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# Diplomatic Normalization between the US and Cuba in Light of Recent Changes in US Foreign Policy More Generally

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May 1, 2015

**We analyze normalization of diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba. We first examine the causes of previous normalizations with Vietnam and China. From these cases, we identify factors that are key to the normalization process. These include political turnover, economic interests, other special interest groups, public sentiment, and what we refer to as the Lawnmower Effect. This effect is observed when one or both nations attempt to reopen diplomatic ties only to continually fail to establish relations due to the endurance of underlying political issues. We use the Multiple Streams Framework (a policy formulation theory) in order to evaluate this normalization process. In this framework, moments known as "policy windows" (opportunities in which the "streams" of politics, problems, and policies come together) focus attention and resources on an issue. In the case of US-Cuban relations, the three streams have come together to create a policy window, due partially to international pressure. We conclude with an evaluation of the current state and progress of the US-Cuban normalization process.**

## Section 1: How did the US-Cuban relationship become abnormal?

In January 1961 the United States embassy in Cuba closed its doors, and US-Cuban relations, politically and economically, essentially ceased to exist. Before December 17th, 2014, the United States and Cuba existed as close geographic neighbors without any diplomatic relations. Cuba is only 90 miles off the coast of Florida, approximately a 40 minute plane ride, and yet politically relations between the two countries could not be further apart. So why, after nearly 53 years without diplomatic relations, does there exist a strong push to normalize US-Cuba relations now? Will this attempt at establishing normalized relations be successful, or will it meet the same fate as past attempts? In order to understand the process of normalization between the US and Cuba, understanding how these relations became abnormal is of crucial importance.

The relationship between Cuba and the United States was not always so tumultuous and antagonistic, however, it has always been asymmetrical, with the much larger United States overshadowing and influencing internal Cuban politics. To best understand the decline in relations between Cuba and the United States, attention must be paid to their historical relationship starting with the establishment of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. The Monroe Doctrine stated that,

We owe it, therefore, to candor, and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers, to declare, that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere, as dangerous to our peace and safety (Monroe 1823).

This was the United State's announcement to colonial rivals Britain and Spain, that the United States could intervene in regional affairs for issues of national security. The doctrine issues a warning against the establishment of new colonies that could threaten the regional power of the United States. This doctrine ultimately paved the way for the United States to intervene in Cuba's battle against Spain, though it would not become relevant again for almost a century.

It is Cuba's colonial past that is a great factor of influence when considering why the country did not wish to have the United States involved in their internal politics. Historically, Cuba had been controlled by the British and the Spaniards. The brutality of living under Spanish rule had caused the Cuban's to attempt to rebel countless times during the 19th century, each resulting in large loss of Cuban life and none resulting in freedom from colonial rule. The United States, fearing the close proximity Spain, decided to intervene in the Cuban war for independence, and by 1898, the United States, with the help of Cuban rebels, successfully forced Spain to cede control of Cuba. Although the Spanish-American war represented the second time the United States had assisted Cuba in overthrowing a colonial ruler (as they had done to Britain

years earlier), it was the first time the United States decided to maintain a lasting influence, and presence within Cuba.

While the U.S. was a helpful component to Cuba's victory over Spain in their war for independence, it was the subsequent introduction of the Platt Amendment in the Cuban Constitutional Assembly, and the wave of government corruption and instability that followed as a result of continued U.S. influence in Cuba, which pushed the populace away from wanting any more U.S. intervention in Cuba. After the U.S. helped Cuba win their war for independence against Spain, the United States decided against inviting Cuba to the negotiation table. Instead, the United States and Spain agreed on the end terms of the war without representatives from Cuba present, and the United States maintained a military presence within Cuba. The Cuban war for independence left Cubans once again without full control of their sovereignty. Cubans no longer wanted to be commanded by a colonial ruler, but unfortunately, when Spain relinquished their control over Cuba, the United States filled their place to form a neo-colony.

Even before the Cuban flag ever flew over Havana in the newly liberated country of Cuba in 1902, the United States had inserted their mark into politics. The Platt Amendment was written into the Cuban constitution in 1901, imposed under the threat of continued U.S. occupation. The amendment restricted Cuban sovereignty, granting the U.S. the power to intervene in Cuba militarily and politically in order to "preserve Cuban independence." It also granted the U.S. the right to establish its naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Even though the U.S. was no longer physically occupying Cuba, it still held a domineering, neo-colonial presence in the political and economic sphere. Government officials and politicians in Cuba maintained close relations with Washington. On more than one occasion the U.S. intervened in elections to support certain candidates who favored strengthening ties with Washington. The United States interventions varied in scale and scope, including a reoccupation of Havana from 1906-1909, the sending of warships into Havana Bay, and keeping U.S. marines in Cuba to protect U.S. property.

Cuban domestic politics would bear the largest burden of United States influence though. Over the next two decades, the Platt Amendment arguably created the necessary conditions under which revolutionaries could gain support, and mobilize popular sentiments toward political and economic change. The political conditions that existed after the passing of the Platt Amendment was polarized and fractured, with Cubans standing politically divided on issues of American intervention. By the 1930's, the political and economic landscape in Cuba was drastically altered by the consistent meddling of Washington into Cuban affairs. Leading up to the Cuban Revolution, "...U.S. capital controlled over 40% of the Cuban sugar industry, 23% of all nonsugar industry, 90% of all telephone and electronic services, and 50% of Cuba's railway

services....” (Sweig, 19). In essence, the U.S. controlled the major aspects of the Cuban economy. This overbearing U.S. presence could not be maintained if Cubans ever wanted to experience sovereignty. After a series of U.S. interventions into elections, the regime in Cuba became more entangled with the mafia, corruption, and overall disregard for Cubans basic human rights.

In 1933, Gerardo Machado, the U.S. supported dictator of Cuba was overthrown by a force of university students, military officers (both commissioned and noncommissioned), and organized labor movements (LeoGrande 9). The newly established government promised social reform in all areas of politics and the economy, including the start of social welfare programs. This severely threatened U.S. interests, particularly in the economic sector, where U.S. investors were heavily involved. To counter this revolution, Washington worked together with a man named Fulgencio Batista, the head of the armed forces, and helped to organize a coup to take down the new regime. Only three months after the revolutionaries had successfully unseated Machado, Batista stormed into power with the backing of the United States. From 1933 to 1944 Batista ruled Cuba. By 1944 Batista lost his re-election, gave over power to the opposition, and went into exile. Less than a decade later though, Batista campaigned his way back into Cuba and in 1952 Batista once again seized control over Cuba by coup. Batista's policies continued to favor the economic elites, while the rest of the Cuban population struggled through relentless poverty.

