bilateral relationship.

Allowing Americans to visit Cuba freely by ending the travel ban would also be a boon for U.S. businesses. One report, sponsored by the Freedom to Travel campaign, predicted that an end to the travel ban could increase U.S. economic output by more than $1 billion and could create tens of thousands of new jobs in the U.S. tourism industry. U.S. consumer product companies would also benefit from an end to travel restrictions as demand by American tourists in Cuba for familiar products like toothpaste and soda would increase. And, according to a study by the U.S. International Trade Commission in 2007, overall farm sales could increase by more than $300 million per year if travel and trade restrictions are lifted.

Third, address legislative impediments to normal commercial relations. In particular, the United States should resolve a longstanding trade dispute with Cuba that targets one of the island’s best known brands, Havana Club rum. Congress passed a special interest provision in the dead of night in 1998 known as “Section 211” (named after the section of the appropriations bill to which it was attached). The provision interferes with the renewal of the Havana Club trademark in the United States. It has been found to violate U.S. trade commitments and exposes the trademarks of hundreds of American businesses to the prospect of discrimination and retaliation by Cuba and other foreign governments. Section 211 is fundamentally at odds with the interests of the U.S. government and American companies in protecting intellectual property abroad. It is also a serious stumbling block to a better relationship. While Congress should consider repealing Section 211 in its entirety, the Obama administration could issue a
license that would allow the Havana Club mark to be renewed in the United States, and would demonstrate the U.S. commitment to intellectual property protection and a new relationship with Cuba.

Other important legislative initiatives, including the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (otherwise known as Helms-Burton), the Cuban Adjustment Act, and the Cuban Democracy Act will also need to be addressed. In particular, repeal of Helms-Burton could have an important symbolic effect on the relationship with Cuba and U.S. allies.

Fourth, encourage greater U.S. private sector engagement with Cuba. The United States should support the establishment of a regular dialogue between Cuban economic officials and American businesses. Facilitating sector-specific briefings — even in the face of continued trade restrictions — would establish important new channels of communication. The United Kingdom provides an excellent model for this type of interaction through a public-private partnership known as the Cuba Initiative. The Initiative was founded in 1994 at the request of the Cuban and British governments. The group facilitates meetings between British businesses and Cuban ministers in the United Kingdom, which has in the past led to opportunities for “chance” meetings with U.K. government officials. The administration should license and facilitate these activities and encourage the American business community to maintain lines of communication with Cuba.

Fifth, engage the Cuban government through principled diplomacy. American diplomats should engage frequently through already established channels to deal with illegal narcotics, migration and military issues. Reinvigorating dialogue through these regular, low-level channels would set the stage for higher level discussions. Even if breakthroughs are not possible immediately, re-establishing regular channels of communication will make gradual improvement more likely down the road. Although the Cuban government may be reluctant to embrace sweeping efforts to change its relationship with the United States, the President should attempt to advance America’s interests and values through direct diplomacy.
Sixth, reevaluate Cuba’s inclusion on the State Department’s list of “State Sponsors of Terrorism.” As with other countries, Cuba’s place on the list may be negotiated in the context of other issues. (North Korea was taken off the list because of its cooperation on its nuclear program, not for lessening support for acts of terrorism.) Cuba should be removed from the list, assuming that U.S. intelligence information supports it, although such a move is likely to happen only in the context of improved bilateral relations.

It is time for a new strategy that recognizes the utility of engaging Cuba instead of continuing the counterproductive policies of isolation. Even incremental steps to loosen travel and trade restrictions would be positive. Dismantling the policies that prohibit trade and investment could benefit American businesses and workers, who are looking overseas for new growth. American economic engagement also provides a larger opportunity to export ideas, values and standards as well and would also send a signal to the Cuban people that the United States wants to help rebuild.

Cuba’s government may not react quickly or favorably at the outset to relaxation of U.S. economic constraints. After initially rejecting U.S. food sales, Fidel Castro eventually was forced to change course in the wake of Hurricane Michelle in 2001. “Process in Cuba is slow,” a former British diplomat told me, “There is a huge depth of suspicion about everything.”

Although Havana may not be in a rush to engage vigorously with U.S. business, the quality and proximity of America’s goods and technology may change the calculus for Raúl Castro. Castro is already giving more control over land and crop production to farmers in the agriculture sector. Recovery and economic reform appear to be high priorities for Cuba’s president, and U.S. businesses may factor into his calculations.

Engaging Cuba through trade and travel would be an easy way for the administration to signal a new approach to foreign policy. Former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Peter Romero told me, “The administration needs to have an early win.”
Romero, who was a key player in the Clinton administration’s second term efforts to increase people-to-people exchanges to Cuba, said the United States has been on a losing streak for so long, something that “breaks the paradigm and shows bold strokes would have an enormous impact.” He added, “I think you can do that with Cuba.”

I think so too. Engaging Cuba is an easy way to send the message that change has arrived in American foreign policy.
Given the recent political transition in Cuba and the change in administration in the United States, it is an ideal time to reevaluate U.S.-Cuba policy. Relations between the United States and Cuba have been frozen for almost fifty years.

During the Cold War, when Cuba was allied with the Soviet Union, a principled U.S. sanctions approach toward Cuba may have made sense. But with the end of the Soviet Union almost twenty years ago, the usefulness of our sanctions needs to be reassessed.

Sanctions have failed to dislodge the Castro government or prompt a reversal in Cuba’s social and economic policies. Indeed, the U.S. embargo may have unintentionally fostered the continuation of the current regime by providing an external villain for the failure of the Cuban government to improve their public’s standard of living.

U.S. sanctions have contributed to a stunting of Cuba’s economic development, but it is unclear what value they have to the United States, or to its Cuban émigrés living mostly in Florida. U.S. policy has had little or no affect on the return of property or payment of reparations by Cuba’s government to exiles or investors whose property was nationalized in the early days of the Revolution.
Despite having had little visible return for the U.S., the sanctions have real costs — not only humanitarian costs to the Cuban people, but also to the United States. One less publicized area where sanctions impact the U.S. is in regional energy development and trade.

Cuba, only ninety miles from our shores, has the potential to be an important supplier of oil, gas and ethanol. Increasing energy trade with Cuba would contribute to U.S. energy security, and could have geopolitical benefits. It would create a competitive counterpressure to the “export-oriented” populist agenda of Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez, and Venezuela’s efforts to strengthen its regional presence through visible aid to Cuba. U.S. energy trade would also limit the attractiveness to Cuba of Russia — which appears to be shifting toward a more assertive foreign policy — and of China, with its increasing presence in Latin America and investment in Cuba’s energy sector.

Cuba is potentially well-endowed with reserves of oil and natural gas. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has estimated that Cuba has “undiscovered” reserves of 4.6 billion to 9.3 billion barrels of conventional oil and 9.8 to 21.8 trillion cubic feet of gas in the North Cuba basin.\(^1\) Cubapetroleo, the Cuban state oil company, claims the country has 20 billion barrels of recoverable oil in its offshore waters, saying the higher estimate is based on new and better information about Cuba’s geology than the U.S. government has.\(^2\) Repsol-YPF, a Spanish firm, leading a consortium of other companies, has already drilled test wells — encouraged by an earlier oil find in Cuban waters. In July 2004, Repsol identified five “high quality” fields in the deep water of the Florida Straights twenty miles northeast of Havana. Cuba has offered fifty-nine new exploration blocks in the area for foreign participation. Repsol, India’s Oil and Natural Gas Corp., and Norway’s StatoilHydro are among the companies that are seeking exploration acreage in Cuba.\(^3\) Contrary to rumors circulated in the United States, Chinese oil firms do not currently control any offshore exploration acreage in Cuba,\(^4\) but have expressed interest. Cuba’s government says several more offshore wells could be started by 2010. Cuba hopes new exploration activity will help it raise its energy production
from 65,000 barrels per day (b/d) of oil and 3.45 million cubic meters a day of natural gas to 100,000 b/d of oil equivalent.