The U.S. supported Batista even though his policies included the suspension of constitutional rule, corruption, dealings with the mafia, and overall favoring of the elite class. His brutality as a leader oppressed majority of the Cuban people, and opposition against Batista mounted as police repression increased. As long as Batista continued to satisfy U.S. political and economic interests though, the U.S. continued to support his blatantly cruel regime.

This is when a key figure in shaping Cuba's contemporary history emerged. Fidel Castro, a young lawyer who was directly influenced and inspired by revolutions and riots occurring in other Latin American and Caribbean countries, was the dominant force behind the 26<sup>th</sup> of July movement, as well as the overall Cuban Revolution. On July 26th, 1953, Castro attempted an attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago, Cuba, as a means of targeting Batista's army. While he did not succeed, during his trial for sedition Castro blasted Batista's regime. His speech gained him popularity with the Cuban people, and his famous closing lines, "Condemn me, It does not matter. History will absolve me" transformed him into a national hero. Castro, who had grown up in a poverty stricken, rural area of Cuba, understood what inequality meant for most Cubans. His sympathy for the poor, and his love for Cuba made him a fervent nationalist, and champion for social reforms that included social programming aimed at

fighting poverty, and giving Cuba greater independence from U.S. influence. To the U.S., Castro was a dangerous man whose revolution was at odds with their economic and political interests. Under the umbrella of the Cold War, Castro's message of revolution was radical. According to LeoGrande and Kornbluh, President Eisenhower was torn on how to position the U.S. on the issues arising in Cuba. While Batista was a sound, stable ruler who represented Washington's interests well, his regime was brutal and crumbling. There was little hope of Batista continuing on as dictator. Eisenhower made the decision to distance the U.S. from Cuba politically, but to many Cubans, this did little to undo the years of long-standing ties between Batista and Washington (LeoGrande 10). On January 1st, 1959, Batista fled Cuba. Fidel Castro and other revolutionary forces, including Ernesto "Che" Guevara, arrived in Havana, solidifying their revolutionary success.

Though there are varying accounts of the degree to which Fidel Castro was initially dedicated to supporting Communism, it can be said that Castro was a man of mixed ideology (Sweig). In fact the Cuban Communist Party (known at the time as the Partido Socialista Popular), was not fully committed to the revolution until 1958. Castro only declared himself a Socialist after he was aware of the United States plan to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. Within the United States though, the Cuban Revolution represented a very close regional neighbor falling to 'communism'. Under the shadow of Cold War policies, the Cuban Revolution came as a blow to the United States official containment policy. Not only was Cuba's regime change seen as a threat, the subsequent attempts made by the United States to recapture Cuba, can only be described as unsuccessful.

It was in the immediate years following the Cuban Revolution that greatly impacted the state of current relations. Diplomatic and economic relations continually became worse over the three year period before diplomatic ties were officially severed in 1961. What occurred in the preceding years can be characterized by multi and unilateral failures on both the part of the U.S. and Cuba. At its basic essence, each state placed domestic and internal issues above maintaining relations, and used the economy as a tool of intimidation. The first agrarian reforms that Castro put in place in 1959 impacted U.S. interests, as the largest plantations in Cuba were foreign operated. In response to this, Congress passed a law giving the president discretionary authority over Cuba's sugar quota, which was in turn reduced. To counter this law, Cuba nationalized US property. In response to the changes Castro was making within Cuba, and the damage it was causing US foreign investors, in October 1960, Washington imposed an export embargo. A few months later, all diplomats were recalled from Havana, and diplomatic ties were severed. In the years after diplomatic ties were severed, the US attempted to overthrow Castro's regime on multiple occasions. This included assassination attempts,

the Bay of Pigs incidence, Operation Mongoose, and the passing of a full economic embargo in 1962.

With this historical analysis, it is clear that Cuba's colonial past has a large influence over how their current politics are conducted. Furthermore, the essence of the Cold War era cannot be ignored when analyzing why the United States perceived Cuba as such a large threat. However, the historical relationship between the US and Cuba did not end with the ending of diplomatic ties. In fact, there have been numerous attempts to reestablish normalized relations, occurring as early as 1963 which included a successful release of prisoners from the Bay of Pigs incident. Because of the political climate in both Cuba and the US, most of these discussions were through back channels, done in complete secrecy.

The first attempt to reestablish diplomatic relations came under the Kennedy administration, when French journalist Jean Daniel, who was in Havana in 1963, transmitted a message from President Kennedy to Castro. This message was later described by Castro as "a gesture...an indication of a desire to establish contact" (LeoGrande 42). A mere 72 hours before President Kennedy's assassination, two messages had been sent to Castro through Jean Daniel, which explained that the US would end the trade embargo if Castro ended his support for leftist movements in the region. Daniel would later recall that, "...[Castro] was clearly happy about the message I was delivering. He would say, ' Maybe things are possible with this man'...both Castro and Kennedy seemed ready to make peace" (LeoGrande 78). After President Kennedy's assassination, Fidel Castro, fearing his regime would be blamed for the death reached out to Washington. The goal of Fidel Castro was to signal to the US that he still wished to continue maintaining open channels, to negotiate diplomatic relations. The normalization of relations under the Johnson administration failed simply because it asked too much of Cuba. Some of the demands made included for Castro to sever ties with the Soviets, to cease all "revolutionary" activities in Latin America, and to enter talks about indemnification of U.S. business interests. While these negotiations failed, from this point on, Fidel Castro and his political advisors had contact (in some form) with every US President and administration up to the present.

President Nixon was one president in which negotiations took a backward turn. This speaks to the importance of the leadership in terms of allowing for channels to exist between the US and Cuba. In the case of President Kennedy and Johnson, channels were open and used, despite no successes occurring in the reestablishment of relations. President Nixon was one such leader who impeded the normalization process (much like President George W. Bush in later decades). Nixon, who had met with Fidel Castro in 1959 while he was Vice President, did not have good personal relations with Castro. Henry Kissinger, who while serving as Secretary of State attempted to establish

secret channels by which to talk with Fidel Castro. He later admitted, "I don't even think I told President Nixon...because Nixon disliked Castro intensely." (LeoGrande 120). Kissinger, in the midst of his Caribbean Détente, spent 18 months attempting to negotiate with Cuba, and according to Keohane and LeoGrande, "Kissinger sent Nixon a memo suggesting the State Department handle all meetings...", to which Nixon responded, "State has handled this with disgusting incompetence. Their careerists are Pro-Castro..." (LeoGrande 120).

The following administration, under President Jimmy Carter, had much more success in dealing with Cuba, though still in the midst of the Cold War, had no success in establishing relations. In a secret policy briefing done by Carter's foreign policy team, it was stated that,

There are many compelling reasons why the US should move toward normalization of relations with Cuba. However, the difficulties in achieving full normalization of relations should not be minimized...Fidel Castro is a wily and tough negotiator committed to some goals that are antithetical to those of the United States. The process of resolving differences with Cuba will be difficult and tensions and problems will remain even after relations have been restored (LeoGrande 159).

During the Carter administration, it was Cuba's involvement in Africa which the United States opposed. The missed opportunity to establish normalized relations included external involvement in factors that went against US interests. Castro was unwilling to sacrifice his global aspirations, just as the US were unwilling to sacrifice theirs.

The following US presidents each had similar negotiation processes, each of which failed due to domestic factors, as well as unwillingness to concede to demands. President Clinton, who had some success in negotiating change regarding Cuba-US relations, faced many domestic impediments that initially placed harsher sanctions on Cuba with the passing of the Cuban Democracy Act. President Clinton personally felt that, "anybody with half a brain could see the embargo was counterproductive... Republicans have harvested the Cuban exile vote by snarling at Castro...but no one bothered to think forward about the consequence" (LeoGrande 269). At the time however, Florida was an important state to win in terms of electoral votes. Clinton endorsed the Cuban Democracy Act, which intensified US sanctions during the Cuban economic collapse by insisting that the embargo would only be lifted if there were democratic elections in Cuba, and banned all vessels from entering US waters. However, the bill also stated that there could be an increase in people-to-people programs, humanitarian assistance (as long as it promoted democratic change) and increased sales of medicine. Over the course of the Clinton administration, other



programs that increased communication occurred such as the Baseball Diplomacy initiative, in which the Orioles played a baseball game against a Cuban team, and counter narcotics cooperation. What eventually impeded Clinton's efforts to secure normalization was the Elian Gonzalez issue. Elian was a five year old boy floating in the Florida Strait on Thanksgiving Day, 1999. Although the boy had been rescued in the water, custody of Elian was granted to his relatives in Miami. His father, still in Cuba, opposed this decision. Eventually, Elian was sent back to his father in Cuba, but the result was that the Cuban American population felt betrayed by the government, and ultimately stalled Clinton's strategy of crafting new negotiations.

After reviewing the history of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, the main factors that contributed to the creation of abnormal relations can be identified as Cuba's colonial past, the US presence as an asymmetrical actor within Cuba, corruption, and years of oppression. Under the threat of the Cold War, Cuba's revolution was perceived as a direct threat to the US. Although there have been multiple attempts to reestablish relations, including the years immediately following the end of official diplomatic relations, all have failed. Taking these factors into consideration, this analysis proposes an interesting question, why is there such an effort occurring to reestablish diplomatic relations now, after decades of failed attempts. What conditions currently exist that are making normalization possible now?

## **Section 2: Why is normalization happening now?**

"Obama Should End the Embargo on Cuba" read the title of an early and rather direct New York Times editorial in October 2014, signaling the openly shifting disposition of not only the editorial board, but of many Americans in the face of what was soon to be an increased dialogue on diplomatic ties between the US and Cuba. Not at all a secret was the arrest of Alan Grossman in December 2009, however, between that time and the time of this editorial, the political reality had changed very little (the only event of serious international consequence being the easing of restrictions for Cubans to leave the country). Of further interest, following this editorial in October were a barrage of opinion pieces and other articles from the New York Times regarding the state of US-Cuban diplomatic relations. Pieces such as "The Shifting Politics of Cuba Policy" and "On Cuba Embargo, It's the U.S. and Israel Against the World — Again" began popping up frequently in the press, marking a mutating discourse on the contentious issue.

Compare this tone with that of a September 2012 article entitled "Where is Cuba Going?" by John J Sullivan. After describing the post-Bush changes in travel restrictions and capital flows between the US and Cuba, the author claimed that the future of the relationship remained increasingly uncertain. In the midst of this assessment, the author takes time to question the political leadership of Cuba in discussing the potential of a

continued Fidel led government. Further, the author had a number of explicit concerns about the continued communist government.

In many cases, you have a situation in which the family is first wiring money over, then shipping the goods. The money is used on the other side to pay the various fees associated with getting the stuff. So it's as if you're reaching over and re-buying the merchandise for your relatives. The money, needless to say, goes to the government.

The author continues to make a number of observations on the considerable penumbra which continues to obfuscate US-Cuban relations. It seems that at this time, a more measured, less optimistic view of the situation dominated this press source.

Some question remains as to why The New York Times paid such particular, positive interest to this topic only a scant few months prior to President Obama's announcement of restoration of diplomatic relations with Cuba in December, 2014, especially since there had been relatively little seemingly occurring prior to this. Regardless, The New York Times had been closely following this turn of events prior to it even occurring. Because of this, its articles detailing eventualities can be useful for constructing a more detailed time frame.

Merely a week after the president's announcement, the Times began addressing issues related to the economic benefits of more normal relations with an article titled "Cuba's Zeal for Tight Control Casts a Pall on New Markets" on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. In it, questions were posed as to the extent to which trade will benefit Cuba given its dense bureaucratic barriers.

Yet according to many economists, President Obama's plan to allow more interaction between the two countries may not be the lifeline Cuba is hoping for — unless Cuba overcomes its resistance to change as well.

By this time, Cuba had already been predicted to require reconciling an economic growth-economic control dichotomy. While less technologically contingent forms of commerce (such as tourism, cigars, alcohol) were predicted to bolster the Cuban economy, major Cuban development was being forecast as a long-term requirement at this time. Here, we can see early questions about the extent of US commitment to meaningful normalization goals.

Between December 25th 2014 and January 9th 2015, The New York Times is heavily focused on Cuban human rights concerns. These included the release of political prisoners, internet access, the effects of normalization on Cuban dissidents, the suppression of public protests, and the multiple arrests of Cuban performance artist and protester Tania Bruguera. On January 2nd, a piece entitled "Despite Thaw, American

Base at Guantanamo still Stings for Cubans” discussed the unresolved negotiations for return of the Guantanamo land back to Cuba, a political issue which continues at this current time of authorship (and is likely to continue in the future). On January 10th, The Times published a piece about celebrations in Miami due to false alarm about Fidel Castro’s death, setting an interesting tone in regards to many Americans’ view of the former and current Cuban leadership. January 15th-17th discuss the high demand for, and easing of access for, Americans wishing to visit Cuba. January 18th-20th reported on the arrival of Senators Patrick Leahy, Debbie Stabenow and Richard Durbin to discuss international cooperation and disagreements. During their visit, they found time to meet with Cuban dissidents, which some speculate led to President Raul Castro failing to attend a meeting with them. January 21st saw the news of the US outpost in Cuba becoming a “full-fledged embassy” in the article “US Outpost in Cuba to Step Out of the Shadows”. The Times released an article the next day stating that Cuban officials were wary of the US policy to accept Cuban immigrants for residency after one year of reaching US soil. The Cuban argument was against the incentivization of “dangerous sea journeys”. January 30th discussed a senate proposal to lift all travel restrictions between the US and Cuba. February 2nd-6th described many of the domestic concerns facing the normalization process including support/opposition, legal protection for Cuban immigrants, politics, etc. February 18th reported in the administrative lifting of many travel restrictions (except tourism and health care). At time of authorship, February 25th is the most recent, significant New York Times article which discusses the raising of American remittance to Cubans and the increase in Cuban private business.