According to Jorge Piñon of Florida International University, Cuba could be producing as much as 525,000 b/d of oil once development of these resources is underway, much of which could be exported to the United States were sanctions to be eased.

Cuba’s pursuit of deepwater oil and natural gas resources is complicated by the ban on U.S. firms and patented U.S. technology to be used in Cuba’s energy development. Although U.S.-patented technologies or equipment cannot be used, recently, other companies such as Brazil’s Petrobras and Statoil have their own comparable technologies and are willing to invest in Cuba.

Current constraints to oil exploration and development in Cuba are related to the scarcity of drilling rigs and other equipment as well as experienced labor. Much of the capacity to build platforms and other drilling equipment as well as the cadre of geologists and skilled blue-collar workers atrophied during the relatively low oil prices in the 1990s and especially in the late 1990s as prices collapsed to $10/barrel. In response to high oil prices, the pace of exploration and development accelerated and the costs of drilling soared.

In the case of natural gas, the benefits of a successful Cuban offshore sector to the U.S. are many, given Havana’s proximity to Florida markets. If a significant level of natural gas could be made available from Cuban waters by pipeline into Florida, the Cuban supply would enhance competition in the Florida market and lower average prices paid by Floridians. The economic costs for Cuban natural gas sup-
plies aren’t likely to be all that different from natural gas from Texas and Alabama. Drilling and other finding costs will likely be similar to deepwater plays along the U.S. Gulf of Mexico, and could even be lower if Cuba offers more attractive fiscal and royalty terms. Pipeline costs to Florida are likely to be similar to those for existing pipeline infrastructure from the natural gas trading hub and storage area at Henry Hub in Louisiana. While Florida is the natural market for Cuban gas, simulations of the world gas model at Rice University indicate that Cuba’s gas could also be transported to Mexico on a commercial basis if our sanctions continue to block the Florida option.

In addition to being a producer and exporter of oil and natural gas, Cuba’s geographic position near expanding markets in the United States and Mexico would make it an interesting entrepôt for energy project development. Were U.S. restrictions lifted, Cuba would be an ideal location for energy trading in refined oil products, natural gas processing and distribution facilities and crude oil storage for shipments to the United States or Mexico. Several Caribbean islands already play this transshipment role. With domestic U.S. refining close to capacity, high U.S. oil demand, and environmental restrictions making construction of new U.S. domestic facilities unlikely, Caribbean refining and transshipment ventures are a promising option to meet future U.S. refined products demand.

The United States also has an increasing need for ethanol as a gasoline additive and supplemental fuel. The U.S. Energy Bill of 2005 required 7.5 billion gallons of renewable fuel to be produced annually in the United States by 2012. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 increased the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS) to require 9 billion gallons of renewable fuels to be consumed annually by 2008, and progressively increased to a 36-billion gallon renewable fuels annual target by 2022 (of which 16 billion is slated to come from cellulosic ethanol). Imported ethanol, which totaled only 450 million gallons in 2007, can play an increasing role in meeting these targets.

Cuba could become a major regional ethanol producer — potentially producing up to 2 billion gallons a year for possible export,
making Cuba one of the largest ethanol exporters in the region, second only to Brazil.

Cuban ethanol, because it would be based on sugarcane, has an energy output/input ratio that is at least four times that of U.S. corn-based ethanol. In part this is because corn is a starch that must be converted into sugar before being converted into ethanol. Sugarcane-based ethanol omits this first energy-using stage. However, Cuba’s industry is thwarted by the current state of Cuban agriculture, as well as Cuba’s lack of access to the growing U.S. ethanol market.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, Cuba was a major sugar producer and exporter to the U.S. before the Cuban Revolution, and to the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba’s sugar economy went into retreat. Sugar production, which reached 8.1 million tons in 1988, fell to 1.2 million tons in 2007. Sugarcane harvested acreage fell from 1.45 million hectares (approximately 3.6 million acres) in 1991 and 1992 to only 400,000 in 2007, and sugarcane yields fell from 60 to 50 tons per hectare in the 1970s and 1980s to only 28 tons in 2007.7 Sugar mills have been closed and large numbers of sugar workers have been retrained and moved off the land.

The land itself has been neglected and much of it has suffered from compaction by the use of heavy Soviet build harvesting machinery. For the land to be tilled and newly planted with sugarcane, much of Cuba’s worn-out harvesting machinery will have to be replaced. Many sugar mills that remain have not been maintained. Cuba would have to undertake significant investments in distilleries and transport, storage and distribution infrastructure if it is to produce substantial levels of ethanol. Investment costs for the bio-refineries alone will come to billions of dollars.

There are also questions of how much land could be devoted to sugarcane. Cuba currently promotes greater land use for food production. During the period 1970 to 1990, the average area harvested was 1.3 million hectares. Some of the land that has been idled since the decline of the sugar industry has been converted to food crops to
reduce food imports. Other land is earmarked for forest development, and there have been recent discussions of investing in soybeans. However, given that Cuba has had a traditional comparative advantage in the production of sugar, the diversion of land to other uses may reflect the effects of economic sanctions that tend to encourage autarky where possible and of necessity, export markets other than the U.S. With the removal of our sanctions, Cuba would be free to rediscover its comparative advantage and the pressure to be self-sufficient in food production would ease. Thus, some of the acreage diverted to other uses could come back to sugarcane cultivation.

Cuba need not go back to the 1.45 million hectare harvest it last had in 1992 to produce 2 billion gallons of ethanol a year. Agricultural productivity is continually improving as new plant varieties or new cultivation practices are developed through research and innovation. Cuba could attain sugarcane and distillery yields comparable to those currently being achieved in Nicaragua and Brazil where growers have been getting agricultural yields of 75 to 80 tons of sugarcane per hectare and distillery yields of 70 to 80 liters of ethanol per ton. (In the Center-South region of Brazil, yields of 84 tons per hectare and 82 liters per ton of cane — 6,888 liters per hectare — have been achieved.)

If these yields were reached in Cuba, ethanol production could produce 2 billion gallons per year using only 1.1 million hectares of land. Even at a more conservative 75 tons per hectare and 75 liters per ton (5,625 liters per hectare), Cuba would need only 1.33 million hectares to produce 2 billion gallons of ethanol.

These production targets are ambitious and cannot be attained in a short period of time. Moreover, the use of sugarcane to produce ethanol for transportation is controversial in Cuba. Former President Fidel Castro has been sharply critical of U.S. policy of using corn-based ethanol for cars, arguing that it would drive up food prices and contribute to world hunger. However, in editorials credited to Castro and repeatedly read on Cuban state radio and television, a distinction has been made between the cane ethanol Cuba produces and the corn-based ethanol manufactured in the United States. Also, as the
commercial opportunities for ethanol sales have expanded, support has emerged in Cuba for increasing ethanol production. A member of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, Conrado Moreno, indicated at a renewable energy conference that there are plans to upgrade eleven of the seventeen Cuban bio-refineries to produce as much as 47 million gallons of ethanol per year. The Cuban bio-refineries currently produce alcohol for use in rum and other spirits, as well as medications and cooking fuel.

Additionally, Cuba has opened the door to foreign investment in the ethanol sector and Brazil has expressed interest in sharing its expertise in order to promote the development of an active and liquid ethanol market. There are also indications that Havana is considering opening access to Cuban land to foreign companies. With flexible policies and ideally a tariff-free access to the U.S. market, Cuba would have no difficulty finding the foreign investment needed to finance the rapid development of an ethanol industry.

Currently, Cuba represents an important and potentially growing market for U.S. agricultural goods. The U.S. Congress has since 2000 permitted agricultural products to be exported to Cuba for payment in cash. In 2007, U.S. companies exported $437 million in food and agricultural products to Cuba. If the U.S. in turn lifted sanctions on imports from Cuba, and bought Cuban ethanol, Cuba could use its comparative advantage in producing highly profitable sugarcane-based ethanol instead of other foods, which would be more gainfully purchased from abroad — including more from us.

Being relatively more labor-intensive than the more capital-intensive oil and gas sector, a developed ethanol industry would create employment and put more income into the hands of ordinary Cubans. However modestly, the Cuban leadership now under Raúl Castro has opened the door to some economic reform, such as permitting individuals to own certain consumer goods, modifying the policy of equality of pay by permitting wage differentials based on productivity, and lifting restrictions on private farming. If the Cuban initiatives to encourage private and collective farming are fully implemented, the
effect on incomes would be even stronger. Extended reforms would be in line with the longer term U.S. goal of political liberalization in Cuba.

The U.S. facilitating Cuban cultivation of sugarcane would also likely be easier to justify in our political arena than lifting U.S. restrictions on investment in Cuba’s nascent oil and natural gas sectors. Loud and forceful U.S. voices oppose any policy that appears to strengthen Cuba’s government. Unlike agricultural-based business which is more dispersed, oil and natural gas revenues accrue directly to the Cuban government treasury. Still, an easing of restrictions on Cuban oil and gas should be considered, as it would benefit the U.S., an energy consuming nation, and give America more say on environmental practices in U.S.-Cuban border areas that might become open to drilling.

Developing Cuban ethanol will provide the growing quantity of ethanol that current U.S. mandates require at a place close to U.S. markets. Allowing Cuba into the hemispheric network of energy trade would likely reduce the geopolitical influence of Venezuela, as well as reduce the need for Cuba to seek distant trade partners such as Russia and China — thereby preventing them from using Cuba to get a stronger foothold in the U.S. backyard.

Perhaps most importantly, a more privatized ethanol industry that would add jobs for the Cuban people and create an opening for U.S. business participation can possibly promote the economic and political reforms in Cuba that our frozen sanctions policy has for fifty years been unable to do.
It is finally time for the United States and Cuba to end their fifty years of mutual hostility and confront a serious mutual threat: Atlantic tropical cyclones. This young century has already borne witness to some of the worst storms in U.S. and Cuban recorded histories. These storms don’t respect boundaries and aren’t restrained by politics.

Take Hurricane Ike in September 2008. The swath of destruction caused to both countries by this one monster storm is at least $7 billion in damages to Cuba and $15 billion to Texas. Other American states were also walloped. The hurricane is considered the third costliest in U.S. history, and — coupled with Hurricane Gustav a few days earlier — the most devastating ever to hit Cuba.

The trend, of course, won’t peak with Ike. As global warming continues, each season will see similar ferocious storms rip into nations that lie in their paths.

Exchanging information on hurricanes is one of the few areas where the U.S. and Cuba actually do talk to each other. The U.S. and Cuba for years have enjoyed a very good working relationship, sharing meteorological data between the U.S. National Hurricane Center (NHC) and Cuba’s Instituto de Meteorología and Centro Nacional de
Prognósticos. Hurricane hunters based in the U.S. regularly cross Cuba’s air space with its government’s permission. But a foreign policy that allows for the exchange of useful knowledge and transfer of technologies could significantly increase the benefit to both the U.S. and Cuba in dealing with these storms.

Each nation has a lot to offer in emergency preparedness techniques and management experience. NHC’s web pages, for example, are invaluable. They display the latest predictions as to track, size, and intensity of a particular storm and update every few hours. The data is based on the latest science and technology available from the U.S., Canada and the U.K., and is the result of one hundred years of progress.

In 1900, a hurricane stormed along the length of Cuba’s island, entered the Gulf of Mexico and headed northwest toward Texas. Cuba’s hurricane researchers, fostered in the local Jesuit community’s tradition of excellence, monitored this hurricane and predicted its track into the Gulf while American forecasters insisted the hurricane was 150 miles northeast of Key West, and headed for the Atlantic Seaboard. U.S. forecasters warned fishermen in New Jersey to stay in port, but the storm struck Galveston, Texas, flattening that beach resort and port and killing at least 8,000 people: the deadliest storm tragedy in U.S. history.6

Even before Castro, U.S. forecasters did not respect the Cuban team, but their ignorance also reflected the state of hurricane forecasting at the time.7 If a storm didn’t leave a trail of firsthand reports and actual destruction while crossing the islands of the Caribbean or the Bahamas, forecasters had no way of tracking whether it even existed.

This shortage of reliable information improved dramatically over the next century with the introduction of maritime radio, reconnaissance aircraft, radar, satellite images of remote tropical areas and geostationary satellites to beam them every 30 minutes.

Today, we measure or estimate air pressure, temperature, humidity, and wind speed throughout a storm and the surrounding atmosphere. Forecasters now have very good clues about a storm’s destination and numerical prediction models to make reasonable determinations of storm surges.8
NHC’s abilities have been aided by ongoing research at universities and governmental agencies contributing to the many global and tropical weather models to predict tracks and intensities of storms, such as the “spaghetti track plots” commonly seen on television news when a storm threatens the U.S.

The NHC’s famous “projection cone” grows larger in width as the distance (and time) from the storm center increases. It is an excellent visual depiction of the range of error in the prediction. Introduced in the mid-1990s, the cone has become narrower and narrower, as the forecasts have become more accurate and confident.

All of these models depend on ground measurements, atmospheric column sampling (via weather balloon, aircraft dropsondes and satellite data). The better the data and the denser the sampling net, the more enhanced the product.

Cuba’s island is 725 miles long, with an east-west orientation across the southern boundary of the Gulf of Mexico, separating that body of water from the Caribbean Sea. Given its meteorologically strategic location, to build up and be privy to critical scientific contributions from its neighbor would indisputably be in the national interest of the United States.

The warm Loop Current entering from the Caribbean Sea is one of the heat engines that makes hurricanes intensify once they enter the Gulf. Were Cuba to maintain oceanographic and weather data buoys in the Yucatán Channel between Mexico and Cuba, their data would prove invaluable. Knowing more about a storm’s 3-D structure would aid our understanding of air-sea interactions and benefit hurricane scientists and prediction modelers infinitely. Unfortunately, such participation by Cuba is beyond their technological capability and the U.S.-imposed embargo forbids our supplying the necessary equipment.

Cuba does have several weather stations, but the embargo hinders them from upgrading or building more. Cuba relies on the European Union and other countries (principally China) for equipment and parts. American-made weather stations, Doppler radar systems and
other equipment would be more reliable and could be supplied at a better cost resulting in more and better meteorological data to improve U.S. hurricane prediction ability.

While tropical cyclone tracking is a very important part of disaster management, it’s only one facet. Cooperation with Cuba in other hurricane response activities is nearly nonexistent.

Although monetary costs from storms devastate and demoralize — human lives also hang in the balance. The saving of lives is of paramount importance in disaster management. Consider this astounding contrast: More than 1,600 Americans died during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and the U.S. death toll from Hurricane Ike in 2008 could exceed one hundred. Cuba’s death rate from storms over this same period was about three persons per year; its loss of life due to Ike was comparatively minimal compared to losses in the U.S. Only seven Cubans died from Ike.9

This difference in death rates between the so-called “third world country” and the United States is striking. Cuba has better evacuation plans, superior post disaster medical support, and more advanced citizen disaster preparedness education programs. Their strengths point to a host of potential pathways for future cooperation with the U.S. While there are distinct cultural differences between the U.S. and Cuba, with so much at stake, a free-flowing exchange of ideas could allow both sides to learn from each other.