### **Section 3: What can we learn from previous diplomatic normalizations**

In light of previous US endeavors to normalize relations with hostile countries, critical information can be induced with regards to current efforts with Cuba. Specifically, special attention can be paid towards the unfolding of such processes with China in the midst of the Cold War and Vietnam after the Vietnam War. Comparing these occurrences for patterns of expected behavior will likely yield insights for an evaluation of US-Cuban normalization.

In addition to the obvious similarities (all three countries have experienced abnormal diplomatic relations), there exist a number of other striking commonalities linking the three cases of China, Vietnam, and Cuba. To start, it would likely be a serious oversight to ignore the colonial histories of these countries. These are nations who have institutional and cultural memories of western influence. The response to this history has often been a rejection to, and in some cases isolation from, western political and economic consensus. Second, all three countries have had revolutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the nature of the revolutions have been both a positive and negative force towards normalization of diplomatic relations with Cuba, the instability is critical to

consider in regards to maintaining a predictable base of leadership (which is perhaps a requirement to successful normalization of relations). This leads to the third similarity, all three nations have a communist history. Arguably, this is single most important aspect of the abnormal relations with the US given US interests and policy during the Cold War. Lastly, all three countries have experienced very difficult relations with the US.

This is not to say that these countries are without their differences. In making any sort of analysis or comparison, scrutiny ought to be employed where these differences are pertinent or relevant. First, unlike Vietnam or China, Cuba has always been of strategic importance to the United States. Evidence of this can be seen with the issuing of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, in which the US took initiative to prevent external (European predominantly) interference in the Western Hemisphere. Because Cuba was one of the few American nations still under European control, it can be argued that this doctrine was targeted largely towards it. Second, Vietnam is in the unique position of being the only country of these three to have had regular US armed forces occupying its borders (barring the Bay of Pigs Invasion). This is interesting because of the three, Vietnam has historically posed the least interest to the US (economically and strategically). Lastly, the sheer size of China and its resource potential leaves it in an entirely different caliber from Cuba and Vietnam. Given the economic opportunity imbedded in normalized relations with China, it can be argued that China posed a relatively tremendous obstacle in maintaining its lack of normalized relations.

Contemporary US-China relations began to decline with the establishment of Mao Zedong's People's Republic of China in 1949. This decline was accelerated by a century of prior, growing anti-western attitude. Genuinely abnormal diplomatic relations became pronounced in decades that followed the founding of the PRC with conflict over Korea, in which the only diplomatic relation between the US and China came in the form of episodic peace talks over the conflict (Office of the Historian).

Further conflict over Taiwan exacerbated the political tension between China and the US, which in 1955 passed the Formosa Resolution, vowing and prioritizing the defense of Taiwan. For a brief period of time in the early 1960's, diplomatic relations seemed to be improving with the political separation of the USSR and the People's Republic of China as well as a mention by the Assistant Secretary of State that the Kennedy Administration may have been considering more normalized relations.

Unfortunately, no overt course was ever taken to fulfil this notion. Any plans of long-term reconciliation were sunk with the US involvement in the Vietnam War and the successful completion of the PRC's nuclear weapons program in 1964. Again, a brief window for potential diplomatic discussion opened in the early 1970's with the Nixon administration reevaluating its containment policy towards the PRC and the continuation

of meetings between U.S. and Chinese Ambassadors. These were again ceased after US military involvement in Cambodia.

Over two decades of strained (and often nonexistent) diplomacy had a clear undertone that both sides sought an improvement of relations, however, neither seemed willing to make the long-term political concessions necessary in the midst of the Cold War. Brief improvement would be swiftly reduced again as each nation made political maneuvers to advance their current agendas in a sort of wave pattern. This was turned around, seemingly by chance, when American Table Tennis athlete Glenn Cowan, practicing for the 31st World Table Tennis Championship in Japan in 1971, missed his team bus and was invited by Chinese players to ride on their own. After a gift exchange and some intensive media coverage of Cowan and some of the other Chinese athletes, the US team was invited to China, thus opening the door to further communication the likes of which hadn't been seen in decades.

The immediate, formal discussion between the US and Chinese governments took place via clandestine meetings in order to address the lingering obstacles to further diplomatic ties. In order to do this, Henry Kissinger (a National Security Advisor at the time) traveled to China in order to prepare the table for more open, formalized communication. When asked about how the State Department viewed this process initially, former State Department official Charles Freeman stated,

There were a great number of other things going on, of course. Part of the business of attempting rapprochement with china was the dismantling of a series of niggling but long-standing trade and investment barriers, resisted fiercely by the different elements of the bureaucracy that had acquired a vested interest in these things over the course of more than two decades. (Tucker, p.241, 2001)

During this period of initial re-communication, there existed a number of peripheral and critical issues. Most pressing among these was the issue of Taiwan, which had remained a point of consistent political tension. When strategizing ping-pong diplomacy, Kissinger and the Nixon administration operated in relatively secrecy. This was to avoid the potential for media and/or congress to instill the sort of limitations that come with publicity in advance. In other words, the State Department sought as much unilateral power as possible in order to ensure the success of the earliest negotiations (Tucker, p.243, 2001).

Kissinger's success in these critical negotiations was directly responsible for the visiting of President Nixon to Beijing in 1972. Here, Nixon met with Mao Zedong in order to sign the Shanghai Communiqué. This solidified several resolutions to a broad variety of issues between the US and China. Most importantly it included a peaceful solution to

the Taiwan issue as well as a statement of cooperation in the face of the Soviet Union. By most standards, this was the proper start to normalized relations.

By 1973 diplomatic offices were established in Beijing and Washington to serve as liaison posts. Although further normalization was slowed due to domestic perturbations in both countries (the Watergate scandal, Mao Zedong's death), progress was accelerated by the rise of Deng Xiaoping in China. After making significant headway with the Carter Administration, normalized diplomatic relations were fully restored. This was immediately evidenced by the establishment of embassies, the visiting of Deng Xiaoping to the US, and a series of economic barrier dismantlings in 1979. Although there remained a number of tension points between the two countries through the 1980's, there existed full intergovernmental communication and an air of positive negotiation.