Although Cuba is less densely populated than the U.S., the main reason for Cuba’s extraordinary survival record is the high priority Cubans place on saving lives and thus planning evacuations.
Cuban evacuation process starts at the local community level, where suburban or subdivision “block captains,” who are paid by the government, go from house to house to determine everyone’s needs. All Cubans know that if they evacuate, their medical needs will be met. Medicines are free and stockpiled before an emergency. The local block captains have an inventory of medical needs. This information is supplied to authorities before each storm.

Recent research from the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center has shown that about half the 1,600 people who died during Katrina succumbed because the failed response included a lack of access to important medicines. Duplicating the block captain approach should be doable in the U.S. If Cuban scientists and emergency managers were free to travel to the U.S. to meet with their U.S. counterparts, they could provide instruction and advice on these measures.

During hurricane season, the average Cuban citizen has impressive knowledge about hurricane impacts and what to do during an evacuation. The dissemination of knowledge comes through disaster awareness education programs that start in primary school and continue through adulthood. Since the devastating Hurricane Flora in 1963, Cubans have perfected an education program that discourages panic in the population and abates undue fear in small children, while providing a fundamental understanding of hurricanes and their impact from an early age. While evacuations are sometimes mandatory in Cuba, even when Cubans have the option to, very few stay in harm’s way.

Research has shown that one way to educate adults is by teaching their children. The U.S. could benefit enormously by adapting this system that works so well. At a recent meeting in Gulfport, Mississippi, organized by the Center for International Policy, emergency managers from the U.S. who had recently toured Cuba all came to the same conclusion: We need to duplicate Cuba’s disaster preparedness education system here at home.

During Hurricane Ike, Cuban disaster officials evacuated 2 million persons. U.S. scientists and emergency managers could benefit
enormously observing a Cuban storm evacuation in real time. The U.S. has never achieved this level of success. Images of those stranded at the New Orleans Superdome during Hurricane Katrina are forever etched in American minds. Huge traffic snarl-ups occurred in Texas when Hurricane Rita threatened the greater Houston area in 2005 and nearly 100 people died, from a failed process that left thousands stranded on the interstate without food, water, fuel and medical support for hours.

Although we’ve made some progress in improving evacuations — using both lanes of an interstate (contraflow), upgrading interstate intersections and staging coastal withdrawals — we’ve got a long way to go. Poor, elderly, and infirm people stay under duress while others willingly choose to stay behind, despite information and warnings on American TV and radio. Death is an inevitable outcome.

While the current sanctions allow scientific visits to Cuba under certain circumstances, they are hampered by an onerous licensing process under the auspices of the U.S. Treasury Department. The rules that restrict scientists — and Americans in general — from traveling to Cuba must be lifted. They are impeding the free flow of ideas that could benefit both countries in emergency management. No matter how much our government may decry the Cuban regime, it is a fact that they are very successful in orchestrating evacuations and meeting the public health and medical needs of their population during disasters.

An exchange of ideas always benefits those involved. We have a rapidly growing Spanish speaking immigrant population — many of whom are drawn to coastal cities such as New Orleans. To lift travel restrictions and encourage two-way dialogue will improve the well-being of both populations. In this day of high speed digital data transfer, U.S.-Cuban cooperation could be well-developed, but collaboration has been hindered by the myopic view of mostly U.S. administrators and politicians.

The past fifty years of U.S. policy of shunning and demonizing the Cuban regime and its people has not brought about significant political change in Cuba. However, open dialogue, freedom to travel and
lifting technology bans could better achieve U.S. government goals. U.S.-Cuban cooperation could lead to saving more lives from hurricane threats. Our Cuba policy is endangering millions of Americans. We need to change it. We should cooperate more closely on all aspects of disaster management. And the time to do so — to confront this mutual threat together — is now.
A distressing instrument of United States policy toward Cuba, especially over the last decade, has been the imposition of increasingly stringent limits on academic exchange. No truly democratic society restricts the free flow and exchange of ideas, or subjects academic relationships to overt political or foreign policy considerations, yet this has been the paradoxical consequence of our strategy.

The near ban on academic exchange has both practical and existential costs. As the essays in this report argue, in areas as diverse as public health, biotechnology, general education, mass mobilization against natural disasters, and environmental conservation, thwarting meaningful dialogue denies our country the fruits of meaningful cooperation. Perhaps more importantly, we cut ourselves off from history and a better understanding of what makes us who we are and what we hope to be.

Reenergizing academic exchange must become an element of a new U.S.-Cuba policy.

Our history with Cuba precedes Castro’s Revolution by more than 400 years. The United States and Cuba had close but complex links long before either became independent political entities.
Juan Ponce de Leon, who established the European presence in Florida, died in Cuba in 1521. For centuries, geography and maritime necessities made Cuba an extremely important location in transatlantic navigation and commerce. Cuba was an important ally and invaluable supplier of coffee, sugar, leather goods, munitions and alcohol to the revolutionary forces in the British North American wars for independence between 1776 and 1783. The number of ships sailing annually between Havana and the colonies increased from four to 368 between 1766 and 1782.

Acquisition of Louisiana from France in 1803 and Florida from Spain in 1819 brought the frontiers of the United States and Cuba within ninety miles of each other.

John Quincy Adams reflected the growing obsession the United States held for Cuba, when he wrote in 1823: “Cuba, almost within sight of our shores, from a multitude of considerations, has become an object of transcendent importance to the political and commercial interests of our Union.”

By 1850, the United States eclipsed England and Spain as the principal trading partner of Cuba. Strong sentiments for annexation developed both in Cuba and the U.S. throughout the century and would fuel the destructive Cuban-Spanish-North American war of 1895-1898.

Having inserted itself into the Cuban war of independence, the United States admitted a moral responsibility for guiding the new state. In his third annual address to the Congress on December 5, 1899, President William McKinley emphatically outlined the position:

The new Cuba yet to arise from the ashes of the past must needs be bound to us by ties of singular intimacy and strength if its enduring welfare is to be assured. Whether those ties shall be organic or conventional, the destinies of Cuba are in some rightful form and manner irrevocably linked with our own, but how and how far is for the future to determine in the ripeness of events. Whatever be the outcome, we must see to it that free Cuba be a reality, not a name, a
perfect entity, not a hasty experiment bearing within itself the elements of failure.6

Under the hegemonial control of the United States, between 1902 and 1959, Cuban freedom became less a reality than a name. That changed drastically with the Revolution of 1959. In January 1961, the United States unilaterally broke diplomatic relations with Cuba, prohibiting citizens from traveling to the island, and rupturing academic exchange that was an integral dimension of relations between the two countries.

The domestic policies of the Cuban Revolution in the 1960s, however, exercised a magnetic attraction to scholars and scientists around the world. Cubans were making extraordinary strides in medicine, the natural sciences, education and aspects of industrial technology. A wide range of international journalists and scholars from political science, economics, history, sociology, music, botany, literature, filmmaking and the dramatic and performing arts traveled to Cuba to study, research, and exchange ideas and techniques. The high interest generated formal programs of study at think tanks and colleges in both Cuba and the U.S., despite irregular political intervention from both sides.

In the United States, the formation under the auspices of several foundations and the federal government of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) in 1965 reflected broadening academic interest. Cuba created an Institute of History within the Academy of Sciences and in 1972 established a program of study focused on the United States.7 Major U.S. universities highlighted their emphasis on Cuba in Latin studies programs. Cuba’s exile community — mostly out of Miami — republished several classical studies on Cuban history, literature and culture. The University of Pittsburgh established the journal Boletín de Estudios sobre Cuba/Cuban Studies Newsletter in 1970† and the Library of Congress held a conference regarding

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† In January 1970, the University of Pittsburgh started an occasional publication series with the reprint of Carmelo Mesa Lago’s Availability and Reliability of Statistics in Socialist Cuba, previously published the year before in the Latin American Research Review, V. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 1969); and No. 2 (Summer, 1969).
Cuban acquisitions and bibliography.¹ Starting in the 1970s, formal and informal travel and communications between the United States and Cuba increased noticeably, but fluctuated unpredictably under successive U.S. presidents. In the early 1970s, the Nixon administration loosened the general restrictions on travel to Cuba in response to a ruling of the Supreme Court invalidating a requirement that U.S. passports be specifically endorsed for travel to Cuba. The Center for Cuban Studies in New York organized regular study trips for North Americans to Cuba. In 1974 and early 1975, journalists Frank Mankiewicz, Kirby Jones, and Saul Landau made three trips to Cuba and interviewed Fidel Castro for a series of television programs aired in the United States.⁸

Beginning in 1977, the Carter administration brought together growing parallel interests when the United States and Cuba opened Interests Sections in Havana and Washington. Encouraged by the State Department, a committee of scholars from Johns Hopkins, Yale and Lehman College invited several Cuban counterparts to the United States. This represented the first formal academic conference hosting Cuban scholars held in the U.S. since the Revolution. Soon LASA, Johns Hopkins, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Arizona participated in graduate and faculty level academic exchanges with Cuba. Cuban representation at LASA congresses was mostly unimpeded until the Bush administration in 2004.

Gradually, the Ford Foundation and other philanthropic foundations lent their support to research projects relevant to academics in Cuba and the U.S. Conferences involving Cuban scholars were sometimes held in third countries to bypass erratic visa restrictions by the U.S. Department of State.

In November 1995, the departments of history at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Havana agreed to conduct joint

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research on Caribbean economic development and national identity and its basic cultural manifestations. † Johns Hopkins continued organizing international conferences involving Cuban participants through the decade. Other universities also convened conferences and conducted long-term research programs in Cuba.

At first, the Cuban government accepted the academic expansion enthusiastically. But toward the end of the 1990s, they became concerned about the impact of binational programs, especially those addressing Cuban domestic politics. Certain Cuban organizations such as the Institute for Higher International Relations (ISRI) came under closer domestic scrutiny. Exit visas for Cuban scholars became harder to obtain.

At the same time, academic exchange fell victim to domestic political concerns in the U.S. The first Bush administration had increased the obstacles for academic exchange with Cuba by inhibiting travel by North American scholars, and reduced significantly the number of visas issued Cuban scholars invited to the United States while extending their waiting periods.

The increasingly close linkage between domestic policy concerns and Cuban academic exchange has undermined many potentially useful educational programs in the United States. Although U.S. Senator William J. Fulbright once said, “if large numbers of people know and understand the people from nations other than their own, they might develop a capacity for empathy, distaste for killing other men, and an inclination to peace,” the J. William Fulbright Educational Exchange Program, funded by the U.S. Department of State, decided not to pursue a Fulbright program with Cuba. † Fulbright exchanges have never included Cuban students or academics, or provided funding for U.S. academics to work or study in Cuba.

In the 1980s, the United States began to tie academic exchange to foreign policy initiatives aimed at isolating Cuba and undermining its

† The document was signed by Professor Franklin W. Knight of Johns Hopkins, Dr. Alberto Prieto of the Grupo Interdisciplinario para América Latina, el Caribe y Cuba (CIPALC), and Dr. Juan Triana of the Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana (CEAC) on November 8, 1995.
government. In 1985, President Reagan restricted entry by Cuban government employees and prohibited the visit of an entire delegation of scholars invited to a LASA meeting in New Mexico. Invitations of Cuban scholars to later LASA meetings became a matter of prolonged negotiations, often with uncertain results.

The Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 signed into law by President George H. W. Bush attempted to initiate political change in Cuba by supporting non-governmental “civil society” associations on the island but again loosened bureaucratic restrictions on research. President Clinton broadened the applications of the Cuban Democracy Act but also exempted a range of activities such as educational and religious activities, news gathering, cultural exchange and human rights activities. By 2000, hundreds of American colleges and universities were licensed to conduct study and research activities in Cuba.

After September 11, 2001, however, academic exchange with Cuba became buffeted by the increased stringency associated with national security concerns. In June 2004, the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), based on recommendations made by the Bush administration’s Report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, sharply amended the rules for U.S. study programs in Cuba. New procedures restricted or eliminated categories of academic travel such as non-credit courses, intensive study, and travel by high school students to Cuba. License periods were shortened, meaning that universities had to reapply more frequently.

By 2005, a large number of U.S. universities and colleges were forced to terminate their programs. Johns Hopkins had to withdraw because their programs failed to meet the requirement of ten continuous weeks in Cuba, and Butler University, because its programs included students from other colleges. The number of colleges offering study abroad programs in Cuba dropped from several hundred to twelve. The number of U.S. students studying in Cuba dropped from thousands annually to only 140 in 2005-06.11

Cuban scholars’ struggles to attend LASA congresses track the effects of these new rules. Despite disruptions during the Reagan
administration and tense relations with prior administrations, Cubans had been generally allowed to participate since 1977. Beginning in March 2003, however, U.S. authorities began to take on a domestic political tone in preventing Cuban scholars from entering, by applying a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act that prohibits aliens the President “deems would be detrimental to U.S. interests” or citing a near-dormant Reagan era presidential proclamation (5377) barring entry to communists.

In 2003, only about half of the 105 invited Cuban academics were granted visas to attend LASA’s Dallas conference. Just ten days before the 2004 Las Vegas conference, the sixty-five Cubans planning to attend were denied visas, and in 2006, fifty-five Cubans were denied visas for the Puerto Rico conference. Finally, LASA moved the 2007 Congress from Boston to Montreal, to ensure the participation of a large Cuban delegation. Democratic America had nearly extinguished the exchange with Cuba of academic scholarship and free thoughts.

Proclamation 5377, issued by President Reagan in 1985, prohibiting the entry of employees and officials of the Cuban government or members of the Cuban Communist Party should be immediately rescinded and Cuban academics, analysts and scientists should not be denied visitor visas based on that decree, or Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act that classifies aliens ineligible for receiving visas or being admitted to the U.S.

In 2003, only about half of the 105 invited Cuban academics were granted visas to attend LASA’s Dallas conference. Just ten days before the 2004 Las Vegas conference, the sixty-five Cubans planning to attend were denied visas, and in 2006, fifty-five Cubans were denied visas for the Puerto Rico conference. Finally, LASA moved the 2007 Congress from Boston to Montreal, to ensure the participation of a large Cuban delegation. Democratic America had nearly extinguished the exchange with Cuba of academic scholarship and free thoughts.
Rules that restrict U.S. academic institutions from offering study abroad programs in Cuba should end.

The United States government should stay out of curriculum decisions for academic institutions. Accredited institutions should be capable of supervising their programs and conforming to all legal requirements.

Cuban Assets Controls Regulations, as they relate to educational exchanges, should return to pre-2004 openness. The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) should grant non-discriminatory general licenses for all academic travel without specific license. No regulations should be placed on the duration, content or personnel of any program as long as it is academic in nature.

International Fulbright educational exchange courses and similar programs should include Cuba. The status of diplomatic relations need not prevent Cuba’s inclusion in publicly funded educational exchange programs including the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program, the International Visitors Program, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, the Education USA Program and the USIA Office of Citizen Exchanges’ professional, cultural, and youth programs.

Finally, Congress should allocate specific funds in future Foreign Relations Authorization Acts for educational exchange with Cuba, directing the Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to assist educational exchange with Cuba.
For too many years, the grip of Cuban-American hardliners on U.S. policy toward Cuba has been the chief cause of that policy’s rigidity and its catastrophic failure. In the future, however, the Cuban-American community, especially the majority of it which no longer associates itself with hard-line positions on Cuba, could become a vital element of an improved, more creative American policy that actually helps to facilitate a peaceful economic and political opening on the island. Several changes in current American policy could pave the way for this shift.