As mentioned previously, of particular cultural importance to normalized relations was Deng Xiaoping's visit to the US in 1979. Harry E. T. Thayer, a member of the Department of State at the time, reflects on the extremely positive response to this visit as he discussed the "euphoria" about China at the time. Stating that "it was important that we help contribute to an atmosphere of increased warmth in the relationship", Thayer then continues to argue that he believed China was "oversold" to the American public at the time (Tucker, p. 327, 2001). Thayer mentions the variety of infamous civil rights issues that occurred after this time, such as the Tiananmen Massacre, as examples of why the initial cultural excitement was perhaps premature. Former US diplomat Arthur Hummel adds that the onset excitement led to a wave of "some 20 agreements of all kinds: trade, scientific relations, technology, exchange of persons, a Fulbright agreement, and various other". However, the economic benefits to the Chinese fell short of their expectations at the time while the US was exposed to some of the more "unlovely, unpleasant" aspects of Communist China. This most usually manifested as the somewhat unpredictable, and sometime damaging, actions of high ranking party officials whose actions would sometimes recklessly hurt American business interests.

As was the case with China, the re-establishment of Vietnam-US diplomatic relations was a long process, heavily shrouded in Cold War ideology. What was fundamentally different than with the situation in China was the POW-MIA war status of many US military members, and other damning remnants of the Vietnam War. This made establishing diplomatic relations even more difficult, particularly when coupled with Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia during the 1970's, as well as Vietnam's reliance on Russia as an aid donor. According to David Elliot in his book *Changing Worlds*, which discusses Vietnam's transition into integration in the global economy, he states that,

Vietnam's transition from 1975 to 2005 was gradual, but punctuated with

sharp discontinuities; first the conflict with China and Cambodia in the late 1970s, the economic reforms of 1986, and the end of the Cold War in 1989, and the reapproachment with China in 1991. But the big turning points in the ideological shifts have been fairly distinct. (Elliot, pg. 8, 2012)

The deterioration of US-Vietnam relations was greatly affected by the Vietnam war. After the unification of Vietnam in 1976, and the resulting regime changes, the United States ceased all diplomatic ties with Vietnam. Sanctions were established, and the US placed a trade embargo on Vietnam. Relations further deteriorated when, in the late 1970s, Vietnam became involved in the conflict in Cambodia, an action which drew US forces into Cambodia. Like the situation in China, after the deterioration of relations, there was a concerted effort by both actors to reestablish diplomatic ties. Lack of compromise on both parties, coupled with tensions created under the global bipolar political climate, did not. An article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1978 highlights the issues the US and Vietnam faced when attempting to negotiate diplomatic ties;

...within hours of the Paris meeting's conclusion when the U.S. House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to bar the government from negotiating "reparations, aid or any other form of payment" to Vietnam. Subsequent votes in the House reaffirmed the existence of strong opposition to any form of aid and even to a lifting of the trade embargo. Positions of both the Vietnamese and U.S. governments hardened. The Vietnamese made it clear they would not budge from their view that U.S. "contributions to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction" were "an undeniable obligation," while the Carter Administration indicated that the aid requested by Hanoi was out of the question. The Paris negotiations, which resumed in June in a gloomy atmosphere, reached an impasse over the aid issue;" ( *Foreign Affairs*, 1978)

Similar to that of Cuba, there had been previous attempts to normalize relations, but no policy window was present in order for these negotiations to find success. This article emphasizes the lack of domestic political will within Vietnam and the US to move forward with the normalization process. The U.S. House of Representatives and the government body in Vietnam were also involved in the failure of the establishment of diplomatic relations, as each saw the issue as non-negotiable. As in Cuba, the will of the leadership is an important aspect in building communication channels through which normalization can begin to occur.

More contemporary US-Vietnam relations began again after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. By the early 1990s, the President George H.W. Bush administration began the

process of normalization with Vietnam. The first order of business was to resolve the issues dating back to the Vietnam war, involving the POW'S and members missing in action (MIAs). The first presence the U.S. government had in Vietnam since 1975 was the U.S. Office for Prisoners of War/MIA Affairs, which opened in Hanoi in 1991. Relations continually began to improve over the year, and later in 1991, when Vietnam's troops withdrew from Cambodia, the political climate in the U.S. became more receptive and invested in the idea of normalization. By 1995, the U.S. set up liaison offices in Hanoi, and Vietnam set up offices in Washington, signifying both countries were ready to fully embark on the process of normalization. President Bill Clinton announced normalized diplomatic relations with Vietnam on July 11, 1995, and secretary of state Warren Christopher flew into Hanoi to oversee the opening of the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, and the U.S. consulate general's office was opened in 1999. Like the case with China, though these offices were opened, and diplomatic relations were normalized, there still exists many points of contention that both states have worked to resolve since 1991. Also like China, the official establishment of relations between the U.S. and Vietnam was preceded by a series of smaller diplomatic steps; the opening of embassies, and offices in both countries.

While in China the process of opening up discussions with the US began with the invitation of the US table tennis team to China, the opening up of discussion between Vietnam and the US began with China's reacceptance of Vietnam in 1991. The moment when diplomatic relations were once again restored between US and Vietnam, came almost simultaneously with Vietnam's acceptance into ASEAN. Because the U.S. has established relations with China, and most other countries in ASEAN, the step to reestablishing diplomatic ties with Vietnam was logical in terms of moving forward economically. Vietnam's acceptance by ASEAN, and the thawing of relations between Vietnam and China, escalated the issue of normalization with Vietnam to become once again in the best interest of the US. Currently, the US is in a similar situation with Cuba, in regards to the Summit of the Americas meetings. Due to resentment from other leaders surrounding the lack of US policy support regarding Cuba, it was in the United States best interest to begin opening dialogue with Cuba. The patterns that emerge in regards to the normalization process that occurred in China and Vietnam can be traced in Cuba as well. Though each country has unique attributes, the overall normalization process, the consistent starting and stopping of dialogue, how relations became abnormal, and the act of reestablishing diplomatic ties through leadership initiatives, follows through to current processes occurring between Cuba and the US.

#### **Section 4: An evaluation of the current normalization process**

Although inherently international in nature, and arguably endowed to discuss with international relations or comparative political theory, the purpose of this research is to



make consideration for, and to focus on, the specific drivers of diplomatic normalization and other potential policy change. We recognize the influence of other countries on the dyadic relationship between the US and Cuba, as well as the changes that have affected Cuba internally, however, we are more focused on how these issues are mediated within the US. We have opted to consider this process through this lense because our primary focus is in determining the evolution of US foreign policy in regards to Cuba. For this reason we will, generally, be holding Cuba as a sort of international constant, one which defaults to a position of attempting to normalize relations. This assumption is made with the understanding the even Fidel Castro has been reaching out to past US presidents for decades. As was previously demonstrated, “back channels” existed between the US and Cuba beginning immediately after the breaking of diplomatic ties. These channels existed through traditional methods, through the CIA, and between the President’s administration and Castro, and through non-traditional methods such as media and news reporters. Castro’s acceptance of US “gestures” as he referred to the communications between himself and various US administrations, was mirrored by his own attempts to engage in discussions. Because of these attempts made by Castro to reach out to the US, beginning with President Kennedy, all the way up to the current administration, Cuba can be held constant in analyzing the relationship between US and Cuba, within the context of US foreign policy.

To this end, we will be examining most closely the domestic components of normalization of dyadic relations with foreign states previously “on bad terms” with the US. From a theoretical standpoint, the multiple streams framework can be applied to this evaluation (Protopsaltis, 2011). This theory categorizes three typically autonomous components (or streams) which can be thought of as “flowing through” the policy making machine on a systemic level. These streams are problems, policies, and politics. Given proper perturbations or moments, these streams can come together in order to improve the attention and resources allocated to addressing an issue. These moments are known as “policy windows” and can be unexpected/regular and external/internal. For example, the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001 are considered a major unexpected, external policy window which induced the formation of the Department of Homeland Security. Alternatively, the ending of a president’s term could be considered a regular, internal policy window. Policy windows are typically taken advantage of via policy entrepreneurs (generally well-situated political actors of all sorts) though the deliberate manipulation of the convergence of the three streams. Our analysis will follow this framework while paying special attention to independent variables that affect any of the three (problems, policies, and politics) streams.

### **The Problems**

While more or less speaking for itself, the problem of abnormal diplomatic relations has a degree of depth which enables it to remain both persistent and consequential. Often,

as we have seen with China-US and Vietnam-US, this rut cannot be overcome without one or both sides having meaningful negotiations and making serious concessions. Typically, both sides would benefit from more normalized relations, but without a policy window opportunity arising, negotiations will result in a “Lawnmower Effect”. With this effect, we observe one or both nations in a pairing attempting to reopen diplomatic ties, in an effort to normalize relations, only to fail due to the endurance of underlying political issues. Efforts to initiate an opening of normalized diplomatic relations will face long-term, and ultimately, terminal obstacles with respect to the preferences and norms of the states involved. Despite these failures, and because of the vested interest both states have in maintaining normalized relations, efforts repeatedly fail and start again over the course of decades until some sort of policy window provides the correct circumstances for lasting negotiations. In the two cases discussed thus far, this has been in the rejection of opposing political systems and consensuses.

### **The Policies**

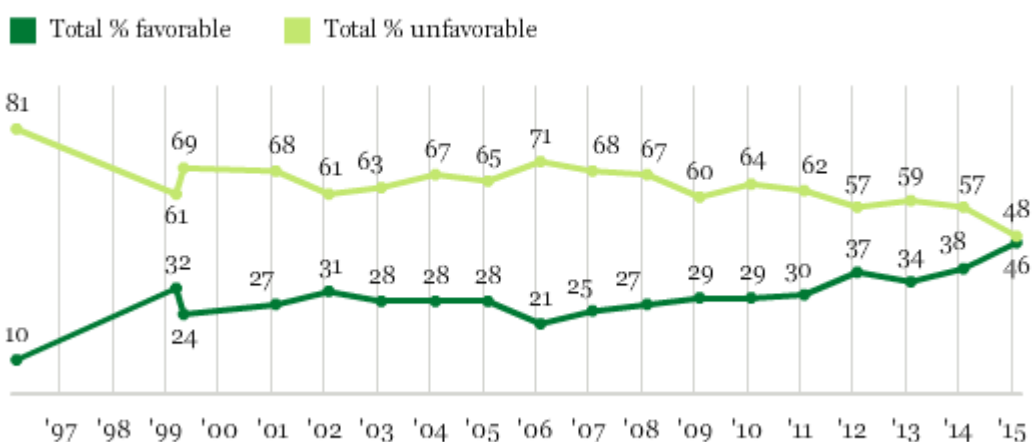
On its own, this stream can be thought of as solutions looking for problems. In regards to normalization, these solutions come in a variety of forms, depending on the political actor who is promoting it. With respect to Cuba currently, there are three prevailing policies in the US political arena. First, there is the sentiment that until Cuba abandons its communist institutions, no concerted effort should be made to reconcile diplomatic issues. This view is adopted for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to the belief that resuming relations with Cuba endorses the activities of the Cuban government, that the current trade and political isolation is a show of support for the activists participating in Cuba, and that the US ought to be sensitive to the historical ties of many Cuban Americans to Cuba. The second popular policy alternative is that of complete, fully realized diplomatic normalization. Proponents of this policy argue that economic warfare harms all those who engage, that the international political ramifications of abnormal relations with Cuba make interactions with other Central and South American governments more difficult, and that the true cause of the abnormal relations is history long passed. At time of authorship, there obstacle facing proponents of this policy is the timing and extent of US concessions to Cuba in order to achieve policy goal. The final major policy alternative is something of a hybrid. Its supporters argue that a partial, though long-term movement towards normalization is most appropriate. This alternative comes in many forms depending on the area of the abnormal relationship. For example, some would propose only lifting the travel restrictions, while others would seek an increase in capital flows, etc.

### **The Politics**

This stream is mostly concerned with system wide political conditions. This refers to interest groups, public sentiment, and political developments (legislative and executive changes). Gallup polling dating as far back as 1974 has sought to explore and quantify

US public sentiment in regards to Cuba. In summary, the results tend to illustrate a movement away from the demonization of Cuba and hold public support for an ending of the embargo, and a re-establishment of diplomatic relations, in the majority. When asked about their overall opinion of Cuba in February 2015, 39% of respondents said “very favorable” while only 16% responded with “very unfavorable”. These are the highest and lowest percentages for their respective categories on record. Compare this with a mere 8% of respondents who viewed Cuba as “very favorable” in 1996. When asked in February 2015 whether respondents favored or opposed the ending of the trade embargo against Cuba, a majority 59% were in favor of ending the embargo. This is compared to a mere 29% who were opposed to ending the embargo. Most importantly, historically, when asked whether respondents were in favor or opposed to re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba, US support has stayed consistently above 50%, reaching a percentage high of those in favor of 71%. The exception to this is April 1996, when the percentage of those in favor of re-establishing diplomatic relations fell to 40%. Even still, the percentage of those opposed to re-establishing diplomatic relations in 1996 remained below 50%.

*I'd like your overall opinion of a foreign country. Is your overall opinion of Cuba very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?*



GALLUP

"Americas-Cuba." *Gallup*. Gallup, Inc. n.d. Web. 26 Mar. 2015.