1. Eliminate restrictions on travel and remittances by Cuban-Americans to the island. In 2004, the Bush administration imposed draconian restrictions on the ability of Cuban-Americans subject to U.S. jurisdiction to travel to Cuba or send money (financial assistance often called “remittances”) to their families. The restrictions were justified then as a way to reduce Cuba’s foreign exchange earnings and pressure its economy to reform. The advocates of the new tougher sanctions were the three South Florida Republican Cuban-American congressional representatives and a small group of the most recalcitrant anti-Castro organiza-
tions in Miami. They argued that the tightened restrictions would deprive the Cuban government of up to $500 million a year. The restrictions were opposed as counterproductive not only by the more liberal elements of the Cuban-American community, but even by moderate-conservative Cuban-Americans such as Carlos Saladrigas, Joe Garcia, and some of the leaders of the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF).

After four years in place, the restrictions have turned out to be a spectacular failure. As Phil Peters, a Cuba scholar and expert on the island’s economy has pointed out, the restrictions did not have the anticipated effect on the Cuban economy. Cuba has more than made up by several times the losses from reduced Cuban-American travel and remittances through increased trade and investment links with Venezuela and China, larger volumes of nickel exports, and growth in its tourism industry.

The essence of the travel restrictions is as follows. The 2004 regulations allow Cuban-Americans to visit only immediate family members, that is, spouses, children, siblings, parents or grandparents. No

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† Saladrigas is a Cuban-American businessman who founded the influential Cuba Study Group, following what he believed were damaging media portrayals of Florida’s exile community as uniform, narrow-minded and uncompromising during the Elián Gonzáles affair. Saladrigas’ group espouses a more moderate, anti-isolationist stance toward Cuba, but one that facilitates change leading to democracy on the island.

Democratic activist Joe Garcia was unsuccessful in his attempt to unseat Republican Rep. Mario Díaz-Balart, brother of Lincoln, in the 2008 election. Garcia is a former executive director of CANF, after that organization took a centrist turn following an exodus of hard-liners in 2001. Garcia argues the embargo hurts the Cuban people, and particularly Cuba’s dissidents, more than the Cuban government.

Both Garcia and Saladrigas advocate for sanctions to be relaxed but not entirely lifted. In fact, on December 10, 2008, Saladrigas’ Cuba Study Group released a report calling for an end to restrictions on travel and remittances to Cuba for all Americans.

‡ CANF is usually credited as having been the most influential lobby group responsible for shaping U.S. policy toward Cuba for many years. Its anti-Castro, pro-embargo, isolationist agenda dominated the exile community and U.S. policymakers throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The traditionally bipartisan but hawkish CANF lost traction after the election of George W. Bush in 2000, when hard-line members formed more insular groups with better access to the Bush White House.
other kind of family relation, such as an aunt or uncle, qualifies, much less a friend, no matter how close the ties may be. Moreover, even with regard to qualified family, visits are allowed only for a two-week period once every three years. No exceptions of any kind are granted. This means that in many cases, Cuban-Americans have been unable to visit a dying parent or sibling because they had visited them a year or two earlier, and hence, had to wait for the three-year period to run before being allowed to visit again. With regard to remittances, a maximum of $300 every three months may be sent, but only to immediate family members as defined above. Again, no exceptions are made, regardless of family emergencies or other special circumstances.

The 2004 restrictions are bad policy on several grounds. First, Cuban-American travel and remittances are economically, socially, and politically beneficial to the long-term goal of promoting a more open Cuban society. Cuban-Americans who travel to the island often give money to family members and friends who have small businesses in Cuba such as family restaurants, repair shops, and home businesses offering services from hair salons to house repairs and construction. In cases this author knows personally, Cuban-American travelers have provided to their relatives and friends books, DVD movies, laptop computers, video cameras, and parts with which to assemble satellite TV dishes; money to start a small business, repair an aging automobile used for taxi runs, and to buy textiles for costumes used in an independent arts company.

The bulk of remittances sent from the United States or carried personally by Cuban-American travelers support small but vital centers of independent economic activity throughout the island. It is an informal but extensive and powerful mechanism for promoting private enterprise and civil society far more effectively than any U.S. government program funded by American taxpayers. Even if the Cuban government wanted to stop the impact of Cuban-American travel and money, it would be hard put to do so, for political and practical reasons. Politically, the Cuban government would not want to be seen as
the obstacle to family reunification or stand in the way of family members providing material assistance to other family members. As a practical matter, Cuba does not have enough security personnel to supervise every single transaction involving money brought into the island or sent there by Cuban-Americans to their friends and relatives. This is not the case with U.S. government-funded programs of assistance to targeted groups of dissident Cubans, which Cuban intelligence routinely penetrates, and which have a far more limited impact because they reach at best a few thousand individuals as opposed to the hundreds of thousands directly affected in a positive way by Cuban-American travel and remittances.

All restrictions on Cuban-American travel and remittances should be eliminated immediately. Cuban-Americans should be allowed to travel to Cuba whenever they wish, and be permitted to send to family and friends as much money as they wish. A Cuban-American should be defined as a person who was born in Cuba, or whose natural father or mother was born in Cuba. Candidate Obama pledged to do this, and the administration can justify the new policy on its obviously compelling humanitarian argument, and its commitment to engaging other countries with the ideas, energy and independent initiative of our people. As a matter of our own national interest and global image, America should not stand in the way of families and friends supporting each other, seeing each other, and spending time with each other. While the most reactionary elements in Miami would object, polling within the Cuban-American community over the past two years — coinciding with the illness and retirement from power of Fidel Castro — has revealed consistently a clear majority in favor of ending travel and remittance restrictions. The Florida International University (FIU) Institute for Public Opinion Research poll of Miami-Dade’s Cuban-American community in 2008 found 66 percent of respondents in favor of lifting travel restrictions to Cuba (67 percent favored lifting travel restrictions on all Americans); and 65 percent in favor of lifting restrictions on sending money to Cuba. The percentage of young Cuban-Americans in favor of ending these measures was
even higher. The community is simply not the political obstacle it once was.

Along similar lines, the administration should follow up on this move by ending current restrictions on travel to Cuba by non-Cuban-American U.S. nationals. The same positive effects on Cuban society and the Cuban economy that would flow from ending the ban on travel by Cuban-Americans would be multiplied many times over by allowing all U.S. citizens who wish to do so to travel to Cuba. To the degree that the new administration is committed to a policy that supports reforms in Cuba toward greater openness, pluralism, and economic growth, it should allow all Americans to travel to Cuba, thereby enhancing people-to-people links between both countries. Right now, the ban on travel to Cuba, like the rest of the existing economic sanctions, has the effect, not of isolating the Cuban government from the rest of the world, but rather of isolating the United States from Cuba, without advancing any other positive U.S. objectives. After half a century of failure, it is time to change this policy.

2. All Miami-based U.S. government programs of support for Cuban democracy should be reviewed rigorously with a view to eliminating most of them and reforming the rest. Several U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) and U.S. congressional inquiries have revealed a high degree of corruption and inefficiency permeating many of the taxpayer-funded, Miami-based programs through which the U.S. government has worked with the Cuban-American community to help bring down Cuba’s government. This includes programs that are funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as the broadcasting operations of TV

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1 The FIU poll shows a clear majority of Cuban-Americans oppose the U.S. embargo in its entirety: 55 percent — up from 42 percent who opposed the embargo in 2007 — and the first time a majority has opposed it since the poll was first conducted in 1991. In addition, 65 percent of Cuban-Americans age 18–44 oppose the embargo, compared with 32 percent age 65 and older — a significant generational difference in opinion.
USAID is an independent federal agency that receives foreign policy guidance from the U.S. Secretary of State and distributes and oversees most non-military foreign aid.

In 2008, a former White House aide, Felipe Sixto, was charged with theft in connection with USAID’s Cuba funds.