Some of the earliest and most vocal opposition to the recent shift towards US-Cuban diplomatic normalization has come from US Republican Senator Marco Rubio. In a statement sharply criticising President Obama's foreign policy in late 2014, Senator Rubio claimed that “What these changes are going to do is, they will tighten this regime's [Castro's] grip on power for decades to come” (Levy, 2014). Rubio then continued to state that he would block any attempt to finance a Cuban embassy or appoint a Cuban ambassador. While the disposition of a single, albeit influential, senator says very little about the larger political scene, an evaluation of some of the

interest groups behind this political actor could reveal the attitudes of some pertinent interest groups. This can be done by considering the types of organizations that actively support Rubio's agenda through campaign financing. While we acknowledge that not all contributors offer funds solely because of Rubio's stance on Cuba, we believe that these interests are at least not diametrically opposed to his stance on normalization either. Looking at contributions for Rubio's 2010 run for US Senate, we find many of the expected, out-of-state (out of Florida) type of political committees such as Sequa/Chromalloy PAC (an air transport group) and Plainscapital Corporation PAC (a banking group) (opensecrets.org). However, we also find a number of in-state interest groups providing significant funding to Senator Rubio. These include the Florida Association of Realtors, Florida Association of Mortgage Brokers, Harmony Health Systems, and the Florida Chamber of Commerce. While many of the interest groups represent business interests, we also find a number of other interest groups such as the Southern Strategy Group and the Florida Police Benevolent Association (followthemoney.org). It is worth considering however that one of the top contributors to Rubio over the past five years has been the Club for Growth, a free-market, free enterprise organization. It is conceivable that this group has strategized that enabling a socialist market to exist in Cuba is a greater threat to its mission than deliberately creating barriers to trade with that market. Furthermore, the primary type of industry contributing to Rubio is retired peoples. This suggests significant backing from a typically older population, perhaps one more personally connected to the fairly recent conflict between the US and Cuba.

In regards to political turnover, much can be said about the historical relationship between the US Congress and the Office of the President. The last US president to make concerted efforts towards normalizing relations with Cuba was President Bill Clinton. According to LeoGrande and Kornbluh, the Clinton era was the last administration to successfully produce lasting changes on the relationship between Cuba and the US. The successful negotiations of the normalized migration accords in 1994 and 1995, as well as the expansion of people-to-people linkages which opened educational and cultural exchanges, have rebuilt some bridges between the two governments. Even though the two governments remained estranged, the dialogue between them increased to produce lasting achievements. However, Clinton's efforts met staunch opposition with Republican majorities in both the House and Senate for almost his entire time in office. Alternatively, President Obama has faced mixed Congressional support with a Republican House and Democratic Senate. However, as mentioned previously, public sentiment towards this issue has also changed in recent years. To this end, the issue is seemingly less partisan than during the Clinton Administration with Republicans like Senator Jeff Flake actively supporting the normalization of Cuban-US relations (Levy, 2014).

## The Policy Window

The recent and serious attention to US-Cuban relations, especially in light of the burst of recent activity surrounding the issue, suggests we are (at time of authorship) in the midst of some sort of policy window. While the policy window is an important component of the explanatory logic behind the multiple streams framework, it is often difficult to isolate precisely what a policy window is while in the middle of it. For this reason, it may become clearer in the future what is contributing to the merging of the political, problem, and policy streams. We identify four potential reasons why this policy window has opened. First, with the abdication of Fidel Castro, there may be a changed perception of the Cuban regime in the US generally. Second, with Venezuela's recent economic downturn, Cuba may be in a position to re-approach a political discussion with the US more constructively. Third, a decrease in the saliency of Cuban-Americans may be relatively reducing US domestic opposition to normalization. Forth, it is possible that the Allen Gross prisoner exchange provided the proper spark between governments in both countries to consider opening negotiations.

After the 1998 presidential election of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, the relationship between Venezuela and Cuba became one of patron and provider. This ultimately led to the interdependence we see between the two countries (Piccone and Trinkunas, 2014). This manifested as the provision of subsidized oil to Cuba by Venezuela in return for skilled Cuban labor, military backing, and friendly diplomatic relations. In regards to the energy/labor partnership, Cuba pays for 60% of Venezuelan oil in the first 90 days. The remaining 40% is financed by Cuba at a 1% interest rate over a 25 year period. This is partly facilitated by Cuba's role as a Petrocaribe state. Petrocaribe is a Caribbean oil agreement in which member states receive preference for Venezuelan oil (The Economist). This is of note because almost two-thirds of Cuba's oil supply was composed of Venezuelan oil imports in 2011 alone. In return for this lucrative energy subsidization, tens of thousands of Cuban laborers were to work in Venezuela.

By most accounts, there are 40,000 Cuban professionals in Venezuela, 75 percent of whom are healthcare workers.<sup>14</sup> Civilian personnel, such as doctors and teachers, are deployed as part of a network of social assistance programs in Venezuela known as misiones, focused on basic community health, sports, and literacy programs (Piccone and Trinkunas, 2014)

In regards to security and diplomacy, the relationship had been one in which Cuba provides significant aid to Venezuelan strategy and security plans. This includes the presence of hundreds of military advisors, the presence of Cuban armed forces liaison detachments, and the adoption of a Cuban military doctrine. Diplomatically, Venezuela and Cuba built strong relations under the Community of Latin American and Caribbean

States (CELAC), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), and Petrocaribe, mentioned previously.

In reviewing this relationship, a number of things become clear. First, there existed a serious imbalance of trade and security between the two countries; with Venezuela providing only oil and Cuba providing a wide array of critical services, it becomes clear how this relationship becomes damaged with a perturbation in Venezuelan oil exports. Furthermore, the close partnership, while exceptionally profitable in the short-term, has limits on long-term development in both nations as it constrains broadening of its alternative trade partnerships. Lastly, the close control Cuba places on Venezuelan security limits Venezuela's political autonomy.

After the fall of Cuba's first economic and political patron, the Soviet Union, in 1991, Cuba's economy contracted by 35% (Gupta, 2014). Given the recent extended low oil prices and the lack of Venezuelan finances generally, it comes as no surprise that the contemporary Cuban-Venezuelan relationship has been coming to an end. Once Venezuela ceases its oil subsidization at a level beneficial to Cuba, we can expect to see a more drastic reduction in Cuban services to Venezuela in return. Since this agreement represents the center of the relationship, its end will result in alternative political-economic policies for both countries. What makes this more interesting is that Chavez and the Castros, in addition to close economic and political ties, were also close personal friends (Reuters, 2013). Perhaps this, more clearly than anything, explains the specific timing of the re-opening of US-Cuban diplomatic relations. Consider that Hugo Chavez's death was March 5, 2013 while the announcement that the United States and Cuba would attempt to restore diplomatic ties took place on December 17, 2014, merely a year and a half afterwards. It is not unreasonable to think that the mere occupation of Chavez in the office of Venezuela's presidency could have dissuaded Cuba from seeking other trade partners. Regardless, the changing conditions in Venezuela, whether they be purely economic, political, personal, or some combination of the three, represent a combination of political, problem, and policy streams conducive to increased efforts to normalize relations between the US and Cuba.