The U.S.-government financed Radio Marti was established in 1983; TV Martí six years later. The GAO reports the Martís were created by Congress to function as “surrogate” broadcasters, designed to temporarily replace the local media of Cuba, where a free press does not exist; the congressional charter states the broadcasts must be operated “in a manner not inconsistent with the broad foreign policy of the United States.” (Emphasis added.) Combined annual funding of the Martís is $34 million.

USAID also invests American taxpayer funds in programs of academic exchange and information that have no links or direct contact with Cuba, and provide little if any value. There is the case of the University of Nebraska Law School, which received a multi-million dollar grant from the agency to carry out a study on the future res-

90 9 WAYS FOR US TO TALK TO CUBA AND FOR CUBA TO TALK TO US

Every year, USAID channels millions of dollars to Miami-based organizations for the general purpose of promoting democratic change on the island. The result has been the growth of a vast network of political and financial patronage that has very little impact on what actually happens on the island. Groups and organizations that supposedly should be aiding dissidents spend most of their funds in Miami itself, often in activities of dubious value. In one celebrated case, taxpayer funds were spent to purchase cashmere sweaters, Nintendo games, and various luxury goods for distribution to dissidents on the island. Immense sums are also spent on providing honoraria, consulting fees, and compensation for Miami-based individuals for their supposed work with Cuba which in reality reaches no more than a few hundred Cubans each year. After years of criticism, USAID has still failed to deploy adequate numbers of staff and oversight procedures to police these grants.

USAID also invests American taxpayer funds in programs of academic exchange and information that have no links or direct contact with Cuba, and provide little if any value. There is the case of the University of Nebraska Law School, which received a multi-million dollar grant from the agency to carry out a study on the future res-
olution of Cuban property claims. Not only does the school have no noted expertise on Cuba, but also it has no substantial links of any kind to lawyers, legal scholars or policymakers in Cuba who undoubtedly would have much to say on Cuba’s approach to future property claims. Indeed, the Cuban government refuses access to institutions or researchers engaged in Cuba-related USAID grants, thus creating a situation in which such grants, while profitable for the institutions that accept them, are worthless from the viewpoint of contributing knowledge about the island and its complex problems. Without delay, the Obama administration should order an immediate review of all USAID Cuba programs, with a view to eliminating most of them as ineffective and inefficient.

Equally disturbing has been the performance of TV and Radio Marti over the years. The most scandalous case is that of TV Marti, which the Cuban government successfully jams so that its programs are hardly ever seen by anyone in Cuba. It is an absolute waste of taxpayer dollars and should be shut down immediately. Radio Marti presents a different set of problems. Ever since it was moved to Miami in the early 1990s after intense pressure from some Cuban-American leaders, the station has suffered a progressive deterioration in standards of journalistic integrity, and in the last ten years it has become a veritable nest of political bias, cronyism, incompetence and corruption, matched by steadily declining numbers of listeners in Cuba. The station does not provide balanced coverage of news or different viewpoints, and often resembles a Miami version of the one-sidedness rightly criticized by the U.S. government as pervading the Cuban state media.
and corruption, matched by steadily declining numbers of listeners in Cuba. The station does not provide balanced coverage of news or different viewpoints, and often resembles a Miami version of the one-sidedness rightly criticized by the U.S. government as pervading the Cuban state media.

Past examples of its many shortcomings include delayed coverage of major events that did not gel with the hard-line Miami viewpoint. These included the return by the U.S. government of Cuban child Elián González to his father, and an historic speech by former President Jimmy Carter delivered in Havana in May 2002. Carter’s address called for greater respect for human rights, and described the Cuban dissident Varela Project, whose activists advocate for democratic freedoms, but expressed disagreement with U.S. policy toward Cuba, including the embargo. Carter delivered the speech in Spanish and it was carried live and uncensored by Cuban state media. Radio Marti played the speech one day later — after the Voice of America’s Spanish service played it. Regular Marti programming has included various shows on “Santeria” and soap operas of little value.

It is questionable whether Radio Marti should be allowed to exist. If the administration believes that the U.S. government should continue to devote resources and attention to the broadcast of news and information to Cuba, a case can be made that the Washington-based Voice of America (VOA) would be a much more reliable, credible and objective source of such news and information for the Cuban people than Radio Marti. This goal could be accomplished with some shifting and reformatting of the VOA’s current priorities and programs.

The issue is not only one of saving taxpayer dollars. In its current modus operandi, Radio Marti detracts from the credibility of the United States, and contributes little to the opening of political or informational space within Cuban society. Its bias, stridency, and unwillingness to accommodate broadly diverse viewpoints detract from the kind of tone that American policy toward Cuba should attempt to set. If, for political reasons, the administration is unwilling to abolish Radio Marti, then at least it should merge it with the VOA, place it directly under the VOA’s
management and direction, and insulate it institutionally from the pres-
sures of the hard-line elements of Miami's Cuban-American community
so as to improve its objectivity and quality.

3. The Obama administration should project a new policy and a new
political tone toward Cuba that includes the promotion of better rela-
tions between the Cuban-American community and the island. For a
long time, American policy toward Cuba has been unremittingly
harsh, hostile and confrontational. While the United States seems to
have no problem using economic engagement, dialogue and quiet
diplomacy to promote human rights and greater political openness in
notably authoritarian countries such as Saudi Arabia, China and
Vietnam, its policy toward Cuba is stuck in the single track of inces-
sant political warfare and economic isolation. While dictated by the
hard-line elements in the Cuban-American community, this policy
also has been a serious obstacle to promoting the kind of constructive
efforts at improved relations and long-term reconciliation between the
Cuban-American community and the island that will be essential to a
more prosperous and pluralistic future in Cuba.

American policy obstructs in several ways. First, it blocks most
contacts between Cuban-Americans and the island through its tight
restrictions on travel and remittances. Second, it maintains an inces-
santly hostile rhetoric toward Cuba that serves only to feed the more
intransigent elements in the Cuban-American community while ignor-
ing the voices calling for a more reasonable, conciliatory approach.
Third, it looks the other way when Cuban-American extremists, such
as the well-known Luis Posada Carriles, engage in acts of violence
and terrorism against the island, thereby creating the impression that
such acts, and the preference for violence over peaceful means which
they embody, are acceptable.5

As part of a new policy, the United States should encourage dia-
logue and a wide range of peaceful, constructive interactions between
the Cuban-American community and Cuba with the long-term objec-
tive of promoting reconciliation among all Cubans. Rather than
encouraging divisiveness and intransigence, as it currently does, American policy should do its best to promote improved, peaceful relations between the Cuban-American community and Cuba. Neither one of the Castro brothers will live forever. The inescapable, long-term challenge for Cuba will be to address its economic and political problems through peaceful means, while avoiding the steep social disintegration, political violence, economic stagnation, and enmeshment in the international illegal drug trade that have engulfed many Caribbean societies in the last three decades. This will be no easy task. The challenge will be made more complicated, or easier, depending on the role ultimately played by the Cuban-American community in Cuba’s future.

In practical terms, American policy can do a number of things to facilitate a constructive role for the Cuban-American community in Cuba’s future evolution. First, as mentioned earlier, the United States should eliminate all restrictions on travel and remittances by Cuban-Americans to the island, so as to allow greater dialogue and engagement. Second, American policy toward Cuba should ratchet down its hostile rhetoric and adopt a more conciliatory tone. As part of this effort, the United States should encourage forces within the Cuban-American community working toward dialogue, understanding, and peaceful approaches to Cuba’s complex economic, social, and political challenges. Third, the United States government should make it quite clear that it will not tolerate any acts of terrorism or violence directed against Cuba by individuals under U.S. jurisdiction. Fourth, American policy should focus much more than it does now on existing common interests between both countries, and promote cooperation in these areas even while expressing disagreement with Cuba on a broad range of other issues. Interestingly, on some specific practical issues such as illegal migration, illegal drugs, and terrorism, the interests of the United States, Cuba, and the Cuban-American community in South Florida converge. It is not in the interests of any of these three parties to allow Cuba to become a major exporter of illegal migrants or illegal drugs to the United States or to allow violent activities to be directed by one side against the other.
In conclusion, for many years, U.S. presidents from Ronald W. Reagan to George W. Bush, including Bill Clinton, have spent considerable energy courting the more hard-line elements of the Cuban-American community. Although this was bad policy from the viewpoint of the U.S. national interest, it made sense in terms of election politics. Hard-line Cuban-Americans dominated the Cuban-American community politically; their campaign finance contributions dwarfed those of any other elements within the community; and they seemed actually capable of delivering the state of Florida to their preferred presidential candidate, as was shown most dramatically in the 2000 election.