The Cuban-American lobby has historically been a domestic factor that has impeded previously attempts at normalization. However, the weakening of the political saliency of these lobby groups, and the shifting attitudes amongst Cuban-Americans have been instrumental in contributing to the allowance of the policy window to occur. Strictly in terms of US domestic politics, the Cuban-Americans in Miami have typically held power as a voting bloc. While the numbers of Cuban-American immigrants have increased in years, their political saliency has decreased in regards to national elections. According to Julia Sweig, in the 2008 presidential election, "Obama won the state of Florida... with

only 35% of the Cuban vote as a whole, having dominated in the 18-24 cohort. Non-Cuban Latinos in the state proved much more crucial to Obama's victory...." (Sweig 268). By 2009, Obama had won 49% of the Cuban vote, putting political myths to rest about the political weight Cuban-Americans hold over Florida in the national elections (Sweig 268). As the Cuban American lobby is a smaller factor in terms of solidifying the electoral votes of Florida, any voiced opposition holds less national weight than in previous years.

Further analysis of the Cuban American population in Miami shows a shift in demographic as well, which is important to consider when analyzing Cuban American attitudes toward US-Cuba relations. While the older generation of Cuban American exiles are staunchly opposed to having any relations with Castro's Cuba, the younger generation, and those who arrived in Miami decades after the first wave of Cuban immigrants, largely do not hold the same view. As was previously discussed, politicians such as Marc Rubio, who still receives campaign funds from Cuban-American lobby groups, are receiving money from retired aged citizens, who have a closer connection to the original US policy stance on Cuba. This does not necessarily represent the interests of the younger generations, who travel to Cuba yearly. In recent polls taken of Cuban-Americans living in Miami that have been conducted by Florida International University, an obvious difference becomes apparent in terms of acceptance of lifting the US trade embargo. 68 percent of respondents favor restoring diplomatic relations with Cuba. However, amongst younger respondents (18-29), 90 percent favored restoring diplomatic ties. 62% of Cuban Americans between the ages of 18-29 oppose continuing the embargo. Even further, amongst Cubans entering the United States in 1995 or later, 80% favor a policy shift in regards to the establishment of diplomatic relations (FIU, 2014).

Perhaps if the previously mentioned situations created an environment in which normalization of US-Cuban relations were possible, then the incarceration and subsequent release of US citizen Alan Gross by the Cuban government in December 2014 could have created the specific opportunity for dialogue between the two countries. This would be a policy window not unlike the Ping-Pong diplomacy of the early 1970's between the US and China. The situation surrounding the arrest of Alan Gross is interesting in and of itself in that he was reportedly conducting a clandestine operation on Cuban soil. He was incarcerated in early December of 2009 on charges of trying to "undermine the integrity and independence of Cuba" (Council on Foreign Relations). He was originally designated to Cuba as a subcontractor for the U.S. Agency for International Development. However, in the course of this endeavor, he allegedly smuggled satellite phones, computers, and other communication equipment into Cuba in order to distribute them to the local Cuban population. After only five years

of his fifteen year sentencing, Gross was returned to the US in a prisoner swap involving him and three Cuban intelligence officers incarcerated in the US since 1998.

In order to secure such a dealing, secret talks took place between the US and Cuba in the year leading up to the exchange (Garvin, 2014). These talks took place sometime in mid 2012 and lasted roughly 18 months. While details are still closely guarded, on a number of occasions, Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama were invited to the Vatican under the facilitation of Pope Francis. With the offices and resources there, it would seem that such talks were largely successful beyond the mere discussion of a prisoner exchange, as President Obama and Raul Castro announced plans to re-establish diplomatic relations shortly thereafter. When two neighboring countries have only communicated a handful of times over the course of roughly six decades, it makes sense that Presidents Obama and Castro would make room to discuss other important issues in addition to the prisoner swap. In this way, this prisoner exchange was taken full advantage of in order to facilitate additional negotiations between the two countries.

### **The Policy Entrepreneurs**

Consideration ought to be made based on the complete range of key actors involved in foreign policy. Yang notes in *Congress and US China Policy: 1989-1999*, that in terms of the US government, there exist only two major actors in this regard: the Congress and President. Typically, the Supreme Court has opted out of becoming involved in such affairs as it views them to be fundamentally “political” (*Oetjen v. Central Leather Company*). However, in the few instances in which the Supreme Court has become involved, it typically holds that it is exclusively the role of the of the president to act on foreign affairs (Yang, p. 7, 2000). Congress, alternatively, has traditionally had a fluctuating role in its level of involvement in foreign policy, however, in 1973, with the passing of the War Powers Resolution, Congress became significantly more involved in the deployment and withdrawal of US armed forces abroad. This marked increased congressional commitment to assert its power in politically sensitive international issues. Recently, Congress has used alternative methods to increase its foreign policy influence in politically sensitive areas. For example, in an open letter signed by nearly 50 US senators to the leaders of Iran in March 2015, it was warned that the future of lasting nuclear negotiations (which are being undergone via the President at time of authorship) was entirely dependent on the approval of Congress in its capacity to ratify treaties. While the treaty ratification is not a new power, the assertive demonstration of political interests to a foreign government is relatively unusual. In light of constituency theory, which argues that Congress members make single-minded efforts for re-election (Mayhew, 2004), it becomes somewhat clear that the economic and trade benefits to an



increase in foreign policy power for Congress gives it leverage to appeal to the interests of its constituencies (Yang, p. 14, 2000).

### **Concluding Remarks: Where Do We Stand Now?**

In light of the historical analysis of US-Cuba relations, the lessons learned from previous attempts at normalization, and the evaluation of the current normalization process, there exists a unique and finite window of opportunity for the occurrence of successful negotiations. The coming together of problems, politics, and policy streams has created the conditions under which a policy window has opened. The spark of discussions that arose through the prisoner exchange presented a chance in which channels of communication could be re-opened, thus, temporarily halting the Lawnmower Effect. Furthermore, there exists economic opportunities in the U.S. and Cuba that are helping to drive negotiations forward. However, this rare policy window can pass if any of the three streams disconnects from the policy window before the final stages of normalization can occur.

In terms of the recommendations that can be made based off the findings of this research, there are still possible sources that could force negotiations away from establishing normalized relations. The transition from diplomatic relations, to normalized relations could be affected by negative pressure from third parties, including other states or interest groups, lack of motivation from US policy makers, and failure to achieve any progress in current discussions in terms of compromise.