Those days are over. The Cuban-American community has become more diverse and politically more moderate for two highly significant reasons. First, with the passage of time, the more recent Cuban-American arrivals — those who came since 1980 — have slowly gained greater prominence and clout in the community. They tend to be more liberal and flexible in their views toward Cuba than the exiles who arrived during the first decade of the Cuban Revolution. Second, the long-awaited generational change within the community has gained speed, bringing to the fore younger Cuban-Americans with a less intense emotional involvement in purely Cuban issues, and a broader set of political interests and viewpoints more akin to those of ordinary American citizens. As older and more conservative Cuban-Americans depart from the scene, their younger counterparts are more pragmatic and much less invested in maintaining a failed policy of isolating Cuba.

Reality also has set in. Following Fidel Castro’s illness, his subsequent resignation from office, and the peaceful transition that brought his brother Raúl to power, the community has increasingly understood that the status quo of U.S.-Cuba policy has run its course. Significant portions of the community have become much more supportive of a more flexible policy toward Cuba that would contain elements of dialogue, improved communication, and what one might describe as “normalcy” in the relations between both countries. The
recent election also has shown that the hard-line elements within the community, while still powerful, no longer dominate it, either politically or in terms of financial clout. Barack Obama was able to win the presidency, the state of Florida, and even (by a large margin of 140,000 votes) Miami-Dade County, in spite of having antagonized the hard-line elements of the community, which unstintingly supported Republican candidate John McCain.

Unlike his predecessors, Mr. Obama need not cater to the Cuban-American hard-liners or fear their ability to make and unmake presidents. The new White House should ignore the hard-liners, consigning them to the political irrelevance they deserve, and cultivate instead a wide swath of younger, and more moderate, voices that are more representative of the community’s current diversity and changing views, including moderate-conservative Cuban-Americans as well as liberal ones. In particular, the new President should emphasize that American policy toward Cuba should be based, first and foremost, on the national interests of the United States rather than the particular interests of one segment of the Cuban-American community. This new emphasis would be a fresh, and much needed departure, from previous practices.

The gradual reconciliation of the two Cuban families on opposite sides of the Florida Straits will be substantively and symbolically instrumental to the broader reconciliation one may ultimately hope for between Cuba and the United States. Through the changes suggested here, American policy can play a helpful role in facilitating improved relations between the Cuban-American community in the United States and the people of the island. Instead of serving as an active and persistent abettor to the long-simmering tensions and rancor between both parties, American policy, through the wide range of policy instruments available to it, can become a subtle but effective contributor to greater good will, peaceful engagement, and closer ties. The results would be beneficial to all parties involved, none more so than the United States.
A dozen specialists — with diverse backgrounds and professions, politics and points of view — have argued that U.S.-Cuba policy has deprived the United States of enormous benefits in areas from science and security to health and prosperity. It has severed the Cuban family from itself, and needlessly prolonged the reconciliation that is required to make it whole. A range of actions both governments could take to build the confidence that leaders, old and young, must have, are specified in order to replace the frayed paradigms of the Cold War with something better, more honest, productive and new.

The much anticipated transition in Cuba has begun, uneventfully, it seems. Power has passed from Fidel Castro to his brother Raúl without incident: no riots, no demonstrations, no protests. Public life in Cuba has continued normally and indeed continuity has been the watchword for more than two years.

But so has change. It is in the air. Change has been the subject of public pronouncements and a topic of private conversations. Small but significant changes have in fact been introduced. It is in the realm of rising popular expectations of more change to come, however, that change has been mostly manifestly registered.
Change has been on the mind of the new Cuban leadership. Raúl Castro early on, in 2006, publicly indicated a willingness to change relations with the United States and negotiate a resolution to outstanding differences between both countries “to settle the long U.S.-Cuba disagreement.” As recently as December 2008, in an interview published in The Nation, he said that the two presidents should meet “in a neutral place.”

To date, the United States has indicated no such willingness. A policy of no-change from Washington has been the response to change in Havana. No new policy initiative, no new directions: nothing but more of the same.

Over these last fifty years, the embargo has assumed a life of its own. Its very longevity serves as the logic for its continuance, evidence of the utter incapacity of U.S. political leaders to move beyond the policy failures of their own making. …That the embargo has not yet accomplished what it set out to do, in exquisite Kafkaesque reasoning, simply means that more time is required.

In the meantime, as the governments of both countries remain hopelessly stalled on the issue of “normalization” of relations, on both sides of the Florida Straits people have continued to develop the basis for engagement. They will not be denied “normal” relations with each other or be deprived of the opportunity to pursue matters of common interest and mutual concern.
Despite decades of “non-relations,” Cubans and Americans of good will have continued to maintain fruitful professional relations. Collaboration among scholars, academics, and researchers in Cuba and the United States has expanded and contracted within the space made available within the larger vagaries of the politics and policies of both governments. Individual Cubans and Americans have developed creative ways to maintain collaborative ties, to exchange information, to share research, and to pursue interests of mutual concern, if albeit on a limited and at times haphazard basis.

The models of collaborative initiatives have long been established and they are exceptionally diverse, registering noteworthy gains of enduring value.

Over the past twenty-five years, often under difficult circumstances and frequently in the face of formidable obstacles — from both sides — cooperation has advanced, and the advances have been constant and the results have been substantial. Professional ties have endured decades of adversity and reversals, and speak to the resilience of commitments to pursue projects of mutual interest. Collaboration has involved scholars and researchers representing the full breadth of the social sciences and humanities, as well as the natural sciences, medicine, the performing arts, and archival management. It has borne fruit in a variety of forms, including joint publications, joint panels at scholarly meetings, the exchange of resources and research materials, among others. Limited official agreements between both governments have similarly produced salutary outcomes. These exchanges make for powerful forces, and in the aggregate work — often imperceptibly — to fashion the larger cultural context in which the politics and policies of both governments must perforce function.

Engagement now, between the governments in Havana and Washington, is the only way forward, and these essays have shown us what must be done and how. Collaborative projects developed as a matter of mutual interest and in the spirit of mutual respect serve to foster the kinds of familiarities conducive to an appreciation of the benefits of expanded relations and indeed contribute in important
ways to hastening the arrival of the time when relations between both peoples will be “normal.” The trend is irreversible, for anything less is abnormal. The issue is not if but when: There is too much history for it to be any other way.

The path forward has been suggested. The leaders can follow it to the future.
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**U.S.-Cuba: The Case for Business (pp. 51–59)**


4. Ibid.

The Potential for Energy Trade (pp. 61–68)
10. Ibid.

Hurricane Preparedness and Disaster Management (pp. 69–75)
1. Estimate by Cuba’s government.


5. Max Mayfield, formerly with the U.S. National Hurricane Center (NHC), and Lixion Avila (NHC), personal interviews, October 2008.


7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.


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Finally, I want to thank every one of our authors for giving U.S. policymakers clear and compelling reasons for both governments not simply to sit down and talk but to make progress on issues and ideas that matter, so that we can change the course of U.S.-Cuba relations, peacefully and successfully. That is what the Cubans we have met along the way urgently hope for. It is our hope that this report helps us reach this goal together.

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